



Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Lieberman a top V.P. candidate

An Orthodox Jew is on Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore's short list for a running mate, according to The Associated Press.

Gore's advisers said Sen. Joseph Lieberman would help the Democratic ticket distance itself from President Clinton because the senator from Connecticut was one of the first Democrats to criticize him during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Egypt: We won't pressure Arafat

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak traveled to Alexandria in an effort to get Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's help in forging a final peace deal with the Palestinians.

After the meeting, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa said Egypt would not pressure Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to make concessions on Jerusalem. Mubarak met earlier in the week with Arafat, who was touring Arab states.

On Thursday, Arafat made an unexpected trip to South Africa to discuss the peace process with former President Nelson Mandela, who turned down Arafat's request to mediate Israeli-Palestinian talks.

CNN reunites Israel, Jerusalem

CNN decided to reunite Jerusalem with Israel on its weather Web site following complaints from Jewish groups and the online Jewish community.

The network had previously listed Jerusalem separately from other Israeli cities, citing an attempt "not to take a side" in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute over the city.

A note on the Jerusalem page now states that Jerusalem "is the most contentious issue in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks" and that "Palestinian and Arab leaders consider part of Jerusalem the capital of the prospective Palestinian state."

Lawsuit filed in cemetery fracas

A London-based Orthodox Jewish group filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights over the construction of an office building over one of Europe's oldest Jewish cemeteries.

The group that filed the lawsuit, the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe, has been trying for several months to halt construction work at the site in Prague.

NEWS ANALYSIS

U.S. two-fisted approach: Clinton boosts Barak, Congress hits Arafat

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — What do you do when your best-laid plans fall apart?

In the aftermath of the Camp David peace summit failure, if you are the U.S. administration, you could put your best foot forward, emphasize that progress was made and press ahead.

But President Clinton went a little further when he praised Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak immediately after the end of the summit for his "particular courage, vision and an understanding of the historical importance of this moment."

In contrast, he could only bring himself to say that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat "made it clear that he too remains committed to the path of peace."

On a number of fronts, both the administration and Congress have made strong overtures in the last week that support Barak and caution Arafat.

Clinton said he supports moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and some in Congress say they would block aid to the Palestinians should Arafat unilaterally declare statehood.

The U.S. has been seen before as favoring the Israeli position in the peace process, but now the public moves to shore up support for Barak and put pressure on Arafat demonstrate the accelerated effort on the administration's part to salvage something from the 15-day summit.

"It's important that Clinton made it clear who needs to do the compromising," said David Makovsky, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank. "Laying the blame was legitimate."

In an exclusive interview with Israel Television on July 28, Clinton warned the Palestinians against unilaterally declaring a state, although he did not say whether he would support cutting off aid to the Palestinians if they carry out their threat to declare a state on Sept. 13, the deadline for a final agreement.

"Our entire relationship will be reviewed," Clinton said. "I think it would be a big mistake to take a unilateral action and walk away from the peace process. And if it happens, there will inevitably be consequences — not just here, but throughout the world, and things will happen."

Clinton also said he would rethink his position on moving the U.S. embassy, saying there is a designated site in western Jerusalem and the move would be the "right thing to do."

Such a move would represent a turnabout of Clinton's long-standing position that moving the embassy would undermine the peace process.

The comments on the embassy were not entirely U.S.-initiated.

Barak, who has also suggested in the past that moving the embassy would be premature, had been in contact with the administration and congressional leaders on the issue.

The Israeli Embassy in Washington said it would be "natural, logical and correct" for the U.S. Embassy to be located in Jerusalem.

As for whether the Israeli prime minister's position has changed, spokesman Mark Regev said now is the right time to move forward on the embassy issue because progress could be made.

Such a move "is not inconsistent with the type of discussion at the Camp David summit," Regev said. While the administration is pursuing Mideast peace through

MIDEAST FOCUS

Plan to oust Barak denied

Senior Labor Party officials denied Israeli media reports of a possible challenge to Ehud Barak for the party leadership if he fails to conclude a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Reports said Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg and Cabinet minister Shlomo Ben-Ami were thinking of challenging Barak.

Kibbutzim launch kosher boycott

Israel's largest kibbutz movement called on its 167-member kibbutzim to boycott products with the Badatz kosher certification, saying they should not be financing the fervently Orthodox Agudath Yisrael movement.

