



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 35

Wednesday, February 21, 2001

84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Barak won't serve in unity gov't

Outgoing Israeli Premier Ehud Barak reversed himself and decided not to serve as defense minister in the national unity government Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon is trying to create.

Several prominent figures in Barak's Labor Party have said they were interested in a unity government, but not with Barak as defense minister. Earlier Tuesday, Sharon gave the Labor Party one week to decide whether to join a national unity government.

### IDF leader calls conflict a 'war'

The Israel Defense Force's chief of staff called the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians a "war in every sense of the word."

Briefing a Knesset committee on Tuesday, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz said the IDF will be calling up an increased number of reservists in the coming days.

He also warned against getting into a war of words with Iraq that could heighten Middle East tensions after U.S.-British air raids near Baghdad last Friday.

"We must be very restrained. We don't have any desire to reach an escalation or a war or deterioration," Mofaz said Tuesday after briefing a Knesset committee.

### UJC officials visit Ethiopia

A four-member delegation of U.S. Jewish leaders is visiting Ethiopia this week to monitor the application and interview process of Falash Mura trying to make aliyah to Israel.

The fact-finding mission is the third since August for the Israel/Overseas Pillar Committee of the United Jewish Communities. According to the UJC, officials are processing some 400 aliyah applications per month from Falash Mura, Ethiopians whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity.

### Anti-Semitic acts up in Canada

There were 280 anti-Semitic incidents across Canada in 2000, a 5 percent rise over 1999, according to a report issued Tuesday by B'nai Brith Canada.

The number of incidents, which include physical harassment, synagogue firebombings, arson attacks and a cemetery desecration, increased following the eruption of violence last September in the Middle East, the report said.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Jewish leaders feel scapegoated in Clinton handling of Rich pardon

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Former President Clinton's claim that Jewish pressure contributed to his highly controversial decision to pardon Marc Rich has left some Jewish leaders feeling scapegoated.

In an Op-Ed in Sunday's New York Times, Clinton defended the pardon of Rich and his associate Pincus Green, saying that "Israeli officials of both major political parties and leaders of Jewish communities in America and Europe urged the pardon of Mr. Rich." He made similar comments in an off-camera interview with Geraldo Rivera for CNBC's "Rivera Live." Rivera said Clinton told him that "Israel did influence me profoundly."

Jewish leaders in America and Israel are mixed on whether Clinton is setting up the Jewish community or whether they indeed influenced the pardon decision.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said it "seems inappropriate" for Clinton to cite Israeli lobbying as an important factor in his decision to pardon Rich after first citing legal grounds for the pardon.

"Israel is largely a scapegoat in this matter," said an official with a Jewish organization in Washington who spoke on condition of anonymity. "No one seriously believes the Rich pardon had anything to do with foreign policy or the peace process."

Phil Baum, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, said Clinton must take responsibility for his decision.

"To refer to the fact that he got character references from Jews is distasteful and gives the wrong impression," Baum said. "The emphasis he gave to the intervention of the Jews is regrettable, because it makes it sound like he did it in response to that."

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, has been critical of Jewish lobbying on Rich's behalf, charging in an Op-Ed last week that the Jewish community was "bought" and that leaders failed an "important moral test." On Tuesday, Yoffie said Jewish leaders should not be reacting harshly to Clinton's comments, but instead should do some introspection.

"This is not a particularly wise and advantageous course for us to be taking," Yoffie said of Jewish officials' negative reactions to Clinton.

"He responded to what we said, and now we are saying, 'Don't scapegoat us,'" Yoffie said. "Under other circumstances, the fact that the president of the United States was listening to the pleas of the Jewish leaders is something we'd take pride in."

Rich received his pardon during the waning hours of the Clinton presidency. 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.

After fleeing the United States, Rich became a major benefactor of Jewish charitable organizations and Israeli universities and hospitals.

Jewish officials in the United States, Israel and Europe lobbied the White House in a mostly underground campaign on Rich's behalf. Many of those advocating the pardon had benefited from Rich's largesse. Among the latest developments in the case:

- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak requested Rich's freedom in both phone conversations with Clinton and letters. Clinton said in his New York Times column that he felt Rich had aided the Middle East peace process by sponsoring health and education programs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

- Shabtai Shavit, who headed Israel's Mossad spy agency from 1989 to 1996, said

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Helicopter rescues Israeli unit

An Israeli undercover unit was identified before it could capture a Palestinian militant near the West Bank city of Jenin, Israeli security sources said.

After the unit's members were identified Tuesday as Israelis, a helicopter that hovered overhead was forced to land and rescue them.

