

NEWS AT A GLANCE

- The Union of American Hebrew Congregations publicly cheered a federal government's lawsuit charging that the Christian Coalition violated election laws. The Federal Election Commission claims that the group, founded by Pat Robertson, used its organization for partisan purposes in the last three national elections.
- Israeli security forces, aided by information from the Palestinians, uncovered what they believe are the remains of an Israeli soldier kidnapped and killed by Hamas terrorists in 1989. [Page 3]
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to visit Jordan next week for talks on the Middle East peace process. Netanyahu is set to meet King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan, Jordanian officials said.
- The wife of convicted spy Jonathan Pollard said she is considering ending her hunger strike after being hospitalized in Israel for dehydration. Esther Pollard announced her fast after President Clinton denied her husband clemency.
- Israeli plans to construct roads in the West Bank that would run through areas administered by the Palestinian Authority drew sharp words from the Clinton administration. [Page 3]
- The director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, John Holum, said Israel's support of a nuclear test ban treaty could help secure backing from other Arab countries in the region.
- Swastikas were spray-painted on the floor and walls of a gas station in Fort Bragg during a weekend break-in, according to a news report. Two weeks ago, red swastikas were painted on the doors of rooms occupied by black soldiers.
- Canada's deportation case against Josef Nemsila, a former commander of a Hlinka Guard unit that shipped Jews to Auschwitz, is moving forward after a federal court judge ruled that there was no attempt of judicial interference.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Non-Orthodox Israelis fear rising conflict with haredim**

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Will the religious parties' strong showing in the May 29 national elections spell an end to religious tolerance in Israel?

That's the fear of many Israelis, who regard the controversy about the capital's Bar Ilan Street as the first salvo in an all-out war between the religious and secular.

Deeply concerned that a government decision to close the road on Shabbat will set a precedent for closing down additional roads, as well as places of entertainment now open on Shabbat, non-Orthodox Israelis are already anticipating other religious-secular standoffs.

Although such standoffs have been going on for years, especially in the country's holiest city, Jerusalem, "the difference is that the ultra-Orthodox are now in a position to impose their beliefs on others," says Ornan Yekutieli, a vocal secularist who heads the left-wing Meretz faction in the Jerusalem municipality.

Noting that dozens of restaurants, bars and discos now operate in the capital on Shabbat, Yekutieli says that "in recent years we've been very successful in our bid to make Jerusalem a modern city that attracts both religious and secular."

"Now the struggle begins over whether the city can continue to be home to a mix of Jewish communities," Yekutieli adds.

Asserting that "we have a prime minister who owes his premiership to the ultra-Orthodox," Yekutieli believes that "Netanyahu will bend over backwards to accommodate them. Unfortunately, the price will be our civil rights. Bar Ilan Street is just the beginning."

For two consecutive weekends in mid-July, the street was the site of confrontations among the local haredi community, which wants the street shut down on Shabbat and religious holidays, secular Jews, who want to keep the street open to traffic seven days a week, and police attempting to keep order.

On more than one occasion, the confrontations turned violent, with haredim throwing rocks and garbage at the police and passing cars, and with the police turning water cannons on the Orthodox protesters.

This past weekend, there was also a mass demonstration by the haredim, or fervently Orthodox community, but it was not marked by the violence of the two previous weeks.

Although Kosriel Shemtov, a Lubavitch rabbi living in the capital, acknowledges that support from the religious community "did help Netanyahu, and he might feel some gratitude, I personally don't see [religious demands on] Bar Ilan Street as proof we're cashing in."

Shemtov points out that "when it comes to funding, government officials from all parties look at the interests of their constituents, and Meretz has been no exception."

"It's only natural that haredi Knesset members will try to help their constituents," Shemtov says.

'They give us all a bad name'

Although Shemtov rejects Yekutieli's claim that the religious community's newfound political clout will lead to an erosion of the religious status quo, he does agree that "there is no place for violence, regardless of the issue."

Looking back on the largely peaceful demonstration on Bar Ilan Street this past Shabbat, Shemtov says, "We had 150,000 people come out and there was virtually no violence.

