



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Wiesel warns of bloodbath

Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel warned President Clinton that NATO and the U.S. military "will have to serve as a kind of living buffer" between the Serbs and Kosovars to "prevent a bloodbath."

Sent by the president as a special envoy to visit refugee camps in Macedonia and Albania, Wiesel told reporters after reporting back to Clinton on Wednesday that he had encountered "terrible sadness, agony and hatred" in the camps.

Wiesel said he suggested that Clinton convene a meeting of spiritual and moral leaders in an attempt to "bring the two communities together" and that psychologists should be sent to help the children.

His comments came amid reports that the 11-week NATO campaign against Yugoslavia may soon end.

### Germany to press Iran on arrests

Germany will press Tehran for the quick release of 13 Iranian Jews charged with spying for Israel and the United States, Germany's foreign minister said Wednesday.

Germany, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, is "gravely concerned" about their arrests, Joschka Fischer added.

Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) introduced a congressional resolution on Tuesday condemning the arrests. The measure is cosponsored by four other members of the House, including International Relations Committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.).

### Netanyahu aide criticizes Clinton

A top aide to outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused President Clinton on Tuesday of having used false pretenses in his apparent decision to postpone the transfer of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

A 1995 law passed by Congress required that the embassy be relocated no later than May 31, 1999, but allowed Clinton to invoke a waiver in the interests of "national security."

Clinton has notified members of Congress and Jewish officials that he intends to invoke the waiver.

The proposed move is "particularly regrettable," said Netanyahu aide David Bar-Illan, who added, "No American security interests seem to be involved."

## PROFILE

### Lauder's strength as a listener could serve him well in new role

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Ronald Lauder is known as a good listener, a trait that will be invaluable to him in his new role as chairman of an organization that represents 55 diverse Jewish organizations.

Finding agreement on issues of concern to American Jews will be the main task for the 55-year-old cosmetics heir during his two-year term at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which began June 1.

The umbrella group, while not well-known outside of organized American Jewry, represents the views of the spectrum of Jewish religious and political organizations to the White House, Jerusalem and other governments.

When it's Lauder's turn to talk on a subject about which he is passionate — the revitalization of Jewish life in Eastern and Central Europe, for example, or providing water to Israel's Negev Desert — he is an animated speaker.

But Lauder, who is the president of the Jewish National Fund of America and was a former U.S. ambassador to Austria and a 1989 Conservative Party candidate for New York City mayor, also knows how to hold his words in check.

That reticence was apparent when he was asked recently about an Israeli newspaper report that he had participated in secret talks between Israel and Syria.

"The responsible answer is not to engage in speculation and not to comment on speculation," Lauder said.

But at a dinner in Lauder's honor in Washington on June 3, Israel's outgoing ambassador to the United States, Zalman Shoval, and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk appeared to confirm the report. Hailing Lauder as "a man of principle and a man of exceptional diplomatic capabilities," Shoval said, referring to the report: "If the papers are right, he's even used them in recent years."

Though the talks with Syria broke down, Indyk was curious. "I'm looking forward to the briefing on the Syria track," the U.S. official said to Lauder.

But Lauder — who served as U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for European and NATO policy from 1983 to 1986 — refused to discuss the trips to Syria.

"Don't believe everything you read," he told JTA.

Lauder has plenty of experience with bad press. His nomination to lead the Presidents Conference was announced amid news reports in New York and Israel about financial support for then-Premier Benjamin Netanyahu's re-election campaign.

Israeli law prohibits political contributions by foreign citizens, and Lauder denied any financial ties to that campaign.

Lauder, who is a major contributor to Republican politics, declared his net worth in 1989 at \$227 million, but The New York Times estimated at the time that it could be "considerably more than \$1 billion." In the end, the nominating committee of the Presidents Conference was satisfied that Lauder had done nothing inappropriate, and he was elected by an overwhelming majority.

The following month, the Times reported that one of Lauder's numerous business concerns had struck a deal with Yugoslavia's state-run telecommunications company — despite a U.S. ban on investment in Serbia.

Lauder, through a spokesman, insisted at the time that there was "no deal in operation" and that "there will not be any deal over U.S. government objection."

Lauder said in a recent telephone interview that he learned to stick to government

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Weizman tries to convince Meretz

Israel's president attempted on Wednesday to break the logjam in Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak's attempts to form a government.

Ezer Weizman hosted the leader of the secular Meretz Party and tried to convince him to join a government that also includes the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid indicated he would consider such a move if it became clear in several months that Shas is no longer led by Aryeh Deri, who was convicted in March of taking bribes.

### Justice minister may be indicted

Israeli police said on Wednesday they recommended indicting outgoing Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi on bribery and fraud charges.

