

**CONGRESSIONAL REPORT FINGERS IRAN AS MAIN SPONSOR OF MILITANT GROUPS**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- A congressional study on Middle Eastern terrorism accuses Iran of backing militant groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel.

But the report, " Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Recent Developments, Sources of Support and Implications for U.S. Policy," fails to shed new light on other sources of support for the fundamentalist Islamic groups.

Released last week by the Congressional Research Service, the report is intended as a tool for members of Congress to make informed decisions about Middle East policy. CRS is known on Capitol Hill to give impartial and unbiased facts.

"The Congressional Research Service is our gospel," one congressional aide said. "It's the best resource we have."

The 15-page report reads like a research paper, recounting recent news reports and policy statements by U.S. officials on Middle East terrorism.

"It is increasingly clear that Iran provides funding to the Islamic Palestinian groups, although the funding levels are not known," the report states. While Hamas and Islamic Jihad get funds from Iran, the terrorist groups also receive money from other more moderate Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, according to the report.

"As the ultimate guarantor of Persian Gulf security, the United States can exercise substantial leverage on the Gulf states to persuade them to restrict private contributions to Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad," the report concludes.

The report found that Syria may be providing funding for Islamic Jihad, but there are no official U.S. allegations of Syrian funding for Hamas.

Congressional staffers say that the report could be useful in answering constituent mail and formulating policy. For example, if a constituent protested that Hamas is not a terrorist group but a humanitarian organization, lawmakers could turn to the report for a response, an aide said.

The report says that while Hamas "provides food, medical treatment and supplies, and education to the Palestinian Arabs of Gaza and the West Bank," the government considers Hamas a terrorist group and is seeking to cut off its funding both abroad and in the United States.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**ISRAEL FACES DILEMMA WITH SYRIA AS IT CONTINUES SEARCH FOR PEACE**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- This week's serious escalation of violence on the Lebanese border, coupled with a diplomatic waiting game in Washington, illustrates the dilemma Israel faces in its search for peace with Syria.

In Washington this week, Israel waited in frustration for the Syrians to signal that they were ready to add high-ranking military officers

to the discreet but largely unproductive bilateral diplomatic talks continuing in the U.S. capital.

And in the security zone in southern Lebanon, almost daily battles with Hezbollah, the Islamic fundamentalist movement, reached a crisis point Monday with the deaths, in two separate incidents, of two Israeli soldiers.

Following the Hezbollah attacks on Monday, Israeli guns replied with one of the heaviest artillery barrages in the area in recent months.

The intensification of the mini-war between Israel and its allied South Lebanese Army on the one side, and Hezbollah and Palestinian rejectionist groups on the other, have inevitably raised questions in Israel regarding Syrian involvement in the Lebanon attacks.

It also raises the possibility of a connection between the violence on the ground and the stalemated diplomatic process with the Syrians at the table.

Put bluntly, Israelis are wondering: Are the Syrians actively encouraging or passively ignoring the Hezbollah attacks? Could Syria, as some Israeli leaders have been suggesting, prevent all or most of the attacks if it wished?

On the Washington negotiating front, President Clinton elicited an agreement from Syrian President Hafez Assad when they met in Damascus in October to add Israeli and Syrian military officers to the ongoing talks in Washington.

Those talks are primarily between Israel's ambassador to Washington, Itamar Rabinovitch, and his Syrian counterpart, Walid Muallem.

A General Atmosphere Of Deadlock

After weeks of delay, Syria reportedly authorized military representatives to join the talks in Washington on Tuesday.

There is a general atmosphere of deadlock in the ambassadorial negotiations, with irregular sessions taking place every two or three weeks.

The slow pace on the part of the Syrians has fueled skepticism here over whether Assad comprehends the Israeli political process and the demands it imposes on the peace process.

Does the Syrian president believe that Israel and Syria have time to make their breakthrough right up until the next elections in Israel, which must be held by November 1996?

Does Assad understand that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's political strength is visibly eroding, in part because the peace process appears to be running out of steam on both the Palestinian and Syrian tracks?

Israeli analysts wonder whether the United States and other Western nations make a point during contacts with Damascus of underscoring the fragile state of the Rabin coalition.

Most recent political polls have shown Rabin running neck-and-neck with Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu. And one recent poll in the Israeli daily Ma'ariv reportedly showed Netanyahu with a slight lead over Rabin. While Rabin could theoretically reach a deal with Assad months or even weeks before the election, in practice his time is already beginning to run out.

If there is no sense of momentum built up

during the first months of 1995, the Rabin government, beset by economic difficulties, could implode, triggering early elections.