### Mufti denies Jewish claim to Wall

The mufti of Jerusalem, the highest Islamic official appointed by the Palestinian Authority, issued a religious ruling declaring the Western Wall a Muslim possession and disavowing any Jewish connection to the site. The rabbi of the Western Wall said the mufti is trying to rewrite history.

### Israel buying more helicopters

Israel is buying nine Apache helicopters in a deal valued at nearly \$500 million. After Israel and the United States signed the agreement, the U.S. Army will contract with Boeing for the helicopters and related equipment, the manufacturer said Monday.

### Palestinians want talks restarted

A Palestinian envoy said he hopes the Bush administration will help restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Speaking after meeting in Washington with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Nabil Sha'ath said Tuesday he had discussed the "very difficult situation of the Palestinian people" stemming from the ongoing violence in the region.

### Hezbollah urged to back off

Lebanon's prime minister said the government, not Hezbollah, is responsible for regaining disputed lands from Israel, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Rafik Hariri issued the statement Monday amid fears that Hezbollah actions against Israel may embroil Lebanon in a conflict with the Jewish state.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).

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Rich had helped the Mossad search for missing Israeli soldiers and had helped evacuate Jews from "enemy countries," The New York Times reported.

- Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami wrote in a letter that Rich had created a fund in the mid-1980s for Egypt to compensate the families of Israelis killed in a terrorist attack in the Sinai Desert. This helped mend the relationship between the two countries, Ben-Ami wrote.

- Several prominent Clinton administration officials active in the Mideast peace process said Clinton never consulted them about the Rich pardon. They include former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Special Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross, former National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and current Central Intelligence Agency Director George Tenet.

- Ross and U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk said they were first approached about Rich in 1995 by Israeli officials seeking clearance for Rich to travel without threat of arrest and extradition to the United States. The New York Times reported that former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Rich had proposed raising billions of dollars to help economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but needed to travel to accomplish the task.

While members of the Jewish community wrote letters on Rich's behalf, Baum said the letters must be examined to see whether they are pardon requests or merely character references. While he sees no problem in submitting character references, Baum said, requesting the pardon would require an assessment of Rich's crimes and their effect.

"It conveys the impression that Jews, because they were recipients of philanthropic contributions, were willing to intervene, even when there are charges that could harm the rest of society," Baum said.

Jewish leaders are upset about how the community may be perceived, either because of Clinton's mistake or their own. But they are not concerned that the Rich affair will affect U.S.-Israeli relations or views of the Jewish community in the long run.

Said Baum: "We've withstood worse things than this." □

(JTA correspondent Avi Machlis in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

## After Allied strikes on Iraq, Israelis line up for gas masks

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis could be forgiven if they experienced some déjà vu this week.

A decade after the Persian Gulf War, when Iraq hit the Jewish state with Scuds, Israeli security officials said they were monitoring Iraq following last Friday's U.S. and British air strikes outside Baghdad, in which two civilians were reportedly killed.

The attacks ordered by President Bush were not the only actions this week reminiscent of the tensions of 10 years ago. The United States and Israel held military exercises for five days in southern Israel, where they tested Patriot anti-missile missiles. Such missiles were used during the Gulf War against Iraqi Scuds fired at Israel.

Israeli sources said the exercise was scheduled months ago, and had nothing to do with last Friday's strikes.

Iraq has blamed Israel for the strikes, and there were street demonstrations in Baghdad in which Iraqis called on President Saddam Hussein to retaliate against Tel Aviv. The calls were echoed in the Palestinian Authority-run areas.

Saddam has gone to great lengths in recent months to establish himself as the champion of the Palestinian uprising against Israel, moving armed forces to the border with Syria and threatening to lead a war of annihilation against Israel. Despite Iraq's own dire economic situation, Saddam even is sending money to subsidize Palestinian families whose sons are killed fighting Israel.

Several divisions of Iraqi volunteers also are ready to fight for the Palestinian cause, according to The New York Times.

Not surprisingly, some Israelis lined up Monday for new gas masks.

During the 1991 war, residents of the Jewish state, wearing masks to protect themselves against possible biological and chemical weapons attacks, huddled in shelters as Iraq rained missiles on Israel in retaliation for U.S.-led attacks. At American urging, Israel did not respond to the attacks. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Bomb threat at German shul

A synagogue in the northern German city of Lubeck was evacuated Monday after receiving a bomb threat. A briefcase found at the scene had wires and a red light, but contained no explosives. In March 1994, neo-Nazi firebombed the synagogue, and in May 1995 it was targeted in an arson attack.

In another development, Germany created special federal police units to combat neo-Nazi activities. The units will focus on train stations and borders. They will be available in special cases if local police need help.

