



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Israeli Cabinet formally accepted the recommendations of the government panel charged with investigating the security lapses that made Yitzhak Rabin's assassination possible. Among the Shamgar Commission's recommendations were a call for the Shin Bet and Israeli police to cooperate more closely. [Page 3]

■ A military court sentenced Arik Schwartz to 1½ years in prison for the illegal possession and transfer of army weapons to brothers Yigal Amir, convicted of killing Yitzhak Rabin, and Hagai Amir, who has been charged with conspiracy in connection with the murder. Schwartz had confessed to passing the weapons on to the Amirs.

■ Six Israeli teen-agers who survived terrorist bombing attacks in Israel shared their experiences with high school students and their parents in Oklahoma City. The meetings were arranged by the Anti-Defamation League.

■ Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid rejected claims of a hazard posed by the Dimona nuclear complex in the Negev. His remarks came in response to claims about a supposed leak from the nuclear reactor. [Page 4]

■ The Labor Party is considering announcing that an immigrant from the former Soviet Union would be appointed to a government led by Prime Minister Shimon Peres. The move is an effort to appease Israelis who think that no Russian immigrants had received relevant spots in the party's Knesset campaign list.

■ Shas Party leader Aryeh Deri said the Ministry of Religious Affairs should give the Reform movement its own budget as a separate religion. Orthodox leaders attacked the Reform movement in Israel for endorsing a decision by its American counterpart to recognize gay marriages.

Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, April 5.

JEWISH SERVICES IN CRISIS [Part 2]

With budget ax ready to fall, which programs will be losers?

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the federal budget ax dangles over the nation's capital, Jewish charities are bracing for devastating cuts.

Although the ax is likely to spare two of the community's most prized programs, resettlement of Jews from the former Soviet Union and housing of elderly Jews, the hatchet will not be as kind to scores of other large-scale projects that serve the Jewish elderly and the poor.

With the budget battle still unresolved — and possibly even on hold as the election season heats up — there are many uncertainties about the actual impact that the Washington revolution will have on the Jewish social service world.

Dozens of Jewish communities that receive grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000 stand to lose money as competition for fewer dollars continues to grow.

It is widely expected that federations, already forced to reduce their allocations to local agencies, will eventually be asked to step in to provide services once paid for with government money.

As the extensive network of Jewish agencies gears up for the inevitable changes, a hard look at the numbers is in order.

Which Jewish programs now receive the most public dollars? Which programs are safe? Which are threatened?

The Jewish federated system receives at least \$3.67 billion from government programs, representing at least 56 percent of their budgets, according to a Council of Jewish Federations study. The vast majority of those funds — more than \$3.13 billion — goes to Jewish-sponsored hospitals and nursing homes through Medicare and Medicaid payments.

Excluding Medicare and Medicaid and other health-care money for hospitals and nursing homes, the Jewish federated system receives about \$532 million a year in public funds, according to the CJF study. This total includes federal moneys as well as state and local assistance.

The UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York receives the lion's share of this money — about \$386 million. The remaining \$146 million is channeled to other local communities.

The primary programs receiving federal funds are: low-income elderly housing; services for seniors; support services for families and children; vocational training and nutrition programs; and resettlement of Jewish refugees.

Bulk of funds through Medicaid

Reforming Medicare, which provides health care for the elderly, and Medicaid, which serves the poor and disabled, is still the focus of heated discussions between the White House and Congress.

Virtually all observers expect lawmakers to curb the growth of the programs, but just how much has yet to be determined.

As the American Jewish population ages, changes in the Medicare and Medicaid systems could profoundly affect Jewish-supported nursing homes and hospitals.

About 1 million Jews older than 65 live in the United States, making up about 18 percent of the American Jewish population, according to the CJF. The elderly make up about 13 percent of the general U.S. population.

More than 70 percent of the 25,000 Jews in nursing homes run by Jewish agencies across the country rely on Medicaid to pay the costs of their stay. Jewish agencies run about 100 nursing homes in the United States. An additional 130 facilities that provide housing for the elderly receive other government subsidies.

Jewish officials are concerned that current proposals to turn Medicaid over to the states to run with a fixed budget would jeopardize the poorest and most vulnerable Americans. Under current law, anyone who falls below a preset income level qualifies for Medicaid, which is known as an entitlement, and is guaranteed services. New proposals would eliminate entitlements, placing a cap on available funds.

"If Medicaid loses its entitlement status, there would be dire

consequences," said Diana Aviv, director of the CJF's Washington office. "Federations would not have the money to step in if states run out of money."

While nursing homes receive payments directly from Medicare and Medicaid, other elderly housing programs receive separate federal funding.

After an early flirtation with massive cutbacks to low-income elderly housing projects and their support services, Congress and the administration appear to have agreed to fund the program near its current level.