The boycott by the United Kibbutz Movement is part of a campaign waged by secular organizations, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Hamas bomb factory discovered

Palestinian security forces uncovered a Hamas storehouse containing close to four tons of chemical materials used for making explosives in the West Bank town of Nablus. The discovery was made some two weeks ago, but was publicized this week.

Last IDF casualty leaves hospital

The last Israeli soldier to be wounded in Lebanon before the military pullout in May was released from a Haifa hospital. Cpl. Ran Yisraeli was seriously wounded when an outpost was shelled in the former southern Lebanon security zone.

Lebanese children study in Israel

Children of former South Lebanon Army soldiers who found refuge in Israel following Israel's pullout from southern Lebanon will continue to study the Lebanese school curriculum next year.

Some 1,700 children of former SLA soldiers are currently in Israel.

negotiations and carefully worded statements, the Congress has been more forceful.

Since 1995 the Congress has pushed for the embassy move and criticized Clinton for his inaction.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) called Clinton's remarks on moving the U.S. Embassy "a shot across Arafat's bow" and commended the president for his negotiating and for actively pursuing talks.

Last week, congressional lawmakers also introduced legislation that would block aid to the Palestinians should they follow through on their oft-repeated threat to unilaterally declare statehood.

While Specter, a member of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, wants the United States to pursue the conciliatory path first, he said he was willing to consider blocking aid to the Palestinians.

"The brass knuckles are ready," Specter told JTA.

The administration's clear praise of Barak came at a time when the Israeli leader needed help on the domestic front as he faced a no-confidence vote that could have dissolved his government.

The short-term effect of bolstering Barak may have worked, as Barak's governing coalition escaped intact on Monday, but the tenor of the U.S. approach and whether it will lead to any longer-term results in the peace process is still uncertain.

Some analysts say plans such as relocating the embassy are only symbolic, and the real work has to be done by persuading Arab leaders in the Middle East to use their leverage with Arafat.

Makovsky said U.S. diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the highest level is crucial if Camp David-level talks are ever to be revived.

Stopping short of alienating Arafat, the United States is working behind the scenes to pressure Arab leaders to convince Arafat he must compromise in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Edward Walker, assistant U.S. secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, is currently visiting 14 Arab countries, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and will likely ask leaders to push Arafat to be more flexible on eastern Jerusalem.

Jerusalem proved to be the main obstacle to an Israeli-Palestinian deal at Camp David.

"Any proposal will need the support of Saudi Arabia, and the United States is realizing that," said Shibley Telhami, a professor at the University of Maryland and a senior fellow in foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "The U.S. thought Arafat could do it on his own."

Arafat met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak immediately following the collapse of the summit, and Sunday he visited Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Also as part of the American effort, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called various Arab leaders last week, including Mubarak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa.

Albright traveled to Rome to meet with the foreign minister of the Vatican this week to discuss the Middle East peace process, although State Department officials would not say whether the United States was now considering the internationalization of Jerusalem, a long-held Vatican position.

The U.S. focus on moving things forward has highlighted that the problems are on Arafat's side, said Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum, a Philadelphia-based think tank.

But U.S. praise of Israel is temporary and America will soon ask its ally to make more concessions, he said.

"The U.S. will look to Israel to bend, and Israel will be flexible," Pipes speculated. "That's been the pattern for the past seven years."

The U.S. push forward is "bullheaded," according to Pipes, and becoming an end in itself, rather than a means toward pursuing America's goal of stability in the region.

Meanwhile, senior Israeli and Palestinian negotiators from Camp David met in Jericho on Sunday to continue negotiations, even if their meeting may have been more symbolic than substantive.

And if Clinton cannot produce more substantive support for Barak and compromise from Arafat quickly, his promises may end up being just symbolic as well. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Education Dept. honors yeshiva

A small girls' yeshiva in Brooklyn is among 198 public and private secondary schools honored this year by the U.S. Department of Education.

But teachers, students and administrators at the school, the one Jewish school honored this year, will be unable to attend the awards ceremony because it falls on Shabbat.

The 91-student Mercaz Bnos is one of 11 Jewish day schools named Blue Ribbon Schools since the Education Department started the program in 1982.

Dutch stock exchange apologizes

The Amsterdam Stock Exchange issued an official apology for looting Jewish assets during World War II.

In June, the exchange and the Dutch Banking Association agreed to pay \$130.2 million to the local Jewish community.

As part of that agreement, the exchange said it would offer an apology for the looting and for failing to make restitution after the war.

