



Daily News Bulletin

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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel deploys Patriots

Israel deployed four batteries of Patriot anti-ballistic missiles in the Negev Desert.

The move came amid fears that Iraq may launch an attack against Israel, as it did during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when Baghdad fired 39 Scud missiles at the Jewish state. [Page 4]

Israel expects notification

Israel expects to be notified in advance if the United States launches an attack on Iraq, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said in an interview with CNN.

The comment came as officials from Russia, France and the Arab world attempted to mediate an end to the crisis over Iraq's unwillingness to permit U.N. weapons inspections.

Clinton budget proposal hailed

Jewish groups hailed President Clinton's budget proposal that would restore food stamps to refugees and other legal immigrants.

But activists criticized the part of the budget that would reduce funds for low-income senior housing. [Page 1]

Palestinians preparing for war

The Palestinian Authority has been stockpiling weapons and building fortified positions in the event of an armed confrontation with Israel, according to news reports.

The Israeli media cited assessments within the country's security establishment that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat would opt for violence if he became convinced that the political process had reached a dead end.

Clashes continue in Bethlehem

Israeli troops and Palestinian demonstrators clashed for a fourth straight day near Bethlehem.

The troops fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters, causing 20 students at a nearby girls' school to be treated for tear gas inhalation.

During the demonstrations, Israeli and Palestinian security forces briefly trained their weapons on each other, but they later backed off from an armed confrontation.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Jewish refugees, immigrants benefit from Clinton budget plan

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish refugees and legal immigrants emerged among the big winners when President Clinton unveiled his proposed \$1.73 trillion budget this week.

Aiming to fulfill his promise to "fix" the 1996 welfare law that cut federal benefits to legal immigrants, Clinton proposed a \$535 million food stamps program.

But for the second year in a row, the low-income elderly appear to be the losers in the opening round of the annual battle over the federal budget.

As much of Washington focused on Clinton's move to submit a balanced budget for fiscal year 1999 and on the larger ticket items, a closer look at the nitty-gritty of the annual White House spending plan sheds light on many programs closely watched by Jewish activists. Among the issues Clinton's budget proposes:

- Increasing U.S. direct aid to Palestinian self-rule areas from \$75 million to \$100 million;
- Allotting \$3 billion in U.S. aid to Israel, although the level could be reduced if an Israeli plan to cut U.S. economic assistance goes into effect;
- Reducing U.S. aid to Israel to resettle refugees from \$80 million to \$70 million;
- Funneling \$24 million over four years to an international fund to aid the victims of the Holocaust.

Diana Aviv, director of the Washington Action Office of the Council of Jewish Federations, said of Clinton's budget proposal: "Overall, our community will be very pleased with the budget."

Under the food stamps plan, refugees who do not become citizens could collect food stamps for seven years, up from the current five years.

Most Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union come to the United States as refugees, which enables them to receive special benefits, because they are assumed to be fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution. After seven years, refugees who do not become citizens are treated like other legal immigrants.

The 1996 welfare reform law eliminated food stamps for all non-refugee, legal immigrants. Clinton's proposed budget restores food stamps to all needy legal immigrants with children. It also restores food stamps to disabled and elderly immigrants who were in the country prior to August 1996.

If successful, the plan would restore the last remaining major welfare benefit to some 700,000 of the most vulnerable legal immigrants who were in the United States when welfare reform became law in August 1996.

Some tens of thousands of Jewish newcomers are expected to benefit from the proposed changes.

Under laws enacted last year to counter the original welfare reform legislation, elderly and disabled legal immigrants can collect Supplemental Security Income and have access to Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for low-income people.

While the measure has some support in Congress, its passage is far from certain. Republican lawmakers immediately attacked the entire budget package, and a lengthy budget battle is likely to ensue.

Clinton's budget would pay for the changes using some of the \$180 million in savings generated by administrative reforms in the food stamp program. Despite her

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israelis concerned about talks

A sizable majority of Israelis are concerned about the deadlock in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, according to a poll conducted by Tel Aviv University.

Among the 500 Israelis surveyed, 83 percent said they were "fairly worried" or "very worried" about the continued inability of negotiators to move the peace process forward.

Palestinian trade increased

There was an increase during 1997 in the scope of trade moving from the self-rule areas to Israel, Israel's Cabinet was told.

The number of Palestinian businessmen and merchants entering Israel doubled from the previous year and currently stands at 12,000.

The number of trucks entering Israel from the self-rule areas last year reached 15,000, up from 12,000 in 1996.

