



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Israeli government and Miami millionaire Dr. Irving Moskowitz worked out the final details of a compromise in which Jewish families who recently moved into an Arab neighborhood in eastern Jerusalem left voluntarily. [Page 4]

■ An Israeli soldier was killed and three others wounded in exchanges between Israel Defense Force troops and Hezbollah in the southern Lebanon security zone. [Page 4]

■ A House International Relations subcommittee approved a modified bill aimed at the problem of international religious persecution. The bill, which will be considered by the full committee next week, expands the denominations protected to include Jews, Muslims, Hindus and those of other faiths as well as Christians.

■ Martin Indyk weathered protests over the Clinton administration's Jerusalem policy at a hearing on his nomination to become assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs. [Page 2]

■ Latvian authorities said they have found no evidence that Konrad Kalejs was involved in Nazi war crimes during World War II. Kalejs, 84, is alleged to have been linked to the killing of 20,000 Jews. An Australian citizen, he was deported by Canada to Australia in August.

■ A Lithuanian right-wing group demanded in a published statement that Jews working in governmental offices be fired and that the Israeli ambassador to the Baltic countries be kicked out of the country. The Lithuanian Freedom Union said the statement was prompted by the desire to put an end to accusations that Lithuanians are a "nation of murderers of Jews." Controversy recently erupted in Vilnius when Israel's ambassador to Lithuania called on the Baltic nation to prosecute alleged Nazi collaborators.

■ B'nai B'rith opened an office in Brussels, the seat of the European Union. The center, the first international Jewish office in Belgium, will monitor human rights in Europe.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Hezbollah poses major challenge on military and political fronts

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hezbollah, the highly trained guerrilla force that has made life miserable for the Israel Defense Force in southern Lebanon, could not have received praise from a better source.

The IDF chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, said this week that the Islamic organization has strong fighters.

Although he added that Israel's soldiers are better, Shahak's statement reflected the high level of respect felt by many in the IDF for the military skills of Israel's bitter enemy across the Lebanese border.

It is an enemy that has cost much Israeli blood.

As a result of its hit-and-run skirmishes — and its latest favorite tactic, roadside bombs — Hezbollah has claimed the lives of 33 Israeli soldiers since the start of the year.

At least four Israelis were killed this week alone.

The continuous war of attrition in southern Lebanon — which has been called the Israeli version of the Vietnam War — has renewed an internal debate over the need for the IDF to maintain a presence in Lebanon in order to defend Israel's northern communities.

The debate has cut across the traditional party lines of Israeli politics.

In an unusual alliance, Labor Knesset member Yossi Beilin is in the same camp as Ariel Sharon, the hawkish infrastructure minister who orchestrated the controversial invasion of Lebanon in 1982, by calling for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

In contrast, the leader of the left-wing Meretz Party, Knesset member Yossi Sarid, maintains that Israel should not withdraw until it reaches a comprehensive agreement with Syria, the real power-broker in Lebanon.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai declared this week that the IDF would not make a unilateral withdrawal. Neither wants to take the chance that Hezbollah would start launching raids on northern Israel the day after the IDF pulls out.

Israel created the nine-mile-wide security zone in southern Lebanon in 1985 to protect Israel's northern flank from terror attacks. But by a curious twist of history, that military decision also created Hezbollah's main reason for existence — to drive what it described as the Israeli occupiers from Lebanese soil.

Hezbollah was born in 1982, the same year that Israel launched Operation Peace for Galilee, its invasion of Lebanon aimed at driving the Palestine Liberation Organization out of the country.

Hezbollah drew its followers from the Shi'ites in southern Lebanon, traditionally one of the country's poorest communities.

'We ignored Amal'

Prior to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the main Shi'ite organization was Amal, a secular, socially minded movement that regarded the Palestinian exiles in Lebanon as rivals.

Because of this, Amal was at the time a natural ally for Israel.

Amal "very much wanted to develop the area and did not want the PLO to return to its power bases" after Israel drove the Palestinians out of southern Lebanon, Clinton Bailey, a former adviser on Shi'ite affairs at the Ministry of Defense, said in an interview.

