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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Attack pinpoints Arafat guard

Israel killed a senior Palestinian security official in a helicopter rocket attack Tuesday in the Gaza Strip.

An Israeli army spokesman said Massoud Ayad, an officer in Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Force 17 bodyguard unit, had been recruited by Hezbollah to carry out terror attacks against Israelis in the Gaza Strip.

Sharon delegation visits D.C.

U.S. officials agree with Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon that peace talks with the Palestinians can resume only when violence ceases, according to former Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens.

Speaking Tuesday after talks at the State Department, Arens also said he did not think there are "very big gaps between our views and the views" of the Bush administration.

Arens is part of a delegation that Sharon sent to Washington to explain the prime minister-elect's agenda.

The delegation met Tuesday with Assistant Secretary of State Edward Walker and Policy Planning Director Richard Haass, and was slated to meet with Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell.

UJC hires exec for Israel pillar

The United Jewish Communities hired a top professional for its Israel and overseas pillar, the last of the organization's four main departments to be staffed.

In addition to directing the pillar, Arthur Naparstek, formerly a social work professor and dean of Case Western Reserve University's school of applied social sciences, will also serve as one of six vice presidents of the umbrella organization for North American Jewish federations.

Jewish-themed films nominated

An Oscar nomination went to a film about the 10,000 refugee children evacuated to Britain on the eve of the Holocaust. "Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport" received a nod Tuesday in the best documentary category.

"One Day Crossing," about a Jewish woman who poses as a Christian in 1944 Budapest, was nominated in the category of live action short film. [Page 4]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Did Pollard — and Jews — pay a price for Rich pardon efforts?

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Did Marc Rich's controversial pardon come at the expense of convicted spy Jonathan Pollard?

And did some prominent Israeli and American Jews compromise their moral integrity by pressing for Rich's pardon?

These are the latest questions swirling around the Jewish world amid indications of a well-choreographed campaign to persuade Israeli leaders and prominent American Jews to lobby on Rich's behalf.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, charged this week that Rich's support from the Jewish community was "bought" and that the Jewish community failed an "important moral test" by participating in Rich's campaign.

Documents released as part of testimony at a U.S. House of Representatives committee hearing looking into the pardon last week show that a central part of the strategy devised by Rich's backers involved building support from Israeli and Jewish leaders. The e-mails and letters show the detailed planning involved in amassing support for Rich's freedom.

Not everyone mentioned in the documents ultimately got involved, but the public release of the documents has lengthened the list of prominent American Jews now embroiled in the controversial pardon — Elie Wiesel, Edgar Bronfman, Abraham Foxman and Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg.

A commodities trader, Rich was pardoned by President Clinton on Jan. 20 in his last hours in office. He had been indicted on 51 counts of tax evasion, racketeering and violating trade sanctions with Iran, but fled to Switzerland in 1983 before standing trial.

Rich later became a major benefactor of Jewish and Israeli charitable organizations, including Birthright Israel, the project to send young Jewish adults to the Holy Land. He also has given to a variety of institutions in Israel, including Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Ben-Gurion University, the Israel Museum and the Jerusalem Foundation.

According to the correspondence between Rich and his supporters, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres and several other Israeli political leaders spoke with Clinton about the pardon in his last months of office.

The pleas came as Israeli officials and American Jewish leaders across the political and religious spectrum were urging Clinton to pardon Pollard, the former U.S. Navy intelligence officer who has been serving a life sentence since 1987 for spying for Israel.

There is mixed opinion about whether the efforts on behalf of Rich undermined simultaneous efforts for Pollard.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said he was surprised to learn that Barak and others had been lobbying for Rich.

Hoenlein, who met with Clinton and other administration officials about Pollard in December, said there is concern that Israeli leaders are expending their influence with the United States to grant pardons, rather than saving their political capital for "when there are vital issues at stake."

For his part, Wiesel, the scholar, Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, said he was approached by Rich's advocates to speak to Clinton on Rich's behalf, but declined to get involved so he could focus his attention on Pollard.

According to the released documents, Rich's advocates felt Wiesel could be the

NEWS ANALYSIS

With peace deal unlikely, Sharon and Barak aim for unity

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A national unity government appears increasingly likely as envoys from the Likud and Labor parties work to overcome some snags in negotiations.

Both Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon and outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Barak appear determined to forge a unity coalition that will remain in power until the end of the Knesset's term in November 2003.

The Palestinian rejection of President Clinton's peace proposals has made it relatively easy for Israel's two major parties to set aside their differences over the shape of a final peace deal and agree on a platform vague enough for each to accept.

