

**ISRAELI GUARDS WERE NOT AT POSTS
WHEN GOLDSTEIN OPENED FIRE, IDF ADMITS**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 8 (JTA) -- The terrorist attack at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron might have been prevented had Israeli security guards been at their posts, the Israel Defense Force admitted in testimony before the state commission of inquiry investigating the incident.

But Maj. Gen. Danny Yatom, commander for the West Bank, said that while lax security made the killings at the shrine possible, a similar attack elsewhere could not have been averted.

"A crazy murderer acting alone who decides and is determined to carry out an attack" cannot be stopped, Yatom said.

"There are many opportunities every day to kill Arabs," said Yatom.

Yatom was testifying Tuesday at the opening of the hearings conducted at the Supreme Court by the five-member commission.

He said that two IDF soldiers and three border policemen were not at their posts when Baruch Goldstein, a Brooklyn-born settler from neighboring Kiryat Arba, opened fire and killed Palestinians at prayer.

IDF investigators now put the number of fatalities at 29. An additional three Palestinians may have been trampled by worshippers fleeing the attack.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Meir Shamgar, who heads the panel, asked Yatom if the massacre could have been prevented had the posts been properly manned.

The head of the central command replied, "To the best of my knowledge, yes."

In response to questions, Yatom also made it clear the military had no intelligence that warned of such a violent attack by a Jewish settler. He said the military had been alert to disturbances from the settlers, but not to terrorism.

IDF preparedness overall focused on Arab terrorism against Jews and not the reverse, he said.

Far-Reaching Legal Powers

The commission has far-reaching legal powers to investigate what happened, to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

It can subpoena witnesses and documents, call on the police to detain people to get them to testify and levy punishment for perjury.

Its power to compel witnesses to testify is especially important against the background of threats by Hamas against Palestinian witnesses not to testify.

Analysts assessing the possible impact of such an inquiry point to two precedents.

In 1973 a state commission investigating the Yom Kippur War found the military at fault for being taken by surprise by Syrian and Egyptian attacks, while absolving the political establishment.

But a 1982 state commission investigating the killing by Christian militiamen of hundreds of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee

camps in southern Lebanon implicated politicians and forced the resignation of then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. In effect, officials were blamed for not foreseeing the massacre.

There has been some speculation that if the principle of indirect responsibility is applied this time, it could bring down the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

**GORE PUSHES FOR PEACE IN TALKS
WITH BOTH ARAB AND JEWISH GROUPS**
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, March 8 (JTA) -- Vice President Al Gore invested some effort this week in trying to get the stalled Middle East talks back on track.

Gore met Monday with a group of Arab American leaders, and then received an honorary degree at the Israeli Embassy here from Bar Ilan University, located near Tel Aviv.

In his speech at the embassy Monday evening, Gore said that last month's killing spree in Hebron "has been a setback which re-opened wounds decades old, and that we cannot expect to stitch closed overnight.

"Nevertheless, I believe with all of my heart that the peace process can and will succeed," Gore continued.

"Israel has now chosen the path of peace. I am convinced that (Palestine Liberation Organization) Chairman (Yasser) Arafat has, as well," Gore said.

Earlier Monday, Gore met with a group of top Arab American leaders.

The Arab American group, which included representatives from the National Association of Arab Americans and the Arab American Institute, presented the vice president with a list of five recommendations for U.S. action.

The recommendations were similar to those presented by Arab American leaders to Secretary of State Warren Christopher last week following the shootings of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron by a Jewish settler.

Among the recommendations were suggestions that the United States be more actively involved in the peace process, and that the Clinton administration should support a U.N. resolution calling for an international presence in the territories to protect Palestinians.

Gore told the guests at the Israeli Embassy ceremony that the Arab Americans, in the wake of the Hebron incident, "told me that what moved them deeply was to receive from the friends they had made in the Jewish community, during this effort called Builders for Peace, heartfelt expressions of condolence and sorrow, to reach out to them and to lift up their hearts."

Builders for Peace is a U.S. private sector organization of leading Jewish and Arab Americans interested in investment in the territories.

Gore announced the group's formation last November. The group visited the Middle East earlier this year.

The vice president also said that the Arab Americans had in turn reached out after the

shootings of Chasidic youths in New York last week.

The National Association of Arab Americans released a statement March 2 condemning that attack, which was allegedly committed by a Lebanese national.

"We condemn it with the same intensity with which we condemn similar crimes committed against members of our own community," the group's executive director, Khalil Jahshan, said in the statement.

SYRIA BEEFS UP SECURITY FOR JEWS FOLLOWING THREATS BY MUSLIM GROUP By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, March 8 (JTA) -- The Syrian government has reportedly taken steps to protect its Jewish residents from violent threats made last week by a Syrian Muslim group.

