



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The final status talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority will begin May 5 in Taba, Egypt, Israeli officials confirmed.** Addressing the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, Prime Minister Shimon Peres reaffirmed his commitment to a united Jerusalem.

■ **Jewish settlers in Hebron called on Prime Minister Shimon Peres to delay or cancel the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank town.** The redeployment could take place as early as this weekend. [Page 2]

■ **A package bomb exploded at the Jewish National Fund of Canada office in Calgary, lightly injuring a secretary.** Local police said there was no reason to suggest that the incident was a terrorist attack. [Page 4]

■ **Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is scheduled to meet this week with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington on the future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.** The meeting comes on the heels of the U.S. visit of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who is not expected to join in the meeting with the Palestinian leader.

■ **Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Israel would consider helping rebuild southern Lebanon, where attacks by the Jewish state caused an estimated \$1 billion in damage.** Peres, speaking to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, also said the United States and Israel should form a study group to examine a possible bilateral defense pact.

■ **Residents of Kiryat Shmona and other northern Israeli towns returned home to assess the damage and begin to rebuild their daily lives after 16 days of Katyusha rocket attacks.** The fighting on the Israeli-Lebanese border cost the Jewish state more than \$130 million. [Page 3]

■ **Leaders of the Orthodox Union planned to join a Capitol Hill protest against legislation that would eliminate 22 state kashrut laws.** The measure, designed to limit state regulations of food labeling, would have the unintended consequence of banning state kashrut labeling.

Washington visit outfits Israel with new means to fight terror

By Matthew Dorf and Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres will return from his latest official visit to Washington with new tools in the Israeli military arsenal to fight terrorism.

Peres began a three-day visit here Sunday by signing an agreement that will help bolster Israel's ability to defend itself against missile attacks.

He is scheduled to end the trip by signing another cooperative agreement on combating terrorism.

Peres and President Clinton also planned to launch a committee to craft the first formal U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation agreement.

Peres timed his visit to coincide with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee annual policy conference.

The plenary session's Sunday night opening honored Clinton and Peres in a "Salute to the Peacemakers."

At that gathering, Clinton and Peres heaped words of praise and warmth on each other and pledged to pursue peace vigorously in the Middle East.

At a Pentagon news conference Sunday after meeting with U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry, Peres said, "Let's face it, fighting terror is enabling the peace process to go ahead."

He added, "It's two sides of the same coin."

Perry and Peres, who also carries the title of defense minister, announced a cooperative program that will provide Israel with virtually immediate warning of any missile firings.

Peres and Clinton are planning to sign the terrorism accord after a White House meeting set for Tuesday.

Peres was scheduled to leave Washington just a few hours after the arrival of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Arafat's visit to Washington was hastily arranged after the Palestine National Council voted last week to amend its covenant.

Plans were also in the works for a Clinton-Arafat meeting later this week, a senior U.S. official said.

A U.S. team will head to Israel next week to continue work on the U.S.-Israeli Arrow air-defense missile and the U.S. Nautilus laser-defense system, which is still in the development stage, Perry said.

In addition, the team will look at ways of providing Israel with an interim defense against Katyusha rockets launched by members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah.

A barrage of such rockets this month injured more than 100 Israelis in northern Israel and set off a massive retaliation by Israel.

Such a system of defense "should reduce any incentive for any country to launch a missile" against Israel "because they would see it would be ineffective," Perry told reporters.

The agreement reaffirms U.S. support for Israel's efforts to develop a defense against ballistic missiles such as the Scuds that Iraq fired on Israel during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Under the agreement, the U.S. military would share with Israel "real-time" missile launch warnings available from spy satellites.

Perry said a prototype of the Nautilus anti-rocket laser weapon, which fires a high-energy beam of light to burn up rockets in flight, should be available for testing in Israel by the end of next year.

'Our full partner for peace'

Expressing gratitude for the new agreement, Peres said, "The relations between the United States and Israel are at their best, and the cooperation between the defense establishments of the States and Israel [is] as good as one can hope for or think of."

