



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Bomber targets Israeli ship

A Palestinian attempted to blow up an Israeli navy ship off the coast of the Gaza Strip in what the navy called a fumbled suicide bombing.

The man blew up his fishing boat late Monday night when Israeli sailors on a patrol boat approached to investigate. The blast killed the man and sank his boat without causing Israeli casualties, the navy said.

On Tuesday, a Palestinian was shot dead during a battle between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen near Rachel's Tomb, a shrine at the entrance to Bethlehem in the West Bank. The battle took place as Israeli officials said violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had dropped by as much as 40 percent since a truce was reached last week.

In another incident Tuesday, Palestinian gunmen fired shots at an Israeli bus bringing children home from school near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip. Bullets hit the bus, but no one was injured in the attack.

### Clinton names Mideast panel

President Clinton named former Senate majority leader George Mitchell to lead an inquiry into the violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Another former U.S. senator, Warren Rudman, will work with Mitchell, who was Clinton's mediator for Northern Ireland.

Also on the panel are former Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, Foreign Minister Thorbjorn Jagland of Norway and Javier Solana, the senior security official of the European Union.

### Arafat presses for peacekeepers

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat said he would continue to press for a U.N. peacekeeping force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip even though President Clinton rejected the idea.

Arafat said Tuesday that he had asked for U.N. peacekeepers more than a week ago, adding, "It's the right of every country that is being exposed to aggression."

Clinton told a Chicago radio station Monday that Israel's opposition to such a force means "it can't happen." Offering a similar view Tuesday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the United Nations would need Israel's agreement before it could deploy the peacekeepers.

## ELECTIONS 2000

### Lieberman not a major factor as Jews vote — and speak out

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Yair Nadiv, a Republican from the Detroit suburb of Huntington Woods, Mich., had just done something he'd never done before: He voted for a Democratic presidential candidate.

The dual citizen of Israel and the United States believes that with the Middle East in turmoil, U.S. policy should not be in the hands of an amateur in foreign affairs.

Al Gore is more experienced, "shows more intelligence, and his commitment to Israel seems very, very strong," said Nadiv, 40, whose youngest child, his prayer shawl fringes dangling from his shirt, accompanied his dad from the polling area.

"I voted basically my conscience as a Jewish man first."

Nadiv said he would have voted for Gore with or without the vice president's Jewish running mate, Joseph Lieberman. In fact, Nadiv is convinced that Lieberman would be faced with conflicting loyalties because his decisions would have to be based on the U.S. Constitution and not on his values as an Orthodox Jew.

Nadiv was not alone in his vote.

In interviews across the country — in Los Angeles, South Florida, the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, as well as in suburban Detroit — Jewish voters mostly expressed their support for the Gore-Lieberman ticket, although some did back Republicans George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. And while many voters expressed their pride that Lieberman, one of their own, had a shot at the vice presidency, his historic candidacy did not appear to be a major factor in their decision-making.

In Los Angeles, the voting lines at the polling places in the heart of West Hollywood's Russian community spilled out into the streets.

The immigrants, many newly minted American citizens exercising their voting rights for the first time, turned out in force — and almost unanimously for the Democratic standard-bearer. Indeed, if voting had been restricted to the nearly 6,000 Russian Jews in West Hollywood, Gore would have won almost unanimously.

Leonid Shvartz, pointing to his elderly parents, said the preservation of Social Security swung him to Gore, who he believes is "close to us."

"Everybody is for Gore," said Dimitri Olshansky, an emigre from Belarus, who was sitting on a sunny park bench, watching a dominoes game. "He's strong for Social Security. Also, his vice president is Jewish."

In South Florida, however, traditionally a Jewish stronghold, Gore appeared to still be haunted by the ghost of Clinton's indiscretions.

Jews are known for turning out to vote in large numbers and for their strong opinions — and Mildred Ross, who lives in the Century Village retirement community in West Palm Beach, Fla., did not mince words when discussing her feelings about Gore.