The paths of Israel and Amal diverged when Israel installed Lebanese Christian commander Sa'ad Haddad as the warlord in charge of the Christian enclave in southern Lebanon. "We ignored Amal all the way," said Bailey, who was at the time Israel's liaison officer with Amal in Lebanon.

A small Amal splinter group known as Islamic Amal, which had consistently opposed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, gradually formed.

Islamic Amal later became known as Hezbollah, Arabic for the Party of God. Unlike the pro-Syrian Amal, Hezbollah derives its power from Iran, both in terms of arms and spiritual support. The Iranian-backed militia lures recruits with the promise that they will get on the fast track to heaven if they fall in battle.

This appeal to religious fervor, along with the steady flow of

armaments that arrive from Iran with tacit Syrian approval, has made Hezbollah an implacable enemy.

The depth of this fervor was on display last weekend, when the leader of Hezbollah, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, offered a public reaction to the death of his 18-year-old son, Hadi, in a clash with the IDF.

"I thank Allah for having made my son a martyr," Nasrallah said at a rally in Beirut. He appeared to be completely impassive.

The reaction to Nasrallah's death reflected the deep differences between Israel and its enemies to the north — differences that are not only military and political, but also cultural.

The IDF, which faces deteriorating morale among some of its soldiers, is confronted with a belligerent, unified movement in which the life of the individual is secondary to the good of the community.

Nasrallah was overwhelmed with thousands of messages congratulating him on the death of his son, a phenomenon that Western observers find difficult to understand.

"Israel's *raison d'être* is the preservation of life," Na'im Kasseem, the deputy secretary-general of Hezbollah once explained, "whereas ours is the preservation of our principles. Because what good is a life of humiliation?"

Internally, Hezbollah faces its own opposition, but Israel has not gained from Hezbollah's divisions.

The organization recently faced the opposition of Subhi Tufaili, the former secretary-general of the organization, who in July declared a "war of the hungry" against the central government in Beirut, which he said had adopted a policy aimed at starving the Shi'ite community in the south.

While the rivalry between Tufaili and Nasrallah has not yet created an open rift in Hezbollah, events are moving in that direction. Hezbollah's response to its internal conflicts has been to intensify its war against Israel.

No one in Israel knows whether Hezbollah would lay down its arms once Israel withdrew from Lebanon. But given the depth of the movement's fervor, there seems to be more than a grain of logic to the belief that Hezbollah would not rest until it has entered Jerusalem.

When asked last week what would happen if Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon, Nasrallah replied, "Everything is possible." □

Senate grills Clinton nominee on U.S. policy toward Jerusalem

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Clinton administration's policy on Jerusalem came under sustained bipartisan attack this week at the confirmation hearing for the man slated to hold the top U.S. Middle East policy post.

From the hearing's outset on Thursday, Martin Indyk fended off questions about President Clinton's rejection of congressional efforts to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Indyk, the current U.S. ambassador to Israel, is credited with crafting Clinton's response to the legislation.

But in spite of the sharp policy disagreement between the administration and Congress over Jerusalem, no senators raised opposition to Indyk's nomination, all but assuring his confirmation.

The committee plans to vote on the nomination as early as next week. It would then go to the entire Senate for confirmation.

Indyk did not unveil any new U.S. policies at the hearing, although he did confirm that the United States has begun a dialogue with the Palestinians to craft a policy to

crack down on the terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian-controlled areas.

Indyk's confirmation hearings came a week after U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's trip to the Middle East, in which she said she was "not going to come back here to tread water."

When asked about continued U.S. involvement to get the Israeli-Palestinian peace process back on track, Indyk said the United States would not disengage from the process.

He cited next week's scheduled meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials at the State Department.

Because Indyk is originally from Australia, the Senate committee broke with the tradition of inviting the home-state senator to make the introduction of the nominee.

Instead, Sens. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) stepped forward to present Indyk.

Ironically, it was Lieberman, along with Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), who urged the committee to raise the administration's Jerusalem policy.

