



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Chagall held hostage for peace

A group claiming responsibility for the recent theft of a Chagall painting from the Jewish Museum in New York says it will not return the painting until there is Middle East peace, according to *The New York Times*.

Authorities say the letter received from the "International Committee for Art and Peace" is not a hoax because it has information about "Study for 'Over Vitebsk'" that could only come from someone who has the painting in his possession.

The painting was discovered missing the morning after a June 7 reception at the museum.

Peres, German meet on Arafat

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and discussed a possible meeting between Peres and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in hopes of ending Israeli-Palestinian violence. Fischer, who is in the Middle East for a three-day visit, will meet with Arafat in Ramallah on Tuesday and later will talk with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Report: Nazis seized violins

The Nazis seized dozens of priceless violins during World War II, according to recently released U.S. documents cited by the *Chicago Tribune*. But attempts to recover the instruments could be slowed by difficulties in tracing their original ownership.

Hamas vows more bombers

Hamas said it had suicide bombers in Israel awaiting orders to avenge the death of a Palestinian and his two children in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli army said Samir Abu Zeid, a member of Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, was killed Sunday by a bomb he was preparing, and not by Israeli fire as the Palestinians claimed. There was no evidence of any shelling at the deceased man's home, according to an Associated Press reporter.

Israel seizes ammunition

Israel seized a truck bound for the Gaza Strip that it says was loaded with arms and ammunition.

The cargo was discovered Monday during a security check at the Karni Crossing from Israel into the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian driver, who allegedly began his trip in the West Bank, was arrested.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Campers plant Seeds of Peace even while violence rages in Mideast

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Few meetings of Israelis and Palestinians at the State Department these days can be defined as boisterous.

Even more rarely do they involve singing and embracing.

But when Secretary of State Colin Powell entered his office's auditorium one day last week, he entered a world where peace in the Middle East still seems possible.

A group of teen-agers, fresh from Maine-based Seeds of Peace camp program, sang of finding peace between peoples teetering on the brink of war, a message that still lives in their hearts — even though it has faded from the world stage.

From their attitudes, it seemed that the youths were oblivious to what was going on in their homelands as they spoke of the friendships they had cultivated — Israelis with Jordanians and other Arabs, Serbs with Albanians, Indians with Pakistanis. In fact, they were keenly aware of what awaited them at home and were simply enjoying their last hours on American soil.

Since its inception in 1993, Seeds of Peace has been seen as a mold of future doves. While it has branched out to other international conflicts, the heart and soul of the program is Israeli and Arab youth meeting for four weeks at a rustic camp in Maine — coexisting, debating and befriending one another.

The campers — or "seeds," as they often are called — go back to their own land with friends on the other side of the conflict and a clear understanding of the complexity of international peace.

While the campers from the Middle East once mirrored their political leaders' stated aspirations for peace, the program now focuses on keeping hope alive in the next generation, as their leaders appear to be inching toward war.

A year ago, as negotiators haggled at Camp David, it seemed to Seeds of Peace campers that Israeli-Palestinian peace was near.

If the budding diplomats in Maine could come up with solutions for sharing Jerusalem and for the Palestinian right of return, certainly their seasoned counterparts at Camp David could do the same, the campers thought.

"The coexistence groups had signed agreements on Jerusalem," said Ma'ayan Poleg, 15, an Israeli from Kfar Saba. "We actually thought that we had the solution, all that was left was to tell our leaders."

But with the death of the Oslo peace process came a new challenge — convincing this year's "seeds" that peace is still possible.

That dilemma became more difficult in June, when the Palestinian Authority refused to send a delegation to the camp. As a result, instead of dealing directly with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this summer's session focused largely on tensions between Arabs and Jews within Israel — and on Israel's regional concerns with its Arab neighbors.

"It shifts the focus off the two parties in the heated conflict, but it lets the other dynamics in the Middle East come to light," said Mandy Terc, a development associate for the program.

Fadi Daood, a 17-year-old Israeli Arab, said the Palestinians' absence made it harder for the Jewish "seeds" to connect with the other side.

"We had no people as reporters of what happened in Palestine," Daood said. "If we had a Palestinian delegation, we would have gotten so much more information."

To make a tough summer more difficult, the Seeds of Peace program was still

MIDEAST FOCUS

Observers pull out of Hebron

The international observer force in the West Bank city of Hebron suspended its patrols after complaining to police over alleged abuse by Jewish residents of the town, including stoning of observers' vehicles.

Jewish residents said they would be happy if the patrols ceased.

Settlers in Hebron recently accused the force of providing the Palestinians with intelligence information on the movement of Israeli troops and civilians in the city.

