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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel: Rules have 'changed'

Israel vowed to retaliate harshly if Hezbollah launches any further attacks on Israeli soldiers.

Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh was quoted as saying Thursday that Israel had "changed the rules" of engagement, implying that the Jewish state would no longer abide by the terms of a 1996 cease-fire arrangement that prevents Israel and Hezbollah from launching attacks on or from civilian areas.

His comments came as the two sides continued attacks on each other's positions.

Meanwhile, the fighting in southern Lebanon reignited debate within Israel about withdrawing its troops from Lebanon. Many people, including at least one Cabinet member, are saying Prime Minister Ehud Barak should pull out the forces earlier than the July deadline he has already pledged.

Report: Israel got Arad 'evidence'

Hezbollah gave Israel "anatomical evidence" about missing Israeli airman Ron Arad, a French newspaper reported.

The daily Voix du Nord, however, did not say what the evidence was or whether it indicated that Arad, whose fighter plane was shot down over Lebanon in 1986, is alive or not.

Thursday's report said Hezbollah used a German diplomatic pouch to send the evidence to Israel.

Hamas plan goes up in smoke

A car that exploded in a West Bank village, injuring two Palestinians, was carrying explosives meant for an attack on an Israeli army base, according to Israel Army Radio.

Military sources quoted by the station said the two were members of Hamas.

One of the men was badly burned while the other's leg was severed, according to Palestinian sources.

Putin urged to fight anti-Semitism

More than 90 members of the U.S. House of Representatives urged Russia's acting president to combat the "rising tide of anti-Semitism in Russia."

Wednesday's letter encouraged Vladimir Putin "to make fighting anti-Semitism one of the priorities of your new administration."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Who's got Al Gore's ear? Jewish advisers weigh in

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In 1993, Vice President Al Gore devised a plan to help American business leaders invest in territories newly under Palestinian self-rule with the hope of bringing economic dividends to the region.

He called on Mel Levine, a Jewish attorney and former congressman from Los Angeles, to co-chair Builders for Peace, a joint Jewish-Arab venture, along with James Zogby, who headed the Arab American Institute.

Since then, Levine has continued to work closely with the vice president. Now, eight years later, Gore, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination, is turning to Levine once again, this time to serve on his informal advisory group on foreign policy.

Levine is one of a number of Jewish individuals Gore has called on to help him keep his ear to the ground and stay informed on issues — both domestic and foreign — of particular concern to American Jews.

Bringing with him a lifetime of involvement in pro-Israel activities, Levine says he has thought through and discussed with Gore many issues relating to Israel's security and efforts to advance the peace process with the Palestinians.

Builders for Peace, launched in the early days of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, brought only limited success and the project closed down in 1997.

Levine and others told Gore that the project couldn't succeed until the Palestinian Authority made changes to its legal and commercial systems.

"We wanted to show that peace brings economic rewards," recalls Levine, who says he will continue to advise Gore on ways to continue encouraging private American investment in the Middle East.

Marc Ginsberg also believes that encouraging the private sector to invest in the Middle East is a crucial aspect of any peace process.

Ginsberg, an adviser to President Carter on Middle East affairs and a former U.S. ambassador to Morocco, is serving as the senior coordinator for foreign policy in the Gore campaign.

With years of hands-on involvement with Israel and Arab states, Ginsberg believes he has an understanding of the conflicts as well as a significant appreciation of the economics of the region.

Together with Gore's national security adviser Leon Feurth, Ginsberg is putting together an advisory group on the Middle East. He also prepares debate material for the vice president and makes sure Gore is up to date on top foreign policy issues.

While he has not worked officially with Jewish groups yet, Ginsberg says that will change in the next few weeks.

The objective will be to exchange views, brief organizations on the vice president's latest initiatives and to develop a support network.

On the domestic front, Gore has a strong commitment to consult with the American Jewish leadership, according to Steve Grossman, a former national chairman of the Democratic National Committee and a past president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Grossman, who serves as an informal adviser to Gore, says the vice president reaches out on a regular basis to the Jewish community.

But while Grossman is there to help Gore make good public policy, he says he

MIDEAST FOCUS

Winter of discontent for troops

Israel Radio aired remarks by Israeli troops reflecting their low morale and desire to pull out of the southern Lebanon security zone as soon as possible.

Said one: "If we're going to leave anyway, why stay and give them a few more dead?"

Meanwhile, the United States set up a meeting of an international monitoring group to try to stop the fighting in southern Lebanon, State Department spokesman James Rubin said. The group, which includes Israel, Lebanon, Syria, France and the United States, will meet Friday, Rubin said.