Indyk became the first Jew to serve as ambassador to Israel when he assumed the post in 1995. He would also be the first Jew to serve in the assistant secretary post, which has customarily been held by diplomats with experience in Arab countries.

In a move that set the tone for the hour and a half hearing, the senators in their introductions to the committee called on Indyk to move the embassy. A 1994 U.S. law requires such planning to have begun in anticipation of a move by May 31, 1999. The president could delay the move in the interest of national security.

Lieberman touts embassy in Jerusalem

"I recognize that Ambassador Indyk is supporting the policy of the administration, but it is my hope that as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, he may one day soon have the honor of participating in the grand opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem," Lieberman said in his introduction, echoing comments made by Moynihan.

"It was our profound hope, clearly across party lines, that this legislation would lay to rest some of the most vexing issues regarding American policy toward Israel," he added.

"Unfortunately, not only has the State Department failed to implement the law, but its representatives have regularly sought to stonewall further progress toward recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in these halls."

Indyk wasted little time responding to the embassy issue.

"The administration is trying to walk a very fine line between the understandable desire of the Senate to see concrete actions to implement the legislation and the president's strongly held view that while the law must be upheld, nothing should be done to disrupt the effort to put the peace process back on track," he said, noting that the current controversy over families moving into Ras al-Amud reflects the sensitive nature of the Jerusalem issue.

In addition to answering questions about the embassy relocation law, Indyk was also called upon to defend the administration's opposition to the current version of the State Department authorization bill that would give parents the option to have "Jerusalem, Israel" recorded as their child's place of birth on official documents.

Current U.S. policy refers only to "Jerusalem." Indyk said this would "complicate and make more difficult" efforts to restart the peace process. □

Flap over mikvah prompts threat of Conservative boycott of hotel

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Tensions between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in Israel have found a new battleground — the mikvah.

And Diaspora Jews once again have entered the fray.

Dozens of Conservative rabbis and congregants in the United States have threatened to boycott the Dan chain of hotels in Israel on the grounds that its sole Jerusalem-based hotel, the five-star Dan Pearl, is insensitive to non-Orthodox Jews.

The threats come in the wake of the Dan Pearl's refusal to permit the Conservative movement, known in Israel as the Masorti movement, to use its mikvah, or ritual bath, when performing conversions.

The hotel has also stipulated that its synagogue be used only in accordance with Orthodox law, meaning that men and women may not sit together and egalitarian services are prohibited.

The threatened boycott comes at a time of heightened religious tensions in Israel, where the non-Orthodox movements have been calling for legal recognition.

Much of the current controversy stems from the lack of recognition of non-Orthodox converts in Israel.

The Dan Pearl is the only mainstream Jerusalem hotel — as opposed to some small hotels that cater to haredi, or fervently Orthodox, customers — with its own mikvah.

Both the mikvah and the synagogue are owned by the hotel but administered by the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate, which also provides kashrut certificates to hotels throughout Israel.

The rabbinate has threatened to withdraw its rabbinical stamp of approval from the hotel if it accedes to non-Orthodox demands.

'Tragedy of state-religion relations'

Rabbi Ehud Bandel, who serves as president of the Conservative/Masorti movement in Israel, said the hotel's policies are a symptom "of the tragedy of state-religion relations in Israel and the power and monopoly of the rabbinate."

Bandel said he is pleased by the concern being shown by his American counterparts, who were alerted to the matter by the Israel-based Conservative Rabbi Andrew Sacks, who sent an alert out over the Internet.

But, Bandel added, "We never called for a boycott."

Stressing that all major hotels are subject to the rabbinate's supervision and may therefore have similar policies, Bandel said, "The Dan Pearl may not be the address to direct anger and frustration."

Instead, he said, "pressure should be put on the government and the Knesset to break the monopoly" of the Orthodox rabbinate, which controls all aspects of religious life.

The movement had decided to use the mikvah at the Dan Pearl for reasons of convenience, according to Sacks.

He said the movement has a mikvah of its own at Kibbutz Hanaton in the north, a three-hour drive from Jerusalem.