"I hate him, because he's just like" his boss, she said, then using a derogatory word for President Clinton. "He'll do anything; he'll besmirch his own parents, just for a vote," she said, pouring a cup of decaffeinated coffee. "I'm voting for Bush."

But Rose Dunsky, also of Century Village, was proud of Lieberman's candidacy.

While spreading peanut butter on matzah for the frail elderly at the local JCC's kosher meals site, Dunsky discussed the prospect of seeing the first Jewish vice president.

Her eyes twinkling, she said, "It's important for the future. Now children will see

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Palestinians free wanted terrorist

The man who tops Israel's most-wanted list of terrorists was released from a Palestinian jail, according to the self-rule government's police chief. Israeli security officials have warned that Mohammed Deif may already be planning terrorist attacks.

### U.S. envoy calling it quits

The man who has been the U.S. State Department's point man in Middle East negotiations for almost a decade said he will call it quits when the Clinton administration leaves office.

Sounding a bit discouraged, Dennis Ross said Monday, "I have done this job for a long time and I must consider the impact on my family. I don't intend to stay on in the next administration."

Ross added that the violence that has wracked the West Bank and Gaza Strip has "created on both sides a sense of betrayal, mistrust and psychic wounds that will take a long time to heal."

### Helicopters land in Lebanon

Two Israeli helicopters landed in a village in southern Lebanon while five others patrolled overhead. Lebanon's president called Monday's incident "an act of war and military aggression."

Israel's army said the action was aimed at protecting Israel's security after Hezbollah gunmen abducted three soldiers across the border in October.

### Palestinians to warn youths

The Palestinian Authority said it is taking steps to stop youths under the age of 16 from taking part in demonstrations that could lead to clashes with Israeli troops.

In a letter to the human rights group B'Tselem, Palestinian Authority official Yasser Abed Rabbo said the self-rule authority was carrying out a safety campaign in schools to stop children from taking part in the protests.

that anyone — any minority — can be president, that their being a minority won't get in the way."

In Brooklyn's Crown Heights, outside P.S. 321, where Lubavitch voters — the men in beards and black hats, the women in long skirts — voted alongside the neighborhood's sizeable African-American community, presidential sentiment favored Bush over Gore. But many people expressed unhappiness about both candidates.

"Gore is in with the Arabs and the first thing Bush did was declare Jesus Day," one Chasidic male voter, who preferred to remain anonymous, said, referring to a day celebrated in Texas and other states.

Nor did Lieberman's observant Judaism appear to sway any of these fervently Orthodox voters.

Daniel Cohen, 28, said he likes Lieberman, but is worried that he might interfere in Israeli politics. "At a time of crisis in Israel, we want to see someone less involved in foreign policy and more involved in domestic policy."

Cohen voted for the Bush-Cheney ticket.

But if some of the voters in Crown Heights backed Gore, there were no such mixed feelings about the state's U.S. Senate race, which pitted first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton against Republican Rep. Rick Lazio.

Signs reading "Save NY — Stop Hillary" were plastered on lampposts and street signs, as were others exhorting Jewish voters to recognize that "Pikuach Nefesh," or the Jewish interdiction to save a life, required Jews to vote for Lazio "for the safety of our brethren" in Israel.

Many of these voters oppose President Clinton's policies in the Middle East, and the first lady herself riled many in the Jewish community last year when she failed to respond immediately to allegations made in her presence by Suha Arafat, wife of the Palestinian Authority president, that Israel poisoned the Palestinian population's water supply.

Clinton later said she did not receive a proper translation of Arafat's remarks.

The Middle East became one of the major issues in the campaign.

Both candidates aggressively pursued the Jewish vote, and Clinton returned \$50,000 raised for her campaign by a U.S. Muslim group whose leader reportedly supports the use of armed force against Israel by Palestinians.

