



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Ross to seek OK on statement

President Clinton's envoy, Dennis Ross, was slated to arrive Wednesday in the Middle East for talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

According to Barak, Ross plans to sound out the two leaders about a statement Clinton may issue at the end of his term on the state of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. [Page 3]

Sources: UJC official leaving

The No. 2 executive at the United Jewish Communities is apparently on her way out, 14 months after being hired to implement change in the U.S. federation world's umbrella body.

The UJC is currently negotiating with Louise Stoll about the terms of her departure, according to sources close to UJC. But UJC officials would say only that they are discussing her future role.

Clinton awards medal to rabbi

Rabbi Arthur Schneier and Marion Wiesel were among 28 Americans whom President Clinton honored for their public service with Presidential Citizens medals at a White House ceremony Monday.

Schneier, the founder of the New York-based Appeal of Conscience Foundation, was the first rabbi to receive the award.

He was recognized for his leadership on behalf of religious freedom and human rights.

Wiesel, the wife of Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, was honored for her efforts to combat hatred.

Judge to hear Pollard arguments

A federal judge in Washington plans to hear oral arguments Thursday on whether attorneys for convicted spy Jonathan Pollard should have access to classified portions of the court record.

The attorneys argue that those documents led to a sentence of life imprisonment, which they are now appealing. A former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, Pollard was sentenced in 1987 for spying for Israel.

Because of the Martin Luther King holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Jan. 15.

Remarks about Israel spur battle over Holocaust council chairman

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — A speech by the chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council has led to calls for his replacement — and responses that he is the victim of a McCarthyite smear campaign.

Critics charge that a speech by Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg in November at the United Jewish Communities' General Assembly was unduly critical of the Israeli response to the Palestinian violence that broke out in late September and has involved more than 350 deaths.

Greenberg and his supporters respond that his comments are being taken out of context and that he is the victim of an ideological vendetta.

The controversy began after an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* criticized Greenberg's speech, in which he addressed the issue of the ethics of Jewish power and the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

The Dec. 29 op-ed, written by Ira Stoll, criticized Greenberg for having said he "would not be shocked if 5 percent or 10 percent or 20 percent of those casualties were [the result of] scared soldiers or people overreacting."

Stoll, a former managing editor at the *Forward* newspaper, blasted Greenberg for "blaming Arab casualties in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza over the past few months on an 'overreaction' by 'gun-happy' Israeli soldiers and police."

Stoll further called the council, which oversees the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, "something of a playpen for Clinton loyalists" and called on President-elect George W. Bush to "set things straight" by asking for the resignation of Greenberg and his vice chairwoman, Ruth Mandel.

The controversy escalated this week, after a group of 45 Israeli soldiers faxed to Jewish communal organizations a statement calling upon Greenberg to publicly retract his remarks.

To some locations, the fax was sent anonymously, but others who received the fax said it was sent under the name of the Zionist Organization of America, according to Blu Greenberg, Yitz Greenberg's wife.

Morton Klein, the president of the ZOA, said that while he did not authorize any of his employees to send the fax, "I don't think it was inappropriate to do so."

"I was disappointed and deeply perplexed that Yitz Greenberg strongly criticized the way Israel's soldiers are defending themselves against unprovoked Arab attacks, while ignoring Arafat's terrorist regime of primitive hatred and violence against innocent families," said Klein, who says he attended the G.A. session where Greenberg spoke.

Greenberg's statements "were both inappropriate and wrong," Klein said.

For his part, Greenberg said his remarks were taken out of context in Stoll's piece and called the op-ed "an outrageous misrepresentation." Reached in Jerusalem, he pointed to other parts of his talk in which he defended Israel.

He said at one point, for instance, that the Israeli army "is trying to seriously minimize casualties and death and under much more difficult circumstances than the previous intifada because there are now serious weapons on the other side."

Greenberg, a longtime Jewish thinker and leader, also defended the museum, which he said has had 15 million visitors since it opened in 1993, as a "bipartisan, highly respected institution."

He said he has written a letter to the army veterans, but does not know where to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Shas Party backs Sharon

Israel's fervently Orthodox Shas Party announced it would back Likud Party Chairman Ariel Sharon in elections for prime minister Feb. 6.

Tuesday's widely expected announcement from Shas, the third largest party in the Knesset, provided another boost to Sharon, who already has a wide lead over incumbent Prime Minister Ehud Barak in polls.

Violence persists in West Bank

Palestinian gunmen opened fire on Israeli positions in the Bethlehem area. Tuesday's fighting began after Israeli forces arrested a Palestinian man wanted for involvement in several attacks on Israelis.

