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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Progress on peace talks?

Yasser Arafat signaled he could accept the latest Israeli proposal to include a nature preserve in the additional 13 percent of West Bank lands that Israel would pull back from under a proposed American plan. U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross met with the Palestinian leader in Oslo as the United States was weighing whether to launch a new round of diplomacy aimed at advancing the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Oslo anniversary 'not a funeral'

Israeli and Palestinian officials attended a dinner in Norway's capital to mark the fifth anniversary of the initialing of the Oslo accords.

The officials — including former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres — denied that they were attending a funeral for the peace process, which has been deadlocked for more than 17 months.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not attending the two days of events to mark the initialing, which paved the way for an official signing ceremony a month later on the White House lawn.

Premier is firm on covenant

Israel is still demanding that the Palestinians revoke the anti-Israel clauses of their covenant as a condition for a further West Bank redeployment, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a special Knesset session.

His comments came amid press reports indicating the prime minister had softened his stand regarding the covenant. Legislators had been called back from their summer recess to discuss the stalemated peace process.

Security Council discusses raids

The U.N. Security Council ended an informal session by saying it needed more information before considering any action regarding last week's U.S. bombing raid on Sudan.

Arab representatives at the United Nations are calling for a U.N. fact-finding mission to probe U.S. charges that the plant it targeted in Sudan was manufacturing chemical weapons.

The representatives are not seeking a similar probe into the U.S. bombings of suspected terrorist training camps in Afghanistan.

NEWS ANALYSIS

U.S. follows Israeli stance on terror, but is public ready?

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States took a page out of the Israeli anti-terrorist playbook when President Clinton ordered attacks last week on paramilitary training camps in Afghanistan and a chemical weapons plant in Sudan.

In speeches strikingly similar to those by Israeli politicians delivered after their own anti-terrorist campaigns, senior American officials have launched an effort to brace the public for a cycle of terrorist violence.

But by all accounts, the American people are ill prepared for a war of attrition against terror.

"We all have to understand that this is not a war that is easily won or ended," Adam Garfinkle, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, wrote in an essay the day after the U.S. attacks.

"We will be tested by terrorism," Garfinkle wrote, "so long as we are who we are."

The cruise missile attack on targets associated with the Saudi Arabian-born Osama bin Laden marked the first time that American forces launched a military operation directly in response to a terrorist attack since Ronald Reagan ordered strikes against Libya.

But after the \$79 million price tag is paid and the finger-wagging threats from the White House, State Department, Pentagon and Congress subside, U.S. officials will be left struggling with one fundamental question: Did the offensive against bin Laden succeed?

If Israel's experiences are any indication, only time will tell.

The 1996 assassination of Yehiya Ayyash with a booby-trapped cellular phone, widely attributed to Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, was a short-lived victory. Hamas terrorists extracted a heavy price from the Jewish state for killing the man known as "The Engineer." Four revenge attacks in seven days killed dozens and changed the course of Israel's political history.

In the end, Israel fell far short of its goal of preventing future attacks by eliminating the man who literally built the bombs that killed Israelis.

But other attacks, widely credited to Israel, have yielded better results.

Since the 1995 assassination of Fathi Shikaki, head of the Palestine Islamic Jihad, the group has carried out fewer attacks and is not as serious a player in the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Meanwhile, last week's attack may have more in common with Israel than previously thought.

Israeli sources told the London Sunday Times that U.S. forces were able to precisely target bin Laden until just hours before the missile strike.

Quoting unidentified Israeli sources, the newspaper reported that bin Laden's location was known to within 10 yards while he was using his satellite phone.

However, the device was disconnected hours before the strikes, and bin Laden, apparently fearing an attack, fled the terrorist training camp in Afghanistan.

The report could not be independently confirmed.

U.S. officials did say bin Laden canceled a high-level meeting of Islamic terrorists and was not at one of the camps leveled in the American attack.

Yet Washington maintains that the Saudi financier was not targeted for assassination. The fallout from the air strikes has many wondering when, and if, bin Laden will

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel increases precautions

Israel stepped up security at its airports following threats of revenge attacks for last week's U.S. strikes against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. The security measures came as Israeli newspapers ran front-page stories that the group led by alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden is threatening to attack U.S. and Israeli passenger planes.

Premier won't remove settlers

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected opposition calls to evacuate Jewish settlers from Hebron after a rabbi was murdered in his home last week by a suspected Palestinian intruder.

