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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel checks into boy's death

Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian boy who was throwing rocks at soldiers guarding an Israeli settlement in the Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian sources.

Israeli officials said they were checking whether the boy had been killed by Israeli fire.

In other violence, a Palestinian sniper in Hebron shot and wounded two Jewish brothers on Thursday, according to the Jerusalem Post. The 11-year-old brother was shot in the stomach and is in serious condition. His older brother, a soldier, was wounded lightly in the hand.

U.S. blasts minister's comment

The U.S. State Department is calling comments by a senior Israeli government official, who suggested that Israeli security forces kill the families of Palestinian suicide bombers, "offensive and reprehensible."

A State Department spokesman said he expected Israeli officials "would take immediate steps to distance themselves from remarks" like the ones Israeli Deputy Public Security Minister Gideon Ezra made last week on Israel Television.

British rabbi won't go to Durban

Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi said he will not attend a U.N. conference against racism set to begin in Durban, South Africa, on Aug. 31 because of a draft resolution that singles out Israel for harsh criticism.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks was invited to join an "Eminent Persons Group" providing an ethical underpinning to the conference, but Sacks said that "until the equation of Zionism with racism, denigration of the Holocaust and the singling out of Israel for condemnation is removed from the draft, the Durban process cannot be afforded such moral integrity."

Report: Iran faces AMIA trial

Argentina plans to prosecute Iran and Hezbollah for alleged involvement in the 1994 car-bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, the lead prosecutor in the case told the Forward newspaper.

Juan Jose Galeano added that the move likely will come at the end of September, when a trial of Argentines with suspected links to the bombing is slated to start.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Besieged Israelis know terror may strike, but remain unbowed

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Stephanie Glick and her fiance, Yehuda Herman, came to downtown Jerusalem to look for engagement rings, they consciously avoided the corner of Jaffa and King George streets.

It was there that a Palestinian suicide bomber stepped into a crowded Sbarro pizzeria earlier this month, detonating a bomb packed with nails, screws and bolts that killed 15 people, six of them children.

Another 130 were injured.

Among the dead were the Schijverschuuder family, who lost a mother, father, two sisters and a brother.

Lily Shamilashvili and her 8-year-old daughter Tamar, new Russian immigrants, also were killed; Lily left behind a husband and 3-year-old son.

Tzvika Golombik, 26, was supposed to introduce his parents to his fiancé's parents that afternoon, but didn't quite make it.

Their stories sent a shiver down the nation's spine — not just because of the horror of that day, but because Israelis always know they could be next.

"I just couldn't walk by," said Glick, 34, a Jewish educator who lives in Jerusalem. "I haven't stopped going downtown, because I'm not going to let anybody tell me where to go. But I get on a bus to go to work, and I look around and everybody else is looking around and we're all thinking, Is this going to be our last bus ride?"

It is a common fear, and a potent one. If there was a bombing in Sbarro's, why couldn't there be one in Aroma, a popular Jerusalem coffee shop? If Palestinians bombed the Dolphinarium disco in Tel Aviv, why not the Ha'oman 17 club in Jerusalem?

As if to underscore that fear, a small bomb exploded Tuesday beneath a parked car in Jerusalem's popular Russian Compound area of restaurants and pubs. It caused no injuries, but police commanders who arrived at the scene said a serious disaster was averted when a second, much larger bomb discovered in the trunk of the car failed to detonate.

Jason, a new immigrant from England, was writing an e-mail in a nearby building when he heard the explosion on Tuesday.

"I'm still trying to get over it," he told Israel Radio. "I was in one of the buildings typing on a computer. It was rather frightening. I thought, here we go again."

What the recent bombings have emphasized is that terror can strike anywhere, anytime — which makes almost all areas equally dangerous, and equally safe.

"There's concern because it's random terror and you don't know which areas to avoid," said Richard Berger, 34, who recently moved to Ra'anana from Jerusalem. "Yet if there were five Sbarros every day, it would be a whole different level of terrorism. The odds of it being you are still relatively narrow."

