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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat, Clinton discuss statehood

President Clinton's meeting with Yasser Arafat on Tuesday focused on the Palestinian leader's request for U.S. recognition of a Palestinian state at a later date if Arafat agrees to let May 4 pass without a unilateral declaration. But Clinton reiterated U.S. policy that such a state can only emerge through negotiations, according to U.S. officials. [Page 1]

Palestinians helped halt attack

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed Tuesday that the Palestinian Authority had recently helped prevent a Hamas terror attack in central Israel.

While stating that he had called Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat three weeks ago to thank him for his help in preventing the attack, the premier added that the self-rule government still has to do more to prevent terror.

Meanwhile, Israeli and Palestinian security forces are searching for a Hamas militant believed to have planned a massive terror attack this week in Tel Aviv. The plan was thwarted as a result of a joint Israeli-Palestinian effort. Palestinian sources said the order for the attack came from Hamas' leadership abroad.

Vatican: Pope's visit not definite

A papal visit to the Holy Land is not yet definite, the Vatican said Tuesday. The announcement came after Israel's Tourism Ministry said a day earlier that Pope John Paul II intends to visit Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas next March to mark the start of Christianity's third millennium.

'Farmbelt Fuhrer' deported to U.S.

Neo-Nazi Gary Lauck is being deported from Germany to the United States after serving a four-year sentence on hate crimes charges.

Lauck, who comes from Nebraska, is known in the United States as the "Farmbelt Fuhrer" because of his Hitler mustache, feigned German accent and rabidly anti-Semitic views.

ADL: Anti-Semitism up in U.S.

The Anti-Defamation League reported a slight rise in the number of anti-Semitic incidents in 1998, representing a more than 2 percent increase as compared with 1997. [Page 3]

NEWS ANALYSIS

Arafat seeks support for state; battle over Jerusalem rages on

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The question of Palestinian statehood may have garnered most of the attention during Yasser Arafat's visit here this week, but the battle over Jerusalem lurked just below the surface.

For Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, the issues are linked — he wants a state with "Holy Jerusalem" as its capital. But to many Israelis, American Jews, members of Congress and policymakers — even those who have come to accept a Palestinian state as inevitable — sharing Jerusalem is out of the question.

Clinton's meeting with Arafat on Tuesday focused on the Palestinian leader's request for U.S. recognition of a state at a later date if Arafat agrees to let May 4 pass without a unilateral declaration. But Clinton reiterated U.S. policy that a state can only emerge through negotiations, according to U.S. officials.

Clinton promised to seek "intensive, serious and credible" peace talks with a deadline for completion.

Little progress has been made since October, when Israel and the Palestinians signed the widely hailed Wye agreement. Since then, each side has accused the other of violating provisions of the accord.

Clinton's meeting with Arafat was the third in recent months and was seen as a boost to Arafat's image at home.

Even as Clinton apparently didn't give Arafat what he was seeking, the president criticized unilateral actions by Israel. He told Arafat that Israeli expansion of settlements beyond existing boundaries are "destructive to the process of peace," U.S. officials said.

Even as attention focuses on May 4, the date Arafat has threatened to unilaterally declare statehood, another critical date — this one relating to Jerusalem — looms large.

At issue is the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act, a 1995 law that requires the United States to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The law requires that building for a new embassy begin or half of the State Department's multimillion-dollar budget for overseas construction and maintenance of its embassies will be frozen.

No one knows for sure when the State Department will finish spending the first half of its budget, but with the federal fiscal year set to reach its halfway point on March 31, Clinton is preparing to take steps to release the money.

But Clinton, who opposed the embassy legislation from the start, has vowed not to move forward on it until Israeli-Palestinian negotiators resolve the final status of the city.

Israelis and Palestinians agreed to leave the most contentious issues — including statehood and the status of Jerusalem — until final-status talks. Under the original Oslo accords, those talks were to have been completed by May 4, but instead have barely gotten off the ground.

Jerusalem leapt to the front of the peace process agenda in recent weeks when the European Union resurrected language from the 1940s, calling Jerusalem an international city.

Now the European Union is reportedly crafting a declaration to support the right of Palestinian statehood that calls on Israel not to veto such a state.

The E.U. move is apparently part of the international effort to convince Arafat not to declare a state on May 4.

On the Jerusalem issue, the deadline Clinton now faces could force the issue once again onto the front burner and into the Israeli election campaign, something Clinton

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel clamps down in Lebanon

Israel barred the 11,000 residents of a town in the southern Lebanon security zone from leaving the region, according to a report Tuesday from Lebanon.

The move was the latest part of a clampdown in the security zone after four Israelis, including a general, were killed last month by a roadside bomb.