Shin Bet abused prisoners

Israeli interrogators repeatedly abused Palestinian prisoners during the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, according to a just-released Israeli government report.

The findings, which covered 1988 to 1992 and were originally submitted in 1995, were released on the recommendation of the Supreme Court, which said there were no longer grounds for secrecy.

Jordan lashes out at Hamas

Jordan's prime minister said his country will not allow Hamas to operate from its territory.

"Hamas is a Palestinian organization that we respect and esteem in the Palestinian arena," Abdul-Raouf Rawabdeh told Egypt's state run al-Ahram newspaper. "But the Jordanian arena is not a field for any non-Jordanian organization," he said in the interview published Thursday.

Illegals fewer than thought

Approximately 80,000 foreigners work in Israel without permits, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported, citing figures reported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The figure, which refers to the period 1996-1999, is significantly lower than the numbers usually put forth.



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won't give the vice president a sugar-coated answer on any difficult issue. Grossman says he tries to present a comprehensive understanding of how the community will view an issue, their concerns about it, and how to take them into account when formulating policies.

"My style is I try to find consensus," he says. "But I give an honest appraisal of the community's views."

Grossman points to charitable choice, the public funding of social service programs run by sectarian organizations, as one such issue that raises concerns among many American Jews.

Grossman believes Gore's support for charitable choice — an issue that has already garnered considerable attention this campaign season — would be more acceptable to American Jews because of Gore's sensitivity to the issue and because he is clear and unequivocal about the separation of church and state.

In addition to lay leaders, Gore has spent time with Jewish congressional leaders, including Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), and Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), who has advised Gore on abortion issues.

Advisers, of course, are still supporters and they are quick to say the vice president doesn't really need their services.

"The vice president is the last person who needs advice," says Ginsberg, who steadfastly touts Gore's record on Israel. "We're there to supplement." □

Orthodox organization is outraged over alleged CIA 'profiling' of Jews

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A leading Orthodox Jewish organization has called on the CIA director to publicly disassociate the agency from allegations that the CIA believes religious Jews are recruited by Israel to spy on the United States.

In a letter to CIA Director George Tenet, Agudath Israel of America said it was dismayed and outraged by remarks made by an unidentified CIA official on the CBS program "60 Minutes" in its segment discussing the case of Adam Ciralsky.

The CIA official, whose identity and voice were disguised on the show, said the CIA believes the Israeli government has a program that recruits religious American Jews to spy on the United States.

Ciralsky, a former CIA attorney, has charged the agency subjected him to "ethnic profiling" and suspected him of spying for Israel.

The CIA refused to comment on the remarks, citing federal privacy laws. Asked about the unidentified official, a spokesman said, "We don't know who that individual is."

Ciralsky's lawyer, Neal Sher, said the CIA engages in racial profiling, and religious Jews are suspect in the agency. "I have no doubt in my mind that there are people in the agency who believe Israel has this program," he said.

The harm caused by the CIA official's statement is "incalculable," Agudath Israel's David Zwiebel said in the letter to Tenet. Zwiebel said the remarks reflect and foster the "canard of 'dual loyalty' and stereotype of Jew as the untrustworthy outsider."

In further comments on the case, Zwiebel noted it is part of a Jew's religious obligation to be a faithful citizen of his country.

"It is the height of absurdity for the CIA to engage in this type of offensive religious stereotyping," he said.

Since last year, when the Ciralsky case first got national attention, the CIA has been under attack for its alleged discriminatory practices.

Ciralsky, who has threatened to sue the agency, has produced internal CIA documents that show anti-Semitic language. One memo refers to Ciralsky's father as a "wealthy daddy" supporting Israeli political and social causes.

Director Tenet admitted the language was "insensitive, unprofessional, and highly inappropriate," but has stated that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated in the agency.

Talks between the CIA and Ciralsky aimed at resolving the case broke down last year. Sher says Ciralsky has not yet filed a lawsuit. □

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish papers officially sold

The Atlanta Jewish Times and its sister publication, the Detroit Jewish News, have been officially sold to current Jewish News publisher Arthur Horwitz and philanthropist Michael Steinhardt.

Style Magazine, which is published in both markets, is included in the deal. Terms of the sale, which was preliminarily approved last fall, have not been released. The paid circulation of the Detroit Jewish News is about 19,000, and the Atlanta Jewish Times has a paid circulation of 10,000.

Haider demands apology

Jorg Haider said European politicians have insulted his country and his party and owe them an apology. "Europe is adopting an attitude which could be dangerous for the continent," the leader of Austria's far-right Freedom Party said in an interview with a Spanish newspaper. "They have shamelessly used arguments that were ungrounded. I hope that all those politicians who have insulted Austria and my party will have the courage to make an apology."