The United States, Perry added, is "committed to maintaining the qualitative edge of the Israeli defense forces."

At the AIPAC session, Clinton used the occasion to rally behind Peres, who is facing a heated campaign for re-election in less than one month.

Calling Peres "our full partner for peace and security," Clinton praised the prime minister's recent book, "The New Middle East," saying

that he "has been able to imagine what the future might be like beyond the history that can be made with the other peace signings."

"And that vision is what must drive us all into tomorrow," Clinton said.

Just days after his administration brokered a deal for a cease-fire in Lebanon, Clinton also reaffirmed U.S. support for Israel's recent actions.

"Make no mistake about it," Clinton told more than 2,000 AIPAC delegates. The Israeli attack on the U.N. refugee camp April 18 was caused by "the deliberate tactics of Hezbollah in their positioning and firing."

"The tragic misfiring [was] in Israel's legitimate exercise of its right to self-defense," the president said.

"If the Jewish people have endured centuries of exile, persecution, the ultimate evil of the Holocaust, flourishing against all the odds, surely together they can throw back their shoulders and raise their heads and say, 'After all this, Hezbollah and Hamas will not succeed where others have failed.'"

Peres lavished praise on Clinton, calling him a "great leader of the free world."

Peres used his remarks to drive home and enlist support from the AIPAC delegates for his vision of a peaceful Middle East.

Addressing an issue that hits home for AIPAC delegates who lobbied last year for a bill that recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and requires the United States to begin plans to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Peres said, "Jerusalem will remain united and the capital of Israel."

After his meeting with Perry, Peres attended a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery honoring British Maj. Gen. Orde Charles Wingate for his contributions to the training of Jewish forces in Mandatory Palestine in the 1930s.

At the annual memorial ceremony sponsored by the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., Peres laid a wreath on Wingate's grave and called him a "glowing comet and military virtuoso devoted to Israel."

He also laid a wreath on the grave of Commerce Secretary Ronald Brown, who was killed earlier this month in a plane crash in Croatia.

During his visit, Peres is also expected to meet with congressional leaders and to travel to New York to consult with Jewish leaders. □

Hebron Jewish settlers urge Peres to delay redeployment

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Residents of Hebron's Jewish community have launched a campaign calling on the government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres to delay or cancel the planned Israeli troop redeployment within the West Bank town.

The campaign was launched Monday, one day after Health Minister Ephraim Sneh said the Hebron redeployment could take place before Israel's May 29 national elections.

Earlier reports in Israeli newspapers indicated that the redeployment could occur by this weekend, but there has been no official announcement of when it would take place.

The reports of the imminent redeployment came in the wake of last week's overwhelming vote by the Palestine National Council to amend the anti-Israel portions of its charter.

The redeployment from Arab sections of Hebron had been scheduled for late March.

But it was indefinitely postponed after the series of

Hamas suicide bombings against Israel in late February and early March.

Peres, speaking during his trip to the United States this week, would not say when the troop redeployment would be carried out.

But he left open the option for a phased withdrawal.

The first stage would involve the stationing of Norwegian international observers in Hebron.

In the second stage, Palestinian inspectors would be stationed in Hebron.

In the final stage, Israeli troops would withdraw from 85 percent of Hebron, but would remain in the enclaves where some 450 Jewish settlers live.

The troops would also maintain their positions at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where Kiryat Arba settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinian worshipers in February 1994.

Military sources have stated that the redeployment in Hebron could be carried out in a matter of hours.

Day of fasting and prayer

The Jewish community of Hebron held a day of fasting and prayer Monday, calling for the redeployment not to take place.

Settlers warned that the Israeli troop pullback from the town, where Jewish and Arab residents live in close proximity to each other, would end in a bloodbath.

"We do not recognize" the Palestinian police, Hebron settler leader Noam Arnon told Israel Radio. "We say war criminals should be punished, not nominated as [local] governors."

