



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

66 Israelis killed in downed plane

A Sibir Airlines flight carrying at least 66 Israeli passengers and 11 or more crew members to Siberia from Tel Aviv crashed Thursday into the Black Sea, following a mid-air explosion. U.S. officials said they believe a missile fired during a military training exercise in Ukraine brought down the plane.

Gunman kills 3 in bus station

Three Israelis were killed and 13 injured when a suspected Palestinian gunman opened fire Thursday in the bus station in the northern Israeli town of Afula.

The perpetrator, who was dressed in an Israeli army uniform, began shooting at passersby when he got off the bus. He was killed by two security officials.

\$66 million raised for Israel

Major Jewish donors who gathered in New York this week raised more than \$66 million to provide psychological and grief counseling for Israeli families affected by the ongoing violence in Israel.

The funds, which will also go for added security within Israel, were raised under the aegis of the United Jewish Communities' IsraelNOW Solidarity Campaign. "The terrorist attacks in the United States brought home the physical and psychological damage that have afflicted our brothers and sisters in Israel since the very first days of its existence," said veteran philanthropist Max Fisher of Detroit.

AIPAC blasts Bush statement

It is "unthinkable" for President Bush to express support for a Palestinian state until after Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat cracks down on terrorism, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee said. The comment came after Bush said Tuesday that the idea of a Palestinian state has always been part of a U.S. "vision, so long as the right for Israel to exist is respected." The State Department and White House say Bush's statement does not reflect any change in U.S. policy.

25,000 gather at Western Wall

An estimated 25,000 Israelis gathered Thursday at the Western Wall, the Jerusalem Post reported. According to a commandment in Deuteronomy, Jews must gather in Jerusalem every seven years during Sukkot to hear a reading of the Torah.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Pro-Israel students find respite but stay on alert at universities

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Malki Karkowsky returned to the University of Maryland this fall with new plans for promoting Israel and defending it from criticism by pro-Palestinian student groups.

But less than two weeks into the semester, the devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon rendered the Hillel activist's plans "obsolete."

With the Sept. 11 attacks came increased support for Israel, Karkowsky said, as students began to sympathize with the terrorism that Israel has experienced.

The attacks have "brought all communities on campus together," even spurring the first interfaith dialogue between Jewish and Muslim students on her campus — mirroring a trend that has taken place at other U.S. universities.

But already there are signs that the respite for Israel supporters may be ending. Just before Yom Kippur, the newspaper at the College Park, Md., campus published a letter to the editor claiming that U.S. support for Israel was the cause of the attacks.

One month ago, Jewish student groups around the United States were gearing up to avoid a repeat of last year, when amid a complete breakdown of the peace process and renewed violence in the Middle East, Israel took a beating on campus.

A national campaign urging universities to divest from Israel, which was being compared to apartheid South Africa, was expected this year, along with repeats of last year's mock Israeli checkpoints, staged war crimes tribunals against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and speeches denigrating Zionism as racism.

Few Jewish students felt knowledgeable enough or prepared enough to respond.

Now it is unclear what long-term effect the attacks will have on Jewish-Arab relations — and Israel's image — on American college campuses.

"The balls are in the air and where they land is yet to be seen," said Jeffrey Ross, the Anti-Defamation League's director of campus/higher education affairs.

With the exception of a handful of campuses, like Wayne State University in Detroit and the University of California at Berkeley, where anti-Israel voices are still being heard, Jewish students and Hillel directors at universities throughout the United States report a quieting of anti-Israel rhetoric in recent weeks.

An October conference at Berkeley that was to launch the Israel divestment campaign has been postponed indefinitely.

Jewish activists now think such a campaign is unlikely to hit campuses for at least another semester, if ever.

Many Jewish groups are taking leadership roles in speaking out against scapegoating Arabs and Muslims.

A result is that Jewish-Muslim relations appear to be improving.

At the University of Michigan, where pro-Palestinian students last year held model war crime tribunals for Israel and compared Israel to the Taliban leadership of Afghanistan, Jewish and Muslim students worked together recently to create a vigil. And Jewish student groups there were among the first to write to the campus paper urging students not to discriminate against Muslims.

Eric Bukstein, one of the students who signed the letter, said he received friendly e-mails from Arab students thanking him.

The ADL's Ross said he has noticed two trends since Sept. 11.

Muslim groups are lowering their profile and focusing more on hate crimes against them in the United States than on the situation in the Middle East. At the same time,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel to U.S.: Expand terror list

Israel's Security Cabinet called on the United States and the international community to declare that Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah are "terrorist organizations against which immediate action must be taken," according to the Jerusalem Post.

During a phone conversation Wednesday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon spoke with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell about the three groups, which were not among the organizations President Bush recently said would have their assets frozen.