The premier also criticized distinctions being made by Palestinian officials between the murders of settlers and other Israelis. "The blood of Jews cannot be spilled with impunity, whether the people live in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Hebron," said Netanyahu.

Israel to provide water

Israel plans to provide the Palestinian Authority with several large tanks of water to help relieve shortages in the self-rule areas. The move came in the wake of Palestinian charges that Israel was limiting water supplies to Arab communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel carries out demolitions

Israel demolished five Palestinian buildings on the West Bank. An Israeli spokesman said the structures were built illegally. Human rights groups have denounced these demolitions in the past.

Jazz festival opens

The 12th International Jazz Festival opened in Eilat under the slogan "Jazz in the Red Sea." The four-night festival, which will celebrate Eilat's 50th anniversary, will feature 140 performances by Israeli and international jazz musicians.



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strike back. When asked in an Israel Radio interview last Friday if he expects revenge attacks, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that when a government or superpower like the United States "initiates action against terror — even if in this case it is a response to a murderous act — it can expect an exchange of blows or a strike back."

While this needs to be taken into account, "it can in no way prevent action, or else the terrorist would always win," said Netanyahu, who is also the author of a book on combating terrorism.

In a telephone conversation between Clinton and Netanyahu last Friday, the Israeli premier said he told the president that "Israel understands the [American] fight as its own fight against international terror."

After all, he later told Israel Radio, "it was Israel that generally charted the course in the struggle against terrorism."

Netanyahu did not comment directly on bin Laden's threats against Israel.

But Israeli officials in the United States said that while the Jewish state has beefed up security at various locations around the globe, they are not anticipating a terrorist campaign waged against Israel.

So far, at least, the exiled Saudi millionaire has focused his firepower on the United States.

Even if the United States manages to cripple bin Laden's network, there is likely to be little impact on Israel's war against terrorism.

According to U.S. officials, bin Laden's network has minimal ties to the Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists who have attacked Israeli targets this decade. They belong to the Shi'ite branch of Islam and are supported by Iran.

Bin Laden is a member of the rival Sunni Islamic sect.

Born to a wealth Saudi family, but later stripped of his citizenship, bin Laden has lived in Yemen, then Sudan and now Afghanistan.

Intelligence officials have linked bin Laden and his network, funded through hundreds of millions of dollars in family wealth, to two previous attacks on Americans in Saudi Arabia.

Bin Laden has vowed to attack U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia and U.S. interests worldwide because of American support for Israel.

He opposes the Israeli "occupation" of Jerusalem, which contains one of Islam's most sacred sites.

Bin Laden, whose fortune is estimated by U.S. officials at \$300 million, founded the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders.

In a telephone interview with a Pakistani journalist last Thursday before the U.S. attacks, bin Laden urged "Muslims all over the world to continue their jihad against the Americans and Jews."

For now, American and Israeli intelligence agencies are working to predict bin Laden's next move.

"It would seem that bin Laden and the organizations allied with him, not to mention his many followers around the world, still have the ability to execute terrorist attacks," Boaz Ganor, director of the International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism, told the Jerusalem Post.

"Now their motivation to carry out such attacks will be greater than ever, as they will feel they must avenge themselves and restore their image."

According to Garfinkle, it's now a waiting game.

"So we must ready ourselves — our intelligence, our military forces, our diplomacy and our willpower — for the long haul," he said. □

(JTA correspondent Douglas Davis in London contributed to this report.)

Militant expects reprisals

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Islamic Jihad leader in the Gaza Strip said the United States and Israel should expect reprisals for last week's U.S. missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan.

His comments came as protesters in Gaza burned U.S. and Israeli flags and called for terror attacks against the two countries. □

JEWISH WORLD

Swiss banks settlement evokes mixed emotions among survivors

By Naomi Pfefferman

Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Fred Diamant spent his teen-age years in concentration camps. He watched his older brother hanged in Auschwitz.

Today, he sits on an advisory board that will decide how to distribute some \$32 million from a Swiss humanitarian fund, established last year by Switzerland's top banks, for needy Holocaust survivors in the United States.

But when Diamant heard that the banks agreed Aug. 12 to pay another \$1.25 billion to resolve a class-action lawsuit filed by survivors, he was "absolutely jubilant."

"It's a great moral victory. Finally there is some justice," said Diamant. "The world has finally recognized that the most 'civilized' nation in history plundered billions from the Jewish people."

