



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to assure Israelis that they faced no threat of Iraqi retaliation as a result of U.S. missile attacks on that nation. Nonetheless, many Israelis, remembering the Scud missile attacks of the Persian Gulf War, rushed out to get new gas masks. [Page 1]

■ Several U.S. Jewish groups expressed support for the U.S. military action against Iraq's Saddam Hussein. The groups included the umbrella National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the Orthodox Union and the American Jewish Congress.

■ Palestinian and Israeli officials held marathon meetings but have not set a date for a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Meanwhile, Netanyahu is set to meet with President Clinton on Monday in Washington.

■ The Knesset held a special debate on the plan to redeploy from most of the West Bank town of Hebron. Cabinet Minister Tzachi Hanegbi said an agreement had to ensure the safety of the Jewish communities in Kiryat Arba and Hebron and allow for development and expansion.

■ Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' Commission on Law and Social Action, argued before the New York Court of Appeals on behalf of a Seventh-day Adventist who was suing the New York City Transit Authority for the right not to work on the Sabbath. Stern said the case, which should be decided in six to eight weeks, could also affect the rights of Jewish Sabbath observers.

■ Europe's biggest synagogue is scheduled to reopen Wednesday in Budapest. Hungary's Jewish community says the 137-year-old synagogue represents a triumph over persecution.

■ Palestinian and Israeli officials left for Washington for a meeting of donor countries. Palestinian Authority official Nabil Sha'ath said the self-rule government would request \$150 million in immediate aid for the autonomous areas.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

U.S. confrontation with Iraq raises fears for Israel, peace

JTA Staff Report

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In 1990, Iraqi aggression against Kuwait led to a full-fledged international war the following year and a torrent of Scud missiles in the heart of Israel.

Given this history, it was probably not surprising that when the United States struck at Iraqi military targets this week in response to the latest Iraqi aggression, Israeli citizens rushed to trade in their Gulf War masks for new ones.

But Middle East analysts have mixed views about the likelihood of the latest U.S.-Iraqi confrontation escalating into another attack on the Jewish state.

At the same time, some experts believe that the latest flare-up will not cause reverberations in the Middle East peace process.

"There will be zero impact on the peace process," said Adam Garfinkle, executive editor of the National Interest, a foreign policy journal in the United States.

Still, Israel and its Arab neighbors have already split in their reaction to the Clinton administration's decision to unleash 27 cruise missiles at Iraqi military targets in southern Iraq on Tuesday.

Administration officials said the attack was in response to Iraqi attacks against Kurds in a protected zone in northern Iraq and was also a preemptive move against threats to Iraq's neighbors.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he understood Clinton's decision to take action and backed the principle "that aggression of this kind must not go unpunished."

"It is a principle of all those who want to see the advancement of peace not only in this region, but in the world," Netanyahu said Tuesday as he sought to reassure his own population about an imminent threat from Iraq.

"We are watching very closely what is transpiring in Iraq and have been briefed by the government of the United States," Netanyahu told reporters after meeting in his Jerusalem office with U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk.

Indyk also briefed Foreign Minister David Levy and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

"We do not see right now a danger of the conflict spilling over into this region, but we do have to be vigilant.

"So we are vigilant in taking the precautions necessary," the prime minister said.

The Israeli leader said the United States had kept him abreast of all developments and that the briefing after the attack was not his first.

Several American Jewish groups, including the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, an umbrella organization, expressed support for the U.S. action.

For their part, Jordan and the Palestinians — both of them stood as pariahs in the Arab world because of their support for Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War — criticized the American strike this week.

Potential complications for peace process

Palestinian legislative council member Ziad Abu-Ziad said the military action was an attempt by Clinton to boost his re-election bid and that it would harm the peace process.

"It's not helpful, especially at this crucial time in the Middle East, when we are facing big difficulties in the peace process, especially on the Palestinian and Israeli track, and the Israeli and Syrian track."

An escalation of the conflict could force moderate states such as Jordan to take a more extreme position, potentially complicating the Middle East peace process.

"If things heat up, King Hussein will have to retreat or move to a more pro-Iraqi position" in order to maintain the support of his people, said Daniel Pipes, editor of the Philadelphia-based Middle East Quarterly.

"This could cause real problems."

Much has changed in the Middle East since the Gulf War, including

improved relations between Israel and the Arab world and between the United States and the Arab world.

Despite these advances, however, a "significant minority of the population of the Middle East will support Saddam," Pipes said.

"Palestinians regret the 20th century," he said.

"They don't like [their] borders, economic situation or the military strength," Pipes said. "This makes them extremely susceptible to a leader who charms them with great aspirations and takes steps against the West and Israel."

The rest of the Arab world was also largely critical of the U.S. move.