Or more likely, the government could simply conclude that it lacks the popular support needed for a major move like reaching a land-for-peace deal on the Golan Heights, which is generally assumed to be a requirement for any accord with Syria.

In public comments this week, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres effectively confirmed that there has been at least one meeting between Israeli and Syrian officers in the recent past.

But in the same breath, Peres cast doubt on whether the current, relatively low level of diplomatic contacts could actually produce the breakthrough that the Israeli-Syrian negotiating track needs.

Is Israel Pulling Its Punches In Lebanon?

In an effort to get the stalled negotiations moving, Peres has long been urging -- without success -- a meeting between himself and his Syrian counterpart as a way of upgrading the dialogue and investing it with new vigor.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, has accused Peres and the government of planning to strike a secret deal with the Syrians. His harder-line Likud colleague, Ariel Sharon, solemnly vowed that if such an agreement is reached, the Likud will refuse to implement it if and when it is returned to power.

Labor spokesmen replied by reiterating their party's pledge to submit any Golan agreement to the people for its approval, by referendum or election, before the agreement is ratified.

But there are members of Rabin's party, and indeed even within his Cabinet, who seem increasingly disenchanted with the idea of a deep or total withdrawal on the Golan.

At the same time, the escalation of fighting in southern Lebanon poses yet another problem for Rabin: To what extent, if at all, is his military freedom of action limited by the very fact that he is attempting to negotiate with Syria?

Likud leaders like Netanyahu and Sharon insisted this week that the government's ability to hit back hard at Hezbollah was limited by its negotiations with Syria.

The Likud opposition's attacks on the government seemed reinforced by an embarrassing spat within the military.

Maj. Gen. Amiram Levine, the new commander of the northern sector, which includes all operations in southern Lebanon, appeared to be contemplating a major military action against Hezbollah bases outside of the security zone.

While his remarks were quickly disclaimed by the chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, Barak himself sought to dispel the impression that Israel is pulling its punches in Lebanon out of concern for the peace process with Syria.

But in comments this week, Barak also said that if Israel approached Syria with a request to curb Hezbollah action in Lebanon, Israel's negotiating position could be weakened.

In a further effort to quell the notion of a weak resolve, Peres denied that political constraints were being placed on army operations.

"Any peace negotiations will never prevent or interfere with taking the required measures to ensure quiet and security in the north," the foreign minister said.

HIGH COURT RULES AGAINST NIGERIAN WHO CLAIMED TRIBAL LINKS TO JUDAISM By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- People belonging to the Ibo tribe of Nigeria are not Jewish, according to a ruling handed down by Israel's High Court of Justice last week.

As a result of the ruling, an estimated two million members of the tribe do not have the automatic right to immigrate to Israel and receive citizenship under the country's Law of Return, a right reserved under Israeli law for Jews worldwide.

The ruling came in response to a petition filed by Chima Edward Onyolo, an Ibo who has been living in Israel for six years and is married to an Israeli woman.

As the husband of a Jew, Onyolo is entitled to recognition and permanent residence in Israel under the Law of Return, which also applies to the relatives of Jews. But Onyolo sought recognition as a Jew himself, saying his tribe had historical links to Judaism.

But the Ministry of Interior told the court that it had consulted with rabbis and scholars and could find no convincing evidence pointing to an Ibo-Jewish connection.

The Ibos came to international attention in the 1960s when they sought to break away from Nigeria and form their own separate state, Biafra. After a bloody civil war, they were forced back into union with Nigeria.

TURKISH COURT IMPOSES SENTENCE FOR ATTACK ON JEWISH BUSINESSMAN By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- A Turkish court has sentenced three members of an Islamic terrorist group to 15 years and a fine for the January 1993 attack against a member of the Istanbul Jewish community, the World Jewish Congress has reported.

The attackers, members of an organization called the Persevering Workers of Islam, were convicted for the attempted murder of Jak Kamhi, a prominent businessman and leading figure in the Turkish Jewish community.

The men were part of a heavily armed five-person squad that fired rockets at Kamhi's car while he was driving to work in Istanbul.

The three men were also convicted of membership in the Islamic organization, a group that is illegal in Turkey. They admitted they were trained for the attack in Iran.

At the time of the attack, Kamhi, 69, who is a member of the executive committee of the World Sephardi Federation, was driving an armored car with personal guards, who returned the gunmen's fire. The attackers escaped but left behind an anti-tank rocket, assault rifles, pistols and hand grenades.

The attack on Kamhi was the third attack in less than a year on Jews or Jewish institutions in Turkey, a secular but mostly Islamic country that has historically been a safe haven for Jews.