"On the whole, the haredi community is very tolerant, very responsible.

"The few rock-throwers don't represent the majority and frankly, they give us all a bad name."

That this demonstration was much more restrained than the previous Bar Ilan rallies was lost on many non-Orthodox Israelis as television camera crews showed a group of black-hatted men setting a garbage bin ablaze and placing it in the center of the street just as it was to be opened for post-Shabbat traffic. In a much more serious incident, a group of haredim recently

attacked a secular graduate student after she parked her car — on a weekday — near the fervently Orthodox neighborhood of Geulah in Jerusalem.

Although the woman, who was wearing a summer dress, escaped with only minor injuries, her car was badly damaged in the attack.

The local media have also been quick to report alleged attempts at religious coercion by the haredim in the two months since the elections. In the towns of Hadera and Kiryat Malachi, female municipal workers have been ordered to dress modestly, in accordance with Jewish law.

In Jerusalem, a supermarket owned by the huge Supersol chain now forbids “immodestly dressed” women — defined as those not wearing a below-the-knee dress or skirt — from entering the store.

The store, which is located in an industrial area bordering both religious and non-religious neighborhoods, does provide a skirtlike coverup for those who seek it.

Asked whether the supermarket’s policy, as well as the attack on the graduate student, signal the erosion of religious freedoms in Jerusalem, a municipal spokeswoman says, “Absolutely not. The religious status quo in Jerusalem remains the status quo.

“The attack on the woman was an isolated incident and the police handled it. The law remains unchanged.”

As for the supermarket, she adds, “as far as I know, the market is in a religious neighborhood and besides, it is a private enterprise and can set its own standards. The status quo remains in effect.”

Orit Sulitzeanu, spokeswoman of the Israel Women’s Network, is not as sure. “There is a law that supervises the sale of goods that mandates that they cannot set unreasonable conditions,” she says. “We consider these conditions unreasonable.”

While the network considers filing an official complaint against the market in question, it is distributing a petition asking people to boycott all Supersol stores if the management does not abandon its dress code.

‘What is the status quo?’

Rabbi Andrew Sacks, director of the Conservative movement’s Rabbinical Assembly of Israel, fears that the implementation of dress codes is just one symptom of what he terms “the government’s new parameters.”

Referring to an agreement reached by the Likud Party and its coalition members when the government was formed in June, Sacks says, “the new government has promised legislation that will reverse any Supreme Court rulings that grant legitimacy to the Reform and Conservative movements.”

At risk, he says, are recent Supreme Court decisions paving the way for non-Orthodox conversions and burials in Israel, as well as for the participation of non-Orthodox representatives on local religious councils.

“Netanyahu can stand before the American Jewish community and say he is committed to the religious status quo, but what is the status quo?” Sacks says.

“To the haredim, maintaining the status quo means ensuring that the [Chief] Rabbinate can tell a couple that it will not convert the baby they adopted until the father can prove he goes to shul and the mother covers her hair and doesn’t wear pants.

“It means not acknowledging that more than 20 Israelis, who went abroad for conversions, are Jews. It means prohibiting Reform and Conservative Jews from praying as a group at the Western Wall.”

Although such legislation has yet to be introduced in the Knesset — and there is no guarantee that laws limiting religious pluralism would pass — Reform and Conservative leaders say they are gearing up for battle.

Uri Regev, director of the Reform movement’s

Israel Religious Action Center, vows to fight any attempt to turn back the clock on religious matters.

“From the civil rights movement in the U.S., we’ve learned that bureaucracies and monopolies will not endorse pluralism or civil rights unless they are forced to do so by legislation,” says Regev.

“I anticipate spending a lot of time in court,” he adds. □

Dole spokesman prompts fury over reported remarks on movie

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole is being urged to repudiate remarks made by a top campaign aide likening the film “Independence Day” to “Schindler’s List.”

As Dole prepared to address Hollywood executives Tuesday, the Los Angeles Times reported that Nelson Warfield, Dole’s campaign spokesman, drew a comparison between the two movies while discussing the role of violence in film.