Its response was a very far cry from the days of the anti-Iraq coalition among Arab and Western nations, meticulously constructed by then-President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker in the build-up to the Gulf War, which began in January 1991.

Their response can be attributed, in the view of some analysts, to the traditional regional indifference to the fate of the Kurds.

Back in 1991, even hard-line Syria set aside its reservations about American intervention, and dispatched forces to the Saudi desert to help beat back Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Arab states fear breakup of Iraq

But Kuwait, Arab and oil rich, is a far cry from the long-oppressed Kurds in northern Iraq, whose internal divisions precipitated Saddam's armed intervention.

In addition, according to Israeli analysts, Arab states fear a breakup of Iraq, and the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the north and, perhaps, a new Shi'ite state in the south.

Indeed, the internal Kurdish strife in the U.S.-protected zone in the north of Iraq has become, in the wider Arab view, a source of concern for future instability in the region.

Since 1991, moreover, most Arab states have begun rebuilding dialogues with Iraq — and are loath to see these relationships — some of them lucrative — destroyed now for the sake of the Kurds.

For Garfinkle, who has been studying the Kurds, the real test now is if Saddam stops and retreats or tries to strike in Sulaymaniyah, another Kurdish area in northern Iraq.

"That's the only thing that could get out of control," he said.

For now, he said, Israel is safe.

"It's not like [Saddam] has a Scud loaded up aimed at Israel," he said.

But others are more cautious.

"When Kurds are fighting Kurds, Iraq brings Israel in willy-nilly," Pipes said.

And that is precisely what some Israelis are afraid of.

During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel in an attempt to draw it into the conflict and break up the alliance of Western and Arab countries.

During that war, Israel distributed gas masks to its citizens and instructed them to create a sealed room in their home with plastic sheeting and tape, in an effort to counter suspected chemical warheads on the Iraqi missiles.

All the rockets launched at Israel had conventional warheads.

The attacks resulted in the direct deaths of two Israelis and extensive property damage.

At least a dozen other Israelis died from indirect causes, including heart attacks.

On Tuesday, hundreds of Israelis crowded gas mask distribution centers to trade in their old masks —

some of which were later declared by the Israel Defense Force as defective — with new ones.

Some of those on line at a Tel Aviv distribution center denied that the latest developments had prompted them to come to the center.

"I'm moving apartments, and I decided this was a good time to get a new mask," the domestic news agency Itim quoted one Israeli as saying.

"I don't even have a radio to hear the news," the Israeli added.

But others on line said they preferred to play it safe.

One woman, Tami, said to Itim that even before the Gulf War, "they said there was no chance of anything happening — and we saw what happened in the end." □

(This story is based on reporting by JTA correspondent Matthew Dorf in Washington and correspondents Naomi Segal and David Landau in Jerusalem.)

Israel protests Palestinian article

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Prime Minister's Office has submitted a formal protest to the Palestinian Authority about the publication of an article in a Ramallah-based newspaper that compared Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler.

The article described Netanyahu as "more of a Nazi than Hitler."

The prime minister's communications adviser, David Bar Ilan, said Israel would not tolerate such published comments.

He added that they represented a violation of the self-rule accords.

Palestinian leaders have criticized what they view as Netanyahu's refusal to implement the peace agreements signed by the previous Labor-led government. □

Israel, Russia discuss property dispute

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Foreign Minister David Levy met this week with Russia's ambassador to Israel to discuss the transfer of deeds of Jerusalem properties from the former Soviet Union to Russia.

The issue of asset ownerships has been a subject of dispute between Israel and Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Among the buildings involved are the Jerusalem District Court building, which will be administered by the Russian Church, and a parking lot in the center of the city, which will be administered privately. □

Israel's credit rating questioned

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Bank of Israel denied a report that it had received a letter from Moody's, a stock and bond rating service, warning of a possible lowering of Israel's credit rating.

A bank spokesman said no letter had been received and attributed the report to rumors circulating on the Tel Aviv stock market.

The Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported this week that Moody's was considering lowering Israel's rating, now at A-3, because of the country's budget deficits.

A lower credit rating means that investors face greater risks on their investments.

This in turn would force Israel to provide greater returns, in the form of higher interest payments, to make up for the added risk. □

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL**Dole pledges smooth relations with Israel in a speech to Jews***By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole spent part of his Labor Day weekend attempting to deflect criticism that U.S.-Israel relations would suffer if he wins the race for the White House.

In a Sunday address to the B'nai B'rith International convention here, Dole told more than 800 delegates from 29 countries that vice presidential nominee "Jack Kemp and I will work more smoothly with Israel than would a second-term Clinton administration."