The State Department released a statement last week saying that Syrian authorities have "taken actions to protect Jewish residents" from the threats.

News reports Monday indicated that the Syrian government was guarding Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues following the circulation of a leaflet promising revenge for the Palestinian deaths in Hebron at the hands of a Jewish settler.

The leaflet, distributed last week by a group calling itself the "Syrian Muslim Party of Justice," threatened "that the blood of all Jews living in Syria will be spilled starting Sunday the 13th of March 1994."

That date marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"You only shoot your enemies when they are praying," the letter said in obvious reference to the murder of at least 40 Muslim worshippers by militant Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein on Feb. 25.

Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), who called for action by the Clinton administration in response to the leaflet, said in a statement this week that he had received news of the presence of Syrian security forces in Jewish areas.

Schumer cited sources who believe that the Syrian Muslim organization claiming responsibility for the leaflet is not an organized group and had probably formed after the Hebron shootings.

Yet despite the assurances of protection for Syrian Jews, Schumer remained cautious.

Following the Hebron killings, Jewish groups including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Canadian Jewish Congress asked the U.S. government to request protective measures from Syrian President Hafez al-Assad.

Seymour Reich, chairman of the conference's Task Force on Syrian Jewry, said White House officials told him last week that a copy of the leaflet was given to the Syrian Foreign Ministry, which promised enhanced protection for the country's Jews.

Reich also reported that about 35 Syrian Jews left the country this weekend and arrived in New York on Sunday. He said more were expected by the end of the week.

The U.S. government has previously come to the aid of Syrian Jews in efforts to have the Syrian government enforce a policy of free travel.

Following more than a year during which the number of Jews allowed to leave Syria had been sharply curtailed, Assad promised Secretary of State Warren Christopher last December that he would grant travel permits to all Jews desiring them.

By the end of February, the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews said that all but a few members of the Syrian Jewish community had travel visas. Syria still contains some 1,000 Jews, most of whom are thought to be free to leave.

LUBAVITCHER REBBE HOSPITALIZED WITH STROKE-RELATED COMPLICATIONS By Alexandra J. Wall

NEW YORK, March 8 (JTA) -- The Lubavitcher rebbe was in stable but serious condition following his admission to the hospital Tuesday morning after suffering from stroke-related complications.

At a news conference Tuesday afternoon, Dr. Orrin Devinsky, chief of neurology at the Hospital for Joint Diseases Orthopaedic Institute in Manhattan, said he was optimistic that Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson would be released in several days.

The rebbe was admitted to the hospital's intensive care unit at 4:00 a.m. to monitor his condition.

Devinsky said that in the morning, Schneerson had experienced seizures, which were difficult to control. He said the seizures subsided after a change of medication.

But due to the rebbe's age, 91, such changes in his medical condition could be seen as life-threatening, the doctor said.

The rebbe has been in frail health since suffering a stroke two years ago. The stroke left him unable to speak and paralyzed him on his right side.

Early last week, the rebbe underwent successful cataract surgery. Devinsky said that the seizures were unrelated to that procedure.

However, he did not rule out a possible connection between the seizures and the Brooklyn Bridge shooting of four young Lubavitchers who had accompanied him to the hospital and recited prayers during his outpatient surgery.

One of those shot, Aaron Halberstam, 16, died of his wounds on Saturday night. The rebbe had felt particularly close to Halberstam and had taught him the Hebrew alphabet. Halberstam's father, Chesed Halberstam, was a personal assistant to the rebbe's late wife, Chaya Moussia.

Another of the youths shot, Nachum Sossonkin, remains in very critical condition at St. Vincent's Hospital here.

The doctor said that seizures can be brought on by stress, but "there was no clear evidence" that these seizures were the result of Halberstam's death, he said.

Heavy security was enforced at the hospital in the wake of the shooting, said Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, the rebbe's official spokesman.

According to the doctor, the rebbe is somewhat lucid but is heavily sedated. He is breathing independently, without the aid of a respirator, the doctor said.

There has been no talk within the Lubavitch movement of a successor to the rebbe, who has no children.

ATTACK ON CHASIDIM LEADS TO CONCERN BUT NOT ALARM AMONG JEWS NATIONWIDE

By Pamela Druckerman

NEW YORK, March 8 (JTA) -- Even while Aaron Halberstam, the young Chasidic student slain in last week's Brooklyn Bridge shooting, was being eulogized Sunday as a "holy sacrifice for the Jewish people," the mood in his Crown Heights community remained somber but calm.