“‘Schindler’s List’ is a movie that describes an evil but has a positive message,” Warfield was quoted as saying, adding that good movies can depict violence without gratuitousness if it is essential to the plot and promotes a greater good.

“In ‘Independence Day,’ ” Warfield told the Times, millions die, “but mankind comes together.”

The report caused an immediate reaction, sparking a flurry of faxes and condemnations. Jewish Republicans dismissed the reaction as election season politics.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), a Holocaust survivor, called the comparison “an outrageous insult to the victims of the Holocaust,” and called on Dole to “repudiate the offensive comments of his spokesperson.”

But Warfield jumped to his own defense. Reached by telephone in California, Warfield said, “I made no comparison at all, and there can be no comparison between the fictional events depicted in ‘Independence Day’ and the horrible historical events that are recounted in ‘Schindler’s List.’ ” Warfield said the point he was trying to make about the portrayal of violence in films was that “violence that advances a storyline can be compelling.”

“You could not tell the story of Schindler in specific or the Holocaust in general without a depiction of violence and indeed ultimate evil,” he said. “But that depiction tells a story we all must remember.”

Warfield added that he resented any suggestion of insensitivity to the Holocaust.

Stanley Chesley, a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and a secretary of the United Jewish Appeal, who was one of those with an initial response to Warfield’s remarks, said he was not satisfied with Warfield’s response.

“I think a total repudiation should be made as opposed to trying to explain it away,” said Chesley, who said he was speaking on his own behalf, not his organizational affiliation. Chesley, who also is a former board member of the National Jewish Democratic Council, added: “It’s certainly a bad example of comparison. One is science fiction and the other is one of the cruelest things that’s happened this century.”

Jewish Republicans, meanwhile, defended Warfield’s remarks. “I don’t think that they were intended to in any way belittle the atrocities of the Holocaust,” said Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican Jewish group.

“Obviously, there is a great deal of partisan politics that is motivating a lot of these people to write and to make a mountain out of a mole hill.” □

Clinton remarks fuel flap over West Bank construction*By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States is preparing to unleash its diplomatic wrath against Israel if the government of Benjamin Netanyahu proceeds with plans to construct two roads through the West Bank.

At a news conference Tuesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, President Clinton stopped short of condemning Israel, but put the Jewish state on notice that Washington is closely watching its construction plans.

"I don't want to blame them for something they haven't done yet," Clinton said, pointing out that the construction has not been formally approved by the Prime Minister's Office. "We expect and believe that Israel will adhere to the agreements it has already made," he said.

National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon this week ordered the construction of two new roads in the West Bank that would run through areas administered by the Palestinian Authority.

The two projects involve an expenditure of some \$57 million. One of the roads would link Atarot, north of Jerusalem, to the heart of the capital. The second would be an extension of the Trans-Samaria Highway.

Palestinian Authority officials were quick to condemn the proposed construction. Under the accords signed by the previous Labor-led government, Israel and the Palestinian Authority had agreed not to take any steps that would change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But as is the case with many provisions of the accords, Palestinians and Israelis maintain differing interpretations.

Former Housing Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer criticized the Trans-Samaria project, saying that it would divert funds that could be used to build essential traffic arteries in the jammed center of the country.

But he welcomed the Atarot road, saying that it was part of the construction program that he had developed for the previous government.

Expressed satisfaction

The Peace Now group objected to both projects, saying that they were politically motivated and could sabotage the peace process.

The flap over construction through Palestinian-controlled areas came as West Bank Jewish settlement leaders emerged from a meeting this week with Netanyahu expressing satisfaction that the new leadership would be more supportive of their interests than the previous Labor-led government.

During Monday's meeting, the leadership of the Yesha Council, which represents settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, presented Netanyahu with three principle requests: that new settlements be established; that existing ones be expanded; and that families be allowed to move into settlement homes and apartments now empty.

Netanyahu made no commitments regarding his settlement policies during the meeting.

