



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Top Hamas militant escapes

Palestinian sources confirmed that the Hamas militant who tops Israel's most-wanted list escaped the Gaza Strip jail where he had been held for the past seven months.

According to Israel Radio, a Hamas Web site claimed that Mohammed Deif was assisted in his escape by Mohammed Dahlan, the head of Palestinian security in Gaza.

Deif and Dahlan became good friends while serving time together in an Israeli jail, the report said. [Page 3]

### 5 wounded in Palestinian attacks

An Israeli soldier was critically wounded, and another soldier and a woman were moderately hurt in a drive-by shooting in the West Bank.

In another attack, a Palestinian stabbed two Israelis at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The second Israeli drew his gun and killed the attacker. [Page 3]

### U.S.: 1994 attack is terrorism

U.S. Jewish leaders welcomed the U.S. Justice Department's decision that a 1994 attack on a New York van carrying yeshiva students was an act of terrorism.

"It is essential that an act such as this be addressed to prevent the spread of terrorism in our country," the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said in a statement.

The machine gun attack on a ramp of the Brooklyn Bridge led to the death of Ari Halberstam and the wounding of fellow student Nachum Sosonkin.

The attacker, a Lebanese man named Rashid Baz, was sentenced to 141 years in prison.

### Vatican defends Haider visit

The Vatican defended a planned meeting later this month between Pope John Paul II and an Austrian politician who has praised Hitler and members of the Nazi SS.

"The Holy See is open to everyone. No one should be surprised by that," Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano said Thursday.

Israel, Jewish groups and Italian leftists have called on the pope to cancel the Dec. 16 meeting with Jorg Haider.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Jews watch for nominees to assess a Bush White House

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the legal battle over the votes in Florida continues, Jewish observers are eyeing George W. Bush's potential administration nominees to signal the direction of his international and domestic policies.

The next president will be facing a shaky political climate in the Middle East as well as numerous divisive domestic issues, including issues related to the separation of church and state. Just as significant, Bush may be in a position to choose as many as three new members of the U.S. Supreme Court.

While cautious not to anoint Bush the winner until Vice President Al Gore concedes, Jewish activists and analysts are beginning to speculate on the new and familiar faces that could be included in a Bush administration.

"The first thing George W. Bush has to do is pick a team," said Diana Aviv, vice president for public policy for the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group of North American federations. "In many ways, his philosophies are going to be translated by the top team he puts together."

Two key Jewish names being mentioned for Cabinet level posts are Stephen Goldsmith, the former mayor of Indianapolis who has been Bush's domestic policy guru, and Paul Wolfowitz, an undersecretary of defense during the administration of Bush's father.

During the campaign, George W. Bush voiced strong support for Israel and a role for the United States as a mediator in regional peace negotiations.

But by and large, the Texas governor is untested in foreign policy in general, and the Middle East in particular.

Some Jewish leaders will be watching to determine whether Bush acts to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which he promised to do during the campaign. Congress has legislated such a move, but the Clinton administration put it off, saying it would jeopardize the peace process.

Bush's action on the embassy will be a key opening-round test of the new Bush presidency, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

In general, Hoenlein added, "I think we will look at the kind of outreach that goes on to our community."

Most analysts predict that Bush will not devote the same level of time and energy to the Middle East conflict that President Clinton did. To the extent that a Bush administration focuses on the region, the job is likely to fall to the State Department.

Bush's chief foreign policy advisers during the campaign were Wolfowitz, Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Condoleezza Rice, a Stanford University professor who served on the National Security Council when Bush's father was in the White House.

Powell, believed to be the leading contender for secretary of state, was chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the Gulf War, and apparently developed good relations with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who was Israel's top military man at the time. Powell, however, has not had much experience in diplomacy.

Rice, who visited Israel this summer, is Bush's likely national security adviser.

In interviews during the campaign, she reiterated Bush's belief in U.S. solidarity with Israel, but said the White House must allow the parties themselves to set the pace

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barak denies deal on elections

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak denied reports that a deal had been cut with fervently Orthodox legislators, under which they would withdraw their support for early elections.

Barak was reacting to reports that Labor and Shas officials had reached a deal to extend draft deferments for yeshiva students.

The government plans to present an emergency order to the Knesset next week that would grant a one-year extension for the deferments.

### Report: No U.S. mediation plan

The United States does not plan to launch any mediation effort in the near future to try to help Israel and the Palestinians reach a final agreement, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported, quoting an American official.