Olmert holds talks in Moscow

The mayor of Jerusalem conferred in Moscow with the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church about a pilgrimage expected to bring some 2 million Russians to Israel between 1999 and 2001 to mark the 2,000th anniversary of Christianity.

In addition to Patriarch Alexei II, Ehud Olmert met with his Moscow counterpart, Yuri Luzhkov, to discuss cooperation between the two capitals.

Amir declared hostile witness

The brother of Yitzhak Rabin's convicted assassin was declared a hostile witness in the trial of Margalit Har-Shefi, who is charged with knowing about Yigal Amir's plot to assassinate the prime minister but failing to notify the authorities.

Prosecutors asked for the ruling after testimony that Hagai Amir gave at Har-Shefi's trial contradicted statements he made during police questioning and at his own trial for conspiracy to murder Rabin.



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praise for the proposal, Aviv of CJF cautioned that immigrants still cannot benefit from other federal programs, including low-income energy assistance and low-income elderly housing.

While the budget goes a long way in fulfilling Clinton's promise to fix welfare reform, it does not do the same for low-income elderly. Activists for these individuals are lambasting Clinton's plan.

"This is not a program at all. It's patently absurd," said Mark Olshan, director of senior housing and services at B'nai B'rith.

The budget proposes spending \$159 million next year on construction for new, low-income elderly housing developments.

Last year Congress stepped in to increase Clinton's proposed \$300 million to \$645 million. Olshan hopes that Congress will support elderly housing again.

"To say that we are meeting the needs of the low-income elderly in this country is a joke. It's laughable," said Olshan, who heads B'nai B'rith's network of 34 housing projects, which serve about 6,000 people.

Under Clinton's proposal, each state would receive a share of the \$159 million.

With such little funding, he said, California alone would only be able to initiate one new housing project.

He noted that a B'nai B'rith project that opened last week in North Hollywood, Calif., filled up within days. "We turned away hundreds of applicants," he said.

Other Jewish activists praised parts of the budget that they follow closely.

The Anti-Defamation League commended Clinton for proposing a 17 percent increase in civil rights enforcement funding from \$516 million to \$602 million. This includes programs to combat discrimination in housing, education and employment.

One of Clinton's centerpiece proposals, to provide \$22 billion for child care over five years, also drew widespread support in the Jewish community.

Many Jewish preschoolers would qualify for low- and middle-income assistance programs, Aviv said. □

Alleged Nazi collaborator to lose Canadian citizenship

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Lawyers for an accused Nazi collaborator who lives in the Montreal area have told Canada's Justice Department that they will not contest efforts to rescind his citizenship.

Denaturalization is the first step in the Canadian government's plan to deport Mamertas Roland Maciukas, who was allegedly a member of the 2nd Lithuanian Police Battalion. A killing unit that worked with the Nazi SS, the battalion was responsible for the murders of tens of thousands of Jews, partisans and suspected communists.

Maciukas is one of 14 suspected Nazi war criminals and collaborators that Canada has brought denaturalization proceedings against during the last few years.

Only one other suspect has previously chosen not to fight denaturalization.

After being stripped of his citizenship, Ladislaus Csizsik-Csatory, a former officer in the Royal Hungarian Police who helped the Nazis round up Jews for deportation to Auschwitz, left Canada voluntarily just as the government was preparing to deport him.

Three suspects from the government's list of 14 have died while their cases were pending, and the remaining nine suspects are still awaiting court action.

Meanwhile, the government has announced plans to name more suspects in the coming months. One suspect expected to be named is Joseph Kitsilaetis, who like Maciukas is allegedly a former member of the Lithuanian Police Battalion.

Kitsilaetis, who settled in Canada after the war, moved to the United States in 1962 but returned to Canada in 1985 after the Nazi-hunting U.S. Office of Special Investigations began proceedings against him.

Activists held a demonstration last summer outside his house, hoping to bring attention to his continued presence in Canada.

"We really wonder why Kitsilaetis is still here, unhampered and unfettered by the judicial process," said Bernie Farber, national director of community relations for the Canadian Jewish Congress. □

JEWISH WORLD

Collector's heirs ask museum to return Nazi-looted painting

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — The heirs of a prominent Jewish art collector are seeking to recover a Cubist masterpiece that was plundered by the Nazis and is now hanging in a major art museum in Paris.

The 1914 painting by Georges Braque, "The Guitar Player," was looted by the Nazis in 1940, along with dozens of others, from the mansion of Alphonse Kann in the Paris suburb of Saint Germain en Laye.

The controversy over the painting is just one of several involving art works plundered by the Nazis — last month, the state of New York prevented the Museum of Modern Art from sending two paintings by the Austrian painter Egon Schiele back to Austria after two Jewish families claimed that they had been looted from them.