Volcker frustrated by bank delays

Former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker said he is frustrated by the delay in returning dormant Swiss bank accounts to victims of the Holocaust.

"I don't know if I can be as frustrated as some of the victims, but I am plenty frustrated myself about the length of time it takes," Volcker, who heads an international commission investigating the accounts, said at a U.S. House of Representatives Banking Committee hearing. The commission said in December that it had found nearly 54,000 Swiss bank accounts that may be linked to victims of the Nazis.

But little has happened since, as the commission and claimants wait for the Swiss to establish procedures for paying claims.

War criminal loses appeal

Britain's first convicted war criminal lost an appeal against his double life sentence for murdering Jews in Belarus during World War II. Britain's Appeal Court ruled Thursday it was satisfied that last April's verdict convicting 78-year-old former railway worker Anthony Sawoniuk on two charges of murders committed in 1942 had been handled correctly.

Film star: Shoah 'part of my life'

Hollywood star Winona Ryder says the fact that many of her relatives perished in the Holocaust has been "a very big part of my life."

In an interview with Jewish Webzine GenerationJ.com, the 28-year-old star film star — whose original name is Horowitz — speaks briefly about her Jewish background.

Israeli cyber-security firms could benefit from big hack

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A string of recent sabotage attacks on Web sites could mean a business boom in Israel, where some of the world's most successful Internet security companies are located.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has launched an investigation into a series of attacks on several leading Web sites, including Yahoo!, Amazon.com, CNN.com and eBay, the Internet auction house.

Some of the Web sites were forced to shut down temporarily because of the sabotage.

The worldwide attention to the issue of Internet security may mean more business for Israeli companies like Check Point Software, a world leader in Internet security.

The company — founded by a group of ex-army technology experts — is now trading on the NASDAQ stock exchange at a valuation of more than \$11 billion.

A Check Point spokesman said none of the sites attacked last week were using the company's products.

Israel's expertise is a direct product of its army's historic focus on cutting-edge technology.

Over the years, as the army adopted new computer and networking technology, securing those networks from outside intrusion was a top priority.

When the Internet started to expand, some veterans of intelligence and communications units transformed their knowledge into civilian applications and companies.

Today, Israeli Internet security companies sell more than \$500 million a year in network security products around the world, and Israeli security experts also play key roles in overseas companies.

Israel Mazin, former chief executive of Memco, an Israeli security company that now belongs to Computer Associates, the world's biggest business software group, said the hacker barrage could make consumers less willing to buy products online.

"All of these sites will now have to be more aware of security and find a way to explain to buyers that it is safe to do business," he said.

However, he added, security companies in Israel and abroad could actually benefit from the attacks, which may boost awareness of the need for comprehensive security systems and spark more corporate investments in foolproof security products.

Shimon Gruper, vice president of Internet technology at Aladdin Knowledge Systems, a Tel Aviv-based, NASDAQ-listed security company, said the method used to disable the Web sites was an "extremely primitive" technique.

It involved bombarding the Web sites with massive requests to view Web pages. This caused an overload on Web servers in the same way a telephone system would crash when hit with massive amounts of calls for the same number or area codes.

There are many theories as to how the sabotage was pulled off — whether it came from one troublemaker who hacked into other computers, which in turn sent the massive requests to the targeted site or whether it was coordinated with other hackers.

Gruper said that although the method was primitive, the coordinated nature of the attack is worrisome.

"That is the biggest threat," he said. "This appears to be the biggest coordinated attack ever." □

Canada tries to deport alleged Nazi

TORONTO (JTA) — Canadian officials want to denaturalize and deport an 80-year-old Montreal resident who allegedly covered up his Nazi past to enter Canada.

Documents that the government filed recently in a federal court claim that Walter Obodzinski, who received Canadian citizenship in 1955, was part of a police unit in his native Poland that has been implicated in murdering thousands of Jews and partisans, and in sending some 20,000 people to forced labor camps during World War II.

Canada's War Crimes Unit has now brought 17 deportation cases to court. □

Daughter's obit prompts search: Did her Chinese father save Jews?

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial is looking into claims that a Chinese diplomat helped thousands of Austrian Jews escape from Nazi Europe.

The story surfaced this week when Ho Manli told the story of her father, Ho Fengshan, China's consul general in Vienna from 1938 to 1940, who died three years ago in San Francisco at 96.

In an article published in the Beijing daily Global Times, 49-year-old Ho Manli described how her father secretly handed out exit visas that allowed up to 4,000 Viennese Jews escape Nazi persecution. Among those who are believed to have obtained exit visas from Ho, then in his late 30s, were Kalman and Anna Singer, the parents of Israel Singer, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress.