According to leaks from the two parties, they have so far agreed to the following guidelines for a unity government:

- It will be committed to advancing a peace involving "painful compromises" by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority;
- It will be bound by previously signed agreements, but not by proposals considered during negotiations that fell short of an accord;
- It will work toward interim peace deals with the Palestinians, rather than the comprehensive agreement sought by Barak and insisted on by the Palestinians; and
- It will not build new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but will allow existing settlements to expand in line with "natural population growth."

Potential pitfalls in the negotiations were avoided by vagueness and omission on key points.

As a result, there is no specific reference — at least in the leaked versions — to the future of Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods. Likud officials had demanded an explicit commitment to keep the entire city under Israeli control.

Nor is there a call to dismantle isolated settlements. Labor had wanted this, but the pro-settler National Religious Party has threatened not to join a unity government if such provisions are included, and the Likud does not want to lose any of its "natural partners" in such a government.

By midweek, the unity negotiations had slowed somewhat. In part, this slowdown was due to Barak's demand that the government's platform say that Israel will agree to the creation of a Palestinian state. In the past, Sharon has said that he would not oppose a Palestinian state, but has set conditions for such a state that Labor does not accept. Likud negotiators in the unity talks were reluctant to commit to any form of Palestinian state.

If a unity government is established, it seems likely that the Cabinet will contain eight Likud and eight Labor ministers, and some 10 other ministers from the religious and rightist parties and from the Russian immigrant Yisrael Ba'Aliyah Party.

Sharon has offered Labor two of the three top portfolios — defense, foreign affairs and finance — but key Likudniks are urging Sharon not to cede finance, with its vast power over government expenditures and policy implementation in the other ministries.

Given the relative ease with which negotiators are overcoming or setting aside the parties' ideological differences, attention has turned to the personalities involved, especially to Barak's role.

Some Laborites raised their eyebrows when the defeated prime

minister insisted on running the party's negotiations with Likud — just days after he told the nation last week, on election night, that he would leave the Knesset and resign as Labor leader when Sharon took office. They raised those eyebrows even further when it emerged that — his resignation notwithstanding — Barak was considering an offer to be Sharon's defense minister.

That exacerbated the tension between Barak and Labor's elder statesman, Shimon Peres.

Peres is still fuming over Barak's refusal to step down during the election campaign to allow Peres to represent Labor, even though polls were predicting a devastating defeat for Barak and a close race between Sharon and Peres.

Peres supporters this week were trying to insert themselves into the coalition negotiations, openly flouting Barak's authority over the party. Peres has said he wants the foreign affairs portfolio in a unity government, and will accept nothing else.

But some observers say he would take defense if Barak decides — or is persuaded — to make good on his resignation.

Looming over the negotiations is the shadow of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who remains the most popular politician in the country, according to polls.

A key Netanyahu supporter, Likud legislator Yisrael Katz, convened a meeting of Likud Central Committee members this week to protest Sharon's offer of the defense portfolio to Barak.

Katz argued that Barak already has proved a total failure in the post, which he held simultaneously with the premiership.

The real reason, political commentators said, is that Katz, and presumably Netanyahu, believe a unity government would have a good chance of staying in power for the rest of the Knesset's term.

Netanyahu, who declined to run for premier on the grounds that the present Knesset is too fragmented to be governable, had said he expects new elections for both prime minister and Knesset before the end of this year.

Political commentators say Sharon and Barak are bound by a common desire to thwart any potential Netanyahu comeback.

Of course, that desire won't make it into a unity government's policy platform. But it will nevertheless be there, commentators say, between every line. □

Refugee film gets Oscar nod

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A film on the Nazi-era rescue of refugee children, most of them Jewish, has been nominated for an Oscar in the documentary feature category.

"Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport" chronicles the rescue of some 10,000 children from Nazi-dominated Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia in the 18 months leading up to World War II.

In addition, "One Day Crossing," about a Jewish woman who poses as a Christian in 1944 Budapest, was nominated Tuesday in the category of live action short film.

The Kindertransport film also traces the children's reception in Great Britain and their lives after the war.

Britain agreed to accept the children at a time when most other doors were closed to Jewish refugees. Entry was limited to children between 2 and 17.

"Into the Arms of Strangers" was one of five finalists nominated for an Oscar in its category. The winner will be announced at the Academy Awards presentation on March 25.

Israel's entry for best foreign language film, "Time of Favor," was not among the five films nominated in its category. □

JEWISH WORLD

Bush urged to focus on restitution

Fifty-five members of Congress urged President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell to stay committed to Holocaust restitution.

