

**FBI DIRECTOR TO JEWISH COMMUNITY:
WE ARE ON ALERT FOR POSSIBLE ATTACKS**
By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- In the wake of recent bomb threats to the Israeli Embassy here and the Israeli Consulate in New York, FBI Director Louis Freeh has reassured Jewish leaders that his agency, in concert with local law enforcement officials, is doing everything possible to prevent terrorist assaults on American soil.

The bomb threats to the Israeli institutions followed a spate of terrorist attacks last month against Jewish targets in Argentina, London, and, possibly, Panama.

Jewish organizations throughout the country have stepped up security measures with the help of law enforcement officials.

In Washington, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has placed concrete barriers in front of the building, shielding it from the street. At the B'nai B'rith headquarters, escorts are required for visitors.

Freeh "sought to assure our delegation of the seriousness with which the FBI is confronting potential threats to the Jewish community," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee. AJCommittee coordinated the meeting with Freeh and a host of Jewish organizations here on Monday.

In addition to AJCommittee, the meeting included representatives from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, Council of Jewish Federations, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, National Council of Jewish Women and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

A separate session with representatives of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was scheduled for Wednesday.

Speaking for many in the community, Michael Lieberman, associate director and counsel of the Washington office of the Anti-Defamation League, said: "It's reassuring to the Jewish community that the FBI is in a heightened state of concern."

At Monday's meeting, Freeh briefed the delegation on the bureau's ongoing investigation of the London, Argentina and Panama bombings, which left over 100 dead and close to 300 wounded. He left no doubt that Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Islamic fundamentalist organization, is responsible for the recent wave of terrorism, according to many who attended the meeting.

**L.A. JEWISH COMMUNITY BEEFS UP
SECURITY AFTER THREE BOMB SCARES**
By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- Jewish community organizations and police have implemented tougher security measures this week in the wake of three local bomb scares that came within days of the attacks on Jewish institutions in Buenos Aires and London.

In the first reported incident, on July 27, police cordoned off a section of Wilshire Boulevard, after a suspicious car was reported parked on the sixth level of the 17-story building housing the Israeli Consulate.

The previous day, a bomb exploded outside the Israeli Consulate in London, injuring 13 people. Early in the morning of July 27, another bomb exploded in front of a Jewish communal building in London, injuring another five people.

After the car was spotted at the consulate in Los Angeles, a stretch of Wilshire Boulevard, the city's busiest thoroughfare, remained closed to traffic between 6 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Police checked out the car, as well as other cars parked near the Jewish Community Building, two blocks from the consulate.

'We Are Conducting Business As Usual'

Following the police investigation, the alert was lifted, said Ido Aharoni, consul for communications and public affairs, who noted that no threats had been received at the consulate or by Israelis living in Los Angeles.

"We are alert and maintaining full security, but otherwise we are conducting business as usual," said Aharoni.

In the second incident on the same day, a bomb threat was received by phone at the University of Judaism in West Los Angeles. The main building was evacuated while police searched the premises for about 90 minutes before giving the all-clear, said Warren Spry, the university's facilities director.

The following day, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and its adjoining Museum of Tolerance were evacuated for three hours, following two separate but almost simultaneous incidents, according to Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the center's associate dean.

Two oversized vans tried to enter the center's parking lot around 3:30 p.m., but were turned back and the drivers detained until police arrived. Subsequent questioning showed that the vans were connected with a group scheduled to tour the museum, and the drivers were released.

At almost the same time, a college student phoned police from a public phone directly across Pico Boulevard from the Wiesenthal Center, and said that a bomb would explode at the Museum of Tolerance at 4 p.m.

Police immediately apprehended the caller, described as a U.S. citizen of Asian descent, and after determining that he and his roommate had just finished visiting the museum, ordered an evacuation of the premises.

According to Cooper, the caller may have been emotionally unbalanced. His roommate quoted the caller as claiming earlier that God had told him about the supposed bomb explosion.

During the three-hour evacuation, Pico Boulevard, another major east-west traffic artery, was cordoned off for several blocks, as well.

Since the attack on the main Jewish community center in Buenos Aires on July 18, in which about 100 people were killed, police throughout the metropolitan area have been

patrolling Jewish institutions more frequently and in greater strength, said Rabbi Gary Greenebaum, Western regional director of the American Jewish Committee.

Greenebaum is a member and immediate past president of the Los Angeles Police Commission.

At the Jewish Community Building, housing the Jewish Federation Council, its agencies and other Jewish organizations, added security measures were implemented following a meeting of executives.