But settler leaders later said that they thought that the new government would not follow in the footsteps of the previous government, which adopted a freeze on settlement building and purposely left some 3,000 homes and apartments empty to prevent settlement expansion.

"We haven't had a meeting like this with a prime minister in four years," said council spokesman Yechiel Leiter. "The prime minister is enthusiastic about the things we have done in Judea and Samaria and is committed to the growth and development there." □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Palestinians help locate body of IDF soldier abducted in 1989*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli security officials, aided by information from the Palestinian Authority, have found what they believe are the remains of an Israeli soldier kidnapped and murdered by Hamas terrorists in 1989.

Based on information provided by Palestinian security services, Israeli workers Monday ripped up part of a major road near Palmahim, along the Israeli coast.

"We have found bones in this area which strongly indicate they are the remains of Ilan Sa'adon," said Maj. Gen. Gideon Sheffer, the head of the Israel Defense Force manpower division. He said information provided by the Palestinians was instrumental in "putting the pieces of the puzzle together."

At a meeting last week with Foreign Minister David Levy, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat promised to give Israel information on Sa'adon. The information was intended to bolster confidence among Israelis that the Palestinians could be trusted as peace partners.

Ya'acov Perry, a former head of Israel's domestic intelligence service who is closely involved in efforts to locate missing Israeli soldiers, stressed that no deal had been made in exchange for the information.

He refuted Palestinian claims that in exchange for the information, Israel had agreed to release Sheik Ahmed Yassin, a founder of Hamas who was jailed for life in 1989 for ordering the deaths of Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel.

"In all of the intelligence and political contacts, there was no discussion of any kind of exchange," Perry said. "Palestinian security forces gave us precise information on the location of the body," he said, but added, "I want to stress that we do not yet have a positive identification of the body."

Caught a ride

"But the intelligence information which pointed us there indicated that it is extremely likely that this is the body of Ilan Sa'adon."

Sa'adon was kidnapped in May 1989 while hitchhiking from his base near Jerusalem to his home in Ashkelon. He was last seen alive by a fellow hitchhiker when he caught a ride with two men in a Subaru who were wearing skullcaps.

Sa'adon did not return to base the next day. His family had not expected him home, so he was only reported missing two days later, when the army sent someone to Sa'adon's home to find out why he had not shown up.

The Hamas leaders who ordered the kidnapping were later apprehended. They told investigators that they shot Sa'adon in the car and then dumped his body in an unknown place and fled the country.

In recent years, Yassin called on those with information of Sa'adon's whereabouts to come forward. But it was widely reported that only the two terrorists knew where the body was.

Dr. Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab adviser to Arafat, said Monday that during the past three months, a Palestinian security official had traveled to a number of Arab countries, tracked down the two terrorists who had killed Sa'adon and learned where they had buried him.

Earlier this month, the bodies of missing Israeli soldiers Yosef Fink and Rachamim Alsheikh, killed in Lebanon in 1986, were returned to Israel as part of a prisoner and body exchange with Hezbollah that had been mediated by Germany. □

Israel lifts closure imposed after drive-by terror attack*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials have lifted a closure of the West Bank that was imposed last week after a terrorist drive-by shooting that claimed the lives of three members of an Israeli family.

As part of the relaxed closure, an additional 10,000 Palestinian workers were to be issued work permits, bringing the total number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip allowed to work in Israel to 35,000.

The slayings of Ze'ev Munk, his father, Uri, and his wife, Rachel, on a road near Beit Shemesh threw into question a key promise of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's election campaign: his vow to provide increased security for Israelis in the face of terrorism.

Security forces believe a Hebron-based cell for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine carried out the attack last Friday as well as a similar drive-by shooting last month in which an Israeli couple, Yaron and Efrat Unger, died.

Doctors at three Israeli hospitals said Monday that they had successfully transplanted the organs of Ze'ev Munk, who died Sunday of wounds sustained in the attack.

Munk's heart and lungs were transplanted to a 20-year-old man from Dimona.

His kidneys and pancreas were donated to a 37-year-old Beersheba woman; his liver was transplanted to a 55-year-old woman from Beit Shemesh.