Two sides meet despite terror

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Palestinian officials at an undisclosed location in Jerusalem on Thursday to discuss ways to halt the ongoing violence.

The meeting had originally been slated for Wednesday, but was called off after an outburst of violence in the Gaza Strip.

On Tuesday, two Palestinian terrorists attacked the Jewish settlement of Eilei Sinai in northern Gaza, killing two Israelis and wounding 15 people, including seven soldiers. The assailants were killed by Israeli snipers.

In retaliation, Israeli tanks destroyed Palestinian farmland and shelled seven police stations near Eilei Sinai on Wednesday. Six Palestinians were killed.

At least 3 Israelis died Sept. 11

Three Israelis are known to have perished in the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States. Two were aboard the planes used in the attacks and one was recovered amid the rubble of the World Trade Center.

A fourth is missing in New York and presumed dead, according to the Israeli Consulate in New York.

The consulate downwardly revised its previous estimates after Israelis traveling abroad called home to notify relatives of their whereabouts.

however, some are also spinning the attacks as "largely Israel's fault, or predictable consequence of U.S. support for Israel," Ross said.

The current situation, Ross said, creates an "opening for pro-Israel activity" on campuses. He is urging campus groups to step up Israel education for Jewish students right now.

"It's important to proclaim a message that what we're about is for Israel," he said. "We're not against anyone, particularly not on the basis of ethnicity or religion."

Few seasoned pro-Israel activists expect a complete turnaround in relations, and many are wary about the future. At George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., Jewish students are on the alert, said sophomore Robyn Weisman.

The Sept. 11 attacks have taken center stage on campus, with anti-Israel groups quiet and Jewish students focused more on prayer vigils and raising money for victims than on the Middle East. But she and her friends are worried about an upcoming panel discussion marking the one-year anniversary of the Palestinian intifada.

Richard Joel, international president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, which quickly issued a statement against scapegoating, said it is "hard to know" how the Sept. 11 attacks will affect Jewish-Muslim relations.

For now, he said, "Everyone's catching their breaths."

Hillel, he said, has encouraged Jewish-Muslim dialogue, although last year's harsh rhetoric — particularly comparisons between Zionism and racism, even Nazism — has made them more cautious.

"You have to recognize that at a certain point people committed to their cause are probably re-examining their tactics but not their purposes," Joel said.

Pro-Arab groups may disassociate themselves from terrorism now, Joel said, but "that doesn't mean they're going to stop delegitimizing Israel."

"I hope this results in voices being lowered and interest in new dialogue," he said.

Anti-Israel activism isn't "going to come back with the same degree of stridency as had been anticipated, but it's still going to be there," Joel said. □

(JTA intern Amy Sara Clark contributed to this article.)

Jews cheer as Britain says it will try to ban Farrakhan again

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — British Jewish leaders are welcoming their government's announcement that it will seek new legal action to keep Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan out of Britain.

The government had banned Farrakhan from visiting the country since 1986, largely due to pressure from Jewish groups, but his lawyers succeeded in overturning the ban in London's High Court this summer.

Home Secretary David Blunkett, who is responsible for domestic affairs, announced this week that he would seek permission to appeal the ruling. The right to appeal is not automatic in all British court cases.

Lord Janner, president of the Parliamentary Council Against Anti-Semitism, said he was "very pleased that the home secretary will immediately appeal. This decision was very sad and should be overturned."

The Board of Deputies, the umbrella organization that represents most British Jews, also welcomed Blunkett's announcement.

"We have always maintained that there should be no platforms for racists," a Board spokeswoman told JTA. "Farrakhan has never retracted nor apologized for his anti-Semitic statements, and further, his policy of racial segregation is completely contrary to the interfaith dialogues currently being conducted by the Board," she added.

Blunkett said this week he was "frankly astonished at the judge's decision."

As well as citing Britain's "long and cherished reputation for respect for the freedom of speech," the judge said Farrakhan had "endeavored to follow a path of reconciliation between Jews and black Muslims."

The judge will soon decide if the government can appeal his decision.

If he refuses, Blunkett can petition the Court of Appeal for permission to continue the legal battle. □



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JEWISH WORLD

AMIA to get \$1.8 million

An agency that supports development in Latin America is giving \$1.8 million to an Argentine Jewish organization to aid in its efforts to help Jews find jobs.

The Inter-American Development Bank grant to AMIA comes as Argentine Jews continue to suffer from an ongoing economic crisis in their country. The announcement of the grant is expected to be made next week in Washington.

New slave payment planned

The Claims Conference plans to provide a new round of compensation payments to 21,500 Holocaust-era slave laborers on Monday.

After the payments of about \$4,650 apiece are made, a total of some 43,500 former laborers will have received payments since June.

The payments come from a nearly \$5 billion fund created by the German government and industry, with the Claims Conference and other groups making the payments to survivors.