No one will be allowed to park in front of the building, employees and visitors will have to wear clear identifications and police will maintain a constant surveillance, said Gary Wexler, the federation's communications director.

The federation and the Anti-Defamation League will shortly hold security seminars for Jewish institutions to reinforce instructions first issued during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

AUTHORITIES QUESTION ARGENTINE JEW AS INVESTIGATION INTO BOMBING PERSISTS By Raul Kollmann

BUENOS AIRES, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- Ariel Mitzcaner was upset.

"I'm Jewish. I have nothing to do with the bomb. Every month my father went to the AMIA to pay the installments for my grandmother's burial," he said, referring to the Jewish social service agency housed in the Jewish community headquarters blown up July 18 by a terrorist car bomb.

The investigators were left puzzled. Their theory that Mitzcaner's garage was the place where explosives had been placed in the Renault van used in the bomb attack had collapsed.

Investigators are confident that a man with false documents brought the van to be fixed at Mitzcaner's garage. But nobody knows who the man was. The only description investigators had was that the man was Argentine, little over 5 feet tall and had dark skin.

He left only one clue -- a reportedly false identification with the name Ramon Martinez.

Argentine police have so far detained five people in connection with the bombing that killed 100 people and left more than 200 wounded.

All the suspects have some connection with the van, which changed hands several times before the attack. Two of the five suspects stole the vehicle, but sold it before the bombing.

In the opinion of Judge Juan Jose Galeano, who is spearheading the investigation, there is one suspect who is the key to breaking the case: a man who stationed the van in a parking lot some 300 yards from the community headquarters.

He left the Renault in the lot on July 15, and three days later, another person drove the van to the front door of the AMIA, got out on the sidewalk and detonated the explosives.

Galeano has not yet been able to prove that the man who left the van at the parking lot knew about the explosives in the vehicle.

But one clue in the investigation was provided by Monousheh Moatamer, an Iranian refugee who is in Caracas, Venezuela, under the protection of the U.N. high commissioner for refugees.

Moatamer apparently held a high position in the Iranian secret service before fleeing from Teheran a month ago.

At police headquarters in Caracas, Galeano recently showed Moatamer some 20 photographs of Iranians suspected of having taken part in the attack.

Moatamer picked out four, saying, "Find out if these people have been in Buenos Aires recently. They are explosives experts, and if they were in Buenos Aires, they surely had some participation in the attack."

The judge confirmed that the four men Moatamer referred to entered Argentina at Ezeiza International Airport, but left the country by crossing at the Brazilian border.

A source close to the investigation pointed out that the four men had diplomatic passports, but that only one had worked at the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires.

According to Moatamer, these men were in charge of organizing local cells of the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement and provided the terrorists with backing at the time of the attack.

In the corridors of the Pink House, headquarters of the Argentine government, it has been rumored that the Foreign Affairs Ministry was about to expel the Iranian ambassador and break off relations with the Teheran government.

But the break in relations has not yet occurred, and it remains to be seen whether Moatamer's statements will help advance the investigation.

BREYER IS CONFIRMED BY SENATE; BECOMES SECOND JEW ON CURRENT COURT By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- Judge Stephen Breyer, whose nomination to the Supreme Court was confirmed by the Senate last week by an overwhelming majority, will join Ruth Bader Ginsburg this fall as the second Jewish justice to sit on the high court.

Many Jewish groups backed Breyer's nomination, noting his pro-choice position on abortion, and strong support for the separation of church and state and the protection of religious minorities.

Michael Lieberman, associate director and counsel of the Washington office of the Anti-Defamation League, was "heartened" that Breyer "demonstrated good sensibilities" regarding the separation between church and state and the protection of religious minorities.

Although once on the Supreme Court, many justices have moved away from what they said in their confirmation testimony, Lieberman welcomed Breyer's "explicit answers" on religious issues and abortion, which Breyer said is "settled law."

Richard Foltin, legislative director and counsel for the American Jewish Committee, said that although the group does not take positions on such nominations, he was "encouraged and pleased" with Breyer's confirmation.

Breyer, who will replace retiring Justice Harry Blackmun, has the "judicial temperament and appropriate perspective" on church-state issues and abortion and "seems to espouse very reasonable points of view," said Foltin.

There was no significant opposition to Breyer in the Senate on ideological grounds.

The vote there was 87-9 in favor of confirmation.

ISRAEL AND SYRIA STILL FAR APART AS FOCUS SHIFTS TO NORTHERN NEIGHBOR

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- As U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher prepares to return to the Middle East in an effort to breathe new life into the long-stalled Israeli-Syrian peace talks, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is maintaining that the two countries are still "substantially apart" on major components of their negotiations.