But Clinton had many Jewish supporters outside Queens' Forest Hills High School, a large red brick colonial building one block away from an intersection officially designated as "Holocaust Memorial Corner," where a Jewish community center and synagogue stand.

Douglas Aronin, who said he is active in the Union for Traditional Judaism, said the criticisms of Clinton were "overblown" and that her opponent, Lazio, never "put forward any positive reasons to vote for him."

This tree-lined upper-middle class neighborhood is a mixture of modern Orthodox and liberal Jews.

With the exception of a lone Patrick Buchanan supporter, everyone interviewed said they had voted for Gore-Lieberman. Or, as Dave Grossman, a senior citizen exiting the polls with his wife, Zita, put it, "We voted for Joe Lieberman and Al Gore."

No one said the prospect of a Jewish vice-president had factored into their choice, although some said they feared it would hurt Gore with non-Jewish voters.

Esther Mechaly, a French immigrant, said she liked Lieberman — "not because he's Jewish," but because she always votes Democratic.

Of Bush, she said, "I don't trust him because I don't trust his father," adding that his father, former President George Bush, "didn't like Israel or the Jewish people."

Jonathan Edelstein, a 29-year-old, also voted for the Democratic ticket, but not because of Lieberman.

But the possibility of a Jewish vice president made him think of how far attitudes in the United States — and of its Jews — had come from when an elementary school teacher told his class: "Any of you could be president, and I said, 'Not with my last name.'" □

(JTA managing editor Howard Lovy in Detroit, staff writer Julie Wiener in New York and correspondents Tom Tugend in Los Angeles and Tom Brodigan in South Florida contributed to this report.)



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Restitution panel begins work

A new international foundation charged with applying to the Polish government for the restitution of Jewish communal property seized during World War II agreed on concrete steps to get the complex process under way.

The foundation, which held its first meeting Monday, was established in June after months of negotiations between the Polish Jewish community and the World Jewish Restitution Organization on how to divide any reclaimed property or compensation.

There are an estimated 2,000 to 6,000 eligible properties. The deadline for submitting requests for restitution is May 2002.

### Group seeks yeshiva tax break

A fervently Orthodox U.S. group wants parents of children attending yeshivas to be able to take a federal income tax deduction for the portion of their tuition payments that goes for religious instruction.

Agudath Israel of America filed a brief in a case now before a U.S. appeals court arguing that since Congress amended the tax code in 1993, tax deductions for "intangible religious benefits" should apply to such tuition payments.

### German church to pay laborers

The Roman Catholic Church in Germany said it will soon start making payments to survivors who were forced to work for the church as Nazi slave laborers.

Some 1,000 survivors of the 10,000 who were forced to work for the church are expected to receive about \$2,200 apiece under the program.

### Budapest cemetery vandalized

Vandals damaged more than 50 tombstones in Budapest's largest Jewish cemetery. Jewish leaders issued a statement after the weekend incident saying they lack sufficient personnel to guard the cemetery.

### Chocolatier creates White House

A pastry chef is creating a White House made entirely of kosher white chocolate to honor Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the first Jewish vice presidential candidate to run on a major party's ticket. Chef Michael Baugh made the creation as part of Kosherfest, a kosher food show being held this week in Secaucus, N.J., where some 1,000 new kosher products are being launched.

### Birthing grad splits the uprisings

A Jewish football player who traveled to Israel last winter on the Birthingright Israel program scored the winning goal for the University of Oregon Ducks on Saturday. Place-kicker Josh Frankel scored the game-winning field goal in overtime, enabling the team to beat rival Washington State University.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Anguished families plead case of their kidnapped sons

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Haim and Edna Avraham arrived in New York this week armed with more than palpable anguish for their kidnapped son, Binyamin.

On the floor of their midtown Manhattan hotel room was a cardboard box stuffed with 30,000 blue and white bumper stickers, printed poignantly with: "Mom's home, waiting."

The stickers, for anyone who'll take one, list the names of three Israeli soldiers — Benny Avraham, 20; Adi Avitan, 20; and Omar Souad, 27.