The fervently religious party Agudat Yisrael voiced its support for the settlers and called on Peres to consider delaying the Hebron redeployment or canceling it altogether.

But Peres was unlikely to do so, having already rejected a similar request from the spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Sephardi Shas Party, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

Peres said at the time that the Jewish community in Hebron would remain intact even after the redeployment.

In New York on Monday evening, a leader of the Orthodox Union asked Peres to re-examine the planned redeployment from Hebron.

Rabbi Raphael Butler, the O.U.'s executive vice president, made the request at a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Peres in turn replied that "to run the lives of an additional 160,000 Arabs" is not in the interest of Israel.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs and the Jewish Quarter "will remain in the hands of the Israeli army," Peres said.

"We are not going to give up and we are not going to compromise," he said, adding that he remained firm in his commitment to keep Jerusalem united under Israeli rule.

Hebron is the seventh and final Palestinian population center in the West Bank slated to be transferred to Palestinian self-rule under the terms of the Interim Agreement signed in September in Washington.

In a related development, Israel agreed to cancel demolition orders on 60 illegally built Palestinian houses in Hebron.

Mayor Mustafa Natshe said Sunday that he appealed to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to ask Peres to stop the planned demolitions and that Peres agreed.

Natshe added that Israeli officials had not yet informed him of a date for the redeployment.

But he voiced the opinion that it would take place in early May. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Residents of northern Israel set about rebuilding daily life

By Michele Chabin

KIRYAT SHMONA, Israel (JTA) — The displaced residents of this embattled border town returned home this week to damaged homes and an uncertain future.

Clutching suitcases, shopping bags and tired, fidgety children, most of the 18,000 people who had fled 16 days of Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah militants streamed into town over the weekend, hopeful that Saturday's cease-fire would hold.

Many of them were relieved to be returning home, yet fearful that Hezbollah would not honor its side of the bargain.

The 4,000 people who stuck out the attacks in underground bomb shelters or reinforced security rooms in their own homes here also resumed their lives, testing out the cease-fire.

While the adults dusted off a town scarred by hundreds of Katyushas, they permitted their children, cooped up for too long, to venture out into the inviting sunshine.

Regardless of where they were during Operation Grapes of Wrath — Israel's military operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon — people here were clearly anxious to resume their lives and livelihoods.

Now that the cease-fire is in place, it is the job of municipal social workers to reassure both adults and children that feelings of fear, anger and displacement are normal reactions to war.

"People with strong emotional makeups and strong emotional ties with others are doing the best, and even they are feeling vulnerable," said Chana Manne, a clinical psychologist who lives and works in Kiryat Shmona. "Those without such support are faring far worse."

In an attempt to help the children cope with the trauma of war, teachers and social workers spent most of Monday, the day school reopened, encouraging the youngsters to share their feelings.

"We're on the lookout for unusual behavior," Manne said. "This could include being withdrawn or overactive or very distractible. Nightmares and bed-wetting are common. What's important is for the children to talk about their experiences and to learn that others share their feelings."

Regardless of their age, Manne said, "every person in the north, including children, has been unsettled by this experience."

Rotting produce

According to Finance Minister Avraham Shochat, the damage caused by the rocket attacks on northern Israel totaled about \$33 million, including the destruction of property and losses to businesses and wage-earners.

All told, 127 Israelis were injured, three of them moderately or severely, by the more than 700 rockets fired at the north. More than 1,400 homes were damaged, 1,200 of them in Kiryat Shmona.

In a meeting Sunday with Shochat, representatives of the northern communities demanded \$800 million in government compensation. Kiryat Shmona, the hardest hit town, sought \$100 million in damages.

Although some of the stores in downtown Kiryat Shmona opened Sunday — the start of the Israeli work week — there were not many customers.

Those who did come to shop stocked up on just-delivered fruit, vegetables, milk and bread as shopkeepers hastily cleared out old, rotting produce. Two-week-old magazines were going for half price.