The same tone was echoed far beyond Halberstam's insulated fervently Orthodox world, as Jewish institutions throughout the United States beefed up security but continued to play down the level of concern in the community and the likelihood of further attacks.

"We're just sort of lying low and monitoring what's happening," said Deborah Lauter, community relations director for the Atlanta Jewish Federation. Lauter said there is a heightened awareness but not a heightened anxiety over the safety of individual Jews.

The muted response of some Jewish groups, according to their representatives, may reflect a strategy of trying to maintain a low public profile, in the hope that the less that reaches the front pages, the more likely it is that events of recent days will pass from memory.

"The more Tonya Harding is in the news, the better" for the Jewish community, said a source close to the Atlanta Jewish community, who asked not to be identified.

The source linked the shooting of four Lubavitcher youths on the Brooklyn Bridge to the publicity generated by recent rifts in black-Jewish relations, which might have set the tone for further bias-related attacks, he said.

Rashad Baz, a 28-year-old Lebanese national, was indicted Tuesday in the shooting, which left Halberstam dead and three other students wounded, one gravely.

The attack came four days after a militant Israeli settler fired on Muslim worshipers at a Hebron mosque, killing at least 29 people.

It also took place while jurors were deliberating the fate of the four men charged with blowing up the World Trade Center last year.

No Confirmation It Was Act Of Vengeance

The New York Police Department has so far refused to confirm widespread speculation that the attack on the Chasidim was in retaliation for the Hebron attack. Police have also declined to comment on whether Baz acted alone or was connected with a larger group.

But fears that Middle East-style terrorism may have become a fixture on American shores set the tone for a swift, citywide response to the shooting.

Just 24 hours after the shooting, police had the suspect in custody. Police are also holding two Jordanian nationals accused of aiding Baz and hindering the investigation.

And this week, following a meeting with New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, a spokesman for the New York Jewish Relations Council said the police have spread a "high-level security net" over the New York Jewish community.

Many have compared Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's response to the shootings to that of former Mayor David Dinkins, who was widely accused as

slow to respond to the needs of the Lubavitch community during the 1991 Crown Heights riots, in which another Chasidic student, Yankel Rosenbaum, was killed by a group of African-Americans.

Shamaya Glick, a 19-year-old yeshiva student who was at the funeral and spends weekends in Crown Heights, said people in the community feel much safer than they did after the riots in 1991.

Michael Miller, executive director of New York's JCRC, credited the swift response and ongoing cooperation by the mayor and city officials with the prevailing calm. City officials have worked closely from the start with Jewish leaders to suppress rumors and avoid public panic.

"This isn't a radical-end-to-innocence type of thing," said Michael Kotzin, director of Chicago's JCRC. Kotzin, whose group is working with the ADL on a regional security conference, described the current situation as a periodic swell in security that should subside as tensions ease.

But Brooklyn City Councilman Noach Dear warned that the United States is passing into a new era of security-consciousness where increased vigilance will have to become "a way of life."

But Jewish leaders admit it will not be easy to get Jews to be more careful. "The Jewish community has been complacent over the last few years," said David Pollock, assistant executive director of the New York JCRC. "Security always costs some money and is always inconvenient."

'You Can't Stay Out Of It'

Some communities have made strong public appearances to renounce the attacks and project a strong, unified public face. Councilman Dear, who represents an Orthodox Jewish district, warned that minimizing the issue may ultimately damage the Jewish communal presence.

"You can't stay out of it. It's a fact of life. We're here," said Dear.

But many Jewish communities outside of New York feel far removed from the turmoil of New York, preferring to view the incident as an isolated act which, while it may have crossed the Atlantic to New York City, will probably not travel inland to Dallas or Detroit.

Many communities already had strong security systems in place, or had planned to increase precautions around the Passover holiday season.

And in many urban communities, other factors are of more immediate concern than the possibility of terrorist attacks. "I've got other things to worry about, like cocaine cowboys," said Lisa Shanbrun, a store owner in Miami.

"Everybody in Miami looks over their shoulder anyway because of crime," said Rabbi Jonathan Kendall of Miami's Reform Temple Beth Am.

Even in New York, the mood -- at least in the secular community -- is benign.

"I'm a secular Jew, so there'd be no reason for someone to target me," said David Solomon, an assistant professor at Columbia University, echoing the sentiments of many in the non-religious world who feel pained by the attacks but not personally vulnerable to future incidents.

Betty Ehrenberg, who heads the Union of American Orthodox Congregation's Institute for Public Affairs, said Orthodox Jews tend to feel more identifiable than their secular counterparts.

The Orthodox Union has circulated a memorandum to its member synagogues detailing increased security precautions.