"Why? We would not pre-empt Israel's sovereign right to devise its own national security policies" and "we would not push Israel to give the Golan Heights to Syria," he added.

Pledging warm relations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Dole said, "We actually believe in peace through strength."

Jewish Democrats have attacked Dole for what is widely described as a mixed record on Israel throughout his 35-year career in Congress.

Dole went on the offensive during his speech this week to attack the Clinton administration's policy on Syria. "The diplomatic solicitude shown by the Clinton administration" to Syrian President Hafez Assad sends "a dangerous message that terrorism pays," the former senator said.

Delegates gave Dole polite applause and a partial ovation during his 40-minute speech, but reserved their loudest support for his remarks about Jerusalem.

"It doesn't serve U.S. interests or promote peace for the United States to signal that its support for Israeli claims in Jerusalem is an open question," Dole said of President Clinton's decision to delay moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Dole sponsored legislation that passed the Senate to require that move by 1999.

Imaginary conversations

While Dole pledged to "forswear personal criticisms" of the Clintons during the campaign, he made one dig at Hillary Rodham Clinton in remarks not included in his prepared text.

Referring to wife Elizabeth Dole's address to the Republican National Convention last month, Dole said: "She is so talented that Eleanor Roosevelt is trying to reach her." Dole was playing off reports that Hillary Clinton had imaginary conversations with Roosevelt earlier this year.

Dole steered clear of domestic policy issues on which he and B'nai B'rith have clashed in recent years, including federal budget cuts, welfare reform and immigration policy.

Instead, Dole focused on his recent stump critique of the sharp increase in teen-age drug use on Clinton's watch. "That is not a record I would care to defend. It is one that I intend to undo," he said.

During election years since 1976, both Republican and Democratic presidential candidates and incumbents have addressed B'nai B'rith conventions.

But Clinton did not speak to the four-day convention this year. White House officials said Clinton returned from his post-convention bus tour Monday and has been focusing on the Iraqi crisis, officials said.

Officials added that Clinton had addressed three B'nai B'rith audiences since 1992.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg also addressed the delegates during their convention, which ended Tuesday. □

Jewish groups launch drive to register 1 million voters*By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Now that the Republican and Democratic conventions are over, attention has shifted to getting American Jews registered to vote and out to the polls.

A patchwork of studies estimates that up to 1 million American Jews are not registered to vote, a group that includes elderly people who recently moved to another state as well as younger Jews.

The numbers have alarmed many Jewish organizations and have prompted the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism to revamp a "Get Out the Vote" manual to give the Jewish community a blueprint to make the "myth that all Jews always vote" a reality.

The 4 million eligible Jewish voters in the United States traditionally draw their political strength from the perception that they will turn out in high numbers on Election Day.

With both President Clinton and Republican challenger Bob Dole counting on Jewish support in key states Nov. 5, the importance of registering Jewish voters has taken on a renewed urgency.

Although the effort has received a late start, organizers believe that they can still mount a successful voter registration drive.

All four major Jewish denominations — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist — and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council are participating in the effort.

Most major national Jewish groups and local Jewish federations have also signed on to the drive.

"The next month to six weeks is a very synagogue-based time for a lot of people," said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center. "This provides a unique opportunity as many American Jews turn their attention to the election."

The Orthodox Union has called on its nearly 1,000 synagogues to hold a registration drive Saturday night, after Slichot, "to make sure that everyone who is not registered will do so," said Betty Ehrenberg, O.U. director of international affairs and communal relations.

'Your vote counts!'

While no longer in existence, the Synagogue Council of America produced and distributed voter registration guides for the 1988 and 1992 elections.

The new 17-page manual, including a state-by-state breakdown of deadlines for registration, gives both synagogues and Jewish groups detailed strategies for reaching unregistered voters during the eight-week sprint to Election Day.

"So many of the issues that we care about are up for grabs in this election," Pelavin said.

"Any way of facilitating the involvement of the community in what is probably the most important decision, who comes to Washington, is important."

After the October registration deadlines, attention will turn to a "Your voice counts! Your vote counts!" campaign to get potential voters to the polls.

In communities across the country, volunteers from local Jewish groups and synagogues will join other volunteers and local political parties to bring voters from their homes to the polls.

"Given the decline in voting numbers in the United States, it is more important than ever to get out the vote," Ehrenberg said.

"Israel's 80 percent turnout should be an inspiration to us all." □

FBI offers \$1 million reward in slaying of Arab American*By Tom Tugend*

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI have offered a \$1 million reward to help solve the 11-year-old bombing death of a local Arab American activist.

The reward will be given to anyone who provides information leading to a conviction in the 1985 slaying. The FBI has taken the unusual step of inserting sizable paid ads in Jewish newspapers to publicize the reward in the Jewish community.