### Court lets victim's family sue

An Israeli court refused to dismiss a case filed against the Palestinian Authority by the family of one of the two soldiers lynched by a Palestinian mob in October.

The family of Cpl. Vadim Nourezitz is suing the Palestinian Authority and its president, Yasser Arafat, for approximately \$16 million.

The lawyer for the Palestinian Authority said Israel was responsible for the lynching because its soldiers entered Palestinian territory, and he threatened a countersuit.

### Army gives soldiers videocams

The Israel Defense Force is equipping some of its soldiers with video cameras so they can document what happens during clashes with the Palestinians, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The move comes as part of the public relations battle the two sides are fighting in parallel to the violence on the ground.



## Daily News Bulletin

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of peace talks. "You want this period to unfold in a way that secures Israel, and you have to trust Israel to make decisions about its own security," Rice said in an interview with the New Jersey Jewish News in September.

Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, said he is concerned that neither Powell nor Rice has a strong diplomatic track record. But Bush has an opportunity to delve into Middle East issues with a clean slate, Neumann said.

"This is an opportunity to come in and start afresh," he said. Bush "does not have a stake" in whether the Oslo process, which began under the Clinton administration and has seemingly collapsed, works.

Meanwhile, some Jewish observers will be watching to see what role, if any, is given to James Baker, the former secretary of state who emerged as a key member of the Bush team during the Florida legal wrangling over vote counts.

Baker, seen by many Jews as hostile to Israel, incurred the wrath of the established Jewish community during a nasty fight over loan guarantees to Israel in early 1991.

Jewish observers will also be watching for gestures made to the Arab American community, which gave Bush strong support on Election Day.

Jewish activists say Bush will have to navigate between the Jewish community and Arab Americans.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said he expects a change in the role the United States will play on issues related to the Middle East.

Bush "realizes Israel has to make its own decisions on the pace of the peace process," Brooks said. "We're not going to force Israel to conform to our timetable."

On the domestic front, a Bush White House will be forced to face a sometimes bitterly divided Congress.

The task is likely to be even more daunting given the contentious outcome of the election.

Analysts say Bush's campaign theme of serving as a "uniter, not a divider" will be put to the test.

They also believe that compromise will be necessary to quell some hot-button issues in the 107th Congress, including gun control, Social Security and Medicare.

"You're not going to see massive changes in the legislative process because the margins are too narrow," said Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

Also potentially explosive could be nominations to the Supreme Court and other federal benches. The Democrats have enough votes in the Senate to block some conservative nominations.

"Given the close division in the Senate, the president is going to be forced to the middle with a nomination," said Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department.

On the abortion issue, Bush is pro-life, but a few moderate Republicans in the Senate are pro-choice.

The White House may be forced to nominate a candidate who will not overturn *Roe v. Wade*, but is in favor of legislative restrictions on abortion, Stern said.

But nominations to the court are unpredictable. A Democratic majority in the Senate in 1991 approved Clarence Thomas, considered one of the more conservative members of the current court.

Although nominees could be seen as moderate because of their views on abortion, Stern said, any Bush nominees will likely still take Republican positions on such issues as charitable choice and school vouchers.

Bush received only 19 percent of the Jewish vote in the election.

But "I know that Gov. Bush does not look at polls in making decisions," said Sobel, the finance chairman of Bush's New Jersey campaign. "Whether we voted less or more for the Republican ticket would not make a difference on important issues."

Forman said it is natural for politicians to steer away from groups that don't provide electoral support, but he said he still thinks the proportion of Jews in a Bush White House will be greater than the Jewish proportion of the country's population.

"The Jewish community will survive a Republican White House," he said. "We will have issues that we won't be happy about, but we will survive quite well." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Hamas man 'escapes' from jail as violence breaks out once again

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A lull in the recent Israeli-Palestinian violence again has proven short-lived.

On Thursday, five Israelis were wounded, one critically, in Palestinian attacks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The attacks came as Palestinian sources confirmed that Hamas militant Mohammed Deif, who tops Israel's most-wanted list for his involvement in terrorist attacks, has escaped from a Palestinian jail.

According to Israel Radio, a Hamas Web site claimed that Mohammed Dahlan, the head of Palestinian security in Gaza, helped Deif escape. Deif and Dahlan reportedly became friendly while serving time together in an Israeli jail.

According to the site, Dahlan arranged for Deif to be moved to a safe house amid concern that Israel might bomb the jail to assassinate Deif.

