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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinians rally for bin Laden

Palestinian police shot dead two protesters during a rally Monday in the Gaza Strip in which thousands of Palestinians marched in support of suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden.

Witnesses said police shot the two demonstrators while dispersing stone-throwers at the rally, which was organized by Hamas. [Page 4]

Syria wins Security Council seat

Syria won a seat on the U.N. Security Council after the 189-member U.N. General Assembly voted Monday to fill five vacancies on the council.

Syria, which appears on the U.S. list of nations sponsoring terrorism, last served on the council during 1970-1971. Mexico, Guinea, Cameroon and Bulgaria were also elected.

Peres slams bin Laden message

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres criticized Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden for linking the Sept. 11 attacks against the United States to the Palestinian cause. "What's he blabbering about?" Peres told Israel Radio. "You don't need any war of liberation for the Palestinians. We offered them liberation without war."

Meanwhile, Israeli Arab legislator Ahmed Tibi backed bin Laden's comments, calling his use of the Palestinian issue "sophisticated and emotional" and predicting that Arab and Muslim pressure on Israel would grow alongside Afghani casualties from any American-led attacks.

Six air disaster victims identified

A team of Israeli police experts identified six of the 14 bodies retrieved so far from the wreckage of a Russian airliner that crashed last week in the Black Sea.

The police had collected photographs, medical and dental records, and X-rays from the victims' families to help identify the bodies. Identification files already have been prepared for 57 of the 66 Israelis who died in the crash.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Wednesday, Oct. 10, or Thursday, Oct. 11.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Rejecting talk of schism, Jewish leaders rally behind Bush policy

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — With the launch of the U.S.-led war on terrorism, American Jewish leaders are rallying behind Washington.

At the same time, anxiety that Israel's interests may be shunted aside seems to be dissipating.

In the weeks since Sept. 11, the administration seems to have acted upon the realpolitik equation that beginning with a narrow goal — going after Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida terrorist network — would garner a broad international coalition, while pursuing a broader goal from the get-go — such as eradicating all terrorism — might result in a narrower coalition.

In the run-up to Sunday's initial airstrikes against Afghanistan, two well-publicized dust-ups over the administration's course hinted at Jewish and Israeli dissent, and perhaps a schism within American Jewry.

Many Israelis and American Jewish leaders felt blindsided amid news reports that the Bush administration had been prepared to launch a new Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative and declare support for a Palestinian state.

Mortimer Zuckerman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, was quoted as describing such policy — perceived as a leak to entice more Arab states into the anti-terrorism coalition — as "a very short-sighted and erroneous policy" that would reward the Palestinians for their past year of violence against Israel.

Zuckerman later said his words had been taken out of context and misunderstood.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon then expressed the fears of many Israelis when he warned the Bush administration not "to appease the Arabs at our expense," invoking the infamous appeasement of Hitler in 1938 when the West sold out Czechoslovakia in an effort to avoid a wider European war.

Sharon's speech sparked a diplomatic tiff, and a schism appeared to be developing in the American Jewish community as the weekend approached, when some 50 Jewish leaders wrote a letter of support to Bush.

Sharon and the White House reportedly patched up relations over the weekend, before the airstrikes. And on Monday, with America embarked upon a new military campaign, Jewish leaders voiced their support — and banked on off-the-record reassurances from Washington that the anti-terrorist dragnet likely will extend beyond bin Laden and his network to include enemies of Israel such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Most Jewish leaders expressed the belief that U.S. and Israeli interests more or less coincide. "There is broad consensus and support for the administration, both for what it's doing right now and for going after the global terrorist infrastructure, to not make it a one-shot deal," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

"If you address those who are a part of this terrorist network, you are enhancing Israel's security, in addition to America's security and interests."

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an umbrella group for Jewish communal organizations nationwide, was also backing the president.

"We support the direction in which the president is going, and it's important we go on record saying so," said Martin Raffel, the group's associate director.

"It's not a question of 'wait-and-see'; we support the president based on what he's said, that we're striking out against those who use violence against civilians," Raffel

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli Arabs slam U.S. campaign

Israeli Arab legislators condemned Sunday's U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan.

They said they could not give their backing to the campaign because it would lead to civilian casualties — a stance similar to that adopted by Iran.

100th suicide bomber attacks

A 17-year-old Palestinian who killed himself and an Israeli man in the West Bank on Sunday was the 100th suicide bomber to attack Israel since 1993, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The newspaper, citing Israeli security sources, reported Monday that 66 of the bombers were recruited by Hamas and 34 by Islamic Jihad.

The newspaper said 77 were either high school graduates or had a university education, and 67 were 23 years old or younger.

