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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bin Laden threatens Jews

The group headed by terror suspect Osama bin Laden threatened to attack Jews if the United States launches attacks against him or Afghanistan.

"Wherever there are Americans and Jews, they will be targeted" if America attacks, the Al Qaida organization said in a statement faxed Tuesday to Pakistani news organizations.

Poll backs U.S.-Israeli teamwork

More than 90 percent of Americans endorse full cooperation between the United States and Israel in combating terrorism, and 74 percent favor either strengthening ties or maintaining the current close relationship, according to a national survey conducted Sept. 14-18 by International Communications Research, a leading polling firm.

The survey, which involved 1,011 adults and had a 3.1 percent margin of error, also found that 83 percent of Americans believe Israel should do "whatever is necessary" to root out terrorism, with 93 percent believing the U.S. government should do "whatever is necessary" to root out terrorism.

Sharon irked by British minister

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reversed course and agreed to meet with Britain's foreign secretary on Wednesday.

Sharon had initially refused the meeting after a statement released in Jack Straw's name by the British Embassy in Tehran said, "I understand that one of the factors which helps breed terrorism is the anger which many people in this region feel at events over the years in Palestine."

A source in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office called Straw's remarks "one-sided and sympathetic to Palestinian terrorism."

New O.U. executive named

The umbrella group for almost 1,000 centrist Orthodox synagogues appointed a Baltimore congregational rabbi, scholar and psychotherapist to serve as its new executive vice president.

Orthodox Union leaders are hoping that Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb will restore community trust in the group, which was rocked by allegations last year that one of its top youth professionals had sexually abused scores of adolescents. [Page 4]

NEWS ANALYSIS

Jewish groups face dilemma as anti-terror coalition builds

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — At a time when the whole country appears to be rallying behind President Bush and the emerging war against terrorism, American Jewish groups find themselves in a quandary.

Many in the Jewish community worry how the war on terrorism will affect Israel and which countries Bush will bring into his anti-terror coalition.

But a combination of factors — respect for the dead, patriotism and fear of a backlash — has produced restraint from usually vocal Jewish activists.

"There is no need for us in front of the scenes," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "We are not the issue."

Hoenlein and other Jewish leaders say it would be inappropriate, while remains are still being pulled from the rubble of the World Trade Center, for them to vocalize their concerns.

But while respect is one reason for the muted voices, the Jewish community is also fearful of the consequences of speaking out.

The Bush administration has amassed overwhelming support for a coalition against terrorism, and voices of dissent seem to be unwelcome.

In addition, Jewish officials are worried about perpetuating the view held by some that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and U.S. support for Israel are to blame for the Sept. 11 attacks.

In addition to concerns about the anti-terror coalition and anti-terror legislation, there is concern about increased pressure on Israel to sit down with the Palestinian Authority.

Indeed the Bush administration put intense pressure on Israel to allow Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to meet with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat this week.

The White House believes that ending the violence in the Middle East and getting back to negotiations is essential to garnering Arab and Muslim support for its anti-terrorism coalition.

It has also become obvious that Bush's war on terrorism will not include targeting Arafat or the groups he controls, despite public pleas from both Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

This was made clear in Bush's speech to the nation last week.

In that speech, delivered to a joint session of Congress, he specified his war on terrorism would focus on those terrorist networks with global reach.

And the executive order Bush signed Monday freezing the assets of suspected Islamic terrorist groups and individuals did not include any groups that specifically target Israel.

There is also concern that Bush will try to find a role for Arafat in the coalition, something many in the American Jewish community oppose.

Jewish activists are also warily eyeing the role Iran and Syria will play in the coalition, and worry that sanctions against those countries for their association with terrorism will be lifted if they aid the anti-terrorism effort.

They are also closely watching the anti-terrorism legislation as it emerges on Capitol Hill.

Among the concerns is a proposal that would remove the bans on the United States

MIDEAST FOCUS

Peres-Arafat meeting planned

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat will hold talks Wednesday, officials from both sides said.

The United States welcomed the announcement. "This is an important step which we hope will contribute significantly to reinforcing efforts to halt the violence and build a substantive political dialogue," U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Tuesday.

U.S. officials had been pressing for the meeting, which Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had called off three times before, citing continued Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

Washington believes that quelling Israeli-Palestinian violence is essential to its efforts to gain support in the Arab world for a U.S.-led coalition against global terrorism.

Arafat said to control terrorists

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat reached an agreement with Hamas and Islamic Jihad to stop attacks on Israel for the time being, according to a West Bank leader of Arafat's Fatah movement.