In other violence, Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian during a confrontation in the West Bank, and a Palestinian youth was killed by Israeli fire.

Hamas claims Netanya bombing

Hamas claimed responsibility for a car bombing in Netanya that wounded at least 50 Israelis on New Year's Day.

The group identified the bomber as Hamed Abu Hijleh, a student from Al-Najah University in the West Bank city of Nablus. The bomber, who was seriously wounded in the attack, died in an Israeli hospital on Monday.

Report: Arafat sought Oslo's help

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat picked Norway to broker a 1993 peace deal with Israel, according to a report sponsored by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. Arafat had cultivated Norway as a secret back channel for contacts with Israel since the late 1970s, said the report, released Tuesday.

Although Norway was one of the last Western European nations to establish contacts with the PLO, Arafat was aware that Norway had for decades been among Israel's best friends, and he therefore thought Israeli leaders would trust the Norwegians.



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send it because the veterans' letter does not have any addresses or e-mails attached.

Individuals in Israel — where Greenberg is currently visiting participants on the Birthright Israel program and meeting with officials at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial — are attempting to arrange a meeting between Greenberg and the soldiers, said Arthur Berger, the chief spokesman for the Washington-based museum.

In any event, Greenberg said he does not feel the need to defend himself.

"Anybody who knows my record for the last 20 years would not be affected by the editorial," Greenberg said.

Before heading the Holocaust council, Greenberg was the founding director of CLAL — The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

Klein said he has written a letter to Greenberg, also asking him to retract his comments, and would not speculate on what action he would take if Greenberg refuses to do so. But in the past, Klein has not shied away from participating in public campaigns against the Holocaust museum that eventually resulted in backtracking by the museum or its appointees.

In 1998, John Roth, an appointee to head the museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, was criticized for making comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany. After a campaign spearheaded by Klein, Roth eventually resigned his post.

There's no evidence that the latest controversy will take this route, and two members of the Holocaust council contacted for this article say they back Greenberg.

"Yitz was trying to push forward the degree to which Jews with power are faithful to the tradition followed by Jews without power," said Michael Berenbaum, a Holocaust scholar. He defended Greenberg's "sterling integrity" and "love for the Jewish people and the Jewish state."

Abraham Foxman, also a member of the council, took his criticism of the anti-Greenberg campaign even further.

"Is this a litmus test that to be the head" of the Holocaust council, one has to believe certain things, said Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"It's McCarthyism. If you disagree with a person's point of view, disagree with that person's point of view, challenge that person's point of view. But don't take it to the point of going after them personally and then their job," Foxman said. □

U.S. Embassy in Rome reopens after terrorist threat shut it down

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The U.S. Embassy in Rome has reopened under heightened security after being shut for three days following what officials called a "very specific" terrorist threat.

Security was visibly tighter outside the embassy when it opened again Monday with a new fence and reinforced security checks in place.

Security was also beefed up at Rome's main airport, with flights to and from the United States and the Middle East under particular scrutiny.

American military bases around Italy were also reported on heightened alert, and security was increased at U.S. consulates and other institutions in several cities.

The embassy, located in a sprawling mansion on Rome's famous Via Veneto, was closed last Friday morning without prior notice. Its 300 employees were sent home with little explanation.

American sources cited a "very specific threat" and "an indication of a potential terrorist attack" but gave no details.

Italian newspapers, however, headlined unconfirmed reports that a suicide bomber was planning to blow up the embassy.

There was speculation the threat came from an Algerian commando unit linked to Islamic fundamentalist Osama bin Laden.

Jury selection began in New York last week for the trial of four men charged with conspiring with bin Laden in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. At least 263 people, including 12 Americans, were killed in the bombings, which left about 5,000 wounded. □

JEWISH WORLD

U.S. Jews, Israeli soldiers rally

The largest solidarity mission of American Jews since Middle East violence began in late September joined 400 Israeli soldiers for a rally and concert at an air force base near Tel Aviv on Tuesday night.

Some 900 North American Jews are visiting Israel this week under the auspices of the umbrella organization of U.S. Jewish federations, the United Jewish Communities.

Campaign promotes Israel travel

Israel's Ministry of Tourism announced a new advertising campaign to reassure Americans about the safety of traveling in Israel. The \$1.5 million campaign, which will feature testimonials of travelers, will appear in major metropolitan newspapers and in Jewish and Christian newspapers.

The campaign comes on the heels of a major tourism drop in Israel following the eruption of violence last fall. Since then, more than 50 percent of tours to Israel have been canceled, resulting in \$500 million in lost revenue, according to Uzi Gafni, deputy Israel commissioner for tourism in North America.

