



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A sixth Israeli, Mordechai Tuvia, 38, died as a result of Monday's terror bombing of a commuter bus in Ramat Gan. Eighteen people remain hospitalized for injuries sustained in the attack. One of them is listed in serious condition.

■ The Senate's nine Jewish members banded together in a vote to end U.S. participation in the U.N. arms embargo on Bosnia. Only five Republicans and 24 Democrats voted against the measure. Several Jewish organizations welcomed the move, but at least one said the United States should not act alone. [Page 3]

■ Israel's Knesset narrowly defeated the Golan Bill, which would have required a special majority in Parliament to approve an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin expressed relief over the defeat of the bill, which he described as a "stupid law." [Page 2]

■ The Israeli Knesset defeated a bill that would have incorporated the communities of Ma'aleh Adumim, Givat Ze'ev and Betar into Jerusalem's municipal borders. The bill lost by a vote of 57-54. [Page 2]

■ Jordan moved closer to formally ending its participation in the Arab boycott of Israel. The lower house of the Jordanian Parliament passed legislation allowing trade and commercial ties with Israel. The legislation, which must still be approved by the Jordanian Senate and by King Hussein, would permit business transactions with Israel as well as the sale of Jordanian land to Israelis.

■ Israeli warplanes bombed targets of the fundamentalist Hezbollah movement north of the southern Lebanon security zone. The bombing took place after two Israeli soldiers were wounded and two Hezbollah members were killed during fighting in the zone.

■ Israeli police arrested three Jewish settlers on suspicion of firing shots at the eastern Jerusalem home of Palestinian official Faisal Hussein. Hussein said it was the second time in two months that his home had come under attack.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Haunted by IDF tragedy, Barak launches political career

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The appointment of Ehud Barak to be the new interior minister has fueled speculation about the future leadership of the Labor Party, even as the former Israel Defense Force chief of staff has barely embarked on the momentous transition from military to political life.

At the same time, the atmosphere surrounding his nomination and approval by the Knesset last week was filled with electricity engendered by an Israeli newspaper report that renewed controversy over Barak's alleged role in a tragic military accident nearly three years ago.

The continuing repercussions of that incident are likely to follow Barak — who stepped down as chief of staff earlier this year — in his new political career.

Many observers see Barak as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's chosen successor to head the Labor Party. Barak's Cabinet appointment is believed to be Rabin's way of presenting him with an opportunity to prove himself in civilian life.

Barak, who has never denied harboring ambitions to be prime minister, holds political views similar to those of Rabin: strongly pro-peace, while not being an out-and-out dove. "I'm in the middle of the political spectrum," Barak recently told supporters at Labor Party headquarters, "not because it's the middle — but because it's right."

Like the prime minister, Barak is deliberately vague about how he envisages a final settlement with the Palestinians, and about whether he would agree to a total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria.

Barak's appointment comes as the Rabin government enters the final and most difficult phase of its four-year term: extending the agreement with the Palestinians in the West Bank as November 1996, the scheduled date for Israel's national elections, looms ever closer.

Renewed controversy over Tze'elim

Given Barak's expertise in matters of defense — he is the most decorated soldier in Israeli history — his appointment was intended to help allay fears and doubts in the public about the peace process. These are fears and doubts that Rabin himself, in a recent interview with The New York Times, admitted that he also shares.

But Barak's appointment was accompanied by renewed controversy over the accident that occurred on Nov. 5, 1992, at the IDF's Tze'elim training and practice area in the Negev. Barak was among three top-level IDF officers present when a live missile was fired accidentally, killing five Israeli soldiers and wounding six others.

In its July 7 issue, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, Israel's largest newspaper, alleged that Barak had abandoned the wounded soldiers by leaving the area in his helicopter.

The newspaper further claimed that Barak had given conflicting testimony to commissions investigating the incident, suggesting that he had engaged in a cover-up effort to protect himself and other senior IDF officers from possible culpability.

On July 13, as millions of Israelis watched enthralled, Barak battled with top television talk show interviewer Nissim Mishal about the Yediot article.

Barak flayed the newspaper as "power-crazed" and the expose as "false, evil and dilletantish."

He cited statements by other officers present at the scene to the effect that he had left only after a huge Sikorsky medevac helicopter had landed and doctors were loading the wounded aboard.

"A chief of staff is not a medical orderly," Barak told the television interviewer. "His job is not to tend the wounded, when others are doing that already. His job is to keep his head, to survey the whole scene — and to act so as to ensure safe and speedy evacuation."

This, Barak asserted, is what he had done, personally directing the arrival of the rescue helicopter and ground-based medical teams. His own

helicopter was small and not equipped to ferry wounded men, he maintained, adding that he had flown away 45 minutes or more after the accident, to brief the prime minister.