"Arafat is in full control of all the organizations operating against Israelis in the territories," Hussein Sheik told Army Radio on Tuesday. "All the factions: Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad — all of them." Arafat has repeatedly stated in the past that he has no control over such terrorist groups.

U.S. drops Jordan trade barriers

The U.S. Senate passed legislation Tuesday that would remove all trade barriers between the United States and Jordan.

A leading opponent of the bill, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), said he dropped his objections because it was important that the United States send a signal of friendship to Jordan.

selling arms. That could mean the United States might sell arms to Iran as part of its anti-terrorism effort.

Jewish organizational officials say they have raised these concerns to the Bush administration as well as to congressional leaders, but they have done so in a low-key way.

Publicly, American Jewish leaders say the reason they are not being vocal is because they are waiting for more details about the coalition.

"It's a couple of days too early," said Barry Jacobs, director of strategic studies for the American Jewish Committee.

Others say it is unclear who in the Bush administration is making the decisions, making it more difficult for Jewish groups to lobby their point.

And with the recent attention to the U. N. World Conference Against Racism and the High Holidays, Jewish groups have not been able to shift gears and organize in the way they would like.

"There is a lot in flux and people want to give the administration a great deal of leeway," said Reva Price, Washington representative of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

But under the surface, there are also fears that an aggressive American Jewish community would not be well-received.

Specifically, they worry about a drop in support for the U.S. relationship with Israel if the American Jewish community puts too many demands on the coalition.

However a recent poll suggests otherwise.

An overwhelming majority of Americans — 92 percent — endorse full cooperation between the United States and Israel in combating terrorism, according to a poll conducted by the Institute for Jewish and Community Research and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the Hudson Institute.

There is also concern that the support for U.S. action against terrorism is so strong, dissenting voices will be ignored.

The American Jewish community fears being cast aside and losing good favor and influence in the Bush White House.

And part of it, some leaders say, is patriotism.

As Americans, the Jewish community was shocked and traumatized by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and its members feel the need to rally around the flag with the rest of the country.

"We're all Americans, and concerns are being handled in a different way," Price said, comparing it to the new bipartisan tone that has emerged, at least externally, from the halls of Congress in the wake of the attacks. "There is an effort to create a certain outward image."

Instead, the community has increasingly turned to Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who is raising some similar concerns on his own.

The ranking minority member of the House International Relations Committee, Lantos has become more influential with the White House since he represented the United States at the Durban conference on racism last month.

This week, Lantos was instrumental in changing language in the president's executive order ending sanctions against India and Pakistan because of their assistance in the coalition.

The language originally called for a review of sanctions on all countries that aid the effort, which would have left the door open for Iran, Syria and other Middle East antagonists.

This week, Lantos is considering sending a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell seeking clarification on the scope of the global war on terrorism, congressional sources said.

Some of his concerns mirror those in the Jewish community.

While acknowledging a changed demeanor, Jewish leaders say this is not their long-term strategy, but merely the interim solution.

These leaders say that once details emerge, if they still have concerns, they will be raised.

"If it turns out the administration is prepared to pay any price for this coalition, then I think you will hear a concerted effort by the American Jewish community to object," Jacobs said.

"Any price is not an acceptable price."



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JEWISH WORLD

Indyk: Middle East envoy needed

A former U.S. ambassador to Israel called on the Bush administration to appoint a special envoy to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Someone is needed to work full time to have the two sides end the violence, Martin Indyk said.

Speaking Tuesday at a House of Representatives hearing on U.S. policy toward the Palestinians, Indyk also said he believed Arafat had acted to stop Palestinian violence in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington.

High Court to hear voucher cases

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed Tuesday to decide whether school voucher programs are a constitutional use of taxpayer money.

Jewish groups are split over vouchers, which allow parents to use a government subsidy to pay the tuition bill at a private or religious school.

5,000 attend Pittsburgh rally

More than 5,000 people took part in a solidarity demonstration in Pittsburgh.

Coordinated by the United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh in partnership with more than 85 communal agencies, organizations and synagogues, the demonstrators expressed their support Sunday for the victims of terrorism and joined in prayer for peace and security in the United States and around the world.

Moscow students attacked

Ten teen-age yeshiva students were attacked by a group of skinheads Sunday night in Moscow.

The teens were coming from a Lubavitch-run yeshiva at the Marina Roscha Synagogue when the skinheads shouted anti-Semitic slurs, beat some of the students and threatened to come and "sort things out" at the synagogue.

Police are investigating the incident.