Arab shooting attacks continue

An Israeli was wounded in a Palestinian shooting attack Monday in the southern Gaza Strip, according to the Jerusalem Post. The man, a truck driver, sustained moderate wounds when his vehicle came under heavy gunfire near the Gush Katif junction. Israeli military forces evacuated him under fire.

Palestinian gunmen shot a 35-year-old Israeli man as he was driving Sunday night in the West Bank. Though wounded in the chest and neck, Norman Zucker managed to drive on and alert security forces, who arranged for his transfer to a nearby hospital.

Peace Now eyes settlements

Twenty-five new settlement sites were erected since Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was elected in February, according to a report released by Peace Now. Peace Now said the locations it identified from aerial surveys could not be defined as expansion of established communities.



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said. "This is the beginning but certainly not the end of the campaign against terrorism."

Meanwhile, to the left and right of the mainstream, views were predictably mixed about the appearance that Washington was linking the Palestinian issue to the anti-terrorism campaign.

Numerous analysts and Middle Easterners — including bin Laden himself — have pointed to the Arab-Israeli conflict as one of the main, if not the primary, source of anti-American anger in the Muslim world.

The Israel Policy Forum, while praising the Bush administration's steps against terrorism, also welcomed its renewed push to get Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

"The Arab-Israeli conflict, with few exceptions, has only moved forward with help from the Americans," said Tom Smerling, director of the IPF's Washington Policy Center. "Parties involved in deep conflict are almost never able to extricate themselves without third-party involvement."

On the other side of the spectrum, though, Morton Klein, the president of the Zionist Organization of America, said Bush had done "serious damage" to Israel's attempts to repel Palestinian violence.

While stressing his support for Bush's efforts to fight terror, Klein warned: "By saying he has a vision for a Palestinian state he is whetting the appetite of the Arabs to continue their terrorism. He pledged that we will end all regimes that harbor terrorists, but then he turned around and asks precisely those regimes to join the coalition. That proves Sharon's charge that he is appeasing regimes of great danger to Israel."

Still, Klein implied that the fight ultimately would be broadened, to Israel's benefit.

"I remain confident that overall Bush's policies will be of benefit to both the U.S. and Israel," he said. To destroy only bin Laden and the Taliban, he said, "while allowing the others to continue with business as usual will mean we'll lose the war on terrorism. He'll have to destroy them, or terrorism will persist." □

Grieving relatives in state of shock following air disaster over Black Sea

By Lev Gorodetsky

SOCHI, Russia (JTA) — Dr. Alexander Maslakov, the director of the local morgue in this Black Sea resort, had seen many gruesome sights in his life.

"But I have never seen anything like this. It is indescribable," he said, referring to the victims of last week's airline disaster over the Black Sea.

Among the 78 victims of the Oct. 4 crash were many Russian-born Israeli citizens going to visit family and friends in Siberia.

Many of those brought in to identify the remains of their loved ones fainted on the spot. Later, they sat listlessly on benches near the building, oblivious to the lovely seaside setting. Many stared at the ground, unable to respond to questions from a reporter. Those who could speak were nonetheless in a stupor. Many said they could not decide if they would bury the remains — assuming they could be positively identified — in Russia or in Israel.

In subsequent days, family members were flown to Sochi — where the investigation into the disaster is being conducted — from Israel and Siberia.

Rabbi Aryeh Edelkopf said he did not faint when he entered the morgue last Friday morning. But, he told JTA, he felt horror — not only at the carnage created by the air disaster, but at the great responsibility that had suddenly fallen on his shoulders.

Edelkopf, a 24-year-old Lubavitch emissary, came here some six months ago to care for the needs of Sochi's 2,500-member Jewish community.

He previously had worked as a rabbi in Brazil and Hong Kong — but until now he had never performed what is known in Israel by the acronym "zaka," meaning "identification of the victims of a disaster."

By Monday, a team of Israeli experts had identified six of the 14 bodies retrieved so far from the wreckage. "But if even only one Jew had been there, we would have had to come and do what could be done," Zvi Black, of Israel's army rabbinate, told JTA.

At a brief commemoration ceremony Sunday, Black intoned the Kaddish for those who died in the disaster. □

JEWISH WORLD

Chief rabbi meets with Blair

Britain's chief rabbi was among a group of religious leaders who met Monday with Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Jonathan Sacks commended Blair on his strong leadership following the launch of a joint U.S.-British attack on targets in Afghanistan.

He also gave the prime minister the biblical blessing: "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid or discouraged."

Pro-Palestinian group in Russia

A group calling itself the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine was formed in Kursk, a city south of Moscow, with the support of ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party.

The group includes Palestinian students studying in Kursk and is allegedly engaged in the "educational work" of informing local residents why terrorism is necessary in the struggle against Israel, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union.

Zhirinovskiy, a frequent visitor to Iraq and Libya, regularly calls for closer ties between Russia and the Arab world.

Ohio man loses citizenship

A Polish immigrant was stripped of his U.S. citizenship for serving as a prison guard at Nazi slave labor camps during World War II.

A U.S. judge ruled last Friday that Wasyl Krysa, 75, obtained his U.S. citizenship in 1958 by lying about his prison camp record.

The decision cleared the way for deportation proceedings against the retired Cleveland-area machinist.

Report: Bodies exhumed for gold

The secret police of the former East Germany exhumed the bodies of some 600 Jewish victims of the Nazis and removed their gold teeth, according to The Associated Press, which cited papers newly discovered in Berlin.

The gold, dug up in the 1970s, was probably melted down by the East German government.

Book studies Hitler's secret life

Hitler had numerous homoerotic friendships during the 1920s, and his later life can only be understood by taking into account his gay preferences, according to a book by a German historian that is being launched at the annual Frankfurt Book Fair this week.

In "Hitler's Secret — The Double Life of a Dictator," Lothar Machtan hopes to shed new light on old speculation that the Nazi leader was secretly gay.

State Department's terror list includes Hamas and Hezbollah

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The U.S. State Department's biannual list of foreign terrorist organizations once again includes Hamas, Hezbollah and other groups that perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israel.

But the significance of the list, issued last Friday, is unclear in light of the new U.S. war against terrorism.

The inclusion of Hamas and Hezbollah in the State Department list contrasts with President Bush's executive order issued two weeks ago that focused exclusively on those groups believed associated with Osama bin Laden's terrorist network.

That list was aimed at terrorist groups thought to be responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks against the United States. Noting he was going after groups with a global reach, Bush called the move a "first strike" on the global terror network to starve terrorists of their support funds.

The exclusion of Hamas and Hezbollah — as well as organizations associated with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat — dismayed Israel and many Jewish activists. Danny Ayalon, the foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said these organizations are driven by the same ideology as terror suspect bin Laden and have a global reach. "We think it is important that they be on the new lists in order to give fighting them high priority," Ayalon said soon after the executive order was released.

Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington, said there is "no doubt that Hezbollah has a global presence." In addition, he said, Hamas has a global infrastructure and Palestinian Islamic Jihad has global ties.

Groups designated by the State Department as foreign terrorist organizations are banned from using U.S. financial centers and prohibits U.S. citizens from providing funds to these groups. It also bans members from receiving U.S. visas.

The executive order goes further, expanding the Treasury Department's power to target the support structure of terrorist organizations, seize the assets of terrorists and punish those that support them. It also increases the government's ability to block U.S. assets of foreign banks who refuse to freeze terrorist assets abroad.

As the U.S.-led offensive in Afghanistan gets under way, Israel is still hoping that Bush was sincere when he said the list of 27 terrorist groups was "just a beginning" and that the United States would continue to add more names to the list.

"We understand that the first part of the counter-terrorism strike is against Al Qaida," Regev said, referring to the group headed by bin Laden.

The timing of the State Department list appears coincidental, since it involves a certification process the State Department does every two years to identify foreign terrorist organizations.

The 28-organization list, which will be included in State Department's "Patterns of Global Terrorism," focuses exclusively on organizations and not countries that sponsor terrorism. This year's list is similar to the last one issued in 1999.

The State Department list also includes two Jewish groups deemed as terrorist, Kahane Chai and Kach, extremist groups whose stated goals, according to the State Department, are to "restore the biblical State of Israel" and claimed responsibility for the shooting deaths of four Palestinians in 1993.

The operational significance of the State Department's list has been minimal in the past, according to Patrick Clawson, the director of research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The question is whether the list will have more significance in light of the new war on terrorism. Richard Boucher, the State Department spokesman, said better collection of financial information and sharing of information with other governments could make the foreign terrorist organization designation more effective.

Boucher also tried to provide reassurance that the United States will remain engaged in the fight against all terrorist groups.

"The effort is to end all terrorism of global reach and not just put this one organization out of business," he said.

"We have worked with Israel very closely and constructively over the years in trying to deal with the problems that Israel faces against terrorism," he added. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Bin Laden's rhetoric heartens Palestinians, but worries Israelis

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Nowhere else on the planet was Osama bin Laden as popular this week as in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It took Palestinians a whole night, after the first news spread of the Anglo-American attack on Kabul, before they took to the streets in protest.

Like the rest of the world, most Palestinians spent Sunday night glued to their television screens enjoying every second "of the best show in the world," the speech of suspected terrorist mastermind bin Laden that apparently was recorded before the attack had taken place and aired just afterward on Qatar's al-Jazeera network.