Just as Yediot's first allegation was demonstrably false, the charge of evidence-rigging was false and malicious, Barak continued.

After the interview, several commentators were quick to point out that Barak's military record, however courageous, did not render him immune to criticism, especially now, when he was embarking on a political career.

Media criticism is the essence of democratic politics, Ha'aretz columnist Orit Shohat noted.

And the point was well made: Lifelong professional soldiers who find that difficult to understand ought not to make the switch from the authoritarian, sheltered life of the officers' mess to the brittle and exposed glass house that is the politician's lot.

But this response, which was echoed in other newspapers, may not reflect the reactions of the millions of television viewers who watched the former chief of staff's consummate TV performance.

Opinion polls showed that Barak had indeed made a strong impact on the general public, though a significant minority still want Tze'elim investigated further.

For Rabin, Barak's performance was convincing enough. He formally announced the appointment of Barak to his Cabinet on July 16, and the Knesset approved it three days later.

In his hourlong television performance, Barak barely mentioned the prime minister.

But he pointedly praised two key figures in the Likud opposition, Binyamin Begin, the son of Menachem Begin, the late former Likud leader and prime minister, and Dan Meridor, the former minister of justice.

Both men publicly stood by Barak and rejected Yediot's allegations against him.

Sensitive political observers suggested that this could foreshadow new political alliances in the future.

After all, if the government succeeds in pushing through its peace policy, and a separate Palestinian entity arises in the West Bank and Gaza, the classical Likud platform of a "Greater Israel" would be rendered anachronistic.

By the same token, the classical pro-compromise platform of Labor and the left would be fulfilled in large measure, and would no longer therefore constitute a forward-looking political program.

Meanwhile, Barak is not out of the woods yet.

Yediot is hitting back, publishing additional evidence that it says supports its allegations.

The families of the men killed at Tze'elim continue to demand a new inquiry. Barak, on television, said he has no objections to one — but added that in his view, it would be "superfluous." □

Rabin withstands challenge as Knesset defeats Golan Bill

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin withstood another challenge to his peace policies this week when the Knesset narrowly defeated a bill that would have thrown up roadblocks to any territorial concessions on the Golan Heights.

The Golan Bill would have required a special majority of 70 out of 120 Knesset votes — or a simple majority in a national referendum of all eligible Israeli voters — before Israel could turn over any portion of the Golan in a future peace deal with Syria.

Observers had said the Golan Bill's passage would have made it impossible to conclude peace negotiations with Syria before the year was over.

It was defeated Wednesday in a Knesset tie, 59-59.

Both the governing coalition and the opposition had mobilized forces for the vote, which ultimately turned on the ballot of a single Knesset member — Deputy Housing Minister Alex Goldfarb of the centrist Yi'ud Party.

Likud Knesset member Haim Kaufman was absent due to illness. Avraham Poraz of the dovish Meretz Party agreed not to vote.

Both government and opposition leaders claimed victory after the vote.

Rabin said the opposition had failed in its effort to "handcuff" his negotiations with Syria.

"This was a stupid bill, the likes of which has never been seen before in the Knesset," Rabin told Army Radio.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres focused on the opposition's inability to muster a majority for the crucial vote. "The vote was about a referendum, not about the Golan Heights, not about peace, not about negotiations," he told Israel Radio. "And even on that particular vote, the opposition failed."

But Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu said the final tally was a serious blow to the Rabin government.

"Rabin barely squeaked out a tie," he said. "The truth was exposed. This is a government that has no majority, not in the Knesset and not among the people."

Rabin had warned before the vote was taken that he could not conduct negotiations with the Syrians if it passed. Further, he and Peres were worried that passage of the legislation could damage Israel's standing abroad.

There was no official reaction from Damascus on the Knesset vote.

Bill on satellite communities defeated

Israel Radio reported that U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross had met this week in Washington with Syrian Ambassador Walid Muallem to try to lay the groundwork for the resumption of talks between top Israeli and Syrian military officers. Those talks were last held for three days in late June. During a subsequent visit to the Middle East, Ross had been unable to secure a date from Damascus for the resumption of the talks.

The bill had been submitted by three members of Rabin's own Labor Party — Avigdor Kahalani, Emanuel Zismann and Ya'acov Shefi. Six similar bills had previously been presented to the Knesset by opposition members, but they were withdrawn before a vote.

The center of activity prior to Wednesday's vote was Goldfarb, as government and opposition members put on the pressure to vote their way. But the deputy minister refused to reveal in advance how he would vote.

Tensions intensified when Goldfarb was absent from his seat when his name was first called during the roll call. When he returned, all necks craned toward the last row, where Goldfarb was surrounded by Knesset members trying to sway him one last time.

His vote against the bill was greeted with boos and heckling from the opposition bench.

With its defeat, the bill cannot be resubmitted for at least nine months.

