



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu praised the U.S.-Israeli relationship, pledged to continue peace negotiations with the Palestinians and vowed to maintain the religious status quo in Israel.** In his first public address since narrowly winning last week's election, Netanyahu also made an effort to reach out to Israel's Arab minority.

■ **The terms of redeploying Israeli forces in Hebron will be decided by Israel's new government.** The Cabinet of Prime Minister Shimon Peres said that even though it backed the implementation of the agreements reached with the Palestinians, decisions on how to proceed should be left to the incoming government. [Page 2]

■ **The Clinton administration urged Arab leaders not to "prejudge" the new Israeli government.** U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said he and President Clinton expect to have "a good working relationship" with Israeli Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu and praised the "enduring and unshakable" bonds between the United States and Israel.

■ **The head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service, said that in recent months, close cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces thwarted a number of terrorist attacks.** Ami Ayalon also said the two forces had cooperated in the capture of a senior Hamas terrorist last month. [Page 2]

■ **Russia promised to renew by June 15 the Jewish Agency for Israel's accreditation.** The agency's license was suspended in April and its activities were curtailed in several Russian cities.

■ **Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles vetoed a bill that would have authorized student-led prayer in Florida's public schools.** Jewish groups, who spearheaded a massive grass-roots campaign against the legislation, hailed the move as an important victory in the battle against school prayer advocates and the religious right.

■ **Howard Kohr was named executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.**

NEWS ANALYSIS

Impact of Dole's departure on Jewish agenda is unclear

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Critics say Bob Dole ran the Senate with his eye on political opportunism.

Supporters say the presumptive Republican presidential nominee skillfully shepherded the GOP agenda through the Senate in the face of sharp partisan skirmishes.

But virtually all agree that he ran Congress' upper chamber with an iron fist and an unparalleled grasp of the archaic Senate rules, enabling him to sway the body the way he wanted.

Now, with Dole soon to be gone and a successor yet to be named, it is far from clear what impact his absence will have on pending legislative issues important to the Jewish community.

Although his overall 27-year record on Jewish issues is mixed, as Senate majority leader, Dole often moved toward rather than away from positions embraced by the organized Jewish world. He twisted the arms of skeptical colleagues to support legislation important to the Israeli government, such as foreign aid and aid to the Palestinians. On the domestic front, the GOP's agenda often put him at odds with many Jewish activists.

But he prevented some of those proposals perceived as most Draconian from receiving an airing on the Senate floor.

"Dole is a great friend of Israel who hasn't helped us one scrap on domestic issues," said one activist, who asked not to be named. "But for the most part he hasn't hurt, either."

Many Jewish activists, Republicans and Democrats, said they now fear that Dole's departure would lead to a lurch to the right in the Senate.

Before adjourning for the November elections, Congress is poised to consider a host of issues on the Jewish legislative agenda. Such issues include: welfare reform, the 1997 budget, health care reform, sanctions on Iran and perhaps a Religious Equality Amendment, which would change the Constitution to allow, among other things, prayer in public schools.

During his reign as Senate majority leader in the current Congress, Dole tamed many Republican skeptics of the peace process, endearing himself to those activists supportive of the peace process.

For example, Dole convinced Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to drop his objections to U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority. The aid is widely seen as a critical component of the peace process.

And when pro-life lawmakers held the foreign aid bill hostage until members would agree to new limits on funding for overseas population control programs that included abortion counseling, Dole stepped in to move the bill forward. In a "Dear Mark" letter to Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), Dole made a personal, passionate plea that ultimately led to the bill's passage.

Israel, accustomed to receiving its \$3 billion in U.S. aid at the beginning of October, lost tens of thousands of dollars in interest because it waited until January to receive the money. Dole's recent push for foreign aid contrasted with an earlier time in his Senate career, less than a decade ago, when he called for a cut in aid to Israel.