Through two federal programs, elderly housing projects sponsored by Jewish federations give thousands of low-income, predominantly Jewish seniors across the country a place to live.

In New York City, the programs also fund Jewish-sponsored low-income housing units.

B'nai B'rith runs an additional 30 facilities, housing more than 5,000 residents.

Outside New York, these Jewish facilities expect to receive full federal funding for at least the next five years to the tune of \$40 million a year. New York City receives at least an additional \$100 million for such housing programs, according to federation officials in New York.

But concerns remain.

Congress has not provided funds for new construction at a time when waiting lists to get into these facilities continue to grow.

Federation agencies outside New York receive more than \$4 million through the Older Americans Act, which funds various programs for the elderly, including bus service to doctors and hot meals for the homebound.

In New York, the federation receives tens of millions more to run elderly programs.

Initial plans to cut the \$1.4 billion program faltered when Republicans and Democrats rallied to fund the program close to its current level.

Local agencies apply for grants through their local or state governments. Known as block grants, the federal government gives one lump sum to state and local governments to disperse with great latitude. Many states add their own funds to supplement the federal funds.

Jewish Family Services at risk

Among the agencies most at risk of losing precious government dollars is Jewish Family and Children's Services. The 139 Jewish Family agencies across the United States annually spend \$134 million in government funds, fully 61 percent of the total spent at these agencies.

Most of the money, from federal, state and local sources, comes from Federal Emergency Management Administration grants.

The exact amount of federal contributions is unknown because local and state governments run the programs and frequently add their own funds to the money coming from Capitol Hill, said Bert Goldberg, executive vice president of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies.

Jewish Family Services provides a range of services. It counsels families with intermarried parents, runs widow support groups, helps divorced and separated parents and their children, and helps low-income clients pay heating bills and buy food during times of economic crisis. Jewish Family Services also counsels refugees, but those moneys come from resettlement program funds.

Officials estimate that the clientele of Jewish Family Services is at least 85 percent Jewish.

Congress and the White House have yet to come to terms on legislation through which the Jewish Vocational Services gains access to its federal money. Pending measures would cut spending, and Congress hopes to fold 100 current programs into three block grants.

Almost 77 percent, or \$135 million, of vocational services sponsored by Jewish communities comes from the federal government.

If the plans now making their way through Congress become law, vocational services would face a 7 percent to 15 percent cut in federal dollars used for adult and youth job training programs and for vocational adult education, CJF officials estimate.

Yet while most other federal programs are facing cuts and restructuring, programs serving Jewish refugees, primarily from the former Soviet Union, are likely to receive more federal dollars this year.

Federations and their agencies received more than \$46 million in 1994 and \$32 million in 1995 to resettle Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. About half of that goes to the New York area, where the majority of these refugees settle. About 23,000 Jewish refugees arrived in the United States in 1995, including 276 from Iran.

Three federal programs combine to aid refugees when they come to the United States. The programs are funded primarily through the Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Local Jewish communities then add their own funds to aid the resettlement efforts, which include job-training programs, English-language classes and cash assistance for housing, food and clothing.

Although final legislation has yet to emerge from Congress, officials at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, which coordinates the resettlement of refugees for the Jewish community, expect an increase in the amount of money the federal government gives for refugee resettlement. Because of that increase and the expected decrease in refugees coming to the United States, HIAS plans to spend more on each refugee this year than last.

There are fears, however, that welfare reform, which is also a hot political topic, could jeopardize many refugees' access to sustained assistance once their initial benefits run out. Many refugees, after exhausting the assistance programs, cannot find work and turn to welfare for cash assistance and health care.

Nutrition programs get a boost

Federation agencies get nearly \$1.4 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for nutrition programs at Jewish day schools, day care and senior facilities. The grants fund milk purchases and school lunches. Additional money comes from emergency food grants.

Congress increased funding for USDA grants, and most Jewish schools and agencies expect to receive the same amount of money, if not more, this year.

Jewish agencies receive millions more in public funds that they risk losing as a result of the federal budget cuts. Some of these funds, not calculated in the CJF study, come from clients who are paying with welfare money.

CJF officials anticipate at least a 10 percent cut down the road in these federal dollars.

These programs span the gamut of federal programs. In Chicago, for example, the federation oversees about \$100,000 a year from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for emergency food and shelter.

Through the program, federation agencies in Chicago deliver 4,000 meals a year to homebound Jewish seniors and other needy individuals, provide 87,000 grocery packages from food pantries and give countless onetime housing payments to prevent evictions.

Many of these programs are to be turned over to state and local governments to administer through block grants, which could force the Jewish community into a new round of competition with its coalition partners. □

(Part 1 appeared in the March 1 issue of the JTA Daily News Bulletin.)

Jewish groups: Pentagon report downplays extremism in the Army

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish groups have taken issue with a recent Pentagon report that concluded that the influence of hate groups and other extremists in the U.S. Army is minimal.