German bomb suspect released

German police released a man they had arrested in connection with a bombing last week that injured 10 immigrants, including six Jews from the former Soviet Union.

Police, who had searched the man's shop and his apartment, said he was no longer a key suspect. Prosecutors have increased the reward for information about the bombing to more than \$56,000.

Jewish treasure search called off

A team searching for sunken treasure believed looted from Greek Jews by the Nazis is calling off its salvage operation for a third time.

The latest postponement came after the Greek government said it is having trouble assembling the committee that will oversee the search near the southern coast of Greece for the treasure, which has been estimated at \$2.4 billion.

Slovakia get kosher cafe

The Jewish community in Bratislava, Slovakia, is building a state-of-the-art kosher cafeteria that will provide up to 120 kosher meals a day. The \$220,000 cost of the cafeteria, slated to open in the fall, is being met by private donors and the city's Jewish community.

Filming starts on Shoah rescue

The story of 1,000 Jewish refugees plucked from Europe in the midst of World War II and transported to safety in the United States is being filmed as a miniseries for CBS Television. "Haven," featuring Natasha Richardson, Anne Bancroft and Martin Landau, is scheduled to be aired in February.

Cheney at odds with Jews over sanctions against Iran

By Lisa Hostein

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — Dick Cheney, the Republican nominee for vice president, is at odds with the Jewish community over sanctions against Iran.

Containing Iran has been a top priority for the organized Jewish community, which cites Iran's record as a major sponsor of terrorism and a potential nuclear threat to Israel and the world.

When the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, was at the forefront of a successful lobbying effort to pass the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act in 1996, one of its chief opponents was Cheney, then the chief executive officer of an international oil company.

The law calls for punitive trade measures against foreign companies and countries that invest in Iran's energy sector. American companies are already banned from doing business in Iran because of its place on the State Department's annual list of sponsors of terrorism.

Cheney has opposed sanctions as an effective foreign policy tool since his days in Congress. But as head of the Halliburton oil company since the mid-1990s, he became an active lobbyist for lifting most unilateral sanctions.

Jewish officials are downplaying Cheney's position, suggesting that his views as vice president would be different from when he was an oil executive. But Cheney, who was to be crowned as the vice presidential candidate at the Republican National Convention here on Wednesday, suggested this week that might not be the case.

In an interview with "Meet the Press" on Sunday, after he had been nominated to run with Texas Gov. George W. Bush, he said he has called for the lifting of unilateral economic sanctions against Iran and Libya because "I believe they don't work."

He said that while he supports multilateral sanctions, like the kind enforced on Iraq since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, unilateral sanctions only "keep American firms out of those areas, but it hasn't done anything to change the behavior or the conduct of the country as well."

He said he advocated that position as CEO of Haliburton because his obligation was to "my shareholders and my employees and my customers." When asked what his stance as vice president would be, he said that he would support Bush's position, which is that it is premature to lift those sanctions, but he added: "I might go in and argue a different point of view with him, but I'll do it privately."

The Republican Party platform adopted this week does not specifically mention sanctions, but says: "Iran's record of supporting terrorism, opposing the Middle East peace process, developing weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, and its denial of human rights, most recently demonstrated in the trial and conviction of Iranian Jews on unfounded espionage charges, demonstrates that Tehran remains a dangerous threat to the United States and our interests in the region."

It also says the next Republican administration will "stop making unilateral gestures toward the Iranian government which, to date, have failed to result in a change in Iranian behavior. We will work to convince our friends and allies, most importantly the Europeans, to join us in a firm, common approach toward Iran."

According to U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), Congress has been under pressure to lift the sanctions against Iran from agricultural and other economic interest groups concerned that the sanctions put them at a trade disadvantage.

Most in Congress want to lift the sanctions, Kyl told a meeting sponsored by the American Jewish Committee here this week.

Jewish groups working in Washington say their position remains unchanged.

Jason Isaacson, director of the AJCommittee's Washington office, said, "Those of us who support sanctions are planning a defense. Sanctions aren't 'always the perfect tool,' he added, 'but sometimes they are the only tool.'"

Noting that Cheney has said that his thinking has evolved on certain issues, Isaacson said he hopes the vice presidential candidate "would take a fresh look at the utility of sanctions." □

Son of Jewish Democrats revels in role as Bush's main spokesman

By Lisa Hostein

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — What's a nice Jewish son of New York Democrats doing as the most visible spokesman of the Bush campaign?