Alexander Michel Odeh, the Western regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, was killed by a booby trap when he opened the door to his office Oct. 11, 1985, in Santa Ana, Calif.

Odeh had appeared the previous day on a television program during which he condemned terrorism but praised Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat as "a man of peace." Odeh, 41, a Palestinian who came to the United States in 1972, was generally considered a moderate voice within the Arab American community.

Orders to track down the perpetrators of the killing with renewed vigor came from the highest authorities in Washington, with U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno declaring, "We hope that this reward will lead to justice in this case, and I encourage anyone with information to come forward."

Over the years, federal authorities have frequently cited Robert Manning, a Los Angeles-born Israeli and veteran Jewish Defense League member, as a key suspect in the Odeh case.

Manning, then a resident of Kiryat Arba in the West Bank, was extradited by Israel to stand trial in Los Angeles on an unrelated charge involving the 1980 mail-bomb death of a secretary at a local computer firm.

He was found guilty and is now serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison. However, under the terms of the U.S.-Israel extradition treaty, Manning could only be tried for the 1980 killing and cannot be prosecuted for any other alleged crimes.

Three other Americans living in Israel have been mentioned as suspects. At least two of them are former JDL members, said JDL National Chairman Irv Rubin.

9-foot statue

Rubin was among the protesters last week at a high-profile news conference at which the two top federal law enforcement officials in Los Angeles, U.S. Attorney Nora Manella and FBI Bureau Chief Charlie Parsons, announced the \$1 million reward. The event took place near a 9-foot statue of Odeh that was erected two years ago outside the main Santa Ana library in Orange County.

Sami Odeh, the victim's brother, announced an additional \$100,000 reward that was raised by the local Arab American community.

Rubin charged that the Odeh case was part of "an ongoing vendetta sponsored by the Arab community to get the Jews."

He likened the accusations against Manning to the treatment meted out to Richard Jewell, a security guard during the recent Olympic Games in Atlanta who was identified by the FBI as a chief suspect — but never charged — in the explosion at Centennial Olympic Park.

Another protester, Howard Garber, said he was establishing a \$1,000 trust fund to remove the Odeh statue and replace it with one of Richard Nixon or another distinguished Orange County resident.

Joyce Greenspan, Anti-Defamation League director for Orange County, endorsed the government's move.

"We oppose all violence and hate crimes, whether the victim is Jewish or not," she said.

In addition to the newspaper ads, the reward information has been posted on the FBI Home Page on the Internet (www.fbi.gov). The FBI has asked anyone with information on the "person or persons responsible for the murder of Odeh" to call (800) 705-6639. □

Group turns to postcards to heal rift between Israelis*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As a result of recent tensions between religious and secular Israelis, a foundation has launched a mailing campaign calling for tolerance.

The Avi Chai foundation kicked off the effort with the mailing of 1.7 million postcards to Israeli households for the Rosh Hashanah holiday. One side of the postcard depicts the backs of two young men's heads — one with a traditional skullcap, the other bareheaded — with the statement: "An order for reconciliation."

The flip side of the card allows recipients to fill out a pledge that they identify with the campaign's slogan: "Honoring tradition, preserving democracy." Recipients then mail the card back to the foundation.

The campaign comes at a time when the relationship between secular and religious Israelis is strained. One example of the tension is the ongoing legal battle in Jerusalem about Sabbath traffic on a main thoroughfare through religious neighborhoods.

Israeli President Ezer Weizman lent his support to the effort at a Monday reception at his Jerusalem residence, where the campaign was officially launched.

Education Minister Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party, who took part in the opening, said, "If we want to live together, we have to first build a common language." □

Netanyahu names security advisers

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appointed a national security staff of senior Israel Defense Force officers to advise him on defense and security matters.

The staff will be headed by Maj. Gen. Ze'ev Livne, and include the prime minister's strategic planning adviser, Maj. Gen. (Res.) Avraham Tamir; the deputy staff director for intelligence and assessment, Col. Shimon Shapira; and the prime minister's adviser on terror, Brig. Gen. Yigal Pressler.

Initial reports indicated that Defense Ministry Director General David Ivri was the candidate to head the staff. But Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai had requested that Ivri remain in his current position. □

Archaeological site is opened

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An archaeological site yielding evidence of the destruction of the Second Temple has opened in Jerusalem, after two years of excavations.

The excavations, conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority, reveal a paved Herodian street, with ruined shops along it.

Stone blocks weighing 45 to 50 tons each were integrated into the pavement. A complex drainage system and ritual baths were also exposed.

The road runs along 77 yards of the Western Wall of the Temple Mount.

At one point, archaeologists found stones apparently hurled by Roman soldiers during the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. □