"Many of our potential converts don't have cars and coming to Jerusalem is much easier."

Although their conversions are not recognized in Israel, the Conservative movement converts between 100 and 150 Israelis each year.

"The fact that the government does not recognize

our conversions does not negate our right to perform them," said Rabbi Einat Ramon, a spokeswoman for the Conservative movement.

"By not doing the conversions, or performing marriages or circumcisions, we would be giving in to Orthodox pressures."

Sacks said the Conservative movement had used the mikvah at the Dan Pearl to perform three conversions in June.

But problems arose, he said, when the movement attempted to convert an adult and six children in August.

"We had just converted the first person, an adult, when Rav Katz, one of the hotel's rabbis, demanded to know whether we were Reform."

Katz "began yelling at the children and then put his hand on the faucet to empty the mikvah," Sacks said.

"We told him that if he wanted us to leave, he would have to call the police. He said that Conservative Jews don't belong to Klal Yisrael," the Jewish people, added Sacks.

"He left, but informed the management that we could never again use the mikvah."

The Conservative rabbis quickly converted the six children and filed a complaint with the hotel management.

A week later, Sacks met with Dan Pearl manager Rafi May.

During that meeting, according to Sacks, the manager apologized for the incident, as well as for the fact that the hotel's mikvah could not be used for conversions in the future.

"Then he introduced Rabbi Eli Routenberg, the hotel's chief mashgiach," or kashrut supervisor, who agreed that "Conservative Jews aren't part of Klal Yisrael," she said.

Sacks added that he decided to share the incident over the Internet after May refused to fire the two rabbis.

In his Internet message, he wrote, "It was unthinkable that people with such a view, who held in contempt so many of the hotel clientele, would be employed by the hotel."

No one at the hotel would be interviewed on the matter, but in an official written response, Simcha Weiss, general manager of the entire Dan chain, said:

While every guest "is welcome to make personal use of the all hotel's facilities, including the mikvah," he said, "we do not permit the mikvah to be used for ceremonies."

He added that "the Dan Pearl hotel acts precisely in line with all other hotels in Israel" on kashrut and religious matters.

Rabbi threatens 'to rethink our use of your hotel'

Although Sacks said he did not call for a boycott of the Dan chain in his Internet message, he encouraged his readers to share their disapproval through faxes and e-mail messages.

Many of those who contacted the hotel said they may avoid using the Dan chain.

Rabbi Leonard Rosenthal, of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue in San Diego, wrote that he and his congregation "will have to rethink our use of your hotel, and indeed, any hotels in the Dan chain.

"Why would anyone want to stay in a hotel in which all of the facilities are not available to them and where they have been explicitly told that they are not wanted and not even part of Klal Yisrael?"

In contrast to Sacks' claim that the hotel has received about 200 complaints — a claim he backs up with a stack of faxes and a long list of e-mail messages — a spokesman for the Dan chain said it had received "just one or two such messages and faxes." □

Jewish families leave house in eastern Jerusalem neighborhood*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The United States is applauding a compromise that Israel reached with three Jewish families living in Ras al-Amud.

But Palestinian officials were far from pleased.

The families left voluntarily, but 10 yeshiva students stayed to maintain a Jewish presence there, according to a news report.

The government minister appointed to handle the matter, Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, voiced satisfaction after reaching the agreement with Dr. Irving Moskowitz, the U.S. developer who leased the structure to the families.

“What is most important is that we reached an agreement and don’t have to remove the (families) by force,” Kahalani told Israel Radio.

The compromise saved Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from the politically volatile step of having to forcibly remove the families. Right-wing members of Netanyahu’s coalition were already warning that such an action would bring down the government.

The compromise was announced as the High Court of Justice was hearing a petition filed by Moskowitz to bar the government from evicting the families by force.

During a court recess, representatives from the two sides informed the presiding justice, Theodor Orr, that a behind-the-scenes agreement had been reached, and the hearing was suspended.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin described the compromise as “good news,” but expressed the hope that the status quo in Jerusalem would not change.