Later this month, the Conference plans to make additional payments of \$1,000 to each of 20,000 former slave laborers.

Student handbook draws fire

Students at the Montreal-based Concordia University came under fire after publishing a handbook that B'nai Brith Canada described as "a call to intifada, anarchy and revolution."

The handbook, paid for with student fees to the school, bears the image of what appears to be a Muslim woman on its cover and the word "revolution" written in several languages.

N.Y. museum to reopen

A Jewish museum located near the site of the World Trade Center is slated to reopen Friday.

New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, New York Gov. George Pataki and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) are expected to attend the reopening ceremony at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, which has been closed since the Sept. 11 attacks.

Shul replaces lost ambulance

A Long Island synagogue raised \$80,000 to replace a Jewish volunteer ambulance destroyed during the Sept. 11 attack on New York's World Trade Center.

The Hampton Synagogue made the appeal during the High Holidays for a new Hatzolah ambulance to once again serve the Wall Street and Battery Park areas, said Rabbi Marc Schneier. "We hoped it would provide some measure of strength and comfort as those communities rebuilt their lives," he said.

German neo-Nazis celebrate terror attacks against the U.S.

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — For years, observers of the German far-right have documented links between Islamic extremists and German neo-Nazis.

This week, German neo-Nazis made their sympathies clear when they celebrated the Sept. 11 terror attacks against the United States during a demonstration here marking the 11th anniversary of the unification of the former East and West Germany.

In banners and speeches Wednesday, members of the extreme right-wing National Democratic Party called the attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon a justified response to American policies, and they protested Germany's support for a war on terrorism.

Meanwhile, German government leaders toned down the usual festivities marking the anniversary of unification. Instead, they spoke about the need to safeguard freedom and democracy.

During official ceremonies in the city of Mainz, the president of the German Parliament, Wolfgang Thierse, said the "horrific events" of Sept. 11 made it clear that peace and freedom are endangered.

In Berlin, the approximately 1,000 neo-Nazis were countered by an equal number of left-wing protesters who blocked the planned parade route.

Police rerouted the neo-Nazi march to side streets in order to prevent clashes. More than 4,000 police were on duty.

No major problems were reported.

During the march, National Democratic Party leader Steffen Hupka called the Sept. 11 attacks a form of resistance to American imperialism and he called for "the death of the United States as a world power."

A Berlin court had banned the former left-wing terrorist Horst Mahler, now a leader of the far-right group, from speaking at the neo-Nazi rally because of comments he made on the group's Web site calling the terror attacks "effective" and "justified."

To protest the neo-Nazis, many shops and theaters lining the parade route along Berlin's Kurfürstendamm rolled down their shutters and draped their signboards with black.

A shoe store had a sign in its windows reading, "Anyone may enter, if they stand up as we do for the basic values of our society: democracy, tolerance and cultural pluralism."

"To all those who tread on these values, we will show the cold shoulder."

The largest group of counter-demonstrators gathered under the nonpartisan umbrella of "Europe Against Racism."

At that rally, Michel Friedman, vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, urged that the National Democratic Party be banned.

In fact, the federal government is considering the legality of banning the party on the grounds that it promotes violence and is undemocratic.

According to German officials, the party has about 6,000 members nationwide.

The party recruits its members from skinhead groups around Germany.

None of the extreme-right parties have had any significant political successes in recent years, with the exception of the German People's Union, which won nearly 13 percent in state elections in Saxony-Anhalt more than three years ago. □

Conversion institute denied funds

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli Knesset committee has voted to deny funding to a conversion institute that had been touted as a partial solution to the "Who is a Jew" question in Israel.

The vote against the institute, reported in the Forward newspaper, was made with only two fervently Orthodox members of the Knesset Finance Committee in attendance.

The vote denied an Israeli Treasury request for \$1.6 million for the institute, which was created in 1999. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Russian Jews back U.S. airstrikes as fear of Islamic extremism grows

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russian Jews are parting company with their countrymen in overwhelmingly backing a U.S. attack on Afghanistan in retaliation for last month's terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Indeed, Jews in Russia — and across the former Soviet Union — overwhelmingly back a U.S. attack on the Taliban regime for its role in supporting Osama bin Laden, who is suspected of being behind the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in which thousands are believed to have died.

"All local Jews that I know; in fact, the entire community, I think, supports the U.S. action," said Roman Bensman, a Jewish leader in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan, a country in former Soviet Central Asia that borders northern Afghanistan, is increasingly being mentioned as a possible launching pad for a U.S. attack.

Uzbekistan and neighboring Tajikistan — with the backing of Russian President Vladimir Putin — have agreed to grant air corridors for U.S. planes, but have denied media reports about leasing air bases to the United States and that U.S. troops are already on their soil, according to Reuters.