In a radio interview on Monday, Rabin said the two sides were still in dispute over four main points: the depth of the envisaged Israeli withdrawal from the Golan; the timetable for the withdrawal; the number of phases for the withdrawal; and the nature of the peace with Syria that will be established during each phase of the withdrawal.

Rabin's assessment of the situation came one day after he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to discuss the Israeli-syrian negotiations.

The continuing gap between Israel and Syria shows how little has changed in the two side's positions in the negotiations, which have been stalled for months over a Syrian insistence that Israel withdraw entirely from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Damascus.

Israel has in turn been offering a phased withdrawal, but first wants a Syrian commitment to a "full" peace with Israel that will include open borders, free trade and a full exchange of ambassadors.

Christopher is scheduled to return to the region next week for another round of shuttle diplomacy to help bridge the gaps between Israel and Syria.

Following the 90-minute meeting with Mubarak at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba, Rabin predicted that no progress would be made with Syria unless Syrian President Hafez Assad takes a series of public steps to persuade the Israeli public of his desire to make peace.

Mubarak Somewhat More Optimistic

Mubarak, who met with Assad last week to discuss the status of the negotiations with Israel, was somewhat more optimistic about the talks, telling reporters Assad had shown some flexibility.

Mubarak also voiced the hope that Israel and Syria would reach an agreement before the end of the year.

During his radio interview, Rabin welcomed a statement made Sunday by Moshe Katzav, chairman of the Likud's Knesset faction, who suggested that the opposition accept the self-rule agreement between Israel and the Palestinians as a fait accompli.

Rabin, meanwhile, is scheduled to meet soon, perhaps as early as Sunday, with Jordan's King Hussein near the Red Sea resorts of Eilat and Aqaba.

According to Israeli media reports, the two leaders will discuss opening borders between the two cities, which are about a mile apart.

The meeting will be the first since last week's historic summit in Washington, where they signed an agreement officially ending their countries' 46-year state of hostilities.

In related developments, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators resumed their talks last week in Cairo on areas of so-called "early empowerment,"

designed to transfer key areas of civil administration to the Palestinians in the West Bank.

Agreements have been drawn up on two of five key areas -- health and education -- but Israeli sources say implementation could be delayed or hampered because of the Palestinians' lack of funds to establish and run a working administration.

Multilateral talks on the environment were also held in Cairo this week. Following their historic rapprochement in Washington last week, Israeli and Jordanian negotiators focused on the problem of flies and mosquitos, which have been plaguing farmers on both sides of the long border from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea.

ARAFAT FACES CRITICISM FROM WITHIN ON HIS CLOSING OF OPPOSITION DAILY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- Yasser Arafat is facing his first challenge from within the ranks of the Palestine Liberation Organization for what his critics have called his high-handed closure of the An-Nahar Arabic daily, published in eastern Jerusalem.

His critics include traditional allies as well as some members of the Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas.

Arafat's move has been seen as a way to oppose Jordan's recent pact with Israel, which he views as usurping his authority. An-Nahar is a pro-Jordanian publication. The ban is also being viewed as Arafat's way to control the Palestinian press.

The ban was enforced by the new Palestinian police force. Arafat said the reason for the closure was that the paper was being published without a license.

Some members of the Palestinian Authority, the governing body in the Palestinian autonomous areas, have threatened to resign if the press freedom issue is not resolved.

The editor of the paper, Othman Halak, said Monday that the Palestinian police had banned An-Nahar's distribution everywhere, not only in the Gaza Strip and Jericho autonomous areas.

Arafat's critics are being supported by human rights organizations and 35 journalists, who signed a petition against the ban.

Bassam Eid, chief field worker at B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization established to monitor Israeli army activities during the Palestinian uprising, called on foreign donor countries to withhold foreign aid to the Palestinians until the paper is reopened.

RABIN ORDERS MODI'IN DIG SUSPENDED

JERUSALEM, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has ordered the suspension of archaeological excavations near the planned city of Modi'in in deference to the objections of the haredi, or fervently Orthodox, Jews.

His decision was protested by the Israeli Association of Archaeologists, which called it a capitulation to haredi dictates. Members of the association called it a dangerous precedent.

The haredim say the archaeologists are violating Jewish law by digging up bones. They say the bones are buried in a graveyard dating to the Second Temple period, Israel Radio reported.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**A JORDANIAN-PLO WEDGE MAY BE USEFUL, BUT IT'S TOO LATE TO DISLODGE ARAFAT**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 2 (JTA) -- "Let them argue for a hundred years."