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat told reporters in the Gaza Strip that the deal was a “trick, not more than that.”

Other Palestinian officials warned of new violence.

Indeed, Palestinian rioters Thursday threw rocks and gasoline bombs in the neighborhood. □

IDF soldier killed in Lebanon amid calls for Israeli pullout*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli soldier was killed and three others wounded during heavy exchanges between Israeli troops and Hezbollah gunmen in southern Lebanon.

Lt. Ayal Shimoni of Kibbutz Ashdot Ya’acov Me’uhad was killed, and two other soldiers lightly wounded, when their tank was hit by a missile fired by Hezbollah during a clash Thursday in the eastern sector of the security zone.

Another Israeli soldier was lightly wounded Thursday by mortar fire at an Israel Defense Force outpost in the western sector of the security zone.

Israel retaliated with air strikes and shelling of Hezbollah targets. Nine Lebanese civilians were reported to have been wounded in the clashes.

The death brought the total number of Israelis killed in clashes in Lebanon in recent weeks to 22.

The recent rise in Israeli fatalities has renewed debate in Israel over the army’s presence in the security zone.

Thursday’s clashes followed two days of relative quiet in southern Lebanon.

Four other Israeli soldiers died in separate clashes last Friday and Sunday with Hezbollah gunmen.

On Sept. 5, 12 Israeli naval commandos were killed in a raid on Lebanon in what was the IDF’s heaviest

casualty count in more than 12 years in a single military operation.

And five Israeli soldiers were killed when they were trapped in a brush fire following an Aug. 28 battle with members of the Shi’ite Amal movement. □

Netanyahu speech to UJA targets terrorism, not religious pluralism*By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Security, not religious pluralism, dominated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech this week before a delegation of major American Jewish donors.

In an address Monday to members of the United Jewish Appeal’s Prime Minister’s Mission, Netanyahu focused on the obstacles standing in the way of peace in the region.

He reiterated his stance that the Palestinian Authority must crack down on terrorism and that trust and compromise will be necessary for peace to succeed.

Only a small portion of the prime minister’s speech was devoted to the issue of religious pluralism, a fact that appeared to disturb many of the donors.

He told the gathering that “the most important thing to achieve is peace among ourselves. Jews around the world are all part of a whole, a part of one people.”

The pluralism issue jumped to the fore of Diaspora concerns after the Knesset took a first step earlier this year toward passing controversial conversion legislation that would codify Orthodox control over conversions performed in Israel.

Netanyahu subsequently created a committee, headed by Finance Minister Ya’acov Ne’eman, to find a compromise acceptable to the three major Jewish streams. But the committee has not yet succeeded.

American Jews have been cautiously eying the progress of the conversion bill, with some so upset over the matter that they have withheld their donations to Israel.

Netanyahu did not tell the UJA donors this week when he expected the Ne’eman committee to issue its recommendations.

Scenes of violent confrontations between fervently Orthodox Jews and liberal Jews seeking to pray at the Western Wall on Shavuot and Tisha B’Av have also focused attention on whether Israeli officials are doing enough to foster a climate of religious pluralism.

In response to a question about what the Israeli government is doing to ensure the rights of all Jews to pray at the Western Wall and other holy sites, Netanyahu said that “some of the same people” who are trying to find a solution to the conversion crisis are working on this issue. He did not elaborate.

Regarding the conversion controversy, Netanyahu reiterated his belief that it was the Reform and Conservative movements that had rocked the boat by filing petitions before the Supreme Court.

Following Netanyahu’s address, Irv Wein, chairman of the 1998 federation campaign in Chicago, expressed dismay at what he termed the prime minister’s “evasion of the issues.”

“Instead of saying how the government will ensure that all Jews can pray at the Kotel, he reminded us that he has appointed a committee to study the conversion legislation.”

What Netanyahu failed to address, Wein said, “are the increasingly aggressive tactics of the ultra-Orthodox against non-Orthodox Jews.”

Unless the Israeli government does more to ensure religious pluralism, Wein warned, many American Jews will stop giving to UJA campaigns. □