### Texas eyes hate crimes bill

Texas legislators are considering a hate crimes bill that would toughen penalties for crimes motivated by race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender or national origin. It also would require annual reports of hate crime statistics by Texas counties. The James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act is named for a black man dragged to his death behind a pickup truck in 1998.

### Israel called fugitive haven

A French prosecutor accused Israel of protecting wanted fugitives. The accusation came at the start of a trial Tuesday in Paris, where French banks and insurance companies say they were swindled out of \$75 million.

A total of 124 people are accused of fraud and other financial crimes involving members of the Paris garment industry. Thirteen of the defendants who hold Israeli nationality fled to the Jewish state, which generally does not extradite its citizens, and are being tried in absentia.

### Finland to mark Holocaust

Finland announced that next year it would begin observing an annual Holocaust memorial day on Jan. 27.

"The day will remind us of events over 50 years ago that no one would ever want repeated in the history of humanity," the government said Tuesday.

Several European nations, including Britain, Italy, Germany and Sweden, already hold an annual Holocaust memorial day on Jan. 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

### Hungary honors Jewish leader

Hungary's president presented a medal to the secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress for his efforts on behalf of Jews around the world.

"We highly appreciate your efforts in seeking appropriate compensation for the Hungarian Jews, once a major Jewish community in Europe," said Ferenc Madl, who during a ceremony Tuesday in Parliament presented Israel Singer with the medal.

## British Jews laud anti-terror law, but Muslims say it's Islamophobic

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — British Jews are welcoming new legislation that allows the government to ban organizations that support terrorism.

The Terrorism Act 2000, which goes into effect this week, also makes it a crime to incite terrorism abroad and gives the police broad powers to arrest suspected terrorists and seize funds belonging to suspected terrorist groups.

Civil liberties groups and Muslim organizations criticize the law, but Jewish leaders say it will make Britain less of a haven for terrorist planners and fund-raisers.

"We are particularly pleased that individuals or groups in the U.K. that incite or finance terrorist acts abroad will be answerable to the British courts," said Neville Nagler, the executive director of the Board of Deputies, the umbrella organization of British Jewry.

"There is much evidence that individuals have been recruited and trained in the U.K. for the purpose of carrying out attacks abroad, and it is vital that the legislation is enforced to prevent these sorts of activities," he said.

Britain is a base for many dissident Islamic organizations, as well as a number of Muslim fundamentalist clerics.

The publishing operations of Hamas are in Britain, and alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden owns property in London, according to an online intelligence magazine called Strategic Affairs — [www.stramag.com](http://www.stramag.com).

There have been persistent reports that Islamic fundamentalists recruit young British Muslims to fight in holy wars from the Middle East to Bosnia.

Last summer, a 25-year-old Muslim from London told the BBC he had spent four months at a paramilitary training camp in Kashmir, India.

The new law should help end this type of recruitment, the British Home Office said. "Incitement to commit terrorism is now an offense," a Home Office spokesman told JTA. "Under the new law, sending people abroad to participate in terrorist 'training camps is illegal.'"

An expert in security issues for the British Jewish community said the recruitment occurs mainly through mosques in London and Birmingham.

"At least several thousand have gone" abroad to fight for Islam since the late 1970s, said Mike Whine, a spokesman for the Community Security Trust, a Jewish organization that monitors security issues.

It is believed that most such recruits have gone to places like Yemen, Kashmir and Bosnia, but there is evidence that in the past six months some have gone to fight for the Palestinians, Whine said. At least one group has been advertising for recruits to go to the Palestinian-ruled territories, he added.

The security trust fears instigators will try to turn the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians into a broader Jewish-Muslim conflict, Whine said.

"There is anti-Semitism within the Islamic jihad movement," he said. "The old idea that we have a common origin as the People of the Book is fading with the rise of European-style anti-Semitism" within Muslim fundamentalism.

One British-based extremist group, Al-Muhajiroun, has denied the Holocaust on its Web site, describing the "claim" that 6 million Jews died as "ludicrous." But relations between British Jews and mainstream Muslim groups generally are positive.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission said the Terrorism Act 2000 smacks of Islamophobia.

"Previous cases show clearly that Muslims are liable to be the key targets of a crackdown," said Massoud Shadjareh, chairman of the British-based rights commission.

Stories of young British Muslims being recruited by Islamist organizations are blown out of proportion, he said, adding that the new anti-terrorism law imposes "draconian restrictions on basic rights to freedom of statement, freedom of association and so on." Islamist recruitment of Britons "is not happening, or if it is, it's in such small numbers that it shouldn't be of concern," he said.

The CST's Whine agreed that the number of recruits is probably small.

"We're not talking about an enormous number," Whine said. "But you need only one." □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Candidate for U.N. job remains untested on Middle East issues***By Michael J. Jordan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — The man said to be President Bush's choice for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations has vast experience in Latin America and Southeast Asia but is an unknown entity vis-a-vis the Middle East.