In the West Bank, an Israeli soldier was critically wounded and another soldier and woman were moderately hurt in a drive-by shooting. The driver of their car was treated for shock.

At the Erez Crossing between Israel and Gaza, a Palestinian stabbed an Israeli, moderately wounding him. Another Israeli witnessed the attack and tried to stop the assailant, who stabbed him as well. The second Israeli drew his gun and killed the attacker. The attacks came as Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat met in Gaza with relatives of Israelis killed in the ongoing conflict.

Yitzhak Frankenthal, whose son Arik, a soldier, was kidnapped and murdered in Gaza in 1994, said the families pressed Arafat on Thursday to help end the fighting. Earlier this week, the group set up a protest tent in Tel Aviv calling on Israel and the Palestinians to restart peace talks.

Arafat expressed appreciation for their visit, and stressed the importance of working together.

"We are living on land together," he was quoted as saying. "It is important there is partnership based on relations of cooperation and faith."

Also Thursday, Israel and the United States continued contacts to finalize the framework of an upcoming visit by members of an international panel charged with probing the causes of the violence in the territories.

Reports said the head of the panel, former Sen. George Mitchell, would meet Monday with Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. It was not clear whether the group would begin any fact-gathering during its first visit.

After Palestinian officials confirmed that Deif had escaped jail, an Israeli security source was quoted as saying Israel holds the Palestinian Authority responsible for Deif's activities.

Palestinian officials would not comment on the report that Dahlan helped Deif escape.

Earlier reports had said Deif managed to slip away from Palestinian guards while being transferred between facilities, and that Arafat had put out an order that he wanted him back "dead or alive." But Israeli security forces believe that Deif's Palestinian guards may have cooperated with him.

Deif is wanted by Israel for involvement in several terrorist attacks, including a spate of suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in February and March 1996.

He is also believed responsible for the abduction and murder of several Israeli soldiers, including Nachshon Waxman in 1994.

Deif was detained by Palestinian security forces in May. When the Palestinian violence erupted in late September, Deif was initially believed to have been released from Palestinian jails along with other Islamic militants.

Reports last week, however, said that Deif and another militant, Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, remained in detention.

At the same time, security sources told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that even during his detention, Deif was able to remain in contact with Hamas activists in the field. □

#### Judge dismisses slave cases

A U.S. judge dismissed 49 class-action lawsuits brought against German firms that used slave and forced labor during World War II.

The move paves the way for Germany to begin paying such laborers from a \$5.2 billion fund agreed to earlier this year.

#### Italian Jewish shops vandalized

Police in Rome believe right-wing skinheads are behind several incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism that targeted about a dozen Jewish-owned stores in a city suburb.

The vandals scrawled anti-Semitic and racist slogans on the shutters of the stores and also used silicon to seal the shutters closed.

The incident took place Wednesday, 10 days before Austrian right-wing leader Jorg Haider is due to meet the pope at the Vatican.

#### Bomb defused at Sydney shul

Australian police defused a bomb that was found in a local synagogue targeted in a recent arson attack.

It is not clear if the bomb was placed in the Sydney-area synagogue by the arsonists or was put there later.

#### Shuls get \$250,000 in grants

The World Monuments Fund and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation allocated grants totaling \$250,000 to help save threatened synagogues in seven countries. The grants include \$60,000 for the synagogue in Subotica, Yugoslavia, one of the finest art nouveau buildings in Europe.

Other grants will go to synagogues in Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine, plus an archaeological site in Suriname featuring the brick remains of the first synagogue of architectural significance in the New World.

#### Vandals hit cemetery in Germany

Vandals damaged gravestones in a Jewish cemetery in the western German town of Saarbrücken. Seventeen gravestones were targeted in the attack, but the vandals left no swastikas or other anti-Semitic graffiti on the graves, police said.

#### Anti-Semitic speeches see print

A book of speeches by a Russian governor known for his anti-Semitic statements was published in his home region of Krasnodar, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

The 460-page book features comments by Nikolai Kondratenko, such as "We will scatter the Zionist mafia in Krasnodar. They will get smeared onto the wall."

## Chicago-area cantor charged with running a prostitution ring

By Ruth Silverman

CHICAGO (JTA) — Members of Chicago's Jewish community are expressing shock and dismay about the arrest of a former temple cantor and his wife of a few weeks.