Hanegbi is accused of misusing funds as head of a nonprofit organization he formed when he was a member of Knesset in the mid-1990s.

### 'Pogrom' leader sentenced

A man who took part in a recent attack on two apartments inhabited by Christian women in a fervently Orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

The judge in the case described Aharon Kornblitt as "one of the ringleaders of the pogrom." Two other people have already been convicted in the incident.

### Jordan marks king's accession

Jordanians held their first public celebrations of the accession of King Abdullah to the Hashemite throne. The streets of Amman were festooned with banners and flags as crowds cheered their 37-year-old monarch and his wife, Queen Rania, when they passed in a motorcade.

Jordan this week designated June 9 to be marked annually as Throne Day, the first public holiday associated with Abdullah's reign.

policy during his tenure in Austria from 1986 to 1987.

Weeks after Lauder took office as U.S. ambassador in Vienna, Kurt Waldheim, a former United Nations secretary-general and Nazi war crimes suspect, was elected president. Lauder, whose grandparents came from Austria and is a devotee of Austrian culture and a collector of Austrian art, had been warmly received at first.

But his absence from Waldheim's inauguration ceremony — he was out of town — was perceived as a snub. The situation became more difficult for Lauder when the United States put Waldheim on its "watch list" of undesirable aliens in 1987.

Lauder told JTA at the time that the U.S. action "would have a bad effect" on U.S.-Austrian relations, but he stuck to the government line nonetheless.

Lauder credits his experience in Austria with spurring him to establish in 1987 the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, which is now active in promoting Jewish life in 13 countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

"I came there very much a Jew, but a more assimilated Jew, and I left there a very dedicated Jew because I saw firsthand what was happening to Jewish life in Eastern Europe — or what remained of it," said Lauder, the father of two daughters, who is expecting his first grandchild next month.

He said the foundation now serves 5,000 children who attend foundation-supported schools and summer camps — providing opportunities that few in the American Jewish community believed possible when Lauder started out.

"Frankly I was very impressed by his vision, though I was pretty skeptical about the ability to carry it out and the prospects of renewing life in Eastern Europe, given the realities there," Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference, said of his first conversations with Lauder more than a decade ago.

Now, Hoenlein says, it is "overwhelming to see how he carried a vision to fruition."

In addition to his business and Jewish philanthropic pursuits, Lauder is the chairman of the Commission for Art Recovery of the World Jewish Congress, treasurer of the WJC, chairman of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and he has served on a host of other boards and committees.

Lauder said that his one of his current goals in the Jewish world is "to do as good a job as I can in the Conference of Presidents and to work with all the organizations to build unity at this critical time."

In recent years, disagreements among conference members over its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has sparked tension in the umbrella organization, which tries to attain consensus positions.

Those tensions were exposed during Lauder's bid for the chairmanship.

A group of about 20 member organizations voiced concern that Lauder's politics — staunch Republicanism and alignment with Likud policies in Israel — would obstruct the group's access to the Clinton administration as well as a possible successor to Netanyahu's government. Now some of those conference members are voicing guarded optimism as Lauder takes the helm of the organization and the newly elected Ehud Barak, a proponent of the Oslo accords, becomes Israel's prime minister.

Though he called it "speculation" to anticipate what kind of job Lauder will do, Mark Rosenblum, the political director of Americans for Peace Now, said: "The Conference of Presidents is perceived as having a mandate of finding ways to support the sitting government of Israel" and "harmonizing" relations between the United States and Israel.

Lauder replaced Melvin Salberg, a Manhattan lawyer and president of the American Zionist Movement, a popular chairman who is credited with having made the Presidents Conference a more open forum for its members.

Those with whom Lauder has worked closely believe that his determination will serve him well at the Presidents Conference.

Russell Robinson, who as executive vice president of the JNF meets with Lauder "a minimum of once a week," compliments his leadership, humor and drive.

"There are not many people with his financial wherewithal who raise their hands and say, 'I will get involved in organized Jewish life.'"

"He could have sat on the sidelines," Robinson said, "but he came forward and said, 'I want to get involved.'" □

(JTA correspondent Matthew Dorf in Washington contributed to this report.)



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Senators slam Palestinian move

Five U.S. senators announced Tuesday that they had introduced a resolution condemning Palestinian efforts to revive the United Nations partition plan of 1947, which called for Jewish and Arab states and for Jerusalem to be an international city.

The senators criticized the Palestinian Authority for attempting to circumvent the peace process.

They also called for any final peace agreement to be determined through direct negotiations with Israel.