Nevertheless, the Sbarro bombing was a benchmark event for many Israelis. It was as tragic as the Dolphinarium disco bombing in June, which killed 21 youth celebrating the end of the school year, yet the lunchtime tragedy struck a different chord, taking place at a familiar intersection in the heart of western Jerusalem.

The next day, everyone reluctantly bought their weekend newspapers, anticipating and dreading the graphic, heartwrenching, poignant stories about the victims, their families and those who narrowly escaped.

Escape, however, has become a relative term. No one really feels completely safe

MIDEAST FOCUS

P.A. policeman escapes assault

Israel fired two missiles Thursday at a car in the West Bank city of Nablus, wounding a deputy Palestinian police commander and two other people in the car.

Israeli military sources said the police official, Jihad Miseemy, is responsible for a "series of shootings and bomb attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians."

Israel to probe helicopter attack

Hamas vowed revenge Thursday after Israeli helicopters fired missiles a day earlier at two cars in the Gaza Strip, killing Bilal Ghoul, 18, a Palestinian policeman. Israeli military sources said the intended target was Ghoul's father, Adnan, whom Israel described as the leading Hamas bombmaker in Gaza. The Defense Ministry announced that it will investigate why the helicopters missed their target.

Court rules for Red Cross visit

Israel's Supreme Court ordered the government to allow Red Cross officials to visit two Muslim fundamentalist leaders who were abducted years ago by Israeli commandos from Lebanon.

A five-judge panel ruled unanimously Thursday that humanitarian principles outweighed security concerns surrounding the two, whom Israel hopes to trade for Israeli MIAs.

Sheik Abdel Karim Obeid, a Hezbollah leader, and Mustafa Dirani, a leader of the Amal militia, were seized by Israel in 1988 and 1994, respectively.

IDF: We'll reduce call-ups

The Israel Defense Force is taking steps to reduce the number of combat reservists it calls up, according to the *Jerusalem Post*, which cited a senior IDF officer.

The officer said the IDF wants to restrict call-ups to a maximum of about three weeks a year. He also said the IDF plans to carry through with its decision to release all reservists from military service at age 45.



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anymore, but they play the odds, looking for alternate routes or restaurants, seeking respite from the threats of the Palestinian intifada.

"You can't let it take over your life, so you use your own artificial logic to make sense of the world," said Stu Schnee, a sales manager at a high-tech company in Kfar Saba.

"After you hear about a bombing and begin realizing the enormity of the tragedy, you become absorbed in mourning mode, watching the news nonstop," he said. "But then you learn to go forward with a little bit of a limp. It's almost like an odor in the room, or a toothache that's with you all the time."

Schnee lives in Jerusalem but travels an hour each day to his job in Kfar Saba. An upscale suburb of Tel Aviv, Kfar Saba also is near Kalkilya, a Palestinian town in the West Bank that has produced its share of suicide bombers.

"I look out the window at Kalkilya, and it's frustrating to me," Schnee said. "There's a hornet's nest of terror five seconds from here. But we've made it clear that you can't break us with terror."

Many Israelis take the attitude that "life must go on."

After a terrorist attack they slowly return to the cafes, restaurants and shopping malls.

They meet friends for a cafe hafuch — "upside-down" coffee, a local version of cappuccino.

They see the latest movies at malls where security has been beefed up with guards and metal detectors.

If it is considered unsafe to take the bus, they hail a cab instead.

If a crowded restaurant seems a potential target for a bomber, they opt for an emptier one.

But they don't return to their schedules without noting the ironies of their new reality.

For Glick, even her recent engagement has taken on a bittersweet taste. Friends and family call to wish her congratulations, but then start discussing whether they feel safe coming to the wedding, which will be held in November or December.