'Panderer' to some, 'hero' to others

But now Dole will probably be best remembered in the Jewish community for spearheading the effort to pass legislation requiring the United States to move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Chastised as a "panderer" by some in the Jewish community and as a "hero" by others, Dole's effort culminated in the first congressional recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital that had the force of law.

On the domestic side, Jewish groups praised Dole for opposing a measure aimed at imposing sharp restrictions on lobbying by non-profit organizations. The legislation would have severely restricted the ability of some Jewish organizations to advance their causes.

Using the power of majority leader, Dole prevented the measure, named after its sponsor, Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.), from coming up for a vote on the Senate floor until supporters had watered it down. In the end, the measure that passed had virtually no effect on Jewish groups.

Many Jewish activists who worked closely with Dole during his recent term as majority leader have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude for how the shakeup at the top of the Republican Senate leadership plays out.

Mississippi's Republican Sens. Trent Lott and Thad Cochran will face off for the right to succeed Dole when he leaves the post shortly after the Memorial Day recess.

"The jury is still out on what the Senate will do without Bob Dole," said Mark Neuman, a supporter of Dole's presidential candidacy and a board member of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said, "People will have to be more flexible."

"This is a process of adjustment," Hoenlein said. "Whenever there's change, it can go either way."

For the pro-Israel community, ties with both Lott and Cochran are strong, activists say.

Both Lott and Cochran are known for their pro-Israel positions and have received tens of thousands of dollars in pro-Israel PAC contributions during their careers.

But for the domestic agenda, the prospect of a Mississippi senator in the GOP's top seat has some worried. "Mississippi ain't exactly Jewish country," said one Jewish activist who asked not to be identified. "There is no natural constituency, making the relationships very tricky."

"Getting to them will be a challenge," said the activist, echoing a concern voiced by many.

"When Dole took over the Senate, we said, 'The best thing that can happen for the Jews is if he decides to run for president,'" said a liberal Jewish activist, referring to what he called Dole's history of turning more pro-Israel during election seasons. "The real challenge for us will be to weather the storm of the next couple of months as the Senate realigns." □

Israeli redeployment in Hebron awaits Netanyahu government

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When and how Israeli forces in Hebron will be redeployed will not be decided until Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu takes office.

The outgoing government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Sunday that it would not act on carrying out the redeployment, which was expected to take place by mid-June.

In a statement issued after its weekly meeting, the Cabinet reiterated its commitment to the peace accords with the Palestinians, including the planned redeployment in Hebron, but said that it would let the government being formed by Netanyahu decide how to proceed.

"The matter will be for the incoming government to deal with, based upon Israel's international commitment to the Interim Agreement, and to the status of the understanding reached with the Palestinian Authority," the statement said.

Hebron is the last of seven West Bank population centers to be handed over to Palestinian self-rule under the terms of the agreement signed in September in Washington. Israel postponed the redeployment, originally scheduled to take place in March, after a series of Hamas suicide bombings in February and March.

The Peres government reached an understanding with the Palestinian Authority to carry out the redeployment from 85 percent of Hebron after Israel's elections. Israeli troops would remain in the districts where some 400 Jewish settlers live.

In preparation for the expected movement of Israeli troops, international observers began to arrive in the town in mid-May.

But over the weekend, Likud Knesset member Uzi Landau said that it was likely that the new government would delay the redeployment in Hebron.

However, Netanyahu was quoted as saying that only he would decide what would be done there.

Israeli security sources were quoted as warning that any delay in the redeployment could lead to an increase in terror attacks.

Meanwhile, the head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security agency, expressed satisfaction with the level of cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces in combating terror.

Reporting to the Cabinet, Ami Ayalon said the cooperation had helped security forces thwart dozens of planned terrorist attacks in recent months.

Such cooperation also was key in last month's capture of Hassan Salameh, the No. 2 man in Hamas' military wing, he said. Salameh, who helped plan and carry out the Feb. 25 suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon and the March 3 bombing in Jerusalem, was apprehended after Israeli soldiers stopped his car at a checkpoint in Hebron. The three attacks claimed the lives of 46 victims and wounded scores more.