They say that even though the report, titled "The Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activities" and made public March 21, is the first step in the crucial battle against extremism in the Army, it downplays the significance of the number of soldiers found to have participated in extremist activities or organizations.

Secretary of the Army Togo West Jr. formed the group that oversaw the report after what police say was the racially motivated killing of a black couple in December 1995 in Fayetteville, N.C., home of the Fort Bragg 82nd Airborne Division.

All three soldiers charged in connection with the slayings reportedly identified themselves as neo-Nazis when arrested. After the crime, police found a Nazi flag and several pamphlets about the Third Reich in the trailer of one of the accused, Pvt. 1st Class James Burmeister II.

According to the report, "The task force found no widespread or organized extremist activity in the Army. It did identify instances of individuals or small, informal groups of individuals who held extremist views."

Mark Weitzman, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Task Force Against Hate, said upon the report's release: "We're very pleased with the effort that the task force put in."

But referring to the report's conclusion that the number of extremists in the Army is minimal, he said, "They tend to minimize those numbers as not outstanding. It shows that there is a presence in the military."

He added, "Those are the ones we know about."

The Wiesenthal Center offered the Army its expertise after it got wind of the Fort Bragg investigation, Weitzman said. What resulted was a briefing in January at the Pentagon at which officials of the center gave an "overview of extremists in this country."

The report, conducted during a three-month period, was based on face-to-face interviews with more than 7,600 soldiers and written responses by more than 17,000 soldiers at 28 major installations in 12 states and 12 posts abroad.

Difficult to know actual number

In direct interviews for the report, less than 1 percent of soldiers said they knew a soldier who was an active member in an extremist group. In separate written responses, about 7 percent of soldiers said they knew a soldier believed to be an extremist.

The task force said 3.5 percent of those surveyed in January and February reported being approached to join an extremist organization since entering the Army.

The report said the actual number of extremists in the Army is difficult to determine because any soldier who admitted to being an active member would be in violation of military regulations.

The Anti-Defamation League also met with military officials at the Pentagon to offer its expertise and to make its concerns known. After the report was issued, Abraham Foxman, ADL national director, said, "This report is an important step in the right direction. We have felt that extremist activity by members of our armed forces represents a serious threat to order in the ranks, and ultimately to the morale and effectiveness of the troops."

Foxman said he was not surprised that the number of soldiers who belong to extremist groups was small, because that number is also small in the general population.

But he cautioned, "The armed services need to remain vigilant against attempts by extremists to recruit military personnel, or to obtain weapons or training from contacts in the military."

Michael Lieberman, associate director of the ADL's Washington office, said in an interview after the March 21 Pentagon briefing on the report, "There's always two ways to look at things. How do you determine what's minimal?"

The task force made a number of recommendations, including the following:

- Clarify Army rules on extremist activity and ask the Defense Department to review its guidance for all the services.
- Assess the extent of extremist activity in the Army Reserve and National Guard.
- Consider giving new soldiers and officers more training on human relations and the dangers of extremism.
- Screen recruits to keep out people with extremist views.

Today, Army regulations explicitly prohibit soldiers from active involvement in extremist groups, including those espousing white supremacist views or advocating violence. Examples of active involvement are raising funds and distributing literature.

The regulations say passive activities in these organizations, such as receiving literature in the mail, are not prohibited but are strongly discouraged.

However, there is no list of specific groups.

In addition, the report said the Army must make a clearer distinction between active and passive activities.

"They're on the right track," Weitzman said. "The key is whether they implement" these recommendations. He added, "Only time will tell." □

Cabinet accepts findings of inquiry into Rabin killing

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israeli Cabinet has formally accepted the findings and recommendations of the three-member government panel charged with investigating the security lapses that made the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin possible.

At Sunday's weekly meeting, the Cabinet also appointed a committee to oversee implementation of the Shamgar Commission's recommendations.

In its findings, issued March 28, the panel said Israeli security services had ignored information indicating that a Jewish militant might try to kill the prime minister. The panel also found flaws in security planning for the Nov. 4 Tel Aviv peace rally at which Rabin was shot.

The commission held 61 meetings and heard 72 witnesses before publishing 214 pages of findings as well as a 118-page classified appendix dealing with the operational methods of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency, and police. Among the panel's recommendations was for the Shin Bet and police to work more closely.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Sunday that the classified appendix also included a recommendation that the Shin Bet more closely supervise its operatives.

According to the report, the Shin Bet had asked Avishai Raviv, the head of a shadowy extremist group known as Eyal, to monitor Yigal Amir, the 25-year-old religious law student who was sentenced last week to life in prison for killing Rabin.