Police testify at Arab inquiry

An Israeli commission looking into the killing of 13 Israeli Arabs by police during riots in northern Israel last October began hearing testimony from senior police officers.

One witness agreed with a commission member's assessment that a former commander deviated from his orders when he responded to the rioting.

Israeli surgeon dies on climb

Dr. Amram Cohen, an Israeli heart surgeon who helped bring some 700 children from poor countries to the Jewish state for life-saving operations, died Aug. 16 at 47 from altitude sickness while climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

Cohen, who immigrated to Israel from the United States in 1992, brought the children to Israel through Save a Child's Heart, an organization he created.

Meditation brings bad karma

A conference on transcendental meditation in Israel was canceled after the Interior Ministry refused visas to most of the participants.

A ministry official said many of the attendees hailed from countries such as Ukraine and Moldova, where residents have exploited tourist visas in the past to remain in Israel illegally.

mourning one of their connections to the Palestinian community. During Israeli Arab riots in solidarity with the nascent Palestinian intifada last October, 17-year-old Asel Asleh was shot and killed, the first "seed" to fall victim to the region's turmoil.

Asleh was described as an extrovert who maintained strong relationships with his Jewish peers.

In fact, his death made international headlines when Moran Eisenbaum, a 17-year-old Jewish "seed" from Israel, visited his grieving family.

Even in Maine, the campers could not escape what was happening in the outside world. It was just another day at camp when a story began floating around the breakfast table on Aug. 9.

One camper's mother called to tell her of a bombing in Jerusalem, with five people killed and more than 20 injured. One "seed" told another, and a friend came running to Poleg to tell her the news.

"I took it really hard," Poleg said.

"I know half of the world in Jerusalem."

The Israelis, both Arabs and Jews, met separately, apart from the rest of the group. The Israeli Arabs began dividing up, comforting their Jewish friends.

Israeli Arabs hugged their Jewish friends as both groups mourned.

"It was amazing," Poleg said. "You could see the concern, you could see that they cared about you."

Daood said the bombing brought the group together. Each Jew was surrounded by two Israeli Arabs as they cried.

"We shared each other's feelings," he said. "We rebuilt a bridge that may have been damaged by the bomb."

Both Daood and Poleg said the reality of the Jerusalem bombing — the death toll ultimately reached 15 — blasted the separation between Maine and the Middle East.

"Seeds of Peace is like a bubble," Poleg said. "Something like this takes you back to Israel, to the way you live your life."

In the immediate aftermath of the bombing, students wanted to go home, having lost hope that peace was possible. But within hours of the news, the camp was back into its color war games.

"It was a collective decision that where they live is never safe and can never be carefree," Terc said. "They had only four or five more days being carefree and enjoying the benefits of peace. They didn't want to waste their time being sad."

Less than a week later, the sea of green shirts filling the Washington auditorium seemed to have moved past the violent incident. In one of their last group events, "seeds" yelled inside jokes to their peers and clamored for group photos with the secretary of state.

Fadi Elsalameen, a Palestinian from the West Bank city of Hebron who was able to join Seeds of Peace this summer despite the ban because he holds American citizenship, told Powell he felt "selfish" for going through the program and seeing an alternative to violence that some of his friends back home can't glimpse.

"I have a choice," Elsalameen said. He said his community thinks of him "as a person who will make it better."

Powell told the campers he needs their help to spread the message of peace.

"I will never give up the struggle, I will never give up the quest to find a solution for this troubled region," Powell said. "I know the future that you want, the future that you need, the future that you must have."

However, the secretary offered few details about future Bush administration involvement in the quest for Mideast peace.

"What is happening in the Middle East today makes it even more important that you have dedicated yourself to this program and even more important that you take this message of peace and reconciliation back to your homes," Powell said.

The "seeds" already were planning on that.

Poleg has returned home from the program once before — only to encounter disrespect from her friends.

"They see Arabs as enemies, which is natural, and they can't understand how they can be my friend," she said.

She said she can handle the fact that people look at her "a bit weird," because she has been to the other side.

"I come back knowing what can be," Poleg said. "I've lived the future." □



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JEWISH WORLD

French survivors mark Drancy

French Holocaust survivors gathered at the site of the former Drancy transit camp at a government-hosted gathering to mark the 60th anniversary of the camp's opening.

More than 70,000 Jews passed through Drancy on their way to Nazi extermination camps, particularly Auschwitz, during the Holocaust.

S. African union protests U.S.

One of South Africa's leading unions organized a march of protesters in Pretoria against U.S. policy in the Middle East and the U.S. threat to boycott an upcoming U.N. conference against racism.

Marchers at the weekend demonstration, organized by the Congress of South African Trade Unions, waved anti-American and anti-Israeli posters.