The soldiers shot and wounded Salameh, but he managed to escape. Palestinian security forces helped in his capture later at the hospital to which he had fled.

Ayalon said Salameh's interrogation had helped security forces uncover much of the military infrastructure of Hamas in the West Bank. As a result, Israeli forces apprehended eight Hamas terrorists and Palestinian security forces captured six. □

3 Israelis petition court, want call for new elections

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Three Israelis have petitioned the High Court of Justice to call for new elections, saying that if blank ballots were counted as valid, neither candidate for prime minister would have won.

Under the law for the direct election of prime minister, one candidate must receive at least 50 percent of the vote. If this does not occur, new elections must be held.

According to figures published by the Central Elections Committee last Friday, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu won 50.4 percent of the vote for prime minister, while the Labor Party incumbent, Shimon Peres, won 49.5 percent. Netanyahu won by 29,457 votes.

An estimated 150,000 to 180,000 blank ballots were found in voting envelopes. These were not counted, in accordance with a decision by the Central Elections Committee that blank slips be considered invalid.

The three petitioners, Shalom Savion, Ya'acov Tal and Shai Marcus, argued that the placement of a blank ballot in the voting envelope has long been considered in Israel an expression of a no-confidence vote.

The law for the direct election of the prime minister disqualifies ballots that do not make clear the intention of the voter, such as those with unacceptable markings. It does not specifically mention how blank ballots should be considered, but allows for the committee to make further decisions regarding the status of ballots.

The petitioners argued that disqualifying the ballots requires a two-thirds majority vote by the committee and that it was unclear whether this procedure was followed.

The High Court is to consider the petitions later this week. □

Russia's top contenders doing little to court the Jewish vote*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — With Russia's presidential elections just a couple of weeks away, the top candidates are doing very little to court the Jewish vote.

But members of the community are split over whether a direct appeal would provide any benefit to the candidates or to the Jewish voters.

When they go to the polls to choose from the 11 candidates running for the presidency in the June 16 elections, most Jewish voters are expected to throw their support to either President Boris Yeltsin or to liberal economist Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the reformist Yabloko bloc.

With no exact figures available, the country's Jewish population is estimated at anywhere between 600,000 and 2 million.

At least some here would like to see Yeltsin come out and specifically address the community, if only to reassure Jews that he is aware of their interests and needs.

"I think it's worthwhile for Yeltsin to show appropriate respect to the Jews before the election," said Dmitri Vestenberg, 29, who is a law student from the capital city of Moscow.

"In the meantime, only [ultranationalist candidate Vladimir] Zhirinovskiy and the Communists seem to acknowledge the Jews' existence in the country," he said sarcastically, referring to their thinly veiled anti-Semitic remarks.

But some Jewish leaders questioned whether any of the reform-minded candidates should make a special address to the Jewish community.

By all accounts, the race could prove to be a tight one between Yeltsin and Communist rival Gennady Zyuganov.

Recent opinion polls give Yeltsin a 5 percent to 10 percent lead over Zyuganov.

But they indicate that neither candidate is likely to win more than 50 percent of the total vote, which would prompt a July 7 runoff.

'Appeal to Jews not a smart step'

Given the high stakes of the race — a continuation of reforms vs. a possible return to at least some of the policies of Russia's Soviet-era past — some members of the Jewish community fear that a direct appeal to Jewish voters could hurt the candidate among voters who are not Jewish.

"Any appeal to Russian Jews wouldn't be a smart step for a presidential candidate in a country like Russia," said Yevgeny Satanovskiy, the director of the Moscow-based Institute for Israel and Near Eastern Studies.

"Reform forces are supportive of the Jewish community on the level of personal contacts," Satanovskiy said.

"Any other expression of loyalty to the country's Jews would be meaningless, if not harmful, for both the community and the candidate."