"We're doing brisk business, but it can't make up for the 17 days we lost," said bakery manager Omer Aloni. "When you consider that we had already been closed a week for Pesach, it's a financial nightmare. Let's just hope the government reimburses us."

"Businesswise, it's a disaster," said Edna Ze'evi, the owner of a new gift shop in the town's trendy mall. "We started business just two months ago and Pesach season was supposed to be high season."

"Instead we got Katyushas and had to shut down for 17 days. I reopened this morning, but as you can see, no one is interested in buying gifts at the moment."

Indeed, as they rushed home to see whether their homes had been damaged, few people were in the mood for window shopping or conversation.

"I'm sorry, but I really can't answer many questions now," Sol Kadosh, a homemaker, said as she disembarked from a bus at the central bus station.

"What I can tell you is that I've lived in this town since 1955 and this is the first time I left during a Katyusha attack. As the bus approached [the town], my heart started pounding. My family is safe, thank God, but is my house in one piece?"

"It's a relief to be home, especially since I have to take my matriculation exams very soon," said 17-year-old Livnat Timsit, a high-school senior.

"At first I moved with my family to a kibbutz near Beit She'an, but the kibbutz school didn't have the kind of physics lessons I needed so I moved down to Jerusalem. It's been pretty crazy."

The need to evacuate, Timsit said, "has been hard for everyone. Having to leave everything behind gave me a stomachache." She added, "My little brothers and sisters were afraid that their toys would be destroyed, and at the kibbutz they wouldn't let my mother out of their sight. At the kibbutz, people seemed to think of us as 'that poor family from Kiryat Shmona.'"

While clearly happy to be going home, Timsit, like many others, expressed concern for the future, even though the cease-fire agreement called on Israel and Hezbollah to stop targeting civilians.

"Honestly, I don't trust the cease-fire and I don't think it will help us in the long run. I mean, Hezbollah fired Katyushas at us just two minutes before the cease-fire went into effect on Shabbat. They clearly have the power and ability to continue their attacks. I hate to admit it, but within a few months we'll be back in the shelters."

'Doubly traumatic for children'

This opinion was shared by Michal Roemi, who toughed it out in her apartment's reinforced security room.

Sitting in her apartment, the walls and window shutters cracked by rocket blasts, Roemi said, "People here are angry because the [cease-fire] agreement does nothing to protect us. Who's to say that in a month, two months, the rockets won't start falling again?"

Recalling the past two weeks, she said, "Being here was frightening, especially after a rocket exploded down the street and the entire building shook."

"But my husband had to stay for work reasons, so I stayed, too. We don't have kids yet, so I think it was the right decision. If we had kids, it would be a different story. As traumatic as a war is for adults, it's doubly traumatic for the children."

Ze'evi, who lives in nearby Metulla, also on the border with Lebanon, said, "We stayed at home for a week, in the shelters, and my two older boys seemed to be all right, but the 3-year-old was very, very afraid."

"Even with the older kids, I often found them checking to see how we, the adults, were coping. They needed constant reassurance." □

Package blows up at JNF in Calgary, injures woman*By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — A package bomb exploded Monday morning at the Jewish National Fund of Canada office in Calgary, Alberta, lightly injuring the secretary who opened it, police said.

A "large portion of the device was still unexploded," Brendan Kapuscinski, the police inspector in Calgary, said in an interview.

He called the bomb an "improvised explosive device," which means that it was not manufactured.

The secretary was sent to a local hospital for treatment of burns to her hands and face. The blast, which police described as more of a "flash," also caused the evacuation of a day-care center in the city's Jewish Center, which also houses the JNF offices. The JNF is involved in fund raising for afforestation in Israel.

"I don't know why we should be a target for terrorist attacks," Avner Regev, the executive vice president of JNF of Canada, said in an interview from the group's Montreal headquarters.

But the police inspector said there was "no reason to suggest that this is a terrorist" attack and that the initial criminal investigation was first getting under way.