CONFERENCE ON INTOLERANCE URGES EUROPEAN NATIONS TO FIGHT RACISM
By Michel Di Paz

STRASBOURG, France, March 8 (JTA) -- More than 100 participants from Europe and North America convened at the Palace of Europe here last week to attend an international conference on racial intolerance.

The conference, called "Europe Versus Intolerance," was held March 3 and 4 and was co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, the Council of Europe and the Foundation of European Science and Culture.

The Council of Europe represents 32 nations of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, making it more broad-based than the European Union, which is composed only of Western European countries.

During his introductory speech, AJCommittee President Alfred Moses noted that it was the work of international bodies, national governments, communal organizations and individuals to combat racism and xenophobia.

"In recent years the AJC has commissioned a number of attitude surveys in various countries in Europe, including the former Soviet Union," Moses said.

"The picture is one of generally high levels of anti-Semitism both in countries where Jews are still present in significant numbers and in countries where Jewish communities hardly exist. The general level of xenophobia is dangerously high," he said.

"The lesson of the past is that individuals do make a difference. Organizations do make a difference.

"But it is to governments that we must look and hold accountable for enacting and enforcing laws that protect minorities, civil rights and religious freedom, and it is to international bodies that we must look to oppose xenophobia and extreme nationalism that operate across international borders," Moses said.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel told the gathering that more progress has been made in the sciences than in ethics or philosophy.

'Danger Of Falling Victim To Intolerance'

"One word defines the fear felt by our contemporaries. It's 'intolerance,'" he said.

"Political fanaticism has succeeded the religious fanaticism of the Middle Ages. The Europe we know, the Europe we wish for, is in danger of falling victim to intolerance, to violence resulting from it and to indifference stemming from it.

"I must ask for your forgiveness if I express myself with some skepticism: Culture is not always an armor against brutality and hatred. The only remedy I know is memory.

"Let us recall to all today the evil and the misery that intolerance brought down yesterday on mankind. Then, hope will be justified," said Wiesel.

In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Catherine Lalumiere, secretary-general of the Council of Europe, spoke of the organization's moral commitment.

"Since our inception in 1949, our mission has been to build Europe, to gather all peoples of Europe. But from the beginning our founders stated that Europe should be erected on the

values of a pluralistic democracy and respect for human rights," she said. "There will be no Europe without these values," she added.

Lalumiere said she had met with the leaders of the AJCommittee during a visit to Washington several months ago.

"I was struck by the amount of things we had in common," she said. "I felt within the AJCommittee the urge to act, with efficiency and strength. It was for us a boost, a breath of fresh air. Our cooperation came through and this seminar is here to prove it."

In an interview, Moses explained why AJCommittee chose to work with the Council of Europe to organize the conference.

"The Council of Europe is the right body to deal with if you want to act against intolerance in Europe. We fight against anti-Semitism, but our agenda has to be broader if we want to be effective. What we intend to do through this seminar is raise consciousness.

"We have here the leading figures in Europe on the subject of xenophobia and intolerance. What we hope will emerge is a closer cooperation between the human rights community here and the AJC.

"This Strasbourg seminar is not a one-shot deal. One shot doesn't accomplish anything. The secret here is to be constantly involved. That means ongoing dedication," said Moses.

MUSLIM DRIVER FOR SARAJEVO JEWS ALLOWED TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 8 (JTA) -- The Serbian Muslim driver for the Jewish community in Sarajevo has been allowed to emigrate with his family to Israel.

Jewish Agency officials said last week that the man, Rasheed Hoznic, 45, had arrived in Israel with his family the preceding weekend.

When hostilities broke out in Sarajevo, Hoznic, along with his wife, Zorica, and their sons, Zlatan, 16, and Goran, 13, decided to throw in their lot with the Jewish community in the Bosnian capital.

Hoznic began helping out at Sarajevo's Jewish Community Center. Confronted by sniper fire, he would nonetheless drive around the city on missions for the Jewish community.

He also helped out in the community center's kitchen, where food was served to hundreds of needy Sarajevo residents, Jews and non-Jews alike.

His "salary" was a plate of soup each day.

Zorica and their children meanwhile fled to Belgrade, where they began undergoing conversion to Judaism.

When a bus convoy left Sarajevo last month with Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from the besieged city, Hoznic was allowed out to be reunited with his family.

Together with those Jews who decided to make aliyah, he traveled to Budapest. But there a disappointment awaited him: his family had not yet arrived, and because he was not Jewish, Hoznic was not eligible to enter Israel under the Law of Return.

But his wife and sons soon made their way to Budapest. Because they had already converted, he was eligible to join them for the trip to Israel.