Russia's chief rabbi, Adolph Shayevich, said there were two reasons why reform-minded candidates were not speaking out directly to Jewish audiences.

"The number of Jews left in the country is not very big, compared to that of five years ago. That's why a direct appeal to the community is not seen as necessary," he said.

Second, he said, there is little reason to make such an appeal, given that the reformists are "sure of winning significant support from the Jewish community when Russians go to the polls."

Moscow's chief rabbi, Pinchas Goldschmidt, suggested that Yeltsin could benefit from giving some attention to the Jewish community.

"Yeltsin might want to take more Jewish votes in the first round of the ballot," the rabbi said.

Yeltsin has reached out to other religious communities.

He has already received endorsements from the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church and from some of the country's Muslim leaders.

The president has already made two addresses to specifically Muslim audiences.

And he may yet issue a direct message to the Jewish community before the June 16 vote.

According to Vladimir Pliss, director of the Moscow Jewish Arts Center, Yeltsin's campaign has approved plans to have Yeltsin make a campaign stop at a Jewish charity event.

After the Jewish community center in the western city of Yaroslavl was bombed on April 19, Pliss proposed that a charity concert be organized on behalf of the community.

Yeltsin campaign aides recently said that the event, set to take place June 7 in the Moscow House of Cinema, would include an address from the president in which he will condemn anti-Semitism.

The address may also include other statements of support for the country's Jewish community, according to Yeltsin aides. □

Second former SS officer sought in Rome massacre*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — Revelations by former Nazi SS Capt. Erich Priebke, on trial here for his involvement in a World War II massacre, have led Italian judges to seek another former SS officer for his alleged role in the killings.

Investigators want to question former SS Maj. Karl Hass, who they believe also took part in the murder of 335 civilian men and boys in the Ardeatine Caves outside Rome.

After Priebke, 83, gave an interview to an Italian magazine last month, it was discovered that Hass, now in his 80s, has been living near Milan.

Hass, based in Rome from 1943 to 1944, was implicated in the Ardeatine Caves massacre in testimony given after the war by the Rome SS Cmdr. Herbert Kappler, but all traces of him were lost.

Military Judge Giuseppe Mazzi has ordered the investigation against Hass reopened.

In the interview last month, Priebke said he had met with Hass in Rome in 1978.

"Despite an arrest warrant issued in 1946, he never left Italy," Priebke was quoted as saying.

The newspaper *Corriere della Sera* on Sunday published photographs of a residency permit issued to Hass in the town of Albiate, near Milan, and of his house and its doorbell with Hass' name on it.

Reports said police attempted to question Hass at his home 10 days ago, but that he apparently had left the country.

The Ardeatine Caves massacre was ordered by the Nazi command March 24, 1944, in retaliation for an attack by Italian partisans that killed 33 German soldiers the day before.

About 75 of the massacre victims were Jewish. Priebke's trial began May 8.

If convicted, he could be sentenced to life imprisonment. □

Conservative coalition seeks common ground on moral issues

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Conservative Christians and Jews are renewing their efforts to set aside differences, search for common religious ground and work together to build a more civil, moral society.

"We seek to restore principled thought, moral values and virtuous action to their rightful place, at the heart and center of American life and public policy," said Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, president and founder of the Center for Jewish and Christian Values.

As the new Washington policy center held its inaugural leadership conference here recently, a coalition of Christian and Jewish religious, political and lay leaders decried what they termed America's moral decline.

And they explored ways in which promoting shared religious values can help create a more ethical society.

The center is a project of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, created 13 years ago to promote greater understanding between Jews and evangelical Christians.

While the fellowship has primarily focused on fostering Christian support for Israel, the new center intends to advance a domestic policy agenda that, according to its mission statement, "seeks to reverse destructive government policies."

That agenda is now being crafted, and the conference was intended to give participants a say in the process.

Although the center has yet to take any official stances, draft statements released this week gave a sense of its general political direction.