And then there's the matter of her Palestinian friends, who were the contractors on Glick's apartment several years ago. They've already called to congratulate her, but can she invite them to a wedding in Jerusalem in these days?

"If this was a year and a half ago, I could have seated them with anyone, even my more right-wing friends," said Glick, who once lived in Tekoa, a West Bank settlement. "But today, things are a lot more bitter. I've been rude to Arabs after terrorist attacks, just based on who they are."

She isn't the only one. In one incident last week, a Druse couple and their baby reportedly were assaulted at a Haifa mall. Tib Anan, a 25-year-old Druse who serves in the Israel Defense Force in the Golan Heights, was called a "stinking Arab" and his son's stroller was sent crashing into a wall, sending the toddler to the hospital.

While the government and organizations like the Anti-Defamation League have denounced such incidents, the sting remains, as does the sense of distrust.

People have become more focused on their own welfare, and less concerned for the average Palestinian.

Even the Israeli army policy of destroying a terrorist's home doesn't elicit the sympathy for the Palestinians that it used to.

"Maybe blowing up somebody's house is going to spare the angst and pain of one Israeli mother," said one young woman, who asked that her name not be used. "It doesn't sadden me, because that's the reality I live in."

For Nora Berger, the entire intifada appears to have confirmed her suspicion that peace was never possible.

"I'm not happy to feel vindicated. I feel depressed," said Berger, 34, an Israeli who moved back to Israel from the United States with her husband Richard last summer. "Attitudes have changed, and that's the biggest price we've paid so far."

At the same time, Richard, who is American, decided to make his aliyah official just last month.

"It's a little bit crazy but we're not living in the West Bank," said Berger, who grew up in Long Island, N.Y. "Your brain sometimes tells you that you're crazy, but if you give into it, you're letting terrorism win." □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

Reform delegation visits FSU

Officials from the Reform movement are traveling to the former Soviet Union, where they will donate two Torah scrolls to Reform congregations and help train congregational leaders for the upcoming High Holidays.

During the ARZA/World Union mission, which begins Thursday and lasts through Sept. 2, the 30 officials plan to visit Kiev, St. Petersburg and Moscow.

One of the Torahs, a 180-year-old scroll, is being given by Temple Beth Shalom of Topeka, Kan., to the Siberian Congregation Madregot of Tumin, Russia. The second scroll is being donated by New York's Temple Shaaray Tefila to Congregation Simcha of Minsk, Belarus.

Bush urged to pressure Arafat

The president of the American Jewish Congress sent a letter to President Bush urging him to use his "bully pulpit" to heighten pressure on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to end the violence.

Jack Rosen also asked Bush to take action against the Palestinian Authority, including cutting off financial assistance to Palestinian-controlled areas, if the administration determines that Arafat is not acting to stop violence.

Canada blasted for Syria support

B'nai Brith Canada lashed out at the Canadian government for supporting Syria's bid for a seat on the U.N. Security Council.

"Syria's government is one whose ministers have authored and published the worst kinds of blood libels and anti-Semitic tracts," said Rochelle Wilner, the group's national president. "This is indeed a sad day for Canada."

Russians learn to detect hate

A Russian Jewish leader, nine Russian officials and 17 police officers flew to San Francisco on Thursday for a seminar on fighting hate crimes.

The U.S. State Department, the Anti-Defamation League and the Bay Area Council for Jewish Rescue and Renewal are sponsoring the weeklong seminar for the group from the Russian city of Ryazan as part of the Climate of Trust police training program.

Chabad teacher has quintuplets

The wife of a Lubavitch rabbi based in St. Petersburg, Russia, gave birth to quintuplets. Esther Segal, a teacher at St. Petersburg's Ohr Avner-Chabad day school, had three boys and two girls at the Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem.

Her husband, David, is the director of a yeshiva and women's institute of higher education in St. Petersburg.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

As racism conference approaches, South African Jews on the defensive

By Michael Belling

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — With the U.N. conference against racism set to begin in Durban, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies is concerned about rising expressions of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic views in the country.