### Louvre plans paintings' return

The Louvre in Paris agreed to return five paintings to the heirs of an Italian Jew whose collection was seized by the Nazis, the World Jewish Congress said Wednesday.

The family of Gentilly Giuseppe has been trying to recover an 18th-century masterwork by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo since the 1950s, but it wasn't until the French government released a list of more than 2,000 looted artworks in 1997 that the family's claim was fully examined.

France has returned six other paintings to their rightful heirs in recent years.

The latest action is believed to mark the first time an artwork has been removed from the walls of the Louvre for the purposes of restitution.

### Mel Torme remembered

Playboy publisher Hugh Hefner and actor Cliff Robertson were among the friends of Mel Torme who paid tribute to the pop and jazz singer at memorial services in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

Torme, who died Saturday at 73 of complications from a stroke he suffered in 1996, was born to Russian Jewish immigrant parents on Chicago's South Side.

In an interview some years ago, the singer recalled that he and his family would sit on the front stoop after Sabbath dinner and sing for their neighbors.

### Ex-synagogue president elected

A flamboyant mob attorney and former synagogue president was elected mayor of Las Vegas by a landslide, according to the final results from Tuesday's vote.

Oscar Goodman, 59, gained fame and considerable wealth representing top mobsters, as well as such celebrities as Mike Tyson.

In a telephone interview, Goodman stressed his past presidency of Temple Beth Shalom, a Conservative congregation, and his and his wife's active support of the Jewish Federation of Las Vegas.

Las Vegas has a population of 1.3 million. Its Jewish community, which has grown rapidly in recent years, numbers 65,000.

## Senate warns Yeltsin to combat anti-Semitism or aid could be cut

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — All but one of the 100 members of the U.S. Senate are threatening to end economic and political support for Russia unless President Boris Yeltsin confronts the rise in anti-Semitic rhetoric there.

"The United States predicates its support for democratic institutions in Russia upon unwavering opposition to anti-Semitism at any level," the senators wrote in a letter to Yeltsin that was expected to be sent as early as this week.

"Over the years it has not been unusual for the United States to act on this subject, linking American foreign policy with what should now be regarded as a cornerstone of human rights policies in Russia," the letter said.

In the 1980s the United States linked trade relations with what was then the Soviet Union to its willingness to allow Jews to emigrate.

While few expect Congress to cut off U.S. aid to Russia, the letter "clearly says, 'Enough. You've got to step forward,'" said Jason Isaacson, director of government and international affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

The AJCommittee and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry actively lobbied senators to sign the letter, which was sponsored by Sens. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and Joseph Biden (D-Del.).

"It is imperative that you demonstrate, through emphatic disagreement with those who espouse anti-Semitism in Russia, your understanding of the importance the Russian government places upon religious freedom," the senators wrote.

While Yeltsin administration officials have made statements against anti-Semitism, the senators said that two recent explosions near Moscow synagogues and an attack against a synagogue in Birobidzhan mean that more public condemnation is necessary.

As Russia enters an election campaign, "there may well be temptations to sound ultra-nationalist themes that attempt to blame the small Jewish community for Russia's problems."

Russia has scheduled parliamentary elections in December and a presidential contest next June.

Jewish activists, including Nebraska rabbis, and senators are still working to convince Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) to sign the letter.

But a spokesperson for Hagel, citing the senator's policy not to send letters to foreign heads of state regarding their domestic policy, said he would not sign the letter.

"Anti-Semitism and discrimination in any form should not be tolerated," said Deb Fiddelke, stressing that the decision had nothing to do with the letter's content. □

## Alleged collaborator denies charges

MOSCOW (JTA) — An 81-year-old man deported from the United States for his World War II-era activities told prosecutors in his native Lithuania this week that he had not killed any Jews during the war.

But in a meeting with Lithuanian prosecutors in the capital Vilnius, Kazys Ciurinskas did not deny collaboration with the Nazis, who occupied the Baltic country during the war.

Ciurinskas was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1997 for concealing his role in a Nazi-sponsored unit responsible for the mass killings of Jews when he applied in 1949 for a visa to enter the United States. He returned to Lithuania last month.

According to the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, Ciurinskas led a battalion that was involved in the mass killings of Jews.

The Lithuanian Prosecutor General's Office says it has been collecting information on Ciurinskas for two years, but has insufficient evidence to launch criminal proceedings against him.

Ciurinskas is the second suspected Nazi wartime criminal who returned to the Baltic state last month. Another suspect, Aloyzas Balsys, returned to Lithuania rather than testify about his wartime activities. □

## Assad said ready for talks as Barak plans Golan pullback

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Syrian President Hafez Assad is about to embark on direct peace talks with Israel without prior consultation with the Palestinians, according to sources in Damascus.