"You can thank Jimmy Carter for making me leave the Democratic Party, and Ronald Reagan for making me a Republican," said Ari Fleischer, the 39-year-old senior communications adviser and spokesman for the George W. Bush campaign.

Speaking on his way to a news conference Thursday, the day his boss was crowned king of the Republican Party, Fleischer said it was during his college years at Middlebury College in Vermont that he started to shift his political thinking.

Those were the years — the late 1970s — when Iranian revolutionaries held Americans hostage and Afghanistan became the latest battleground of the Cold War.

"The notion of a nuclear freeze didn't make sense to me," he said, citing just one of Carter's policies with which he disagreed.

Still a registered Democrat, Fleischer's first job out of college was working on the political campaign of a New York Republican running for the U.S. Congress.

After that, he was offered a job on Capitol Hill — again working for a Republican — and his political conversion was complete. "My parents were shocked," he recalled. "They are proud Democrats."

But, he said, his parents still talk to him — they even discuss politics, though he never tries to persuade them to follow his footsteps.

They even came to Philadelphia — "as good strong Democrats" — to join in the festivities surrounding the Republican National Convention.

The man who has emerged as one of the most oft-quoted individuals in the Bush campaign worked on Capitol Hill for nearly two decades for a variety of lawmakers, including Sens. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and Bill Archer (R-Texas).

He left Archer's staff to join Elizabeth Dole's presidential campaign. When her campaign foundered last fall, he left, and reportedly was courted immediately by Bush's staff.

After some hesitation — during which time he reportedly negotiated with Microsoft Corp. to become its Washington spokesman — he signed on with Bush in November.

One of the first things Fleischer did when he moved to Austin, Texas, the headquarters of the Bush campaign, was to join the local Jewish community center to work out.

He describes his Jewish background as "relatively observant, basically Reform," and says that being Jewish is a "big part of my life."

The fact that he and other Jews play a prominent role in the campaign, he said, shows that Bush is a "wonderfully inclusive man" who "doesn't judge people by what group they belong to."

He knows that most Jews vote Democratic, and that many Jews are troubled by the conservative stances in the party platform on issues such as abortion and gun control.

The goal of Bush's Republican Party, he said, "is to show it's inclusive."

The governor's recent proclamation of "Jesus Day," which

drew criticism in the Jewish community, should not worry Jews so much, Fleischer said.

"I've also read the governor's proclamations on behalf of the Lubavitcher rebbe" and other Jewish causes, he said. "Proclamations are appropriate ways to commemorate important moments in the lives of your constituents."

Jews instead, he suggested, should focus on Bush's record in improving education and welfare reform.

"I hope that we can make an increasing number of American Jews open their eyes and reconsider their vote," he said, adding, "It's in the best interest of the Jewish community and of the Republican Party to reach toward each other."

As for his own political future, Fleischer evades the question about whether he would like a position in the administration if Bush wins.

"One step at a time," he said.

Is he optimistic? "We're going to work very hard at winning," he said. "It sure feels good now." □

Head of tolerance center addresses GOP convention

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — The founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center emphasized the importance of tolerance and combating hate in remarks to the Republican National Convention this week.

Before he delivered his three-and-a-half-minute speech in Philadelphia on Wednesday evening, Marvin Hier said he would address the lessons of the Holocaust for people today.

"The freedoms we cherish are not given in perpetuity," Hier said, adding, "If there is hate in our homes and schools today, it will be in our boardrooms and factories tomorrow."

He also used as inspiration the legacy of Anne Frank, the Dutch Jewish girl whose diary of her family's life in hiding from the Nazis has become famous around the world.

"This child's voice has outlasted the shouts of the murderers," Hier told the delegates.

Hier's invitation to speak at the convention came after Republican presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, visited the center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles earlier this year. The governor and his wife were scheduled for a one-hour visit, but stayed for three-and-a-half hours, said Hier. "His aides could not get him away," he said.

Hier was one of several speakers at the convention representing nonprofit organizations.

Earlier, the Republican Party called on an Illinois rabbi to give an invocation at its national convention this week.

Rabbi Victor Weissberg, spiritual director at Rosewood Rehabilitation Center in Northbrook, Ill., drew from the Book of Psalms the idea of following God to find truth.

"The voice of duty is the voice of God, a commanding voice, asking us to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly as leaders of the free world," Weissberg told the GOP delegates Monday night.

Weissberg touched on themes of freedom, hope and opportunity, and continuing the revolution in human destiny. □

(JTA staff writer Sharon Samber in Washington contributed to this report.)