The lawmakers asked Bush to appoint a special envoy on Holocaust issues to replace Stuart Eizenstat, who served in the previous administration.

They also asked Powell to maintain the State Department's Office of Holocaust Issues.

FBI: Crimes hit Jewish targets

The overwhelming majority of hate crimes in 1999 directed at property involved Jewish targets, according to an FBI report on hate crimes.

There were 1,289 such attacks on Jewish targets that year, according to the report, which was released Tuesday.

Blacks were the most frequent victims of hate crimes against individuals, according to the report.

Armitage named to State Dept.

President Bush named Richard Armitage, who was a former emissary to Jordan and special mediator for water in the Middle East, as deputy secretary of state. Bush also named Dov Zakheim as undersecretary of defense and comptroller.

Murder trial ends in hung jury

The trial of a man accused of murdering a yeshiva student in Pittsburgh in 1986 resulted in a hung jury.

The case involving the death of Neal Rosenblum rested in large part on the testimony of ex-convicts who only recently told prosecutors that Steven Tielsch had confessed to the murder.

'Publisher' to go to jail

A judge sentenced a St. Louis man to five years in jail for obtaining \$2.5 million by fraudulently claiming to be the publisher of two Jewish newspapers.

Scott Rose pleaded guilty to mail fraud for "operating" the Jewish World News and Jewish World Review in the 1990s.

Anyone wanting to file a claim to try to recover money can find additional information at usdoj.gov/usao/ils.

Group eyes synagogue renewal

More than 400 clergy and congregants from 18 Reform temples across the United States are gathering in Philadelphia this week for the largest conference ever on "synagogue transformation."

The three-day gathering marks the launch of the congregations' involvement in Synagogue 2000, a program that helps synagogues rethink their approach to such things as worship and Jewish study.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Even without faith-based details, groups are mobilizing against plan

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Even before details are released of President Bush's proposal to grant federal funds to religious groups that provide social services, some Jewish groups and other religious organizations are mobilizing against it.

Bush's proposal has raised fears in the Jewish community that the expanded partnership between the government and faith-based institutions would break down the constitutional separation between church and state, allow for employment discrimination based on religion and infringe on religious liberties.

Not waiting to see what will happen to Bush's plan in Congress, Jewish groups are meeting and strategizing, building coalitions and doing whatever else they can to prepare for what could be a dramatic change in social welfare policy.

Several groups — including the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the National Council of Jewish Women, and Hadassah: the Women's Zionist Organization of America — have formed a coalition with non-Jewish religious and civil liberties groups to address policy concerns.

Many groups have been working together on this issue of "charitable choice" since it was first passed in 1996 as part of welfare reform, when it allowed religious institutions to bid for government contracts to provide services to welfare recipients.

Bush's plan would expand charitable choice to fund religious institutions directly. Even before specifics of the plan have been released, some organizations have undertaken a broad push to educate their members, the Jewish community at large and congressional representatives on the issue.

The Anti-Defamation League is organizing meetings with state and local legislators and congressional representatives, while the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism is working with Capitol Hill offices and also fielding calls from rabbis who want to organize against the proposed changes.

Some details of the plan are expected later this month, after the federal Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives opens on Feb. 20.

The head of the new office, John DiIulio Jr., is scheduled to speak at the annual plenum of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs at the end of February.

Some members of JCPA, an umbrella organization, are more sympathetic to the issue, but DiIulio still is likely to face a tough audience.

In a recent Op-Ed, JCPA Executive Director Hannah Rosenthal wrote, "We will work to convince President Bush that even as his priorities are right, his solutions are misguided."

Orthodox Jewish groups, on the other hand, generally favor an expanded role for religious institutions, provided that minority religions are protected. They do not raise arguments about religious discrimination, viewing the hiring choices of synagogues and churches as a private matter.

Even as they mobilize against the Bush plan, some Jewish groups admit that parts of the administration's proposal intrigue them.

Indeed, groups say they do not object to closer ties between the federal government and religious institutions, but rather to the expansion of the role of churches and synagogues without proper safeguards against what they see as religious coercion and discrimination.

Another concern is that, if no additional money is slated for social services, the proposal will result in more groups fighting for the same limited government funding.

Just after Bush announced his plan in late January, a number of Jewish and non-Jewish clergy met to voice their opposition, saying the proposal would force different faiths to compete for government funds and could excessively entangle church and state.

Legislators are awaiting the administration's blueprint and listening to the concerns of the Jewish community, but some on Capitol Hill already are well-versed on charitable choice and are raising questions about Bush's proposal.