Kann, a collector of 20th-century art, had already fled to London when his collection was looted. He died in 1948.

Didier Schulman, a curator at the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris, where the Braque now hangs, said in an interview that the painting was a major work, but could not say how much it was worth today. He also denied that the museum was trying to conceal the fact that the work had been plundered.

"We bought it in good faith. As soon as we bought it, we did some research and we realized it had belonged to Alphonse Kann. We mentioned that in our catalogue," Schulman said.

As all transactions with the Nazis were declared null and void by the Allies in 1943, a 1942 exchange of the painting between the Nazis and an art dealer was illegal — and would seem to imply that the Braque should be returned to its rightful owners.

But Schulman said that the museum still has to "determine exactly what happened to it between 1942 and 1948 before returning it."

What happened to the painting during that period is still unclear, but recent investigations by the Pompidou Center and Kann's heirs have shed some light on a series of sales by brokers and collectors.

It appears that in 1942 the Nazis exchanged "The Guitar Player" — along with works by Matisse, Leger, Picasso and de Chirico — for an "Adoration of the Magi" by a German master. The Nazis considered most modern art "degenerate" and usually bartered such works for art that corresponded to their Aryan ideal, often trading several modern works for a single painting by a Dutch or German master.

The Paris art dealer who received the painting in exchange for the "Adoration of the Magi" then sold the Braque, which had several owners before emerging at a 1948 exhibit with the mention "Collection of Andre Lefevre."

Upon Lefevre's death, it was sold at auction in 1965 to Heinz Berggruen, a German-American collector living in Paris. A Braque by the same name, but painted in 1911, hangs in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1976, Berggruen lent the painting to the Pompidou Center, which bought it in 1981 for some \$1.5 million with a loan from the French government.

Kann's heirs have already recovered one Cubist painting from the Pompidou Center, "Landscape" by Albert Gleizes. It was looted from Kann's home at the same time as the Braque, but was returned to France from Germany right after the war.

Like hundreds of other looted works, it was temporarily entrusted to the French state museum network until its owner could be located.

The Kann family was able to prove ownership of the Gleizes after a lengthy search, which included delving into the Foreign Ministry archives, and the painting was returned to them in the summer of 1997.

But several works from Kann's collection are still missing.

The French state museum directorate was criticized in a 1996 report by the country's state spending watchdog for failing to try to seek out the owners of looted works.

The museums holding the works ran a spate of exhibits last spring in the hope that the owners would step forward and claim them. □

Euro firms plan trade with Iran

European oil companies are poised to defy U.S. sanctions aimed at curbing foreign investment in Iran's oil and gas industry. Such action would not only bolster Iran's economy — and, potentially, its nuclear weapons program — but also undermine American policy.

European companies are reportedly eager to strike deals with Iran as soon as possible in a bid to pre-empt potential U.S. commercial involvement in the event of a diplomatic breakthrough between Washington and Tehran. European and Iranian sources confirmed that European companies are close to striking deals with Iran in the oil and gas sectors.

Lawyer backtracks in Papon case

A lawyer for the plaintiffs in the case against French war crimes suspect Maurice Papon abandoned his demand that the judge step down.

Arno Klarsfeld last week called for the judge to remove himself because he had an uncle whose wife's family was deported to their deaths at Auschwitz while Papon served as a high-ranking bureaucrat for France's pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

Bubis addresses anti-Semitism

The number of anti-Semites in Germany has not grown in recent years, but those who dislike Jews are less likely to conceal their views, according to the leader of Germany's Jewish community.

Ignatz Bubis said in a radio interview that about one-third of the German people harbor some negative feelings toward Jews.

Nationalists form new group

Several Russian nationalist groups united to form a political movement with the goal of building a political base for the Russian Orthodox Church. The Union of Orthodox Citizens, according to its manifesto, will espouse conservative and nationalist views.

Church's anti-Semitism attacked

A Russian Orthodox priest accused his church of harboring "endemic anti-Semitism."

Father Sergei Hackel also said at an academic conference in St. Petersburg that interfaith dialogue has been hampered by the persistence within the church of the myth of Jewish ritual murders.

U.S. rabbi named to U.K. temple

Rabbi Mark Winer is expected to be appointed senior clergyman at the West London Synagogue, the flag-carrier of Britain's Reform movement.

Winer, 54, of White Plains, N.Y., will succeed the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn, the former leader of the British Reform movement.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Israel readies for attack but doubts Iraq will strike***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis are hearing conflicting opinions over the latest crisis with Iraq — and no matter what the experts say, it appears they are preparing for the worst-case scenario.