The statements criticized what those involved see as an entertainment industry obsessed with violence and gratuitous sex; expressed opposition to physician-assisted suicide; expressed alarm at America's high divorce rate and the number of out-of-wedlock births; and emphasized what they see as the importance of the traditional, two-parent family.

The more contentious issues batted around during the conference included abortion, school vouchers, gay rights and prayer in school.

The center's leadership expects to find consensus on some issues, and is agreeing to disagree on others.

Eckstein said the first policy proposals would be released in coming weeks.

As the political campaigns — and accompanying divisive rhetoric — shift into high gear, Eckstein said he hopes that the center can help create a civil discourse surrounding moral issues.

"We can't change the world," he said, "but we think we can play a role and we want to pick our fights."

A Judeo-Christian consensus

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition and a member of the center's advisory board, hailed the cooperative effort between Christians and Jews as a promising beginning.

"The religious conservative movement that I represent," Reed said in a speech at the two-day conference, "will never achieve its aims and its aspirations for a better society until it becomes more fully inclusive of those of other faith traditions."

Reed is one of a number of prominent political figures backing the center's objectives.

Jack Kemp and William Bennett, co-directors of Empower America, a conservative grass-roots public policy organization, are also taking an active role in promoting a Judeo-Christian consensus through the center.

"The American people really hunger for moral

leadership today, and they hunger for a leadership that is prepared to talk about morality in terms of faith," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), an Orthodox Jew who co-chairs the organization along with Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.), a born-again Christian.

"We are a tolerant society," Coats said. "We accept no established religion. Yet we are not a secular society. The values that come from an active faith in God are central to the success of our nation. They should be welcomed and encouraged, not feared."

The center hopes to bring that message to the grass-roots level during the next year by establishing a coalition of Jewish and Christian leaders across the country and holding similar conferences in 10 cities.

The exact complexion of that coalition, however, remains unclear. So far, Eckstein has assembled a largely conservative coalition made up of such groups as the Heritage Foundation, the Christian Coalition and the Southern Baptist Convention.

At the same time, he has attempted to bring mainstream, secular Jewish groups on board. Representatives of B'nai B'rith and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism participated in the conference, while the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee sent observers.

Eckstein said, however, that such a coalition poses a dilemma. "There's a decision we have to make now," he said. "Is the center going to try and build as broad a base as possible" that would include mainstream Jewish organizations, "or are we going to try to build a narrower coalition of more conservative Jews and Christians?"

A narrower coalition of more like-minded religious conservatives would be more likely to find consensus in tackling volatile issues, Eckstein said, while a broad coalition might prove ineffective if it has to water down its agenda in order to find consensus.

Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center, agreed that Eckstein "needs to make a decision." Reflecting a wariness shared by other Jewish groups, Saperstein said he would have difficulty participating in a religious coalition that advances a conservative agenda.

But he also said he would welcome a more inclusive organization that "can have a much greater impact on the public debates in America."

For now, Eckstein remains torn.

"I want both," he said. □

Hezbollah kills 4 IDF soldiers

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Four Israeli soldiers were killed and seven others wounded May 30 in two roadside explosions in southern Lebanon near Marjayoun.

In addition, an officer with the Israel-allied South Lebanese Army and two Lebanese civilian journalists were also lightly hurt in the explosions.

The dead soldiers were identified as:

Lt. Col. Yoram Dahan, 32, Acre; Capt. Moshe Harosh, 23, Ashdod; Capt. Yitzhak Mizrahi, 21, Jerusalem; and Staff Sgt. Yitzhak Shapira, 21, Netanya.

Israel Radio reported that the incident occurred when two Israeli convoys left Marjayoun for two separate destinations.

Shortly after, a roadside bomb went off near one of the convoys, lightly injuring two soldiers and lightly injuring the SLA officer and two Lebanese civilians.

The second convoy heard the explosion and backtracked to see what had happened. Hezbollah gunmen then detonated a second bomb, killing four soldiers and wounding five others. Of the seven wounded soldiers, one was in serious condition. □