On Sunday, Israeli officials arrested a member of the Israel-backed South Lebanon Army who was accused of helping a high-ranking member of the SLA defect to the Lebanese government.

Last Friday, Israel arrested seven Lebanese civilians accused of helping Hezbollah.

Bedouin deportations begin

The Israeli army began deporting members of a Bedouin tribe to Egypt on Tuesday, one week after they crossed the border seeking shelter from what they said was a blood feud with a rival clan.

The Egyptian army set up a tent to receive the tribe members, who traveled across the border in buses, with their livestock loaded on trucks.

Report: Terrorist's hideouts found

Terrorist Osama bin Laden has been located by Western intelligence agencies at a series of new safe havens close to the Pakistani border in eastern Afghanistan, according to media reports Sunday in London.

Bin-Ladin, who was said to have disappeared from his former hideout in northern Afghanistan, is widely considered to have been responsible for masterminding and funding a string of terrorist attacks, most recently the simultaneous car-bombings of two U.S. embassies last August in Kenya and Tanzania.

The renegade Saudi billionaire, whose family made its fortune in the mosque construction business, is believed to control some 3,000 potential Islamic terrorists worldwide in his declared war against "Jews and Crusaders."



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administration officials have said they want to avoid. From the start, Clinton argued that the embassy measure was inflammatory and would explode the peace process.

Responding to his personal lobbying, Congress included a provision in the law that allows the president to waive sanctions against the State Department if such a move does not take place.

According to administration officials, Clinton is preparing to use his prerogative to waive the law.

Such a move is sure to draw the ire of the U.S. Congress, which overwhelmingly passed the embassy law as a show of support for Israel.

Israel is the only country where the United States does not maintain its embassy in the country's declared capital.

In the meantime, a key senator who has championed Israel's claim to Jerusalem since he came to the Senate in 1977 is going public with a compromise plan.

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) wants the United States to designate an official site in Jerusalem for "ambassadorial functions."

Although largely symbolic, the act would be yet another small step toward U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, according to congressional aides. Moynihan has proposed using a suite of offices at the LaRomme Hotel in Jerusalem maintained by the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

In a letter to Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, Moynihan called for the embassy to publicize its presence in Jerusalem.

Moynihan wrote that he remains "convinced that it is not too late for the administration to craft a response to this impending deadline that honors the spirit and letter of the Jerusalem Embassy Act, while avoiding actions or statements that may have negative repercussions on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the current Israeli election campaign."

Designating an appropriate site in Jerusalem for ambassadorial functions "would give all sides a clear understanding of the intentions of the United States in a way that none should find surprising, or objectionable," Moynihan wrote.

The White House has not responded to Moynihan's letter, although the two sides have been in negotiations over the issue for months.

"I'm highly optimistic we will have a deal," said David Luchins, a top aide to Moynihan.

"The administration is not interested in having a conflict over Jerusalem," he said.

Other congressional officials sounded a more pessimistic tone, but promised to "win" on the Jerusalem issue before Moynihan retires from Congress in two years.

Prior to his meeting with Clinton, Arafat met in New York with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to discuss the peace process and Palestinian statehood.

Leaving the meeting, Arafat called it "very fruitful, very positive."

"I remind the world that the decision calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state is Resolution 181, which refers to a Palestinian state, then to a Jewish State which later came to be called Israel," he told reporters, referring to the U.N.'s 1947 partition plan, which was overwhelmingly rejected by Arab states at the time.

"The Palestinian people has the right to a homeland and to self-determination just like all the other peoples of the world," he added.

Responding to Arafat's comments to the media, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Dore Gold, noted an increasing reliance on the part of Arafat and other Palestinian officials on U.N. Resolution 181 to justify claims for statehood.

"By getting increasing world acknowledgment of 181," Gold said, "he's hoping he can break through the '67 borders and get international backing for claims inside of Israel."

"Equally important and maybe more importantly," Gold said, "he's using reference to 181 to pry open Jerusalem."

The 1947 partition plan would have established Jerusalem as an international zone with a U.N.-appointed governor and a legislative council elected by proportional representation of the city's residents.

Relying on the U.N. resolution is the first stage "is a means of denying recognition of Israel's control," Gold said. "In a latter stage, he can assert a Palestinian claim." □

(JTA staff writer Julia Goldman in New York contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

ADL: Anti-Jewish acts rise slightly, reversing a 3-year downward trend

By Julia Goldman

Britain expands Internet list

Britain added 5,000 names Wednesday to the 25,000 it listed on the Internet last year of people whose assets, seized by Britain at the start of World War II, were never recovered. The government also started issuing claim forms to Holocaust victims or their heirs seeking to recover such assets.