Maj. Gen. Gabi Ofir, the commander of Israeli forces in the West Bank, met this week with the head of Palestinian police to discuss what he said were recent violations of the Israeli-Palestinian accords by the self-rule security forces.

Ofir warned that if violations continue, the Israel Defense Force would take punitive action against the Palestinian police, including a reimposition of the closure and specific closures of Palestinian population centers. □

Foreign aid bill moving on Congress' fast track*By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If Congress stays on course, Israel will receive \$3 billion in U.S. foreign aid on time this year.

The Senate approved a \$12.2 billion foreign aid bill last Friday in a vote of 93-7. The House of Representatives passed a similar measure last month that spends \$11.9 billion in U.S. aid.

Unlike last year when the aid package, including Israel's \$1.8 billion in military assistance and \$1.2 billion in economic aid, was held up until four months after the fiscal year ended, this year's spending bill is on the fast track to approval. The measure also would provide \$2.1 billion for Egypt and allow for \$75 million in cash assistance for the Palestinian Authority. Like the House, senators included a number of pro-Israel provisions in the legislation, including early disbursement of the aid in October.

The bill also authorizes the creation of a Middle East Development Bank. However, no money is provided for the venture.

Members of the House and Senate were scheduled to meet this week to hammer out differences in each chamber's bill. Members must then approve the agreement for the bill to be sent to President Clinton for his approval.

Officials at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee expressed hope that the final bill would be sent to President Clinton by the end of this week, when Congress is scheduled to leave for its August recess. □

Egyptian leader firm but upbeat in meeting with Jewish officials*By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told Jewish officials here this week that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu needs to take concrete steps "on the ground" to foster Arab confidence in the peace process.

Mubarak suggested the redeployment of troops from most of Hebron as one such gesture, and he urged Israel to do so before Arab leaders gather at an economic conference this fall in Cairo, an official who attended the meeting said.

The meeting came on the first day of a three-day visit to Washington by the Egyptian leader. Mubarak also met Monday with U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Warren Christopher, National Security Adviser Tony Lake and CIA Director John Deutch, with whom he discussed terrorism issues.

He was scheduled to meet with President Clinton on Tuesday.

Jewish officials characterized their meeting with Mubarak as an upbeat gathering in which the Egyptian leader made assurances that Egypt remains firmly committed to the peace process.

"He clearly wanted us to understand that he hasn't been disillusioned with Netanyahu, he's prepared to be reasonably patient and he understands that Netanyahu has only been in office a month," said Robert Rifkind, president of the American Jewish Committee, which convened the meeting.

"I didn't hear any big note of impatience or criticism," Rifkind added. □

Defense sums up: Erich Priebke had 'marginal' role in massacre*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — In its closing arguments this week, the defense in the case against Erich Priebke maintained that the former Nazi SS captain had a "marginal" role in Italy's worst wartime atrocity and should be acquitted.

"Priebke only obeyed an order that he believed to be legitimate," defense attorney Velio di Rezze said before the Rome military court Tuesday. "An order that came from Hitler and was thus unthinkable to disobey."

The attorney added that Priebke and other SS officers had understood that they would be killed if they refused to take part in the killings of 335 men and boys, about 75 of them Jews.

Priebke, who turned 83 Monday, is accused of being one of the architects of the March 1944 massacre at the Ardeatine Caves south of Rome. The slayings were ordered in reprisal for a partisan attack that killed 33 German soldiers. The ex-Nazi, who was extradited to Italy from Argentina, has already admitted to shooting two of the victims and crossing off names from a list at the caves.

The prosecution, which is seeking a life sentence, contends that Priebke played a key role in organizing the massacre.

Also Tuesday, a military appeals court rejected a second request to dismiss the judges presiding at the trial.

Relatives of some of the victims in the massacre claimed that the presiding judge, Agostino Quistelli, was biased in favor of Priebke.

The appeals court had already dismissed a similar request made by the prosecution.

A verdict in the trial was expected later in the week. □