The solidarity many Jews in the former Soviet Union feel for Israelis explains some of the support for U.S. military action.

"Over the last decade, Israel has become a great deal closer to lots of people here and to me personally, and I see these strikes against bin Laden" and his cronies "as part of a common war by Israel and the United States against world terrorism," said Tanya Gilova, a Moscow-based economist and Jewish activist.

Gilova's nephew, who lives in Israel, currently serves in the Israeli army.

But Jewish support for the United States also stems from the perception that the Bush administration's "war on terrorism" is a crackdown on militant Islam around the world.

While ordinary Russians share this a distrust of Islam, exacerbated by a series of bombings in 1999 that were blamed on Chechen Muslim separatists, they also have a greater distrust of U.S.-Russian cooperation — and little attachment to Israel. As a result, more than 60 percent of Russians oppose a U.S. retaliation, according to new poll.

Official Russian Muslim leaders have been rather cautious over the last decade in publicly expressing their attitudes on Israeli or Jewish issues in order to avoid accusations of anti-Semitism, according to Alexander Axelrod, head of the Moscow office of the Anti-Defamation League.

Public anti-Jewish Muslim rhetoric, though not unknown in Russia, has been mainly limited to the war zone in Chechnya, where the Muslim rebels accused "the world Zionist conspiracy" of controlling the Kremlin and unleashing the war in Chechnya.

This seems to have changed after Sept. 11.

At a news conference Sept. 18 in Moscow, some Muslim leaders, including the chief mufti of the Asian part of Russia, Nafigullah Ashirov, accused "the Zionist special services" of perpetrating the Sept. 11 attack against the United States in order "to unleash anti-Islamic hysteria on a world scale."

Mufti Ashirov, who is also co-chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia, said at the conference that "God's court awaits

the U.S. for the sufferings that it has caused the Muslim world."

And speakers at a pro-Palestinian rally on Sept. 12 in Russia's Dagestan region expressed a readiness to send Dagestani volunteers to assist in the "liberation of Palestine."

Outside Russia, militant Islam has strong support in Azerbaijan and especially in Central Asia, where a radical Islamic political grouping known as The Liberation Party is active.

The party, which wants to establish a Muslim state across Central Asia, recently called Uzbek President Islam Karimov a Jew who is being controlled by Zionists.

Karimov, who is indeed friendly toward the local Jewish community — though he has no known Jewish roots — responded with a heavy crackdown on Islamic radical organizations. The attacks brought a wave of criticism from human rights groups, but also relative stability to the region.

In more democratic parts of the former Soviet Union, the growing Islamic anti-Semitism recently started to spill over into local media.

Latvia's top security agency and the country's Religious Affairs Department are probing a controversial article recently published in a Latvian newspaper in which a Latvian Muslim blamed Jews for organizing the terror attacks against the United States, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the FSU.

In "The Sign of Allah to Americans," which promulgates a canard about the attacks that has spread across the Muslim world, a Muslim named Omar says "the aim of Jews is to turn people of other nationalities into slaves" and that the attacks were part of God's punishment of the American nation.

Latvia's chief rabbi, Natans Barkans, voiced indignation over the article calling it "a crime and incitement to hatred directed not only against Jews, but against the whole society."

Anti-Semitism has traditionally been considerably lower among the estimated 20 million Muslims in the former Soviet Union, than among Slavs, who predominate in such countries as Russia and Ukraine. And Slavic anti-Semitism continues.

Zavtra, a leading Moscow extremist publication, condemned Putin's promise to help the U.S.-led operation. "Let's not stain Kabul's mosques with Russian blood," the paper wrote.

Inside mosques across the former Soviet Union, experts and insiders say that the recent steady growth of radical Islamic groupings and the corresponding rise in anti-Semitism and of anti-Zionism are largely a foreign-imported phenomenon, which initially surfaced in the early 1990s. At that time, the doors to Islam — which, like other religions, was suppressed during Soviet times — were thrown open to proselytizers from all walks of life.

"Fundamentalists received millions of dollars from international Muslim organizations over the past decade," said Dmitry Makarov, an expert on Islam at the Moscow-based Institute of Oriental Studies.

According to experts in Moscow, it is highly probable that bin Laden himself, the Afghanistan-based Muslim leader suspected of planning the Sept. 11 attack, has provided financial support to Russia's Muslim radicals.

The situation regarding personal Muslim-Jewish relations is more complex. A recent day in the life of Konstantin Luzin, a Moscow university student, reflects this complexity.

He received Sukkot greetings Monday from a Muslim groundskeeper. Not later that day, sitting in a classroom in a local Saudi cultural center, his Lebanon-born Arabic instructor informed the class that the current task of all Muslims in the world is to fight Zionism and destroy the State of Israel. □