The Jewish Center's executive director, Joel Miller, reportedly said, "We have no indication of where the package came from." □

Pension office: London Jew left Nazi territory too early*By Jenni Frazer**London Jewish Chronicle*

LONDON (JTA) — A London Jewish woman has considered appealing to German pension authorities after being told that she had left Nazi-invaded territory too early to qualify for the funds.

Vera Goldberg and her family were living in Antwerp, Belgium, in May 1940, when it became clear that the Nazis were about to invade.

Her father, a diamond merchant, called home from the office May 11 and told everyone in the 19-member extended family that they had to leave immediately. The Germans had actually entered Belgium on May 10, but the pension office ruled that Nazi persecutions occurred later, making Goldberg's claim invalid.

Vera Goldberg, who was 15 at the time, and her family made their way first to Arcachon, France, and then to Bordeaux. They were Dutch nationals, and they finally left for Falmouth, England, on a Dutch merchant navy ship under the auspices of the British authorities.

"The crossing took three days and then I became war refugee No. 6961," Vera Goldberg said.

In 1993, German law was amended so that women who were born after 1921 and had a child before 1950, even if they had lived abroad, would be entitled to claim a German pension if they were victims of Nazi persecution.

Vera Goldberg was philosophical about the rejection. "They say I left too early," she said. "If I had stayed, I wouldn't be here now." □

Police commissioner warns of pre-election terror attacks*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Police Commissioner Assaf Hefetz has warned that terrorist groups may launch attacks in order to change the course of Israel's May 29 national elections.

Addressing a meeting of police commanders to review preparations in the run-up to the elections, Hefetz said that even though Israeli security forces have cracked down on terrorist groups, some of these groups may still be able to carry out attacks.

Hefetz said special security measures were being taken to prevent such attacks.

Last week, police found the body of a terrorist in eastern Jerusalem, saying that he was killed when a bomb he was preparing exploded prematurely. Police think that the terrorist was on his way to carry out a suicide bombing against Israelis in downtown Jerusalem. They said the man planned to detonate the explosive, estimated to have weighed more than 20 pounds, at a bus stop or on a bus.

Support for the government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres slipped after the series of suicide bombings in late February and early March.

Political observers contend that another terrorist attack could cause Israeli voters to support Peres' more hardline opponent, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

Islamic militants believe that a Netanyahu victory could seriously impede the Middle East peace process, which they staunchly oppose. □

Cyprus denies Israel use of airspace*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Cyprus has refused to grant Israeli pilots permission to train in its airspace because a military airbase is being built near the airport Israel wanted to use.

The refusal comes against the background of an agreement between Israel and Turkey allowing Israeli pilots to use Turkish airspace to fly training missions.

A Cypriot official said last week that three Israeli requests to use Paphos Airport in 1996 were turned down.

Israeli pilots used the facilities twice last year.

A Cypriot government spokesman said the three Israeli applications were turned down because work had begun on an airbase, to be located near the small civilian Paphos Airport on the western coast, as part of a 1993 defense accord with Greece.

Under the accord, Greece will provide air and naval support for Cyprus in the event of renewed hostilities with Turkey, which has occupied the northern third of the island since 1974. Cyprus is meanwhile seeking clarifications from Israel regarding its agreement with Turkey. □

Israel hosts U.N. food conference*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Officials from more than 40 countries convened this week in Tel Aviv for a five-day international conference on food and agriculture.

The meeting of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization went ahead as planned, despite earlier discussions among some organizers to cancel the meeting because of Israel's 16-day cross-border fighting with Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon.

Finding ways to combat world hunger was a central topic of the conference.

The director general of the FAO, Jacques Diouf of Senegal, said there are 800 million starving people in the world, among them 200 million children younger than 5.

He said Israel could help combat hunger in such places as Asia and Africa by sharing the technology it has developed to increase food harvests in arid areas.

During the past 25 years, Israeli irrigation technology has enabled the country to increase harvest production by 12 percent without devoting more land for growing crops. □