The group's 41st congress last weekend was dominated by reactions to such sentiments.

Yet government ministers and other high-ranking officials have "gone out of their way" to assure the Jewish community that the ruling African National Congress is not anti-Semitic, Russell Gaddin, the Board of Deputies' national chairman, said at the opening of the board's meeting in Johannesburg on Saturday night.

In a message read to the Jewish group, South African President Thabo Mbeki, a guest at the previous congress, said he is deeply worried about the situation in the Middle East.

"We are deeply concerned about the violence that has gripped this important part of the world for many months now," Mbeki wrote. "We are firmly committed to contribute whatever we can to ensure that the violence ends and negotiations resume and a just and stable solution" is "found that addresses the interests of both the Israelis and the Palestinians."

Mbeki added that he and his colleagues "value greatly what Jewish South Africans, including yourselves, are doing to ensure that our country truly belongs to all who live in it."

The Board of Deputies adopted a resolution urging the South African government and the South African Non-Governmental Organizations Coalition to use their position as hosts of the racism conference — and the NGO conference that will precede it — "to prevent racist resolutions" with "language against the Jewish people and against their liberation movement, Zionism, and its fulfillment, the State of Israel."

Proposed language that denigrates Zionism as racism and criticizes Israel's treatment of the Palestinians has prompted an American threat to boycott the conference, which is slated to begin Aug. 31. Particularly worrying to the Board has been the drumbeat of anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian coverage in the South African press.

"The media onslaughts, the lies, the distortion of the truth, the total pro-Arab bias, the rewriting of Jewish and Israeli history have been very hard to deal with," Gaddin said.

In all probability, until the conference is over, "it will get a lot worse," he added.

In addition, several massive rallies — including one in Pretoria over the weekend by the influential Congress of South African Trade Unions and another Monday in Cape Town by some 10,000 local Muslims — have included virulently anti-Israel and anti-Semitic expressions.

Israel's ambassador to South Africa, Tova Herzl, said the latest political and diplomatic onslaughts were "tinged with a fair amount of hypocrisy and, in some cases, anti-Semitism." They are intended to undermine the very legitimacy of the State of Israel, Herzl said.

Mendel Kaplan, a South African who chairs the executive of the World Jewish Congress, said South African Jewry had been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Oslo peace process because it removed Israel's dispute with the Palestinians as an issue between the Jewish community and the South African government.

With political tension again high in the Middle East, however, the Jewish community feels obliged to come to Israel's defense, often putting it at odds with the South African establishment.

"Now that there are no negotiations, we are in play, because there has always been a long, close relationship between the ruling party in South Africa, the African National Congress, and the PLO," Kaplan said.

There is no need for South African Jewry to accept the denigration of Zionism as racism, Kaplan said. "We do not have to apologize, and we are not expected to, because the nature of the new democratic South Africa allows us to protest, to make demands and to have our voice heard," he said. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Jews will miss Helms on Israel, but not for his domestic positions***By Sharon Samber*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For a lawmaker once considered a staunch opponent of the Jewish state, it seems ironic that Jesse Helms's retirement will be lamented — though not quite mourned — by the pro-Israel community.

But while the five-term Republican senator from North Carolina has earned the support of pro-Israel activists, he has antagonized much of the Jewish community with his conservative stances on domestic issues.

On Wednesday, Helms, 79, announced his intention to retire when his term ends in 2002, setting off a race for his seat that is expected to be hotly contested.

Helms' retirement leaves open several questions: Whether his replacement will prove an equally staunch ally of Israel and which party will control the next U.S. Senate — currently split almost evenly between Republicans and Democrats.

It also is unclear how the loss of the conservative icon will affect some of Helms' pet issues, such as abortion and school prayer.

First elected to the Senate in 1972, Helms angered pro-Israel groups during his first decade in office by consistently opposing aid to the Jewish state.