Hezbollah abducted the trio Oct. 7 during a routine Israeli army check of the northern border with Lebanon and the three have not been heard from since.

Their families were in the United States this week to highlight the fate of their sons in meetings with American politicians, Jewish leaders and, possibly, U.N. officials.

Israeli investigators found blood at the site where the Israelis were abducted, leading them to believe that at least one of the soldiers was injured.

"I beg of everyone to help: I don't want anything else in the world but to know the condition of my son, and that these three boys are okay," Khadra Souad, the mother of Omar and 11 other children, said Monday during an interview at the hotel, just hours after they stepped off the plane.

Omar, a Bedouin from the village of Wadi Salameh, is the only one of the three who is married. He has two children, aged 3 and 5.

Israel has offered a prisoner exchange with Hezbollah, but the Syria- and Iran-backed militants have not responded, said Lt. Col. Rina Idan, the Israel Defense Force's liaison to the families who accompanied the group on their weeklong visit.

"Israel has sent a clear message that we are willing to negotiate, but the letter has not been answered," Idan said.

The case of a fourth Israeli, a businessman kidnapped in mid-October, is being handled separately, said Idan. He is a civilian, while the other three are soldiers.

Meanwhile, the IDF northern command is now on high alert, amid warnings that Hezbollah may be about to launch a massive attack near the confluence of the Israeli, Lebanese and Syrian borders.

In response, Israeli warplanes reportedly violated Lebanese airspace this week and landed two helicopter gunships in a southern village.

Israeli officials confirmed the incident, saying it was intended to protect Israeli security in the wake of the soldiers' kidnappings.

As for the three families, Israeli officials in New York invited them to the United States to "open a second front," in the words of one Israeli official, to publicize their cause, condemn Hezbollah's tactics and use diplomatic channels to apply pressure on Syria, Lebanon, Iran and the United Nations.

"Today it's Israeli soldiers, tomorrow it could be American soldiers," said Haim Avraham, whose family resides in Bnei Brak, near Tel Aviv.

"One day our sons were stolen, and we want them back."

During their stay, they were meeting with U.S. politicians, including Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the New York Jewish Community Relations Council.

They are also planning to attend the United Jewish Communities' General Assembly, scheduled to begin over the weekend in Chicago.

In particular, the group hoped to exhort the United Nations, which has been perceived as being historically hostile to Israel, to wield its influence. Israel believes that the United Nations bears special responsibility since it was the world body that for 22 years had demanded Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

When Israel did withdraw in May, the United Nations moved in a peacekeeping force to monitor the border. The three soldiers were abducted while a U.N. patrol reportedly cowered in its post nearby. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Can a lame-duck president bring Mideast back from abyss?**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — How lame is a lame-duck president?

In separate meetings with President Clinton at the White House this week and next, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat are about to find out.

The hope on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that a new chapter can be written in America's political science textbooks — a chapter suggesting that the widely believed weakness of an outgoing president is, in fact, a source of strength.

Weakness, of course, is a characteristic that all three leaders currently share.

Clinton is on his way out, and the attention of the world is fixed on his successor. In terms of the Middle East, moreover, Clinton's weakness stems from the ongoing crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which has come close to undoing all the effort he put into the peace process during the past seven years.

Barak is also weak — because his minority government is living on borrowed time. The fervently Orthodox Shas Party recently gave his government a one-month "safety net," during which Shas legislators would not support any motions to topple him. Likud and the other parties of the opposition are pressing Shas officials to reduce that time frame, or at least not to extend it.

Arafat is no less feeble, but for different reasons. His fragmented Palestinian Authority is infinitely weaker, militarily and economically, than Israel. The uprising in the territories is causing suffering to his people while he, as leader, has yet to show a tangible political achievement that makes the suffering all worthwhile.