Amir's name reportedly did not appear on a list of right-wing extremists being watched by the Shin Bet. After the Nov. 4 killing, Raviv denied that he knew of Amir's plans to shoot Rabin. He also denied that he had worked for the Shin Bet. □

Environment minister rejects claims of nuclear plant hazards

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid has rejected claims of a hazard posed by the Dimona nuclear complex in the Negev.

Sarid's remarks came in response to claims last week by Egypt and Saudi Arabia regarding a supposed leak from the Dimona nuclear reactor.

Sarid also received requests for clarification from ambassadors in Israel on behalf of their governments, as well as from Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan.

An investigative report on Israel Television last week claimed that tons of radioactive waste are stored in 30-year-old underground containers above a large aquifer in the Negev.

If a significant earthquake occurred near the disposal site, which is some 15 miles from an active fault line, a nuclear disaster could result, it was reported.

The television program quoted a 7-year-old Agriculture Ministry document about problems with the nuclear-waste disposal techniques at the Dimona facility.

The document said pollution had been detected in underground water wells near the facility.

But the document apparently referred to minor leaks, because no major leaks are known to have occurred at Dimona, according to the televised report.

In a statement issued by the Environment Ministry, Sarid said radioactive waste is handled at the site with a high level of safety.

Sarid said the ministry closely monitors the air, ground and water in the area of the reactor, adding that no radioactive contamination that would constitute a danger to the population had been detected.

In response to the reports, Israel's Atomic Energy Commission said the area's geological and hydrological properties had been studied thoroughly before the Dimona center was built.

Yisrael Lederman, a commission official, said a study of workers at Dimona and of other people in the area found that the incidence of cancer among them was no greater than in the general population. □

Palestinian police confront Arab protesters in West Bank

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Palestinian police went head-to-head with protesters in two West Bank towns, with one of the confrontations becoming violent.

In Bethlehem, some 200 protesters scuffled Saturday with Palestinian police, who stopped demonstrators from reaching an Israeli checkpoint outside the city.

The protesters demonstrated against Israel's continued closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and against what they said were Israel's plans to confiscate land from the city for road construction.

Hundreds of Palestinian students held a rally the same day in Nablus, where Palestinian security forces fired shots into the air and hurled tear gas to break up the protests.

Reacting to the day's worst outbreak of violence at a protest, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called for a formal inquiry into the clashes in Nablus, where 10 students were injured after Palestinian security forces broke up a pro-Hamas rally at An-Najah University.

Despite Arafat's move, Nablus residents reportedly said they thought that police had been acting under his instructions when they raided the campus gathering.

The rally was held to protest the arrests of several

students as part of the self-rule government's crackdown on suspected Islamic militants. The crackdown comes in the wake of the recent series of Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel.

At least five students were arrested in Saturday's confrontation.

Studies at the university were suspended to protest the Palestinian police action.

Meanwhile, Israeli Arabs spent the day holding rallies to commemorate Land Day, an annual tribute to six Israeli Arabs killed in 1976 as they protested Israeli land seizures in the Galilee.

In at least one rally Saturday, Israeli Arabs called for an end to the closure imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. □

Russians choose Jewish state as up-and-coming vacation spot

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Israel is fast becoming one of the most popular destinations among Russian tourists.

"A big part of Russian tourists are those who come to visit relatives in Israel," Yehuda Shen, director of the Marketing Operations and Public Relations Department of the Israel Ministry of Tourism, said during last week's annual Moscow International Tourism and Travel Exhibition.

About 115,000 Russians visited Israel in 1995, making Russia the fifth largest source of tourists to the Jewish state, after the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany, Shen said.

More than half of the Russian tourists are non-Jews, Shen said, adding that this number could be expected to increase.

A 10-day trip from Russia to Israel can cost as little as \$800, including round-trip airfare.

But, Shen said, "many Russian tourists in Israel spend much bigger sums."

He added that about one-tenth of the Russian tourists are from the newly wealthy class that emerged in the wake of Russian economic reforms.

Among the Israeli travel agents participating in the tourism exhibition were some firms recently established with the sole purpose of serving Russian-speaking tourists.

"We serve more than 12,000 Russian-speaking tourists a year," said Marina Vorobyova, director of a travel agency that bears her name.

She said the recent series of terrorist attacks in Israel were bad for business.

"We had five groups that scheduled trips for the end of March," she said. "None of them came." □

Women enter air force pilot course

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Seven women, all of whom passed the qualifying exams, are scheduled to take the Israeli air force's pilot training course.

The seven women are the first allowed into the course since November's ruling by the High Court of Justice, which ordered the air force to open up its pilot courses to women.

The army officer who brought the petition to the court, South African-born Alice Miller, will not be among the pilot cadets.

Miller, a licensed civil pilot with a degree in aeronautical engineering, failed the preliminary exam, which she took immediately after the ruling was issued.

Miller's lawyer, Neta Ziv Goldman, reportedly said at the time that Miller had failed medical tests. □