Helms took this position mainly because he believed the United States should not send direct aid to foreign countries. With Israel one of the largest recipients of U.S. aid, however, some Jews interpreted Helms' actions as a lack of support for the Jewish state.

In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon to eradicate the PLO's mini-state and counter Syrian influence, Helms advocated "shutting down" relations with Israel.

But Helms changed his policies after his close re-election race against Democrat Jim Hunt in 1984, when Jews overwhelmingly supported Hunt.

A 1985 trip to Israel with a Jewish senator further changed Helms' views on Israel — this time for good.

"It was a complete switch," recalls Morris Amitay, a pro-Israel activist and former executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Part of the shift in Helms' relations with Jewish activists resulted from an evolution of positions on the activists' part, a Helms aide said.

For example, some pro-Israel groups eventually came to support military assistance to relatively moderate Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, a position Helms long had backed.

In the early 1990s, Helms, who served for years as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stood up to then-Secretary of State James Baker.

Helms especially opposed the attempt to link billions of dollars in U.S. loan guarantees to Israel's settlement policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In 1990 Helms signed a resolution declaring Jerusalem the "eternal, undivided capital of Israel." In 1995 he called for the U.S. Embassy to be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Both resolutions were supported by the overwhelming majority of senators.

AIPAC appreciated Helms' firm stances on a number of issues — opposition to terrorism, holding Palestinian Authority President

Yasser Arafat accountable for Palestinian terror, threatening to cut off aid to the Palestinians if they declared a state unilaterally and criticizing the United Nations for its hostility toward Israel.

But AIPAC never fully embraced Helms because of his continued aversion to foreign aid in general, a major issue for the lobbying group.

Indeed, Helms annually tried to block foreign aid packages, using a variety of procedural tactics.

In 1996, after President Clinton and former secretaries of state criticized Israeli settlement policies, Helms expressed solidarity with the Jewish state.

"There are voices who insist that it is incumbent upon the State of Israel to make all the sacrifices for peace. Do not count us among such people," Helms wrote in a joint letter to Clinton with Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), then chairman of the House International Relations Committee.

But for all of his support for Israel that emerged over time, it was Helms' conservative domestic agenda that angered most Jewish groups.

Helms represented the conservative end of the Republican Party, speaking out loudly against abortion, fighting for prayer in public schools and opposing gay rights.

"Only 45 years after hundreds of thousands of European Jews and other civilians died at the hands of Hitler's Nazis, we have forgotten the critical lesson of that atrocity — that all human life is sacred regardless of color, race, religion, or physical, or mental capabilities of that human being," Helms said in 1993.

"We are today reliving the Holocaust. We know it by a different name. It is called abortion."

Recently, after a Supreme Court ruling allowed the Boy Scouts of America to bar the hiring of homosexuals, Helms authored an amendment warning public schools to provide the Scouts with equal access to school facilities or lose federal funds.

Helms described those trying to ban the Boy Scouts from campuses as "radical militants."

Gay activists "demand that everybody else's principles must be cast aside in order to protect the right of homosexual conduct," he said earlier this year.

Despite his support for Israel, Helms did not enjoy broad support in the Jewish community because most American Jews identified him with his views on social issues, according to Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Indeed, one long-time Jewish Democratic strategist said some American Jews who wanted to support Helms because of his pro-Israel stance were too upset to do so because of his domestic views.

"I can't tell you how many times people came to me and said, 'I'm pro-Israel, but I'll be damned if I'm going to support Jesse Helms,'" the strategist said.

On Wednesday, Helms said he was retiring to spend more time with his family.

Over the past few years, he has suffered from a variety of health ailments.

The field of candidates for Helms' seat likely will be crowded, as both Democrats and Republicans will be fighting for the majority in the Senate.

One-time GOP presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole could make a run for her party's nomination, while North Carolina Secretary of State Elaine Marshall already entered the race on the Democratic side. □