A proposal that denigrates Zionism as racism and criticizes Israel's treatment of the Palestinians has prompted the American threat to boycott the conference, which is slated to begin Aug. 31 in South Africa.

Group wants bigger Israel trips

A program that sends young Jews on free trips to Israel plans to send more people this winter than it did last winter, despite significant drops in American Jewish travel to Israel during the Middle East violence. Birthright Israel has sent 22,000 Jews to Israel on group trips so far, 14,000 of them since the Palestinian uprising began last fall.

Rabbi's jury selection launched

Jury selection began Monday in the New Jersey trial of a rabbi who allegedly arranged his wife's death. Fred Neulander could face the death penalty if he is convicted in the 1994 murder of his wife, Carol.

Anti-Semitic fliers greet suburb

Hundreds of racist and anti-Semitic fliers were dropped on lawns across a predominantly Jewish suburb of Boston.

The fliers found over the weekend in Sharon, Mass., included pamphlets by a white supremacist leader whose writings are alleged to have inspired Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

Anti-Holocaust campaigner dies

Peter Bergson, who campaigned to rescue European Jews during World War II, died Saturday in Israel at the age of 86.

In 1943, Bergson established the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews to publicize what he considered to be feeble efforts in the United States to protect European Jewry. As part of the effort, the group staged plays, took out full-page newspaper advertisements and held rallies.

ARTS & CULTURE

Heartthrob twins rocking out, but they don't forget the tefillin

By Matthew S. Robinson

BOSTON (JTA) — With their boy-band good looks and intelligent songwriting, the pop duo of Evan and Jaron Lowenstein are making it big and are poised to make it even bigger.

The talented identical twins from Atlanta's Yeshiva High School have lived together since they were, well, embryos, and have been playing together since 1993. In that time they've performed with Burt Bachrach, Mick Fleetwood, Jimmy Buffett, Bonnie Raitt and Vice President Al Gore.

The 27-year-old brothers, who once toured the country as semi-pro baseball players, now harmonize on hits such as "Crazy for This Girl" and "From My Head to My Heart" before audiences of screaming girls.

"It's been quite a ride," says Evan, speaking to JTA recently from a hotel sauna in Denver.

Rugged individualists, the singer-songwriters keep a close eye on every part of their careers.

"We used to do it all for ourselves," Evan says, recalling the days when the brothers handled their own writing, arranging, booking, performing and publicity. "We've always felt it was important to understand the whole package. The more you understand the business, the more you can protect the art."

Fortunately, they now have some help.

Recently back from a tour sponsored by Chanel, the folk-rock duo signed with Columbia Records last year.

Evan and Jaron say their fans make it all worthwhile.

"We love to play for them," Evan says. "That's what makes it fun."

But couldn't one say there's an even higher authority at work? As observant Jews — they're careful about using the word Orthodox — Evan and Jaron are closely involved with their religion, but say they're not overly so.

"It serves as a great blueprint for my life and I have found success in it," Evan says, "but I do not find religion handcuffing."

The two keep kosher on tour and never play on the Sabbath.

The Lowensteins demonstrate their faith with a publishing company called "Tzitzis What We Do," which Evan claims took its name from a friend's misunderstanding of Hebrew.

In addition, their hit single, "From My Head to My Heart" subtly traces the path of tefillin, or phylacteries.

Still, the duo prefer to focus on their music.

"I don't wear my religion on my sleeve, but I do wear it in my heart," Evan says.

As a result, the brothers have been very careful about how they handle their fame, fans and philosophies.

"We held off from doing Jewish press for a long time," Evan says. "We didn't want everything to be focused on that part of our lives."

In fact, the duo say they much prefer to tell their own story by sending out e-mail accounts from the road.

"We try to get something on our site as often as we can to let our fans keep in touch and let them see what life on the road is really like," Evan says, citing the duo's Web site at www.evanandjaron.com.

In addition to letters from the road, fans can check out the brothers' personal histories, tour dates and photos.

"It's a great way to keep in touch with our fans," Evan says.

In considering his religion and his art, Evan sees an interesting dichotomy.

"Religion is about structure," he suggests, "and rock is about lack of structure."

Labeling themselves as "musicians who are Jewish" rather than "Jewish musicians," Evan and Jaron say they've been influenced by the sounds of their tradition, but no more than any other style of music.

"We grew up listening to everything from Hebrew to Jimi Hendrix," Evan recalls. "Religious music is beautiful — but right now, we want to rock!" □

Officials in Canada look into terror Web sites linked to Mideast

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Acting on a complaint from B'nai Brith Canada, Canadian police and government intelligence officials are investigating a Web site operated by an Islamic terrorist group in Toronto, and another in Montreal, that encourages violence against Jewish targets.