Also on Sunday, some Orthodox yeshiva students were attacked in the city of Orenburg in Eastern Russia.

Giuliani: Let's not hesitate again

New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani recalled America's initial hesitant response to the Nazis in calling for strong action now to thwart terrorism.

"We had a choice like that in the 1930s. We missed making that choice for a very long time," the popular mayor said in a brief address at the Appeal of Conscience Foundation's annual awards dinner on Monday.

"Maybe this time we shouldn't do it that late."

AMIA trial begins amid echoes of terror attacks against U.S. sites

By Florencia Arbiser

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — A trial that began here this week for 20 people accused of playing a role in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center has taken on additional significance following the terror attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

"Terrorism is a worldwide threat to democracy and tolerance," Jacob Kovadloff, a representative of the American Jewish Committee, told JTA before entering the courtroom Monday. "At this time, there is a great deal of concern around the world how Argentina will deal with this issue."

Security was the byword as the trial began. Police vans drove with sirens blaring toward the court. Two police dogs trained to sniff out explosives walked the court corridors. An ambulance was parked at the front door.

To get inside, it was necessary to walk about a half-mile within green fences that surrounded the federal court building.

Inside, doctors in green scrubs could be seen with stethoscopes around their necks. Three metal detector machines guarded the entrance to the courtroom. Every bag was checked at least twice. Credentials that were necessary to get into the courtroom were checked by magnifying glass and ultraviolet light to verify their authenticity.

Police said 200 agents were on hand to insure security.

The "measures became stronger after the attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon," inspector Gustavo Palazzo told JTA.

The basement in the court building in downtown Buenos Aires had a courtroom specially built for the trial — and it was packed Monday.

In attendance were three federal judges, four prosecutors, the 20 defendants, dozens of lawyers, victims' relatives, politicians and reporters.

Also to be seen inside the courtroom, which was decorated with pink curtains, were Jewish community leaders and Israel's ambassador to Argentina, Benjamin Oron.

Before the trial began, Pablo Jacoby, lawyer for Memoria Activa, a group of victims' relatives, asked for a minute of silence for those killed in four terror attacks — the two earlier this month in the United States; the July 1994 AMIA blast; and an earlier attack, in March 1992, on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires.

The AMIA attack claimed the lives of 85 people and wounded some 300 others. In the bombing of the Israeli Embassy, 29 people were killed and more than 200 injured.

After the judges accepted Jacoby's request, everyone in the courtroom rose for the minute of silence before the trial began.

The opening week of the proceedings are being devoted to reading the accusations. Statements are scheduled to begin next week.

The 20 defendants have not been charged with involvement in the actual attack.

Five of them, four former police officers and car salesman, stand accused of supplying the stolen van — later loaded with some 600 pounds of explosives — used in the bombing. If found guilty, they could be sentenced to life imprisonment, the maximum punishment under Argentine law. The other 15 have been charged for offenses discovered during the investigation process.

Jewish and Argentine officials alike hope the trial may shed light on those who masterminded the attack. Jewish leaders here and abroad have long blamed Argentina's inability to find the culprits on incompetence, corruption and anti-Semitism among security and government officials.

The terror attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon are likely to affect the trial, Jewish leaders, lawyers and victims' relatives agreed.

"The attacks in the United States may change the results of the AMIA trial," said the president of AMIA, Hugo Ostrower. "There is more international pressure for convictions. And this has modified local attitudes."

For Marta Nercellas, a lawyer for DAIA, the Jewish umbrella organization, the attacks against the United States gave new meaning to the attacks that occurred in Argentina: "Terrorism is the common enemy, so this has to be a common fight. We need more international help."

The trial is expected to last between seven and 10 months. □

New Orthodox Union head aims to heal embattled group

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) —It would be an understatement to say that Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb is coming into his new job at a difficult time.

Just two weeks before Weinreb was appointed executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, the view from the Manhattan-based organization's 14th floor headquarters was of soot and debris from the World Trade Center catastrophe, just a few blocks away.

And in the year and a half preceding his appointment, the view inside the office has been filled with a different kind of debris — from a major scandal.

Since July 2000, the O.U. has been reeling from accusations that Rabbi Baruch Lanner, the top professional in its youth group, sexually abused and molested scores of teen-agers over a period of 30 years, and that the group ignored complaints about his behavior.

Lanner, who resigned immediately after the allegations became public, was indicted earlier this year in New Jersey and is expected to stand trial in the coming months.