Lithuania to seek extradition

Lithuania plans to request the extradition from Britain of a man accused of Nazi war crimes. Anton Gecas, 85, is alleged to have killed Jews and other civilians when he was head of a special Nazi police unit in a part of Lithuania that is now in Belarus.

More than 90 percent of Lithuania's 250,000 Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

Pact would end French lawsuits

The United States and France plan to sign a pact later this month ending legal lawsuits in America against French banks. U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat announced the move Tuesday after meeting in Paris with French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Under the agreement, eight French banks would pay a financial settlement to cover claims by Holocaust victims whose bank accounts in France were frozen by the collaborationist Vichy regime.

Report: Britain let in SS members

A British television documentary claimed that up to 1,500 members of a Ukrainian SS unit were allowed into Britain after World War II. In the wake of the TV show, Lord Janner, the head of the Holocaust Educational Trust, called on Home Secretary Jack Straw to open government archives on the subject.

New Israeli envoy in Germany

Shimon Stein is expected to be sworn in as Israel's new ambassador to Germany on Thursday. He replaces Avi Primor.

Ross urges sides to endorse Clinton statement on peace process

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — U.S. envoy Dennis Ross is mounting a last-ditch effort to convince Israel and the Palestinian Authority to allow a presidential summation of the state of the peace process before President Clinton leaves office on Jan. 20, amid warnings from the Israeli military that Clinton's proposals would undermine Israeli security.

Clinton has proposed that Jerusalem be divided according to ethnic composition, that a Palestinian state be established in virtually all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and that international patrols — rather than the Israeli army — secure the Jordan Valley against a threat from the East.

The Israeli army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, laid out the army's reservations on Tuesday in a briefing for the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Mofaz warned that the proposals would "eat away" at Israel's ability to defend itself in the face of future threats.

To ensure its security, Israel must retain sole control over the Jordan Valley as a defensive buffer and control border crossings to prevent the flow of arms into the Palestinian area, Mofaz said.

Mofaz added that Jerusalem must not be divided, as a lack of contiguity for Jewish neighborhoods would create dangerous friction points. He also called for buffer areas off-limits to armed Palestinian security forces.

According to a Palestinian source, Israeli, Palestinian and American representatives were to meet in Gaza on Tuesday night in an effort to restore security cooperation. That meeting would follow security discussions in Cairo this week.

Some Palestinian officials denied any progress was made at the Cairo talks, but Prime Minister Ehud Barak's chief of staff, Gilead Sher, told Israel Radio that the sides had adopted an eight-point plan presented by CIA Director George Tenet aimed at reducing the violence and increasing counterterrorism efforts.

Meanwhile, Barak said Tuesday that Ross' latest shuttle mission would seek to convince Israel and the Palestinians to allow Clinton to make a statement summing up his peace efforts. Barak and Clinton spoke by phone on Tuesday.

Ross "will try to achieve certain understandings about a statement, a presidential statement, that President Clinton might release toward the end of his term," Barak told reporters at Hadassah-Ein Kerem Hospital, where he visited an Israeli boy wounded in a shooting attack Monday night.

Such a declaration could provide an outline for future negotiations, though Clinton this week said the incoming administration of George W. Bush would not be bound by it.

With Clinton due to leave office on Jan. 20 and Barak facing elections on Feb. 6, all parties to the contacts are skeptical that a full peace agreement can be achieved in the time left.

At the same time, Sher said it is possible "some real progress can be made."

In exchange for Israel's territorial concessions, the Clinton plan asks the Palestinians to scale back their demand that Arabs who fled Israel in 1948, and their descendants, be allowed to return to their former homes.

Both sides have given their conditional acceptance of the plan, but with significant reservations.

The Palestinians have said they cannot agree to anything less than a full right of return. Israel has said it cannot grant the Palestinians sovereignty over Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

On Tuesday, Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian fugitive in the Bethlehem area wanted for involvement in terrorist attacks. His accomplice also was apprehended.

Following the arrests, Palestinian gunmen opened fire on Israeli army posts near the settlement of Efrat and the tunnel road linking the Etzion bloc of settlements to Jerusalem. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Rallies in N.Y., Israel revive debate over role of U.S. Jews***By Michael J. Jordan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — As tens of thousands rallied in Israel this week to denounce proposals to relinquish parts of Jerusalem, leading U.S. Orthodox groups held a rousing rally of solidarity in a Manhattan synagogue.