On the one hand, there are the comments by Richard Butler, head of the U.N. weapons inspections team. Butler's remarks that Iraq had enough biological material "to blow away Tel Aviv" captured banner headlines in the Israeli press and brought back disturbing memories of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Then, 39 Scud missiles were fired on Israel, and Israelis spent many nights in sealed rooms and shelters.

But according to experts like Israel's former army chief of staff, Dan Shomron, and Reserve Gen. Avihu Bin-Nun, the commander of the Israeli air force during the Gulf War, the chances for an Iraqi missile attack on Israel now are "very, very slim."

As the United States mustered support this week in Europe and the Middle East for possible military action against Iraq, which has snubbed the U.N. weapons inspections teams, Baghdad had yet to threaten the Jewish state.

The circumstances this time, said Bin-Nun, are different.

There is no international coalition for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to try to break up by provoking Israel to attack.

In addition, Iraq's military capability is more limited than it was seven years ago, and Saddam realizes that an Israeli counterattack might be too difficult to endure.

In an effort to sway world public opinion, Iraqi spokesmen bent over backward to describe Butler's comments regarding a possible attack on the Jewish state as a deliberate American provocation.

The U.N. official "chose Tel Aviv," wrote the Iraqi government-controlled Al-Jumhuriya, "because he knows that this will move the USA, under the pressures of the Zionist lobby, to attack Iraq."

Other Israeli military experts echoed the comments of Bin-Nun.

The American response also appears to be different this time.

In 1991, Israel, under pressure from the Bush administration, refrained from responding to the missiles, all armed with conventional warheads. The attacks caused property damage and only two blast-related deaths.

At a news conference held over the weekend in Jerusalem after separate meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, "Nothing will shake the iron-clad commitment of the U.S. when it comes to the security of Israel."

Albright would not respond to a question about whether the United States had asked Israel to refrain from responding to an Iraq attack, but she indicated that Washington would not oppose Israeli military action.

"It is obviously always up to each country to determine its own way of defending itself," Albright said.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu stressed that Israel alone would decide how to defend itself.

"We will respond as needed, to protect Israel and fortify its national security," he said.

"We are the only ones making the decision," said the Israeli premier.

This week, heads of the defense establishment tried to reassure the Israeli public that even in the unlikely event of renewed missile attacks, the home front was much better prepared than in the past, and that anti-missile rockets were much more effective now at intercepting Scud missiles.

Four batteries of U.S.-produced Patriot anti-ballistic missiles were deployed in the Negev in southern Israel on Monday in a move described by the army spokesman as part of "routine training drills."

This came, even as some members of Knesset criticized the policy of the Netanyahu government to keep its preparations vague in order to reduce panic.

Despite these reassurances, Israelis are facing some troubling reports.

Prior to the Gulf War, every Israeli was given a gas mask in case of a chemical attack.

Only after the war was over was it learned that had a chemical attack taken place, the masks would not have done much good.

And no matter what the experts and politicians say, some Israelis aren't prepared to take any chances.

"Seven years ago, we didn't think twice," said Tamar Golan of the port city of Haifa, "as soon as the war broke out we packed a few belongings and our 3-year-old daughter and went on a long trip overseas.

"If need be," she said this week, "we would do the same. None of us want to be heroes."

There also appeared to be evidence that, as critics are charging, Israel is not fully prepared for an Iraqi attack.

At least one municipal official charged this week that some 300,000 pupils lacked proper shelters.

Israel's Education Ministry confirmed that there was a problem, but added, without elaborating, that it had "contingency plans how to act in case of emergency."

Reuven Pedatzur, a military analyst for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, said, "We are not better prepared, and if chemical warheads hit Tel Aviv, the casualties will be much higher than 300 to 400 people."

Just to be on the safe side, however, concerned citizens lined up in front of the gas mask distribution stations to make sure that their masks were still in working order.

It was also reported that the United States had agreed, in principle, to send Israel vaccines against biological agents, including Anthrax, that Iraq is believed to possess.

However, experts such as Eran Dolev, who headed the medical corps during the Gulf War, explained this week that such inoculations have their side effects and should therefore be used only on limited segments of the population who possess weaker immune systems — such as the elderly.

Meanwhile, as most Israelis weighed the possibility of missile attacks, a few saw a business opportunity.

The Amos Gazit firm is offering a protection suit that is made of several layers of film and strong cloth. The company, claiming that the suit is totally germ-proof, is asking between \$600 to \$900 per suit. □