Nazi-hunter presses Austria

Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal called on Austria to make a full accounting of Nazi-era economic exploitation of its Jewish population. "Everything must be investigated — for historical reasons," Wiesenthal said in an interview Monday. "The history of the suffering of Jews is also Austrian history."

Hillary Clinton visits Cairo shul

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton made an appeal for religious tolerance during a visit to Egypt.

"The three great monotheistic religions have so much to give one another and people everywhere," Clinton said Tuesday after touring Cairo's Ben Ezra Synagogue and Christian and Muslim holy sites.

Swiss conduct raid on neo-Nazis

Swiss police confiscated anti-Semitic pamphlets, videos and compact disks during a raid earlier this month in the canton of Neuchatel. Two skinheads were arrested during the raid, which police said resulted in their largest ever confiscation of neo-Nazi materials.

Rabbinic group visits Prague

A delegation from the newly created North American Boards of Rabbis visited Prague last week, less than a month after the interdenominational group was founded in Washington. Rabbi Jay Rosenbaum, one of the leaders of the mission, described Prague as "a place where Jews are welcome, and you can feel it."

Germany sentences skinhead

A German court sentenced the lead singer of a skinhead rock band to two years' imprisonment, upholding a lower court's ruling that he had incited racial hatred. The 30-year-old singer was convicted last year for performing songs at a 1996 concert in which he applauded the murder of Jews by the Nazis.

Jewish camps get grants

Twenty Jewish overnight camps in North America were awarded the first grants presented by the Foundation for Jewish Camping. Most of the \$200,000 in grants will bolster efforts to recruit, train and retain staff. The 7-month-old New York-based foundation will also support a Jewish heritage video collection and the publication of a directory of Jewish camps.

NEW YORK (JTA) — Vandalism against Jewish institutions and property rose slightly in 1998, ending a three-year decline in reported anti-Semitic incidents, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

In 1998, 1,611 acts of vandalism and harassment directed against Jews were reported in 42 states and the District of Columbia — 40 more than in 1997, an increase of more than 2 percent — the ADL's annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents found.

While the number of incidents involving harassment, threat or assault held steady at 898 in 1997 from 896 in 1998, cases of vandalism rose by 6 percent to 715. The highest incidence of vandalism occurred in states with large Jewish populations — 177 in New York and 166 in New Jersey.

These acts include destruction of synagogues and other Jewish institutions ranging from graffiti to arson. Defacement of private property and cemeteries were also counted, as well as anti-Semitic graffiti on public property.

In 1998, the audit notes, there were two acts of arson, one arson attempt, four bomb threats and one bombing attempt. According to the report, the number of Jewish cemetery desecrations slid to 10 from last year's 14 incidents.

In a statement released with the audit, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman expressed concern over the prevalence of vandalism because "an attack on a synagogue is an attack on an entire community."

Still, ADL officials said the minimal change does not indicate a major trend in national attitudes toward Jews.

"Any increase is disturbing," said Kenneth Jacobson, ADL's assistant national director. "But it's too early to make some definitive judgment that we're heading into a period of constant increase," he said in a telephone interview with JTA.

Jacobson said there was no specific explanation for why attacks against Jews increased slightly this year and he noted that the decline during the past few years paralleled a national drop in crime.

One of the report's more hopeful signs is a decline in anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses, from 104 in 1997 to 86 in 1998.

An exception to the brighter campus picture was Bradley Smith's Committee for Open Debate.

The group placed Holocaust denials in advertisements and opinion pieces in 26 college newspapers nationwide, six more than in 1997.

According to Jacobson, the ADL has worked to educate college newspaper editors about their rights to refuse to print advertisements and articles that they deem to be "hateful."

Overall, the findings of anti-Semitic incidents for 1998 are well below the 10-year average of 1,741.

The total for 1997 — 1,571 — represented the lowest number of incidents since 1989, when 1,432 incidents were reported. The numbers peaked in 1994 at 2,066 incidents.

This year's report calls for "cautious optimism."

It cites the FBI's annual report on hate crimes, which showed that in 1998, Jews and Jewish institutions were the targets of nearly 80 percent of all such acts perpetrated on the basis of religion.

Despite the enactment in recent years of laws that increase the penalties for hate crimes — all but 10 of the states have passed such legislation — many incidents reported in the ADL's audit are not considered crimes.

In many cases, however, the audit indicates swift response outside the criminal justice system on the part of local communities.

Meanwhile, the ADL and other hate-speech monitoring groups are keeping a wary eye on the Internet, where anti-Semitic and racist organizations can easily and inexpensively disseminate propaganda with little regulation. The ADL audit also notes the findings of the League for Human Rights of Canadian B'nai B'rith showing a 14 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in Canada in 1998. □

Primakov to Jewish officials: Anti-Semitism to be combated

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russia's prime minister has condemned the recent rise in anti-Semitism in Russia and said he would press for new hate crimes legislation to combat the growing scourge.