The sources' comments come amid reports in Israel that Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak has devised a plan for concluding a peace agreement with Syria that involves Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights in exchange for security arrangements with Damascus.

Assad, who recently signaled to Barak that he is willing to be "flexible" in negotiations, has always insisted that talks with Israel must take place only in close coordination with other Arab states.

But the Saudi-owned daily *Asharq al-Awsat* reported over the weekend that Assad told visiting Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat had been the first to break ranks — and, in the process, had weakened Syria's negotiating posture. Syria, he said, should not now be blamed for pursuing its own interests in the peace process.

The London-based daily quoted an informed source in Damascus as saying, "What concerns Syria now are its policies, its interests and the Syrian-Lebanese track."

The source pointed out that Syria was the first to agree to attend the 1991 Madrid peace conference "within the framework of a joint Arab position."

However, the source added, Damascus "was subsequently surprised" by the series of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that began in 1993, "from which Syria was totally excluded."

The Saudi daily also indicated that relations between Assad and Arafat remain tense. It reported that the Syrian leader responded coolly to an Arafat initiative to convene a five-way summit — involving Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians — to coordinate their positions on the peace process in the wake of Barak's recent election victory.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who was working to facilitate the summit, told the state-owned Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* last Friday that he had all but abandoned the initiative "because there is a Palestinian-Syrian rift."

Arafat is said to be apprehensive that Barak may strike a deal with Syria that will enable him to withdraw Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, leaving the Palestinians to face Israel alone in the final-status negotiations.

Abdullah reportedly expressed full support for Damascus until it recovers "every inch" of the Golan, but it was unclear whether he offered to mediate between Assad and Arafat, as some Arab papers have suggested.

Meanwhile, the senior correspondent for the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, Dan Caspit, reported over the weekend that Barak has developed a package of security arrangements and timetables for concluding a settlement with Syria and Lebanon.

Under the plan, Israel and Syria would sign a declaration of principles that includes an Israeli acknowledgment of Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

The declaration, writes Caspit, will spell out Israel's willingness to return the Golan to Syria, subject to detailed and verifiable security arrangements. The declaration would not only trigger the

start of peace talks between Syria and Israel, but also the start of Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

The withdrawal from the security zone would be undertaken in cooperation with the Lebanese army and international forces, which will assume responsibility for security in the area.

According to Caspit, Barak envisages an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in two stages: The plateau, the largest part of the Golan, would be returned in the first phase; the strategically sensitive cliff area would be handed back in the second stage, after a period of some five years.

However, Barak is reportedly adamant that the Syrians do not get all of the Golan to the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Instead, Barak will propose the creation of a narrow strip about 5 miles wide along the eastern bank of the sea that would remain demilitarized and depopulated for a period of about 50 years.

Barak will seek to leave two or three Israeli-manned early-warning stations on the Golan and make provision for Israeli and Syrian officers to conduct joint patrols to verify compliance with the terms of the agreement. In addition, Syria will agree to surprise inspections of the evacuated territory, according to the *Ma'ariv* report.

The guiding principle of Israel's security requirements will be that the demilitarized area of the Golan will be "transparent" to Israeli eyes in order to preclude the possibility of Syria using the Golan as a platform for a surprise attack on Israel.

Barak expects the economic cost of the package, which Caspit describes as "astronomical," to be assumed by Washington.

He is reportedly counting on Israel getting a handsome compensation package from the United States, in addition to substantial economic aid to transfer bases from the Golan and set up the sophisticated early-warning stations. He will also seek U.S. surveillance planes, access to satellite intelligence and other still-unspecified security measures from the United States. □

## Macedonians release Israelis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Macedonian officials have released seven Israelis who were arrested while operating a remote-controlled aircraft monitoring the situation in Kosovo.

The Israelis said Wednesday that their only goal was to serve international television companies by providing footage from battlefields and other sensitive areas.

The drone operators are working for a company founded by former Israeli journalist Shlomo Goren, who said his team, which he claimed was arrested as a result of a misunderstanding, would continue its work in the Balkans.

The group recently set up a company to use pilotless planes for the specific purpose of getting television footage from Kosovo.

Goren said the company had obtained the necessary permits from NATO and the Macedonian Embassy in London, and was lawfully registered in the Macedonian government press office.

Wednesday's flight of the drone, which lasted one hour, brought back footage of burned and deserted villages in Kosovo.

Shortly after it landed, a Norwegian officer with NATO confiscated the film, expressing concern that it would provide information on NATO positions on the border with Kosovo.

Norwegian officials apologized for the incident, but the Israelis were later detained by local police and questioned. □