Israel Singer, who was not yet born, says he knows his parents received their exit visas from the Chinese Consulate, but does not know the identity of the man who issued the life-saving permits.

While many of those who received such visas traveled to Shanghai, Singer's parents went to the French port of Marseilles and then on to the United States.

Ho's reported rescue efforts are currently the subject of an investigation by the Jerusalem-based Yad Vashem, which is belatedly considering awarding him the title of Righteous Gentile.

Ho was said to have had an excellent command of German and was posted to Austria in 1937, where he became consul general in 1938.

He left Austria in May 1940 when he was posted to Turkey, from where he later moved to Egypt, Mexico and Colombia. In 1973, he retired to California, living quietly and modestly until his death in 1997.

Ho witnessed Hitler's rise to power as a student of politics and economics at Munich University and, according to his American daughter, he was stunned by the jubilant welcome that Hitler received in Austria after the 1938 Anschluss.

He was even more alarmed, she said, by the panic-stricken reaction of the 182,000-strong Jewish community in Austria, then the third largest in Europe.

According to his daughter, Ho's decision to actively devote himself to saving Jews — in defiance of the Germans and opposition from the Chinese ambassador in Berlin — was triggered by the events of Kristallnacht, the night of Nov. 9-10, 1938, when Nazi thugs ransacked Jewish-owned shops and set synagogues ablaze across Germany and Austria.

During the first three months of his posting in Vienna, Ho issued 1,200 visas, which has been verified by the serial numbers on the visas. His daughter has estimated that as many as 4,000 Jews were rescued in this way.

Ho's efforts to save Jews appeared to have started almost by accident when a 17-year-old Jewish boy, who had tried unsuccessfully to obtain visas from 50 other consulates, visited the Chinese Consulate in 1938.

Ho issued 20 visas for the boy's relatives. But he did not stop there. The boy's relatives told their friends, and soon long lines were forming outside the consulate, from where Ho was soon issuing dozens of visas each day.

When the Chinese ambassador to Berlin, Chen Jie, learned of Ho's activities, he feared they would damage Sino-German relations and ordered Ho to stop.

Ho ignored the order.

He also defied the Nazi authorities, who sought unsuccessfully to establish that Ho was taking bribes for the visas.

As part of their efforts to stop him, according to Ho's daughter, the Nazis confiscated his consular apartment on the pretext that it had been leased from a Jew. Undaunted, Ho found a new apartment, which he paid for out of his own pocket, and continued issuing exit visas.

Most of the thousands of Jews saved by Ho's exit visas are believed to have been among the estimated 18,000 Jews who sought refuge in Shanghai. Shanghai had been occupied since 1937 by the Japanese, who operated a relatively open-door policy to Jewish immigrants — as long as they possessed at least \$400 or had a local guarantor.

Today, Ho Manli, who lives in Maine, says her father rarely spoke of the period.

"He was a Christian and basically thought that it was a natural thing to do," she told the London Times this week. "So there was no reason to brag about it. Nobody had any idea of the extent of his rescue activities."

Ho's efforts surfaced only after his daughter wrote his obituary for the Boston Globe and she was contacted by Eric Saul, who has put together an exhibition — "Visas for Life" — about the diplomats who saved Jews during the war.

Together they have researched her father's wartime history, tracking down survivors and the children of survivors, some of whom still have the visas.

Some, like Singer, have been unable to identify the man who issued the life-saving visas.

But Ho Manli does not find this surprising.

"My father was simply the man at the consulate who stamped the visa," she said. "You never pay any attention to the person who stamps your visa, do you?"

She added that she found the ordeal of meeting some of the survivors and their children an emotional experience.

"I miss my father terribly," she said, "and these are the people he was able to help. It's as if he lives on through them." □

Team refuses to take off kipot

NEW YORK (JTA) — A referee in Virginia has slam-dunked a local Jewish school basketball team.

The team from the Hebrew Academy of Tidewater, made up of sixth- through eighth-graders, forfeited a game last week after the referee told six of its players they could not wear their yarmulkas on the court.

The wearing of yarmulkas is "not something we are going to be flexible on," the coach for the academy, Nathan Drory, was quoted in the Associated Press as saying, adding that four of his players are sons of rabbis.

The commissioner of the local officials association defended the referee's decision, saying, "If the clips were to come loose and stick someone in the eye, our \$5 million liability insurance wouldn't cover it."

After the forfeit, the academy played the Sweethaven Christian Academy in a scrimmage, which Sweethaven won, 33-22. □