Topping the agenda of the Washington meetings is the need to end the violence and shore up the still largely unimplemented agreements made last month at the Sharm el-Sheik summit. Those agreements included ending the violence and finding a path back to peace talks. Beyond this, however, the two sides appear to have very different goals for their talks with Clinton.

Reportedly included on Barak's agenda is a desire to revise, in light of the ongoing violence, some of the security arrangements discussed at the Camp David summit in July — particularly the repeated incidents in which Palestinian gunmen have opened fire on Israeli troops.

Barak, who is scheduled to meet with the president on Sunday, is also said to have reconsidered his previous willingness to grant the Palestinians control over Arab neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem.

Arafat, slated to be in Washington on Thursday, is continuing to press for an "internationalization" of the peace process so that the United States will no longer have the sole role of mediator in the talks. As part of this drive, Arafat is also urging that a U.N. peacekeeping force be deployed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel adamantly rejects the idea, and Barak this week denied reports that U.S. officials had floated such a proposal with Israel.

For his part, Clinton told a Chicago radio station Monday that Israel's opposition to such a force means "it can't happen."

Offering a similar view, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Tuesday that the United Nations would need Israel's agreement before it could deploy the peacekeepers.

Despite the differing positions of Israel and the Palestinian

Authority, Israel's foreign minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami, remained optimistic that a way could be found back to the negotiating table.

"If Arafat wants to return to the negotiations, and the calm in the territories continues to take hold, it is certainly possible to renew negotiations," Ben-Ami told Israel Army Radio on Monday.

His comments came as Israeli officials noted a drop in the number of clashes in the territories. Still, the death toll among Palestinians from these clashes continued to mount daily.

And at the same time, attacks on Israeli targets took on a new dimension this week, when a Palestinian attempted to blow up an Israeli navy ship off the coast of the Gaza Strip in what the navy called a fumbled suicide bombing.

The man blew up his fishing boat late Monday night when Israeli sailors on a patrol boat approached to investigate. The blast killed the man and sank his boat without causing Israeli casualties, navy officials said. And on Tuesday, Palestinian gunmen fired shots at an Israeli bus bringing children home from school near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip. Bullets hit the bus, but no one was injured.

Given such continued violence, can the three leaders overcome their individual weaknesses and pull the tortured region back from the abyss?

This week, only diehard optimists were prepared to subscribe to this prospect. These optimists argue that Clinton, freed from all considerations linked to the elections, will be able to be more creative, and if need be, tougher toward both sides.

The optimists assume that America's president-elect would be only too pleased to give Clinton his full moral support to finish the job of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking — rather than face the prospect of inheriting a potentially explosive situation in one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints.

Where Barak is concerned, the optimists believe that his sole chance of political survival is to go to the electorate with a peace treaty, and that this will drive him to cut a deal with Arafat.

But is Arafat still interested in a peaceful resolution of the conflict? The optimists say that this may be the only way for him to remain as the leader of his people.

The intifada, now in its sixth week, has unleashed new and potent forces within the Palestinian community, including within Arafat's own Fatah movement.

If the violence continues, there will be no guarantee that the old generation, personified in Arafat, can continue riding the tiger without falling off.

Without a doubt, however, there are numerous pessimists out there who do not expect much of anything from the Washington meetings. Among them is Samuel Lewis, who was the U.S. ambassador to Israel in 1979, when the Jewish state forged its first peace treaty with an Arab neighbor, Egypt.

Participating in a panel discussion this week in Washington sponsored by the Israel Policy Forum, Lewis said the violence of the past weeks has broken "too much crockery."

"If there was a chance for a comprehensive deal, it has fled. And we may not see it again anytime soon," said Lewis, who was the U.S. envoy to Israel from 1977 to 1985.

Citing Clinton's long-standing commitment to the peace process, Lewis was far from certain that Clinton's successor would be any more successful at resolving one of the world's most intractable disputes. □

(JTA correspondents Naomi Segal in Jerusalem and Matthew E. Berger in Washington contributed to this report.)