One potential ally for the new president is Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who often talked about the role of faith in the public sector during his vice presidential bid last summer. □

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel pays Maccabiah athlete

Israel agreed to pay \$4 million to Australian athlete Sasha Elterman, who was seriously injured when a bridge collapsed at the opening ceremony of the 1997 Maccabiah Games.

Finance Minister Avraham Shochat said he hoped Tuesday's compromise would end the dispute between Israel and the Australian Jewish community.

Legal troubles limit Cabinet picks

Israel's attorney general Elyakim Rubinstein told Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon that legislators Tzachi Hanegbi and Avigdor Lieberman cannot serve in the Cabinet because of pending indictments against them, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

U.N. team caught in crossfire

Members of a U.N. human rights mission got caught in the crossfire between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza Strip. The five-car U.N. convoy became trapped Tuesday while visiting the Khan Younis refugee camp, but none of the members was injured.

Bill would free lawmaker

Israel's Knesset gave final approval to a bill that grants early release for good behavior to prisoners who have served half their sentences. The law passed Tuesday could win early release for former Shas leader Aryeh Deri, who is serving a three-year sentence for accepting bribes and misappropriating state funds. If he qualifies, Deri could be freed next year.

Protesters slam judge's sentence

Human rights activists protested outside a Jerusalem court where a judge sentenced a Jewish settler convicted in the death of a Palestinian child to six months of community service.

A court had ruled that Nahum Korman did not intend to kill Hilmi Shousha in 1996.

perfect "moral authority" to present Rich's case to Clinton.

One advocate said he had been "assured" that Wiesel had called the White House over the matter.

But Wiesel told JTA on Monday that he did not discuss the matter at the White House.

He also said he did not know his name was associated with the Rich case until the e-mails were released.

Wiesel said he did not think the Rich and Pollard cases were related.

In any case, Wiesel said, he wouldn't have supported Rich's petition, even if there had not been a campaign to free Pollard.

Wiesel said he didn't want to pass judgment on others who got involved in the Rich case, but he personally considered Rich "a man who has done things I don't like.

"I don't know him. Why should I help someone I don't know?" Wiesel asked.

The e-mails suggest that other Jewish leaders were hesitant to support Rich because of its potential impact on the Pollard campaign.

In one message, Avner Azulay, who runs Rich's foundation in Israel, writes that Israeli Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg would only support Rich if World Jewish Congress leaders Bronfman and Israel Singer did the same.

Seeking to explain Burg's reaction, Azulay, a former Mossad agent, wrote: "I don't know but suspect that this has to do with JPoll," apparently referring to Pollard.

Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, said neither Bronfman nor Singer raised the issue with Clinton.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said the Rich efforts may have had some effect on Pollard because they gave Clinton a choice of who to pardon while still showing support for the Jewish community.

But because the arguments for the two men were radically different and the politics of the situations also were different, it was not a choice between two equals.

"It may not be quite the trade-off that it seems at first glance," Saperstein said.

With Rich, Clinton was likely to anger prosecutors who had charged Rich and watched him evade prosecution, including New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. If he pardoned Pollard, however, Clinton would have gone against many in the national security community.

Saperstein expressed concern that the current Jewish embroilment over the Rich pardon would have an effect on Pollard's chances for a pardon in the future.

While Israel's political leaders did advocate for Rich, an Israeli official in Washington said there was "no doubt about it" that their main concern and emphasis was on Pollard.

Some Jewish leaders are questioning whether prominent members of the Jewish community should have aided Rich.

In his op-ed, Yoffie accuses several prominent Jewish leaders, who participated in the Rich campaign, of being pressured by Rich's contributions to advocate on his behalf.

In the piece, which was scheduled to run in the New York Jewish Week and the Washington Jewish Week, Yoffie wrote: "The result is we have undermined our community's moral fabric, jeopardized our political standing, disillusioned our youth and compromised the sacred values of our tradition.

"In short, the moral stain of this sordid affair has begun to engulf us," he said.

Greenberg, chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, apologized to the council last month for writing to Clinton in support of Rich on museum stationery.

But he defended his support for Rich, saying in a statement, "I became aware of other of his good works, including matters done with no expectation of recognition or reward."

Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, has come under fire for writing a letter to Clinton on Rich's behalf. He could not be reached for comment.

ADL spokeswoman Myrna Shinbaum confirmed he sent a letter Dec. 7 that said that "we are a country that was founded on the belief in second chances." Shinbaum said she does not know if Rich had contributed to the ADL.

One Jewish leader, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, defended the Jewish campaign for Rich. "I don't think you can blame people because they wrote letters," the leader said. "I don't think they were motivated by anything but feelings that it was a good thing to do." □



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