The two were charged in connection with a prostitution ring. Joel Gordon, 51, who has served at several Chicago-area synagogues, was charged Nov. 21 with keeping a house of prostitution following a police raid on three massage parlors, operated out of private apartments in the northern suburbs.

His wife, Alison Ginsberg, 23, was charged with prostitution and keeping a house of prostitution.

Gordon was most recently the cantor and spiritual leader of Congregation Shirat Emet, a now-defunct synagogue in the Chicago suburb of Buffalo Grove.

Cantorial colleagues of Gordon's were stunned by the news.

Cantor Shlomo Shuster of Ezra Habonim-Niles Township Jewish Congregation trained Gordon as a cantor. He remembers his student as "very talented and bright— but one who liked to dance on the edge."

"I'm very sad," he said. "It's very bad for all Jews, for the profession, and it's a disgrace to God's name, especially for a member of the clergy, who wears the mantle of God."

Cantor Eric Wasser, president of the Midwest Region of the Cantors Assembly, said, "Obviously, we want to give anyone the benefit of the doubt until due process has taken place."

Gordon, he said, "has a real musical talent. We will offer our support in whatever ways we can. Certainly, there have been clergy with problems before, but this is pretty unique."

Wasser, whose group is affiliated with the Conservative movement, said he had not seen Gordon in a couple of years. Gordon used to be active in the organization, helping to plan programs, Wasser said, but had curtailed his involvement the last several years.

Gordon resigned from the Cantors Assembly last week.

One of the founding members of Shirat Emet, Betsy Delman, expressed a mixture of anger and heartbreak at the news of Gordon's arrest.

"Once you get over the shock and disgrace of his part in something so sleazy, you feel sorry for him," said Delman, who remembered Gordon as a "Pied Piper" with children.

"What was it that turned him in this direction — the demise of his synagogue, his age? His voice was incomparable. Was it all just superficial? Was there another person in him? Was there something that made him change? How do we explain to our children what a supposedly spiritual man has done?"

Cook County Sheriff's police officers said female employees at three Golden Touch Massage parlors offered sexual favors for money and the business featured massages performed by nude women. As part of the undercover investigation, a female officer applied for a job with the owner of the business. The officer was told by the owner she could make between \$600 and \$1,100 per day working for him, but that all activities performed would be "illegal," the sheriff's department said.

Both Gordon and Ginsberg declined comment, when reached by phone at the home of her mother. When asked if their lawyer,

whom she refused to identify, would comment on their behalf, Ginsberg said, "Don't call him. He doesn't want to be bothered."

Several other people were also arrested in connection with the ring. All were released on bail. □

## Muslim Holocaust denial tests South Africa's ban on hate speech

By Anna Cox

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — A Muslim radio station is asking a court to overturn a section of the broadcasters' code of conduct that prohibits hate speech.

In a case brought before the Johannesburg High Court, which has not yet delivered a ruling, the station said the section of the broadcasters' code should be revoked because it is too broad and limits freedom of expression.

Radio 786 brought the case after the South African Jewish Board of Deputies lodged a complaint against the station for airing a program that dealt with the ideology of Zionism and how it resulted in the creation of the Jewish state.

Appearing on the program was Yacoub Zaki, a historian at the Muslim Institute in London.

During the broadcast, Zaki said, "I accept that 1 million-plus Jews died during the Second World War, but I dispute the fact that they were murdered, that they were killed by gassing.

"These people died, like other people in the camps, from infectious diseases, particularly typhus," he said.

Section 2(a) of the law states in part that broadcasters shall not air any material that is indecent or offensive to public morals, or is offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the population. □

## Teens arrested for vandalizing Jewish cemetery in South Africa

By David Saks

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — In one of the worst acts of anti-Semitic vandalism in South Africa in recent years, a Jewish cemetery in the town of Lichtenburg has suffered damage to nearly all of its graves.

About 60 graves in the cemetery were targeted in last week's incident. More than half of the tombstones were broken, and the remainder pushed over.

There was no anti-Semitic graffiti, but in a number of instances dead snakes were left on the graves.

Several children's graves in an adjoining cemetery also were tampered with, but the concentrated damage to the Jewish cemetery suggested that the vandalism was motivated by anti-Semitism.

The incident was reported to police by one of the last remaining Jewish residents of the town, located west of Johannesburg.

The alleged perpetrators, four pupils from a local high school, have been arrested.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, a member of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said the board recently had spent some \$4,000 to restore the cemetery and build a wall around it.

Organized religious services have not been held in Lichtenburg for more than 10 years. □