This was the spirited though off-the-record comment offered this week by a senior Israeli policy-maker -- and pronounced political dove -- in response to reports of ongoing tension between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization in the wake of last week's Israeli-Jordanian summit in Washington.

This official, like other well-placed Israelis, does not deny that the thought of "driving a wedge" between Jordan and the PLO did indeed cross the minds of Israeli decision-makers during the recent, hectic weeks in which the Washington Declaration with Jordan took shape.

But the belief that Israeli policymakers both anticipated and are pleased by this inter-Arab friction is a far cry from the theory, aired by some commentators in the region and abroad, that Israel may be seeking to displace the PLO with Jordan in the ongoing peace process.

To a certain degree, a wedge has indeed been driven: The Palestinians have been angered by a paragraph in the declaration in which Israel recognized Jordan's special role as guardian of Muslim holy places in Jerusalem.

In the Washington Declaration, which officially ended 46 years of conflict between Israel and Jordan, Israel agreed to give "high priority to the Jordanian historic role" at these Muslim holy shrines during the final-status negotiations on the territories that are scheduled to begin in two years.

But PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat continues to insist that his organization, which he regards as the harbinger of an eventual Palestinian state, should have primacy over both the Muslim and Christian holy places in Jerusalem.

Clearly disturbed by last week's developments, Arafat called for immediate negotiations with Israel on the status of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Is Not The Issue Now

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, citing the declaration of principles signed last September in Washington, said the Jerusalem issue was not to be the subject of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations until two years after the implementation of self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

But chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath responded that the declaration of principles explicitly stated that the final-status negotiations, which include the issue of Jerusalem, should begin "as soon as possible and not later than the beginning of the third year" from the start of Palestinian self-rule.

As Israeli and Palestinian officials traded their disagreements about the timing for Jerusalem negotiations, the Palestinians and Jordanians were engaged in delicate diplomacy designed to defuse growing tensions over this potentially explosive issue.

At the same time, it is apparent that Israeli leaders recognize the importance of dealing with Arafat and the Palestinians.

"Arafat is the partner," Rabin stated repeatedly during his triumphant trip to Washington

last week to sign the Washington Declaration. He may not have said this with relish, and he indeed was more comfortable with Hussein than he had been with Arafat. But comfort is not the issue.

Neither Rabin nor any other major player on the Israeli side is seriously contemplating any prospect of dislodging the PLO in favor of Jordan as Israel's negotiating partner in the future stages of Palestinian self-government.

Rabin, despite any qualms, does daily diplomatic business with Arafat and meets the PLO chief from time to time when the need arises.

He has not changed his core belief, voiced countless times since September, that the success of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians will depend ultimately on the PLO's success in gradually taking hold of the reins of government in the territories.

Jordan's place in that scheme is, at most, peripheral during the five-year transitional period. But it could become more central when the final status of the territories -- and their relationship with Jordan -- is negotiated.

Israelis, of whatever political stripe, understand that Hussein would not -- and perhaps could not -- have moved toward the Washington Declaration until the Palestinian problem had been addressed in the declaration of principles and in the subsequent agreements for implementing Palestinian autonomy.

This is not to say that the breakthrough with Jordan has not occasioned a great deal of historical soul-searching.

Both in the Labor Party and in Likud there is much quiet thinking about what might have been had Israel reacted differently to various diplomatic opportunities that were presented in the past.

Jordan-PLO Strains Useful

These include former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's proposal for a separation of forces agreement with Jordan in 1974 (which was rejected by Rabin, who was prime minister at the time) and the Hussein-Peres "London Agreement" of April 1987 on terms for an international peace conference (which was foiled by then Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Likud).

Following the 1974 rejection by Rabin, the Arab world resolved at a summit conference to recognize the PLO as sole representative of the Palestinians. And not long after the 1987 episode, the Palestinian uprising broke out.

But historical hindsight, like personal comfort, is not the stuff of practical, here-and-now policy-making, they say.

The "Jordanian option," long advocated by senior Israeli leaders from both major parties as an alternative to dealing with the PLO, is dead.

The Jordan-PLO strains over Jerusalem are convenient for Israel -- particularly because of the Israel-PLO deadlock over Jerusalem's future.

Both sides bring to this conflict unswerving political positions, with Israel insisting on a unified city under its own exclusive sovereignty and the PLO advocating a city physically united but politically split into two capitals.

Jordan's readiness to accept this distinction between guardianship of religious sites and political sovereignty lets Israel show its flexibility and respect for Muslim feelings without weakening its own claim to exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem.