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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel told of U.S. attack

Israel received an early warning of the joint U.S.-British attack on targets in Afghanistan, according to Israeli media reports.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon planned to convene a meeting of military and intelligence officials to discuss the implications of the attack.

Israeli killed by suicide bomber

A 43-year-old Israeli man from Kibbutz Shluchot in the Jordan Valley was killed Sunday morning by a Palestinian suicide bomber near the entrance to the farming settlement.

The bomber apparently detonated the explosive when Yair Mordechai drove up and stopped alongside him to ask his identity.

The attack came after Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat demanded last Friday that Arab terrorists stop attacking Israel.

Sharon, Bush dispute ends

A dispute between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Bush appears to be over, after Sharon retreated from statements he made that Washington is appeasing the Arabs at Israel's expense.

After a rebuke from the White House over his comments, Sharon praised Bush's efforts to form a global anti-terror coalition.

Last Friday, Sharon called U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in a bid to ease frayed relations with the White House.

During a news conference a day earlier, Sharon had said Western democracies should not repeat the "dreadful mistake of 1938" when Europe decided to sacrifice Czechoslovakia to the Nazis for a "convenient, temporary solution."

Israeli team to probe air disaster

Israeli investigators arrived Sunday in Russia to help probe last week's crash of a Sibir Airlines flight into the Black Sea. [Page 4]

Because of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Wednesday, Oct. 10, or Thursday, Oct. 11.

Israelis prepare to hunker down as bombs rain on Afghan targets

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israelis have gone on heightened alert after the launch of a joint U.S.-British strike against Taliban and suspected terrorist targets in Afghanistan.

Still, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and other top officials said they believe the attacks would have no immediate repercussions on the lives of Israelis.

"At this stage, I don't see a danger" that Israel might be the target of retaliatory attacks, Peres said Sunday, shortly after the United States launched its first attacks on Afghanistan.

That same day, suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden attempted to link the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In videotaped remarks broadcast Sunday over Qatar's al-Jazeera television, bin Laden said, "I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine."

Though he stopped short of taking responsibility for the Sept. 11 attacks, bin Laden warmly praised them.

"America has been filled with horror from north to south and east to west, and thanks be to God what America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted," he said.

"Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more 80 years," he added, calling President Bush the "head of the infidels."

Until now, Islamic extremists who have justified the Sept. 11 attacks have not focused primarily on American support for Israel. Bin Laden's comments on the subject appeared to be an attempt to rally Islamic support and cast the U.S.-led effort for an international anti-terror coalition as an attack on Islam.

The United States has "come out to fight Islam in the name of fighting terrorism," bin Laden said.

"God has blessed a group of vanguard Muslims to destroy America," he said. "May God bless them and allot them a place in heaven."

Israel received an early warning of the U.S.-British attack on targets in Afghanistan, according to Israeli media reports.

In the first official comment from Jerusalem after the attacks, Peres praised the "brave decision" by President Bush.

"I think that all us, first of all, are praying for the welfare of the American army and its allies," Peres told Israel's Channel Two television.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was slated to convene a meeting of military and intelligence officials on Sunday to discuss the implications of the attack.

That same day, the Israel Defense Force's Home Front Command held an emergency session to deal with the possibility of retaliatory strikes against the Jewish state. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iraq launched SCUD missiles against Israel — which was not part of the coalition against Iraq — in retaliation for the U.S.-led attacks.

Sharon, who spoke with Bush about an hour before Sunday's attacks, told reporters, "Israel supports the war on Afghanistan, but isn't involved," according to Israel Television.

The general consensus in Jerusalem is that Israel is willing to sit out the war, watching it on television, commented Ehud Ya'ari, an Arab affairs analyst for Channel Two. "This will be a celebration of media," Ya'ari said. "The Taliban wants a direct pipeline to the West," and is likely to use al-Jazeera as a messenger.

As the likelihood of an attack on Afghani targets grew in recent weeks, Israelis

MIDEAST FOCUS

7 Arabs die in Hebron clashes

Israeli tanks and troops remained Sunday in Palestinian neighborhoods in the West Bank city of Hebron. Israeli forces launched the incursion last Friday after Palestinian gunmen repeatedly fired at Jewish enclaves in the city.

Two Palestinian gunmen were killed Saturday during skirmishes with Israeli soldiers, after five other gunmen were killed there a day earlier.

Year passes since 3 kidnapped

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel is among those calling for world pressure to secure information about three Israeli soldiers kidnapped a year ago.

On Oct. 7, 2000, Hezbollah gunmen kidnapped the three soldiers — Benny Avraham, Adi Avitan and Omar Souad — from a disputed border area known as Shabaa Farms. Since then, the Iran-backed group has not allowed the International Red Cross to visit them.

Syrian seat at U.N. opposed

U.S. lawmakers are signing a letter urging President Bush to oppose Syria's bid for a seat on the U.N. Security Council. Nearly 30 members of Congress have joined the letter, which was circulated by Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.).

"Giving Syria a seat on the Security Council, when we know they sponsor terrorism and terrorist activities, is like letting the fox into the hen-house," Engel said.

Man nabbed for aiding Hezbollah

Israel arrested a Palestinian resident of a West Bank village near Jerusalem on suspicion of helping Hezbollah officials in Lebanon plan terror attacks against Israeli targets. Suleiman Ahmed Rizek allegedly received money and orders to gather intelligence about Jewish settlements near his home and to find out how to obtain arms.

flocked to Home Front centers to obtain gas masks. Sources at the Defense Ministry were quoted as saying that the Afghanistan operation was not Israel's war. Just the same, according to Army Radio, the air force and other IDF units were placed on high alert.

Announcing the start of the U.S.-British operation during a televised address Sunday, Bush hinted that other countries besides Afghanistan could face U.S. military action if they continue to give support to terrorists.

"Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is broader," Bush said. "In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril."

Bush also reiterated that the war on terror is not a war on Islam.

"The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are the friends of a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith," he said.

"The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name." □

(JTA Correspondent Jessica Steinberg in Jerusalem and Intern Amy Sara Clark in New York contributed to this report.)

Czech advertising campaign aims to chastise neo-Nazis, rouse public

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Czech Jewish leaders are backing a public service campaign that aims to ridicule neo-Nazis and convince the public not to be indifferent to skinheads' activities.

The campaign, which is being supported by a range of state and nongovernmental agencies, shows skinheads giving Nazi salutes and includes the slogan, "Be Kind to Your Local Nazi."

The campaign — which some have found confusing — is being beamed into millions of Czech homes and posted on billboards across the country.

The television ad, which was designed by a German advertising agency, shows skinheads facing a series of embarrassing situations. In one scene, a skinhead loses his arm when the doors of an elevator close as he salutes. In another, a man is thrown out of a bar for knocking over beer glasses with his arm. In yet another scene, two skinheads use their outstretched arms to hold up a clothesline for a housewife.

Czech Jewish representatives backed the campaign, saying they believed it is important to raise public awareness at a time of increased neo-Nazi activities in the country. Tomas Jelinek, chairman of Prague's Jewish Community, said a controversial campaign was an effective way to approach the issue.

"A politically correct advertising campaign would be OK, but what is needed is something that wakes people up and alerts them to what is going on," he said. "It is too early, however, to say yet what the result of all this will be."

"I am quite supportive of the campaign, particularly on television," said Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities. "I think it succeeds in ridiculing those who behave in a racist way."

Kraus did note, however, that the billboard slogan could be taken out of context by foreigners or those who had not watched the full television advertisement.

Tourists on the Prague subway system appeared confused by the poster campaign. "When I first saw it, I actually thought it was an advert made by the neo-Nazis themselves," said tourist Jon Einarsson from Iceland.

The advertising community is also split on the comic nature of the advertising campaign. While one senior advertising executive described it as a great campaign, others are less sure.

Said Pavel Brabec, president of the Association of Czech Advertising and Agencies, "I am not keen on the presentation of evil as something silly. Fascism, neo-Nazism and communism are not doctrines that are influenced by silly people."

The advertising campaign, which will run until the end of the year, has already drawn criticism from right-wing groups. The Czech far-right Republican Party has filed a criminal complaint against the campaign's organizers, accusing them of scare-mongering. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Leaders affirm Bush support

Jewish leaders sent a letter to President Bush assuring him of their "steadfast support" in the fight against global terrorism. They also commended Bush's efforts to use the current situation as an opportunity to push forward the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Organized by the Israel Policy Forum and signed by nearly 70 leaders, the letter follows some criticism of the Bush administration from Jewish groups. The letter was an attempt to put to rest any questions about whether there is any conflict between support for the administration and support for Israel, IPF officials said.

Meanwhile, officials at the Conference of Presidents issued a statement supporting Bush and Israel in the fight against terrorism and rejected any attempt to portray the American Jewish community as divided.

Senators slam Bush statement

Democratic leaders of the U.S. Senate told Jewish groups that President Bush's recent comments backing the creation of a Palestinian state were ill-timed.

During the Oct. 4 meeting, the senators and representatives of Jewish groups expressed concern over who will join the U.S.-led international coalition against terrorism. The meeting was organized by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an umbrella organization of national groups and local federations.

Wiesenthal announces retirement

Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal said he is retiring at the age of 92 after bringing some 3,000 war criminals to justice.

"My real work, the search for criminals, is over," he told the London-based Sunday Telegraph. "I've outlived them all."

Talmudic scholar dies at 84

Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik, one of the world's foremost Talmudic scholars, died last Friday at 84 in Chicago, where he was dean of the Brisk Yeshiva. He was to be buried in Israel on Monday.

Soloveichik was part of a family of distinguished rabbis stretching back more than 200 years. He taught Talmud and Jewish philosophy for 59 years in the United States.

Schindler widow dies at 93

Emilie Schindler, who with her industrialist husband, Oskar, helped save hundreds of Jews from Nazi death camps, died last Friday near Berlin at 93. The cause of death was not announced.

She often complained that the Holocaust epic "Schindler's List" overlooked her role in helping save Jews. "Oskar is the hero, but what about me? I saved many Jews, too," she said in a 1999 interview.

With new wing, Jewish museum demonstrates life amid the ruins

By Amy Sara Clark

NEW YORK (JTA) — The future of much of the area near the former World Trade Center is still uncertain, but a Jewish museum just blocks from Ground Zero is forging ahead with plans to build a new wing.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage - A living Memorial to The Holocaust, located in Battery Park on Manhattan's southern tip, has been closed since the terrorist attacks on September 11th.

At its reopening ceremony last Friday, nearly 100 guests and speakers — including New York Governor George Pataki, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and several New York City officials — walked past National Guard checkpoints, nonfunctional phone booths, and evacuated apartment buildings to enter a museum that was built to symbolize renewal and rebirth.

Manhattan District Attorney and museum chairman Robert Morgenthau said the reopening of the museum is symbolic.

"The museum represents the ability of human beings to rebuild after catastrophe and is a symbol of remembrance and renewal," Morgenthau said. "This is why it is so important that we reopen now."

The core exhibition of the museum, which opened in 1997, focuses on three themes: Jewish Life a Century Ago, The War Against the Jews, and Jewish Renewal.

"I cannot imagine a better symbol for the rebirth of our city than the reopening of this museum," Clinton said. The museum "helps us experience the incomprehensible and unimaginable. It takes us to a place that we wish we could consign to the past but unfortunately still lives in the human spirit."

By reopening the museum, Clinton added, Americans are demonstrating that "we choose life" even in the face of evil.

Clinton said it is more important than ever that teachers take their students to see the museum because it will help them understand "what we face today."

Pataki agreed.

"The entire third floor of this museum talks about the renewal of the Jewish life and experience out of the horror of the Holocaust," he said. "On Sept. 11th we faced unspeakable evil but our renewal is coming. This museum and its reopening is a tribute to that."

In response to the terror attacks, museum workers will bring the museum's student workbook, "Meeting Hate With Humanity," to public and parochial schools throughout New York City as part of its ongoing educational outreach programs.

Visitors who arrived after the reopening ceremony felt that going to the museum allowed them to honor not only Holocaust victims but also the victims of the September 11th attack.

Clara and Tom Welbourne of Louisiana said their visit would allow them to "pay homage to all people who had gone through hardship due to fanaticism and bigotry."

The couple said they see many similarities between the Nazi ideology behind the Holocaust and the motivations of the terror attacks.

The museum also is forging ahead with plans to build an east wing, the first new construction in lower Manhattan since the World Trade Center attack.

Museum officials are "pleased to be part of the revitalization of the downtown area, and are confident that together we all can rebuild this great city," museum director David Marwell said.

The \$60 million addition, which will more than triple the size of the museum, is projected to open in November 2003. It will house a theater, classrooms, expanded gallery space, a living history center, a library and resource center, cafe and catering hall, offices and a memorial garden.

The wing will be financed by a number of sources, including \$1 million from the State of New York, \$22 million from the City of New York, \$8 million from the City Council, \$6 million from the Edmond J. Safra Foundation and a \$500,000 grant arranged by the New York State Assembly. Museum Trustees Bernard Spitzer, Peter Kalikow and others also have made significant contributions. □

Israeli families and crash experts fly to Russia following air disaster

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Dozens of Israelis have flown to Russia for the grim task of helping identify the remains of relatives who died last week when a Russian airliner exploded in mid-air over the Black Sea.

In addition, Israeli experts arrived Sunday in Sochi, Russia — the site near the Black Sea where the crash investigation is taking place — to help probe the Oct. 4 crash of a Sibir Airlines flight. The 35-member delegation also included a group from the army rabbinate to ensure that victims' remains are dealt with according to Jewish law.

"Our aim is to help those who need our help," Lt.-Col. Shimon Dahan, deputy head of the Israeli team, told Reuters. "The delegation consists above all of police who specialize in the identification of bodies."

Russian officials initially said the incident probably was a terrorist act, but later appeared more open to the U.S. contention that Ukraine mistakenly shot down the plane during a military exercise.

The U.S. theory gained credence after debris was found at the crash site that could not have come from the plane.

Ukraine initially denied that its forces had shot down the plane. But Ukrainian Prime Minister Anatoly Kinakh later appeared to retreat from those denials, saying the missile theory "had a right to exist."

As some relatives were being flown to Russia on Sunday, others who had already arrived were taken to a morgue for the grim task of identifying bodies — some of which had been burned beyond recognition.

An estimated 78 people were on the plane, many of them Russian-born Israeli citizens going to visit family and friends in Siberia. The plane was en route from Israel to the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, which has one of Russia's largest Jewish communities and is a major center for aliyah to Israel.

Novosibirsk is known as the scientific capital of Siberia. There are more than 50 research institutions in the city, which has 13 universities for a population of 2.5 million people.

In addition to helping identifying the victims, the relatives were flying to Sochi to try to gain some form of closure, said Chaim Chesler, treasurer of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which sponsored the relatives' flights.

"We want to help the relatives as much as we can," said Chesler, who was formerly the head of Jewish Agency operations in the former Soviet Union. "We're taking the same route" the downed airliner took.

Since the beginning of the year, 620 Jews have made aliyah from Siberia, 78 of them from Novosibirsk.

In 2000, 2,173 Jews immigrated to Israel from Siberia, 447 from Novosibirsk.

One victim, Adi Kameri, 25, was a native Israeli who was going to visit her mother, Aliza, the Jewish Agency's emissary in Novosibirsk.

Another victim was Natalia Simanin, 22, who was flying to Novosibirsk for her wedding.

There were fathers flying with their children, and mothers with their infants.

Five of the victims were relatives of five 19-year-olds partici-

pating in the Jewish Agency's Sela program, which hosts Russian teen-agers who come to Israel before their parents.

Siberian representatives of two international Jewish organizations were among the dead: Lyudmila Ashkukova served as the Jewish Agency's coordinator in Novosibirsk, and Valery Chaeifez was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's coordinator in nearby Sosnovoborsk.

With around 15,000 Jews living in Novosibirsk, and another 90,000 in the greater Siberia region, the plane crash will affect many families, Jewish Agency spokesman Michael Jankelowitz said. The agency plans to set up a 24-hour help center in Sochi to offer counseling and other support to victims' relatives.

"The fact that there's a direct flight once a week from Novosibirsk shows a strong connection between the Jewish community there and Israel," Jankelowitz said. "The plane that crashed was the weekly flight." □

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

Second Jewish heritage day draws crowds in 23 nations

By Ruth E. Gruber

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Last month's second annual European Day of Jewish Culture drew more than 175,000 visitors in nearly two dozen countries.

"The number of visitors and of visited sites compared to last year were greatly increased," organizers said in a statement Sunday.

Held Sept. 2 in 23 countries, the event aimed at recognizing Jewish heritage as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Europe, promoting tourism to Jewish heritage sites, and fostering both Jewish pride and a sense of European Jewish identity.

Hundreds of synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, ritual baths, medieval ghettos and Jewish museums were opened to the public in more than 250 cities, towns and villages.

In addition, there were special exhibitions, concerts and other events — from book fairs to food-tastings — and special brochures, leaflets and other informational material was distributed.

Some 16 countries took part in the first Culture Day last year, drawing as many as 150,000 visitors.

The Culture Day was organized by B'nai B'rith Europe, the European Council of Jewish Communities, the Jewish Routes of Spain and the Tourist Development Agency of France's Alsace region. It was also part of the Council of Europe's project, "Europe, a Common Heritage."

Organizers said that despite tensions related to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence and the anti-Semitic rhetoric at the U.N. conference on racism held recently in South Africa, events were not marred by any serious incidents.

"There was a very, very good attendance and good atmosphere," said Catherine Lehmann of the Alsace tourist Development Agency. "It exceeded our expectations."

Culture Day activities in France, sponsored by the ministries of culture and of tourism, included 120 events in 60 towns.

More than two dozen sites were on display in Germany, and in Spain, home to 20,000 Jews, about a dozen medieval ghettos in towns including Toledo, Girona, and Tudela were the focus of a variety of events.

Events in Italy, sponsored by the president and the Culture Ministry, took place in 36 towns and cities. □