"I swear to God that America will not live in peace until there is peace in Palestine and the army of the heathen will leave the Land of Mohammad," bin Laden said, referring to Saudi Arabia.

He then listed honored "battle sites" where Palestinian militants have clashed with Israeli soldiers in the past year — Rafah, Ramallah and Beit Jalla.

At last, Palestinians noted with satisfaction, it would be clear to the world why it was suffering from terrorism — because of Israel.

The most quoted source in the Palestinian territories — after bin Laden — was a Newsweek public opinion poll that showed that 58 percent of Americans, too, feel that American support for Israel is in some measure responsible for the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, however, said any attempt to link the Sept. 11 attack to Israeli policy toward the Palestinians was ridiculous.

"What's he blabbering about?" Peres said of bin Laden on Israel Radio. "You don't need any war of liberation for the Palestinians. We offered them liberation without war."

Like the Palestinians, millions of Moslems throughout the world shared bin Laden's analysis that this was a war between Islam and a corrupt West.

In the first 24 hours of the U.S.-led retaliation against Afghanistan, bin Laden might have expected more. Palestinian protest was limited and the intifada continued at its slow, bloody pace.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat withheld official reaction to Sunday's air strikes on Afghanistan and forbade P.A. officials from commenting on them.

Reeling from the negative publicity when Palestinians celebrated the Sept. 11 terror attacks on America, Arafat ordered that demonstrations of support for bin Laden not be filmed. The Palestinian Authority tried to ban Monday's protest in Gaza and, when that failed, to suppress it. Two protesters were killed in clashes with Palestinian police, and 10 policemen reportedly were injured.

But like the rest of the western world, Israelis feared possible terror retaliation for Sunday's strikes — but then, terrorism has become part of the daily routine here.

"There is perhaps no other country in the world which is so well-prepared for terrorism as Israel," Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said. On the eve of Simchat Torah, Ben-Eliezer urged Israelis to celebrate as they had planned, stressing that Israel is not part of the evolving war.

"There is nothing new in the fact that we are on bin Laden's map," Ben-Eliezer said. "I am more troubled by Jewish targets around the world. He might reach such targets as well."

Despite Ben-Eliezer's calming words, Israel feared a possible flare-up on various fronts — Israeli and Jewish targets abroad, Hezbollah militants on the border with Lebanon and Palestinian militants.

The fact that initial reaction was subdued did not mean that trouble would not flare up later on. It generally was assumed here that as long as the Americans did not attack targets like Iraq or Hezbollah, there was no immediate danger of a local escalation.

However, Ze'ev Schiff, military analyst for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, suggested that it was quite possible that organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah might try to open "a second front" to make life difficult for the Americans.

The Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian street were totally divided. The Palestinian cabinet met Sunday for an emergency session, but whereas Arafat is keen on remaining part of the American coalition, hatred against America currently runs deep in the Arab world in general and among Palestinians in particular.

"There is no other people that has suffered so much from terrorism as the Palestinian people," said Abdul Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas leader in Gaza. "America has always stood by Zionist terrorism."

Israeli Arabs expressed similar feelings, and Israeli Arab Knesset members condemned the American-led attacks.

Knesset member Ahmed Tibi backed bin Laden's comments, calling his use of the Palestinian issue "sophisticated and emotional" and predicting that Arab and Muslim pressure on Israel would grow as Afghani casualties mounted.

"Today they have declared war on Islam," said Abdul Hakim Mufid, senior editor at the newspaper of the Islamic Movement in Israel. "The West has brought the calamity upon itself after hundreds of years of colonialism and imperialism."

Initial hopes have faded that Iran, a leading supporter of world terrorism, might join President Bush's anti-terror coalition. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's spiritual leader, condemned the Anglo-American attack. He thus joined Iraq, which was the first Arab state to come out against the attack.

"Moderate" Arab regimes were concerned about a possible domino effect, fearing that the offensive against Afghanistan could cause instability in countries like Pakistan and Indonesia — which in turn might roil spirits among radical Islamic elements in countries like Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Egypt supported Sunday's attack on condition that it be limited in scope.

Prof. Emmanuel Sivan, one of the leading experts on Islam in Israel, said recently that the attacks in New York and Washington were part of the "third wave of the activities of radical Islam."

The two previous waves were Islamic terrorism in Arab countries such as Egypt — including the murder of President Anwar Sadat 20 years ago this month — Syria, Algeria and Tunisia.

The previous waves have failed, Sivan said, but radical Islam is now engaged in a third wave — against the western world.

"I am quite sure that the West will succeed in winning this round," Sivan said last week in an interview with the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

"But if there is something that frightens me it's the knowledge that there will be a fourth wave, which once again will focus on the Arab countries. I am not convinced that the Arab countries will succeed in overcoming it as they have the first two waves." □