While \$1.25 billion is only a fraction of the stolen Jewish assets, Diamant said, he is a realist.

"The biological clock is ticking," Diamant said. "The average survivor is aged 75 to 95.

"The longer it takes to settle the matter, the more people who really deserve this money will be gone," he added.

Lithuanian survivor Si Frumkin, a senior adviser to the Association of Holocaust Survivors from the former Soviet Union, was blunter.

"I'm very satisfied that those Swiss SOB's will finally have to pay," he said.

Not every survivor interviewed was so pleased, however.

Diane Jacobs, for one, calls the amount of the settlement "total theft, though it's the best we can do for now."

During a telephone interview, Jacobs, a retired catalog designer, said she grew up in a Jewish military family — in a luxurious Berlin household with servants and chauffeurs.

Her father, a decorated World War I veteran, owned 16 beach inns on the Baltic Sea.

The family periodically visited Switzerland so he could deposit money in his Swiss bank accounts.

Three decades after he died in a concentration camp notorious for its human medical experiments, Jacobs began approaching the Swiss banks about her father's money.

She told officials she did not have the account numbers, because it was not customary for fathers to discuss such details with young children. The bankers' rebuff was always the same: "You don't have an account here. There was never such an account."

Flora Rosman, whose father, Shmuel, regularly deposited a significant part of his business proceeds in Swiss accounts, also deemed the settlement "too little, too late."

When the Transylvanian family arrived in Auschwitz in May 1944, Shmuel said, "Stick together and we'll meet at home." It was the last time Rosman ever saw her father.

After the war, her mother, Piroska, tried in vain to retrieve her late husband's money from the Swiss banks.

"She wasn't able to get any response from them at all," Rosman said. "It would have meant so much to her if the banks had settled during her lifetime."

Diamant believes the settlement will pressure other banks and insurance companies in Europe to follow suit.

"In the end, however, even a settlement of \$10 billion wouldn't be enough," said Lidia Budgor, president of the Council of Holocaust Survivor Organizations. "Can the money replace my two little brothers and sisters who were murdered a half hour after arriving at Auschwitz?"

"Every night, when I am alone, I still think about how hungry they were when they went to the gas chambers." □

Bank plans second study

Austria's Creditanstalt Bank said it would conduct a second probe of its wartime records to prove that it had no involvement in the laundering of gold and other valuables stripped from Holocaust victims during World War II.

The Austrian bank was named along with Germany's two largest commercial banks in an \$18 billion class-action lawsuit filed by survivors of the Holocaust claiming the institutions knowingly traded in victims' assets.

Kohl agrees to delay

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl agreed to delay a decision on a proposed national Holocaust memorial until after the Sept. 27 general election.

Opposition to the project has increased in recent months, leading to speculation that the memorial would never be built.

The project has been mired in controversy for more than a decade.

U.S. judge frees Palestinian

A U.S. federal judge released an imprisoned Palestinian man who has been on a hunger strike since February after refusing to testify about Hamas fund-raising activities in the United States. The judge ruled that Abdelhaleem Ashkar, who was not a target of the fund-raising probe, was not likely to testify and that any further imprisonment would "simply amount to punishment."

ADL appeals to Bulgarian leader

The Anti-Defamation League asked Bulgaria's president to "publicly renounce" anti-Semitic statements recently made by a prominent member of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

In a letter, the ADL told President Petar Stoyanov that it was "deeply concerned" by the statements, which accused the Bulgarian government of "selling the country to Jews and Gypsies" and claimed that the country is being "ruled by Jews."

The ADL reminded Stoyanov that it had honored Bulgaria in February for the government's efforts to save Jews during World War II.

More crosses erected

A group of Polish skinheads was reportedly among those who set up dozens of additional crosses near the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

One of the activists has said he wants to erect 152 crosses at the site to commemorate Poles killed there during a 1941 Nazi action.

Jewish groups and leading Catholic officials have called for a halt to the activity, which has been led by Catholic fundamentalists.

Jewish groups staying low key in din over black youth marches

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Khalid Muhammad and the Nation of Islam are coming to town, and Jewish groups are reacting with surprising restraint — both in New York, where the former Nation of Islam spokesman is planning a Million Youth March in Harlem over Labor Day weekend, and in Atlanta, where the Nation of Islam is planning a similar gathering the same weekend.

Leaders of Jewish organizations in New York have made a concerted effort to stay low key.