Weinreb, a Baltimore congregational rabbi who is also a psychotherapist and is known for his scholarly and oratory skills, replaces Rabbi Raphael Butler, who resigned in January amid criticism that top leaders had long failed to heed complaints about — and properly discipline — Lanner.

The O.U. also plans to hire a chief operating officer to oversee much of the day-to-day management.

Among the conclusions of a comprehensive investigation, an O.U.-appointed commission reported in December 2000 that "certain members" of the O.U. leadership "share responsibility for Lanner's misconduct," and also criticized the organization for "poor management practices," including lack of accountability, and a "total absence of any policies regarding basic ethical issues."

Weinreb, 61, will begin officially on Jan. 1, but is working part time before then. He acknowledges that one of his foremost responsibilities will be to restore faith in the embattled organization.

Interviewed Tuesday, his first morning at the office — where electricity is still running on a backup generator as a result of the Sept. 11 devastation — Weinreb said the O.U.'s "blemished" reputation will be restored both by correcting internal problems and becoming a "proactive" advocate on a range of moral issues, including matters of abuse.

He said he will devise a more detailed plan of action in the coming months. Weinreb said he sees the O.U. position as an opportunity to "broaden my impact" and "bring the message of traditional Judaism to the entire world."

Asked how he differs from his predecessors, Weinreb said he had similar values and goals, but a very different working style influenced by his training in psychotherapy. Before becoming a congregational rabbi, Weinreb worked for more than 10 years as a therapist, treating both Jewish and non-Jewish patients.

Weinreb, who comes across as a warm and gentle man, is known as an advocate for Orthodox victims of domestic violence as well as for his skill at bringing together diverse segments of the Jewish community.

He is a past vice president of the centrist Orthodox group Rabbinical Council of America and has served on a range of

boards, including the Baltimore Jewish federation, NEFESH: North American Network of Orthodox Mental Health Professionals and The One Israel Fund, an organization that provides humanitarian assistance to Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In a recent article in the Baltimore Jewish Times, Weinreb's anticipated departure was mourned not only by local Orthodox community members but by a Conservative rabbi, Mark Loeb, who called Weinreb a "wonderful human being" with "enormous intellectual gifts."

For 12 years, Weinreb has been spiritual leader of Baltimore's Congregation Shomrei Emunah, which he described as "the most diverse Orthodox synagogue in the world." Members vary in their levels of Jewish observance and enroll their children in everything from right-wing yeshivas to public and secular private schools.

"The best way to come together is to daven together," Weinreb said. "If I have any influence, more shuls will begin to follow that model."

O.U. insiders, along with people who had criticized the group's handling of the Lanner affair, all praised the appointment.

Julius Berman, a past O.U. president, lauded Weinreb for simultaneously playing a local and national leadership role and balancing scholarly and nuts-and-bolts achievements.

"Because he has established an excellent reputation as a scholar-in-residence around the country, he's been able to reflect his intellectual achievements, while at the same time he has shown he's not in an ivory tower and can deal with a real community with real sensitivities," Berman said.

Kenneth Hain, immediate past president of the RCA, called Weinreb "a wonderfully sensitive and eloquent spokesman for Orthodox Judaism."

"He looks at the needs of the Jewish community with a great degree of clarity, identifying what the issues are, and is willing to take them on even if they're areas that perhaps some in the Orthodox community would rather remain shrouded in secrecy."

Murray Sragow, a parent active in the New Jersey region of the O.U.'s National Conference of Synagogue Youth who was sharply critical of the organization for not taking stronger action against Lanner and other top officials, said he is "absolutely thrilled" with the selection of Weinreb. Calling Weinreb the "anti-Lanner," Sragow said the rabbi had helped an acquaintance confront domestic violence and is as "squeaky clean as squeaky clean can be with regard to this kind of issue."

"This is a person who knows our community includes all types, including those we're not particularly proud of. He's seen it firsthand. Therefore, all the issues the O.U. and NCSY have pledged to reform, he'll be able to tell if they're hitting the right points or not," Sragow said.

Richard Joel, international president of Hillel: The Foundation for Campus Jewish Life and chair of the commission that investigated the O.U. last year, said Weinreb is a "wonderful man" and "bona fide scholar."

However, Joel urged the O.U. not to view Weinreb's appointment as the end of its soul-searching, or to assume that by selecting him it has solved all the problems — particularly the broader issues of management and accountability — identified in his commission's report.

"The O.U. shouldn't say, 'Oh good, we've finished, we've hired a new professional,'" he said. "It's great news if this marks the beginning and not the culmination of a period of transformation for the O.U." □