Previously, terrorists killed the security chief at the Israeli Embassy in Ankara by booby-trapping his car. That attack took place two days after Israel and Turkey established full diplomatic relations last year.

AS HATE MAIL FLIES THROUGH CYBERSPACE, JEWISH GROUPS SEEK ANSWERS AND ACTION
By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 20 -- The Simon Wiesenthal Center is asking Vice President Al Gore and Prodigy, an on-line computer service to face up to the swelling volume of hate tirades on electronic bulletin boards in cyberspace.

In a letter last week to the president of Prodigy, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, requested that the on-line computer service find a way "to deal with racist subscribers who abuse Prodigy to spread hatred and demean entire groups of people."

In an immediate response, Prodigy spokesman Brian Ek invited Cooper and researcher Rick Eaton to come to White Plains, N.Y. and meet with Prodigy officials in early January.

At the same time, Cooper petitioned Gore, as the highest-ranking advocate of the budding information superhighway, to convene a meeting of human rights groups, educators, regulatory agencies and technological experts "to develop strategies to combat the abuse of the superhighway by hate mongers."

Cooper said that while racist, anti-Semitic and white supremacist messages are found on other major commercial on-line services, he had received the most complaints from Prodigy users.

The commercial services have five million subscribers, including two million on Prodigy, but these figures -- and the potential spread of hate messages -- are dwarfed by the 20 million computer users linked to the Internet global computer network.

Prodigy was the focus of controversy involving anti-Semitic postings three years ago and at the time worked with the Anti-Defamation League to craft a policy that forbids "blatant expressions of hatred" on its boards.

More Than 50 Hate Groups Found On Internet

Prodigy spokesman Ek said that while this policy is still in place, "we have more than 1.7 million notes on the board at any given time, and we can't read them all."

ADL confirmed that Prodigy has "been extremely receptive and cooperative" about ADL complaints.

According to Jeffrey Sinensky, director of ADL's civil rights division, the problem with Prodigy and the other on-line services is getting them to adhere to the standards they have set.

The Wiesenthal Center said it has tracked more than 50 separate hate groups on Internet and the on-line services during the past few months. While Cooper acknowledged that sensitive free speech issues are involved in any attempt to restrict access and expressions of opinion in the booming medium, he believes that reasonable guidelines can be established.

"We're dealing with a new field and we have to come up with new answers," he said.

By way of illustration, he said that Alexander Graham Bell never thought the telephone would be used for obscene calls, but given their existence, technological means have been found to defend against such calls.

Right now, Cooper said, the Internet is getting to be like the Wild West, with no sheriff around to discourage evil doers.

Internet is also the latest battlefield for Middle East confrontations, according to a recent Los Angeles Times article by Sheldon Teitelbaum.

One forum, called JPOL -- for Jewish Politics -- is the favorite platform for mostly "ultra-right-wing American Jews willing to fight to the last living Israeli" against the current peace process, the article says.

On P-NET, or Palestine Net, Palestinians and their supporters regularly lambast Yasser Arafat for selling out to Israel.

For both camps, as well as for Holocaust deniers and skinheads, Internet "is a strategically placed hilltop from which to lob computer equivalents of Katyusha rockets and artillery shells at the enemy," writes Teitelbaum.

(JTA intern Avi Aronsky in New York contributed to this report.)

JEWISH FIRM DEFIES DUTCH LAW

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- A company founded by Jews that operates department stores and supermarkets throughout Holland is refusing to comply with a government law that calls on all Dutch companies with more than 35 employees to register their foreign workers with the government.

KBB, which owns the De Bijenkorf department store chain and the Hema supermarket chain, says the government regulation is all too remindful of German measures enacted during World War II that required all people of Jewish origin to register with the authorities.

The Dutch government instituted the registration program in an effort to determine how many foreign nationals a firm employs and to find out whether companies are using fair hiring practices. The government is specifically tracking the employment of people from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Vietnam, Somalia and the Caribbean.

KBB stands to lose millions of dollars in fines for refusing to comply with the regulation.

ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS ON RISE IN AUSTRALIA

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitic incidents have risen throughout Australia during the past year, which has also witnessed an expansion in the activities of Australian racist groups.

These were the grim assessments in reports presented earlier this month at the annual meeting of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

The ECAJ, which maintains a central database of reported anti-Semitic incidents in Australia, recorded a 7 percent increase over the previous year in all types of such incidents from Nov. 1, 1993, to Oct. 31, 1994.

The council noted, however, that there was an 18 percent decrease in reports of violent anti-Semitic incidents.