Meanwhile, in another Knesset vote, a bill was defeated that would have incorporated the communities of Ma'aleh Adumim, Givat Ze'ev and Betar into Jerusalem's municipal borders.

The bill, which lost by a vote of 57-54, had been jointly presented by Likud member Yehoshua Matza and Labor member Emanuel Zismann. □

Jewish senators vote to lift embargo as groups hail move

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Senate's nine Jewish members banded together in a vote to end U.S. participation in the U.N. arms embargo on Bosnia.

Surpassing the expected support for the bill, the Senate voted Wednesday 69-29 to approve the measure, which was sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.).

Only five Republicans and 24 Democrats voted against the measure, which President Clinton has vowed to veto.

Several Jewish organizations welcomed the move, which comes as fighting has intensified in Bosnia.

Rebel Serbian forces have overtaken two Muslim "safe havens" in the region as Western nations have been meeting to decide a course of action.

Further complicating the matter, a senior adviser to Russian President Boris Yeltsin reportedly warned that if the United States unilaterally lifts the arms embargo, Russia would consider selling arms to Serbia.

In a statement released minutes after Wednesday afternoon's vote, the leaders of the American Jewish Congress said:

"We applaud the broad bipartisan recognition that United States policy on Bosnia has been a stunning and tragic failure, and one of historic magnitude."

In a speech shortly before the midday vote, Dole thanked the AJCongress for its previous letter supporting the initiative.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council "hopes this will lead to action that will begin to bring this tragedy to an end," said Martin Raffel, associate executive vice chairman of the umbrella group.

B'nai B'rith International also immediately welcomed the vote.

"The time has come for the embargo to be lifted. It's long overdue," said Robin Schwartz-Kreger, B'nai B'rith spokeswoman.

At least one Jewish group, however, opposed the Senate action. The American Jewish Committee said it opposed a unilateral move by the United States.

"This could have serious ramifications for lifting other sanctions, including those against Iraq and Libya," said Jason Isaacson, director of the Washington office of the American Jewish Committee.

"This move could be a prescription for a blood-bath," Isaacson said, predicting that the Bosnian Muslims would likely be overrun by the Bosnian Serbs before any arms could be delivered.

The overwhelmingly strong show of support for the measure has thrown the White House's Bosnia policy into further disarray. The Senate has enough votes to override a presidential veto of the legislation.

Administration officials lobbied in vain to keep Democratic senators from supporting the measure.

The House, which passed a similar measure by a 3-to-1 margin earlier this year, is expected to approve the legislation. □

House move on immigration prompts fear for refugees

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A House of Representatives subcommittee has struck a potentially devastating blow to Jewish refugees seeking to come to the United States as well as America's immigration programs in general.

The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims voted last week to slash the number of refugees allowed into the United States by about half, cut overall legal immigration by about one-third and end family reunification programs for all relatives except spouses and minor children.

The full committee plans to consider the measure in September after Congress' summer recess.

Jewish activists and members of Congress are already working to restore the cuts. "We will do everything we can to ensure these cuts do not become law," said Diana Aviv, director of the Washington office of the Council of Jewish Federations, which has spearheaded the Jewish community's efforts on immigration reform.

The subcommittee approved a measure reducing the number of slots reserved for refugees to 50,000, about half of the current allotment. The Immigration and Naturalization Service currently reserves about 35,000 slots for Jews seeking to come to the United States from the former Soviet Union.

Jewish activists fear that a cut in the program would also lead to a cut for refugees from the former Soviet Union. Activists fear that without the refugee program, many Jews from the former Soviet Union would have to wait years to come to the United States or possibly not be able to come at all, especially if the overall number of legal immigrants allowed into the country is reduced.

The measure approved by the subcommittee would reduce legal immigration from about 830,000 to 585,000. It also would restrict visas to highly skilled workers as well as to the spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and legal residents.

The measure, known as the Immigration in the National Interest Act, was introduced by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), subcommittee chairman.

Three Jewish congressmen who are staunch immigration advocates — Reps. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), Howard Berman (D-Calif.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) — have already begun to organize for the expected showdown, according to Capitol Hill aides.

The three members of Congress are drafting amendments to restore the cuts in the refugee program as well as the overall immigration numbers, the aides said.

The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), has also expressed support for immigration programs in the past. □

Attorney evokes Holocaust image during hearings on Waco debacle

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Recalling an Israeli victim of the mass suicide at the Branch Davidian's Waco, Texas, compound two years ago, one of cult leader David Koresh's attorneys evoked images of the Holocaust in testimony before a special House committee investigating the failed raid.

Jack Zimmerman, attorney for Koresh's lieutenant, Steve Schneider, compared the raid to the images of the Holocaust.

"Can you imagine the images in an Israeli's mind, with the Holocaust survivors in Israel," Zimmerman said. "Watching that gas be inserted into that building, watching an American tank knock down an American house, and then it burst into flames."