The Toronto Web site is registered to Islamic Jihad, one of the main groups responsible for terror attacks against Israel.

The site contains "statements from Palestinian terrorists taking credit for bombing attacks against Israeli civilians and threats of further violence," the National Post newspaper reported in a recent front-page story, after translating some of the content on the site from the original Arabic.

An "invitation to jihad" and other incitements to violence have been posted on Islamway.com, the Montreal-registered Web site, the newspaper reported.

"These sites are obscene and an affront to the sensibilities of all Canadians," said Rochelle Wilner, president of B'nai Brith Canada.

"That Canada should be used to recruit killers is unacceptable. It is imperative that the Canadian public understand that the threat of creating terrorist cells in this country is now a reality."

In a press release issued last week, Islamway disclaimed responsibility for the violent messages on its site, saying they were posted by private individuals on an English-language discussion board similar to those operated by CNN.com and Yahoo.

The revelations about the Web sites are only the latest indications that some terrorist groups have long regarded Canada as a safe haven from which to conduct their deadly activities.

The issue exploded into Canadian public awareness in 1985, when Sikh militants bombed an Air India jet flying out of Vancouver, killing all 329 aboard.

Sixteen years later, officials of Jewish and other groups targeted by terrorists remain dissatisfied because lawmakers have yet to enact tough counterterrorism legislation.

In a May 2000 report, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service indicated it was watching 50 organizations and 350 individuals connected with international terrorism, and identified "transnational Islamic extremism" as the "leading threat to Canada's national security."

"We seem to be dragging our heels," said Wilner, one of several leaders calling for tough anti-terrorism measures and immigration controls on suspected terrorists.

Canada hasn't ratified its support of an international convention for the suppression of terrorist financing that both the United States and Britain already have turned into law.

While the United States has buttressed its anti-terrorism legislation with the death penalty, there is no Canadian law that specifically outlaws terrorist activities.

Terrorist acts are treated like ordinary crimes in Canada.

"Before we go forward with this, we have to consult with stakeholders who may have an interest in this," said Michael Zigayer, a senior counsel in Canada's Department of Justice. "We could look at the U.S. and the U.K. models, but we have to examine their constitutionality. We need to remember that we have a charter for freedom of expression and freedom of association."

So far, the Liberal government has brought forward only one

limited piece of legislation. The proposed bill would make it a crime to raise funds for terrorist organizations such as Hamas or Hezbollah, but critics say it doesn't go nearly far enough.

"It's a modest first step, but we're urging much stronger action," said Keith Landy, national director of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

"The government should criminalize some of the terrorists' activities, not just deregister their charities. What are they waiting for, some devastation to take place in Canada before they take steps?"

Jewish and Israeli consular officials in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto were rattled last month after Ahmed Ressam, a convicted terrorist from Montreal, told a New York City courtroom that he and other Algerian emigres had considered attacking an unspecified "neighborhood in Canada where there was an Israeli interest."

Ressam was caught smuggling explosives over the Canada-U.S. border in 1999 and subsequently was convicted of involvement in a millennial plot to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport.

Ressam testified in July at the trial of Mokhtar Haouari, who was convicted of terrorist activities in connection with the same scheme.

Some suspected terrorists living in Canada have attempted to wreak havoc in other countries.

Fateh Kamel recently was convicted of terrorist activities in Paris, and Mustapha Labsi is being held in London on terrorist-related charges. Both are formerly of Montreal.

Two Vancouver men also have been charged in the United States with shipping weapons to Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based terror organization.

Last week, intelligence officials arrested suspected terrorist Mahmoud Jaballah, who had spent 10 months in a Canadian jail before a judge dismissed charges against him.

Jaballah is back behind bars because he is still considered a threat to national security, an immigration department spokesperson said.

While such moves offer encouragement to those who hope to weed out domestic terrorist fronts, the same parties are troubled when Canada extends a hand in friendship, as it recently did to Libya, a country considered a sponsor of terrorism.

Canada recently opened diplomatic relations with Libya, promised to open an embassy in Tripoli, and has encouraged Canadian businessmen to invest in the North African nation.

"Libya is still a country that has been a state sponsor of terrorism, and we see no reason why Canada has been embracing this country," Landy said. "It sends out the wrong signal." □

Budapest won't investigate charge

BUDAPEST (JTA) — The chief prosecutor is refusing to investigate Jewish claims that spokesmen for a far-right political party incited hatred against the country's Jews by denouncing the sale of Hungary's most popular soccer team to a leading Jewish businessman.

"Unfortunately, this is not the first time that the attorney general refuses to start legal procedures against anti-Semitic statements, which incite the public," Hungarian Jewish leader Peter Tordai said.

Tordai added that he would appeal to the country's chief prosecutor to take up the case. □