Jews walking to and from synagogues in such cities as Adelaide, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne found themselves the targets of verbal attacks, according to the council.

The ECAJ reported a nearly 60 percent increase in reports of intimidation and hate mail during the past year, with Holocaust-denial materials being mailed to Holocaust survivors a particularly prominent development.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**AS EUPHORIA FADES, SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS SOUND MIXTURE OF OPTIMISM AND WORRIES**
By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Dec. 10 (JTA) -- The sense of euphoria that enveloped South Africa's Jewish community in the aftermath of the country's first all-race elections seems to have disappeared.

Eight months after President Nelson Mandela became the first black president in what once was an apartheid society, Jews here are expressing diverse views.

While some continue to sound upbeat, many more speak of an uncertain economy, a drop in educational standards, increasing crime and continued unemployment.

Many voice concerns for the country's future stability.

Amid a host of dire predictions and genuine concerns for the country's future course, the most optimistic views were put forward by Seymour Kopelowitz, national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

"I am upbeat for 1995," he said. "We had a marvelous year starting with the election and the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela. With the confidence which the economy is generating, I look forward to continued growth and development in South Africa -- and that is good news for Jews."

Citing the latest demographic study, which put the country's Jewish population at about 105,000, Kopelowitz said he believed that emigration patterns among Jews, many of whom had left South Africa before the elections, had stabilized over the past year.

He pointed to an analysis of Jewish day school enrollments that indicated there was an increase in the number of Jews returning to the country. "As the political environment stabilizes, so one can expect continuing patterns of stability" within the Jewish community, he said.

Kopelowitz said he believed that relations between blacks and Jews in South Africa were a model for the rest of the world. He also did not predict any major tensions between Jews and blacks, some of whom have moved into white neighborhoods from which they were previously excluded.

Jews Continue To Leave The Country

Joan Lurie, a personnel manager for a large public company, shared much of Kopelowitz's optimism.

"The walls built by apartheid are slowly coming down," she said. "Integration is starting to happen. There are mixed racial suburbs, which are proving to be harmonious, dynamic environments."

At the same time, however, she said Jews were continuing to leave the country because of high levels of violence and crime. She said the greatest challenges facing South Africa include building the economy and equipping people with skills to enable them to attain a minimum standard of living.

"Unless we can do this, with all the political will in the world, we will not succeed," she said.

Harold Rudolph, a former Johannesburg mayor who is a professor of constitutional law at

the University of the Witwatersrand, said Jews were leaving South Africa because of crime, affirmative action and concerns for the future.

At the same time Jews are leaving, others are returning, he said. He said he knew of Jews returning to the country in small numbers from Canada, Israel and Australia.

Rudolph felt there had been little economic change since the April elections, but he expressed hope for the coming year.

Generally, he said, "some things have gone better than expected, others have gone worse."

He noted a decline in political violence, but cautioned that such violence could return.

"The message of reconciliation by President Mandela has done much to lower tension in the country. But expectations of blacks of an immediate improvement in their living standards have not yet been met," he said.

Irene Green, a businesswoman and mother of three, feared that limited economic development was turning South Africa into a Third World country.

She predicted that South African Jewry would follow the pattern set by the Jewish community in neighboring Zimbabwe, where a shift to majority black rule led to a gradual lowering of living standards among Jews. Most Jews eventually emigrated.

Green said she is not worried that blacks have moved into her neighborhood, even right next door. "There has been no hint of anti-Semitism, the children have befriended my children, but there does seem to be a cultural difference," she said.

Cost Of Living Has Escalated

Steven Adler, an insurance broker and prominent communal leader, said he believed that Jews were still leaving South Africa for several reasons.

"They fear for their security and the security of their families and feel there is no future for their children," he said.

"They also fear that, sometime in the future, with integrated schools, the level of education will drop for a temporary period, and they do not want their children or grandchildren to be educated in this society."

Adler shares the view of others who believe the country's economy is in trouble.

"At this stage, things have not changed much. But if there has been a change, it has been negative in that the cost of living has escalated tremendously," he said.

Nanette Pack, an executive secretary, also spoke of deteriorating economic conditions and the hostility some of her neighbors feel for blacks.

With her local town council opposed to the integration of blacks and their representation on the council, she said she doubted if blacks would willingly move into a neighborhood where they would not be welcomed.

Pack also painted a gloomy economic picture and expressed concern over the "almost uncontrollable" crime rate.

Looking toward 1995, Pack said the road ahead would be a long, hard struggle requiring compromise by all South Africans.

"But I believe, with a concerted effort, it can be achieved," she said.