They have been able to do so, they say, because Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the black community's leaders are publicly saying exactly what they had hoped would be said about the unrepentantly racist, virulently anti-Semitic Muhammad.

Giuliani, whose administration has denied Muhammad a permit to hold his march in Harlem on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, has called it a "hate march" because of its leader's "race-baiting and anti-Semitic" comments.

"We have reached out behind the scenes, but there's no reason for us to ratchet up the tension and pressure when people are saying what they need to," said Adam Segall, New York regional director for the Anti-Defamation League.

The ADL, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress have all publicly said little about the upcoming march.

The executive director of the New York Jewish Community Relations Council, Michael Miller, would openly say only that "Khalid Muhammad is an unrepentant anti-Semite, bigot, and any event associated with him can produce no positive net result."

The ADL has at this point confined its activity to sending journalists a background compilation of Muhammad's anti-Semitic quotes.

They include:

- "This will be a direct confrontation with the Jews of that area who have misused and abused our people in Brooklyn and Crown Heights for so long." (Muhammad said this in July while threatening to hold his march in the heavily Chasidic Crown Heights section of Brooklyn if the city did not give him a permit to march in Harlem.)

- "If you say you're a Semite — even though I know goddamn well you're not a Semite, if you just say you're one — I'm against you. If you say you're white, goddammit I'm against you. If you're a Jew, I'm against you." (From an interview in the September 1997 premier issue of the magazine XXL)

- "Look at it, so-called Jew. Look at it, imposter Jew. Somebody must call you what you are. Somebody must look you in your cold, lying blue eyes and pull the cover off of you today. I don't give a damn about you, and I will give you hell from the cradle to the grave." (From his keynote speech at a conference preceding the Nation of Islam's Million Man March in October 1995)

Muhammad and associate Malik Shabazz, national youth director for the New York march, have filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Manhattan alleging that Giuliani's refusal to grant them a permit to rally in Harlem is discriminatory.

The case was scheduled to be heard Wednesday.

No matter what the outcome, the Million Youth March is expected to go on in Harlem on Sept. 5. Organizers expect about

150,000 participants, while city officials anticipate far fewer, according to press accounts.

City officials in Atlanta are predicting that a Nation of Islam-sponsored event also called the Million Youth March, scheduled for the same day, will attract little participation.

The Nation of Islam applied for a permit to hold its gathering in a park, but the city of Atlanta has not yet granted it, said Michael Langford, the director of community affairs for the mayor's office there.

In the meantime, the group is apparently planning to hold it elsewhere in the city, but the event has not yet taken significant shape, Langford said.

A different gathering, named the Million Youth Movement, is also happening over Labor Day weekend in Georgia's capital and will likely draw a much bigger crowd, said Ralph Dickerson, director of youth services for the mayor's office.

That rally is being organized by a coalition of major black groups, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/Push Coalition, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Urban League, with the cooperation of local black churches.

The Promise Keepers, a fundamentalist Christian organization that supports the idea of biblically mandated roles for men and for women, is also a sponsoring group, said Dickerson.

"Whether it attracts 10,000 people or a million, it will be a success," said Langford.

The mayor's office is supporting the Million Youth Movement gathering, but declined to be involved with the Million Youth March, because "we represent everyone, and from discussions with organizers, we kind of sensed where it might be headed."

Despite the quickly approaching date for both events, neither has been widely covered in the Atlanta press.

Two Jews long involved in facilitating black-Jewish relations in Atlanta were caught unaware by a reporter's questions, having heard nothing at all about either one.

And a senior official at the Atlanta Jewish Federation's Community Relations Council said she had also not heard of the gatherings. □

Arab Americans to protest film

NEW YORK (JTA) — Arab Americans are gearing up for action against a film set for release in November.

"The Siege" details the roundup of Muslims in detention camps after a terrorist bombing in New York City.

Protesters fear the film will foster anti-Arab sentiment. Some have already sent letters and e-mails to 20th Century Fox complaining about the film.

The Council of American-Islamic Relations plans to hold a protest of the film in front of the studio Wednesday, and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee is encouraging its members to picket theaters when the film opens.

The director of the film, Edward Zwick, says the thriller is meant to explore the American tendency toward ethnic scapegoating.

Zwick mentioned the internment of Japanese Americans in camps during World War II.

"It's very difficult to write anything that doesn't offend anybody," Zwick, the former director of the television show "thirtysomething," was quoted as saying. □