In fact, John Negroponte, who has held ambassadorships to Mexico, Honduras and the Philippines, was barely on the radar of American Jewish activists until he recently emerged as a front-runner for the post.

The Bush administration has not officially announced the appointment, which remains the last major vacancy in his administration.

But The New York Times reported over the weekend that his nomination is all but a done deal.

The appointment would still require Senate confirmation.

Israel's defenders at the United Nations expect the new ambassador to have his hands full at the world body, as the knives may be out for Israel following the election of Ariel Sharon as prime minister.

Many in the Arab and Muslim worlds, which dominates the United Nations, view Sharon as a war criminal.

Despite their unfamiliarity with Negroponte, pro-Israel advocates say they are satisfied with what they have heard about him so far.

"The word we have is that he'll be fine on our issues," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"We have every reason to anticipate that he will be supportive and carry out the administration's goals and objectives," Hoenlein said in a phone interview from Jerusalem.

Negroponte was a career diplomat until 1997, when he joined the publishing giant McGraw-Hill as executive vice president for global markets.

While in the State Department, he sometimes attracted controversy.

As ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985, according to The New York Times, Negroponte "oversaw a military buildup that turned much of that country into a springboard and refuge" for the rebels, known as Contras, who were battling against the leftist government in neighboring Nicaragua.

According to his McGraw-Hill biography, Negroponte was the officer-in-charge for Vietnam for the National Security Council under Henry Kissinger, from 1971 to 1973; and he was the deputy director of the security council under Gen. Colin Powell from 1987 to 1989.

He is said to be close to Powell, the new secretary of state.

Jewish observers are not concerned by Negroponte's lack of expertise in Middle East affairs, noting that his predecessor, Richard Holbrooke, was similarly new to the issue when he went to the United Nations.

Holbrooke was widely praised for his robust defense of Israel.

"I don't consider that to be a significant drawback; the U.N. does deal with issues other than the Middle East," said Henry Siegman, director of the U.S./Middle East Project at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Holbrooke has joined the Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank in New York, as a "senior counselor."

Holbrooke could not be reached for comment about Negroponte, who was, according to news reports, his roommate in Vietnam from 1964 to 1965, where they both served as diplomats.

But in interviews with the Times and CNN, Holbrooke had only good things to say about the appointment.

Nevertheless, no one expects Negroponte to quite fill Holbrooke's shoes.

In fact, some speculate that the post, which had been elevated to Cabinet rank by President Clinton, may be downgraded again under Bush.

Holbrooke lobbied for Israel's partial entry in May into the Western Europe and Others Group, one of five regional groupings at the United Nations. Because of Arab pressure, Israel was the only one of 189 member-states to be excluded from the regional grouping system.

Holbrooke was also key in pushing for Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, to gain "consultative" status to the influential U.N. Economic and Social Council. Thanks in part to Holbrooke's efforts, Hadassah now seems to be on the verge of attaining such status.

"Holbrooke showed how much an active U.N. ambassador can do," Hoenlein said.

during the ongoing Palestinian intifada, Holbrooke fought behind the scenes to block official condemnation of Israel.

Perhaps the greatest blemish on Holbrooke's record, from the Jewish perspective, was his controversial abstention from an Oct. 7 U.N. Security Council resolution that essentially blamed Israel for provoking and prolonging the Palestinian violence that had erupted.

The United States is empowered with a veto, so a "no" vote would have torpedoed the resolution.

Holbrooke later cited several reasons for the abstention, but it wasn't clear to observers whether Holbrooke had recommended to Clinton that the United States abstain, or if it was primarily the president's call.

From the Jewish perspective, Negroponte, if he is confirmed, will face two primary challenges at the world body, said Michael Colson, executive director of the Geneva-based U.N. Watch, which is affiliated with the American Jewish Committee.

"One of the most challenging things for a U.S. ambassador is to articulately define U.S. interests in a multilateral environment," Colson said.

At the United Nations, it's "one country, one vote, for 189 members, and when you start adding up the numbers, there are many countries with a much different outlook on foreign policy issues than the United States."

The second challenge, Colson said, is "to make sure the U.N. does not get involved in the Middle East in an inappropriate or unhelpful way."

In recent months, the Palestinians have appeared to be reviving its efforts to "internationalize" the Israeli-Arab conflict, to lure in the world body, where the voting bloc of Arab and Muslim states guarantees the Palestinians a sympathetic hearing, and hostility toward Israel.

"The only way to settle the Middle East conflict is through direct negotiations between these two parties.

"The United States must tell the U.N. when it shouldn't act," Colson said. □