The simultaneous events come amid renewed debate of whether some American Jewish leaders are breaching long-held principles of not opposing the democratically elected government of Israel or interfering in Israeli elections.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is engaged in an intense re-election campaign against Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon. Many viewed Monday's rally in Jerusalem as an effort to bolster the Sharon campaign. With elections set for Feb. 6, Barak is still trying to hammer out an 11th-hour peace deal that may cede certain Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem and sovereignty of the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site.

Most controversially, Ronald Lauder — viewed by many as the de facto leader of American Jewry in his role as chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations — spoke briefly at the rally Monday in Jerusalem's Old City.

At a rally widely perceived as anti-Barak, Lauder said he was speaking as an individual, not as the Conference of Presidents chairman.

According to reports, Lauder opened his brief remarks by stating, "I stand here tonight not on behalf of any Jewish organization, but as an individual Jew representing millions of Jews around the world from Manhattan to Moscow, from London to Budapest. All the world should know that you are not alone."

Yet many believe Lauder would not have been invited to address the crowd if he were simply a cosmetics magnate who happens to be a Jew.

The most outspoken of Lauder's U.S. critics, Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of the Reform movement's ARZA World Union, went on an Israel radio program Tuesday morning to "apologize" to the Israeli public if Lauder "gave the impression that he was representing American Jews."

Hirsch, whose group is a Conference of Presidents member, told JTA that "the chairman of the Conference of Presidents represents 54 major organizations, not himself.

"The conference itself did not give its authorization for Mr. Lauder to participate in the rally, let alone to speak. In fact, it specifically feared that his speaking would be perceived as interfering directly in Israeli politics, which all agreed the conference has never done before."

In response, Lauder's spokeswoman, Jeanine Kemm, told JTA, "I have no control over how other people perceive things."

"Mr. Lauder was there as a concerned Jew, as an individual, and with no other hats. He is truly concerned about the peace and security of Israel. Surely no one would seriously suggest he would be muzzled on a vital issue he has cared about his entire life. In fact, remaining silent would be a greater cause for criticism."

Those American Jews now on the offensive say that declaring Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem — in particular the Temple Mount, which is also Islam's third holiest site — is an issue that

"transcends politics." They say that Jerusalem is the ultimate "red line," the "eternal and undivided capital" of Israel and the spiritual and religious core of the Jewish people.

That means it supercedes another hallowed "red line" — that it is up to the government of Israel to decide what's best for Israelis.

Besides, says at least one American Jewish activist, all bets are off concerning the latter red line, given the current political situation in Israel.

"The government right now is something that's in flux," said Betty Ehrenberg, the lead organizer of the New York rally and the director of international affairs of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs.

"Now you have a government that has basically resigned and an election campaign going on. So it's unfair to world Jewry to continue to negotiate the most sensitive issues at this point in time."

The accusation that the rallies are politically motivated is "a false perception," Ehrenberg said. With Jerusalem on the negotiating table, "American Jews can support the Israeli government but not support this policy."

At the New York rally, held at the marble-and-stained glass Kehilath Jeshurun on Manhattan's Upper East Side, speakers uttered no harsh words about the Israeli government or even about Barak personally — unlike the Israeli right, whose most common characterization of him today seems to be "traitor."

Nevertheless, the criticism was implicit.

"This rally is no more political than a rally of solidarity with the State of Israel would be political," said Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, spiritual leader of Kehilath Jeshurun. But Lookstein went on to denounce the failure of Israeli security forces to halt Palestinian attacks on the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo, instead opting to install bullet-proof windows in private homes.

"One Gilo is enough!" Lookstein boomed. "Jerusalem and Har Habayit" — Hebrew for the Temple Mount — "are not negotiable any more than Tel Aviv is negotiable."

U.S. Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), told the audience, "I come here not as a politician, because this isn't about politics. I come here as a Jew, a Jew who is troubled, concerned, pained and angry."

"We fully understand that in forging a peace," Ackerman said, "peace means compromise. But compromise does not mean surrender.

"Give it away. Chop it up. Parcel it out. Never!"

And as the crowd's cheers grew louder, Ackerman's words were barely audible: "It's time to let the world know that Jerusalem will never, ever again be divided!"

Congregant Ira Nadler said he attended the rally because "I wanted to be counted. To stay home and have my opinions isn't very effective."

"Jerusalem is on the table, of course," said Nadler, 73. "But just because it is doesn't mean it has to be given away, does it? That's the problem. Everything that goes on the table, Jews lose."

Nadler said that in 1998 he backed Barak, but now he supports Sharon.

But that doesn't mean he's "anti-government," Nadler said. "I'm not going against them. I don't have a right to do that, just because I'm a Jew. Whatever they finally decide, they know better. And we will support whatever they feel they need to do." □