Zimmerman said during his testimony that after the fire which killed more than 80 people, he spoke with Shulamit Cohen, mother of Pablo Cohen, the Israeli who died in the fiery raid. "I could not explain to her how that happened," Zimmerman testified. "And her question was, 'I thought he would be safe in America.'" □

Presidents' Conference affirms commitment to civil discussion

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations has brought together 50 of its member organizations to express their commitment to civil discussion in the Jewish community.

In a statement issued last week, leaders of the conference and all but one of its member organizations affirmed their "stake in assuring the civility of debate and behavior."

The lone holdout was the Jewish War Veterans of Americans.

The group feared that the conference statement aimed to slow down debate in the Jewish community.

The statement came in response to increasing rancor in the American Jewish debate over Israel's peace process policies.

In May, Israeli Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni was allegedly punched by an organizer of the New York Salute to Israel Parade.

In June, an Orthodox rabbi in New York, Abraham Hecht, declared it acceptable under Jewish law to assassinate Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Earlier this month, several Jewish groups issued their own statements condemning extremist, violent rhetoric.

They included a coalition of mainstream Orthodox groups, the New Israel Fund, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress.

Unlike some of those statements, however, the Conference of Presidents did not single out any incidents. At the insistence of right-leaning member organizations, the final language of the statement referred to "those from all sides of the spectrum who engage in verbal violence, demeaning characterizations and other excesses."

Such people "violate basic Jewish tenets," endanger "the interests of the community" and "have been and will be rejected."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the conference, said the examples of incivility have been the exceptions.

"The fact that the community as a whole came together to make this declaration will say something to those who have engaged in such name calling," Hoenlein said. □

ZOA president considers run for seat in Congress

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, may challenge Rep. Jon Fox (R-Pa.) in next year's Republican primary.

Klein said he has been asked to run in the primary by a handful of Republican activists in his congressional district in suburban Philadelphia. He refused to identify the individuals.

"I have agreed to think about it," Klein said, adding, "At this point it is unlikely."

Fox, a first-term congressman, is the only Jewish member of the House freshman class.

The 47-year-old Klein was elected president of the ZOA last year.

Since then, the former biostatistician and economist has led the charge on Capitol Hill to cut off funds to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

He has also lobbied to prevent the stationing of U.S. troops on the Golan Heights to monitor any future peace agreement between Israel and Syria. □

Israel, Jordan mark historic day with joint peace flight to Bosnia

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — One year after ending their state of belligerency, Israel and Jordan sent a joint humanitarian aid airlift to Bosnia's besieged Muslims — along with a message of peace for the war-torn country.

The Jordanian and Israeli planes took off separately from Amman and Tel Aviv for Split, Croatia. There, the cargoes of blankets, tents and food, as well as medical and other crucial supplies were unloaded and redirected to Tuzla, where thousands of Bosnian Muslims have fled from Bosnian Serb attacks.

On July 25, 1994, at a White House ceremony, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein signed their Washington Declaration, ending 47 years of a state of war.

The declaration paved the way for a peace treaty between the two nations last October.

Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan, head of his country's delegation, said upon arrival in Split that he hoped the joint aid effort of two former enemies would bring a message of world peace.

"Today we remember one year of peace between Jordan and Israel," he said.

"I hope the symbolizing of the two sides signing a peace treaty" will serve as "some value to the warring parties in Bosnia."

The airlift came a day after five Israelis were killed in a suicide bus bombing in Ramat Gan. One of the wounded Israelis also has died.

The head of the Israeli delegation, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, said that despite Monday's attack, the Middle East needs to demonstrate that terror is not the answer.

"It is a sad day, a tragic day, of funerals, mourning and pain," he said. "But nevertheless, after reconsideration we came to the conclusion that we have to proceed with this operation because this is one of our answers to terror."

The airlift to Bosnia was initiated by King Hussein of Jordan.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey thanked Israel and Jordan for their aid.

"We are certainly most grateful for both the practical and symbolic help," he said.

Together, the dignitaries visited the Jordanian peacekeeping forces stationed there, who will help transfer the aid.

Because of the Ramat Gan terror attack, a joint television broadcast with President Clinton, Rabin and Hussein that was scheduled to mark the signing of the Washington Declaration was postponed. □

Israeli police arrest 3 Jewish men

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police arrested three Jewish men on Wednesday on suspicion of being involved in a shooting incident outside Palestinian official Faisal Hussein's home, located in eastern Jerusalem.

Husseini complained that anonymous gunmen had fired bullets and thrown stones at his home.

Automobiles in the area were damaged. No one was hurt.

Husseini said it was the second time in two months that his home had come under attack.

Police arrested the three men after carrying out a search.

Army Radio said one of them had a gun. □