Yevgeny Primakov's statements, which he told to officials with the Anti-Defamation League and the Russian Jewish Congress, came on the eve of a planned trip to Washington to meet with President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.

The Russian premier canceled the trip Tuesday, apparently because of the worsening crisis in Kosovo.

His remarks condemning anti-Semitism also came after a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during which Israel and Russia agreed to cooperate to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, particularly Iran, and also reached an agreement aimed at boosting bilateral trade relations.

The United States and Israel has also repeatedly criticized the transfer of Russian missile and nuclear technology to Iran. Indeed, the United States has recently announced sanctions against 10 Russian scientific institutes that it says are involved in helping Tehran develop its military program.

Netanyahu, who urged Russian Jews to make aliyah in the wake of growing anti-Semitism, was in Moscow as part of a two-day trip to Russia, Ukraine and Georgia.

According to Jewish officials who met with Primakov, the premier referred specifically to Albert Makashov, a hard-line Communist lawmaker who has made several anti-Semitic statements during the past several months.

Primakov said, "I believe Makashov has to be condemned fair and square and unambiguously for his pronouncements in an open and undisguised way," according to Jewish officials.

They added that Primakov said Russia is preparing a law that would intensify Russia's campaign against anti-Semitism, which has risen sharply since the collapse of the Russian economy last summer.

On Monday, Primakov also said that he wants the Jewish community to feel comfortable and remain in Russia.

Many other top Kremlin officials, including Russian President Boris Yeltsin, have spoken out against anti-Semitism in recent months, but Primakov had been criticized for his silence.

Jewish leaders said the most important part of Primakov's message was that he made his stand public and that it came on the eve of his planned visit to Washington.

Primakov was expected to have met a barrage of questions regarding Russia's plans to combat anti-Semitism. He had also been slated to meet with representatives from the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, during which anti-Semitism was expected to top the agenda.

Netanyahu was accompanied by Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon during his 48-hour trip to the former Soviet Union. Netanyahu denied speculations in the Israeli and Russian press that his trip to the former Soviet Union was aimed at courting the votes of the nearly 1 million former Soviet Jews in Israel.

Russian Jews should respond to growing anti-Semitism in the

country by making aliyah, Netanyahu said during a visit Sunday to Moscow's Choral Synagogue.

"I say it openly," Netanyahu told hundreds of Moscow Jews who came to greet him at the synagogue. "I want to see you in Israel," he said to an ovation from the audience.

Russian Chief Rabbi Adolph Shayevich reacted to Netanyahu's remarks by saying he welcomed aliyah, but as a result of the "call of one's heart" — and not because of fear for one's safety in Russia.

Some 3,300 Jews left Russia in the first two months of this year as compared with 1,600 in the same period last year, according to the Jewish Agency for Israel's Moscow office.

Shayevich and Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt urged Israeli leadership to fight a common prejudice among those Israelis who consider Russian immigrants "second-rate Jews."

Before visiting Moscow, Netanyahu also held trade talks with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma and visited Babi Yar, where nearly 100,000 Jews were massacred during World War II.

Later on Monday, Netanyahu traveled to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, where he met with Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze to discuss diplomatic and trade relations between Israel and the small former Soviet republic as well as possible Israeli investment in Georgia's energy sector. □

Is Specter heading to Iran? Senator requests a meeting

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The delicate dance between Tehran and Washington could take a new turn if U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) gets his way.

Specter has asked an Iranian Cabinet minister to take a message back to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami requesting a meeting with members of Congress.

Members of Congress "sometimes have the capability to speak in broader terms without binding the U.S. government," Specter told Zahra Shojaie at a forum last week sponsored by Middle East Insight magazine.

"There are many of my colleagues who would be interested in going to Iran and welcoming others from Iran," said Specter, the Senate's only Jewish Republican.

Specter's request came after Robert Pelletreau, Clinton's former top Middle East official at the State Department, pointedly described members of Congress as representatives of the American people, not the government.

Such a distinction is important in the diplomatic two-step between Iran and the United States, neither of which is prepared to open an official dialogue.

Shojaie agreed to take the message back with her but did not respond directly.

Since Khatami, a relative moderate, was elected in 1997, he and Clinton have sought ways to bring to an end 20 years of diplomatic isolation. Shojaie's visit itself represents a thaw in relations, officials said.

Special permission from the Clinton administration was required for her to visit Washington for the meeting.

Shojaie, Khatami's adviser on women's issues, was in the United States to attend a conference at the United Nations. □