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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli minister assassinated

Gunmen lurking in a Jerusalem hotel hallway assassinated Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a PLO faction, claimed responsibility. [Pages 1,4]

Sharon: 'Everything has changed'

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon rescinded his decision to ease a blockade on Palestinian areas in the West Bank after the assassination of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi. Sharon made the announcement during a meeting with senior security and cabinet officials following the assassination.

"From today, everything has changed, just as President Bush said after the 11th of September," Sharon was quoted as saying at the meeting.

Groups' offices face anthrax tests

Several Jewish organizations are being checked for contamination after anthrax spores were found Wednesday in the Manhattan office of New York Gov. George Pataki, which is located in the same building.

The groups — the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations and ARZA/World Union, along with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency for Israel — together have approximately 325 employees.

The Jewish organizations continued with their work.

Anthrax fears reach Knesset

Two members of Israel's Knesset from the Meretz Party received letters with suspicious contents Wednesday, prompting the closure of a section of the building amid fears of anthrax.

Legislators Naomi Chazan and Yossi Sarid, accompanied by their assistants, were immediately taken to hospitals, where they were tested and treated for possible infection. Test results were not released.

Europe condemns slaying

The European Union, Germany and Britain condemned the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi. "I urge restraint on all sides in response to the men of violence who only want to wreck any proposals for peace," a spokesman quoted British Prime Minister Tony Blair as saying.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Ze'evi assassination may force U.S. to back off on plans for peace push

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The assassination of Israel's tourism minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, may create additional pressure on the Bush administration to understand Israel's plight.

"This has to throw into sharper relief the disconnect between the State Department's criticism of Israel's defensive actions against terrorists and the reality of the terrorist threat Israel faces on a daily basis," said Jason Isaacson, director of government and international affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

As recently as Monday, the State Department had reiterated its opposition to "targeted killings," the Israeli policy of taking out Palestinian militants responsible for attacks on Israel or believed to be planning additional attacks.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a PLO faction, took responsibility for shooting Ze'evi Wednesday morning in the Hyatt Hotel in Jerusalem. Israel assassinated the PFLP's leader, Mustafa Zibri, in August following a string of PFLP terror attacks.

Some U.S. Jewish leaders hoped Ze'evi's murder would force the Bush administration to acknowledge the constant threat of violence Israelis face, and the need for tactics like targeted killings.

"For our government to not recognize the awesome threat Israel faces and the obligation of Israel to respond to threats would not be the response of a government that is sympathetic with the people of Israel and the government of Israel," Isaacson said.

Jewish leaders have been concerned that the Bush administration will pressure the Israeli government to resume peace negotiations with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat — despite continuing Palestinian violence — in order to bolster Arab and Muslim support for the U.S.-led coalition against terror.

The Bush administration is said to have prepared a new Mideast peace plan toward that goal.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said Ze'evi's death is magnifying those concerns.

"It does give urgency to the issue," Hoenlein said. "It validates the view that you can't put the peace process together artificially without acts on the ground."

President Bush, for his part, condemned the assassination "in the strongest terms," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said. "This despicable act is further evidence of the need to fight terrorism."

Concern also is rising about the role Syria will play in Bush's anti-terror coalition and whether Syria, which harbors PFLP leaders, will be pressured to crack down on the organization.

Even those who favor peace talks believe Wednesday's assassination will ice the Bush administration's push to renew negotiations.

"It's certainly likely to dampen recent hopes for diplomatic movement," said Tom Smerling, Washington director of the Israel Policy Forum. "It may ignite more cycles of violence."

However, European leaders said the killing made it more urgent to press forward with peace talks.

"I urge restraint on all sides in response to the men of violence who only want to wreck any proposals for peace," British Prime Minister Tony Blair said. "I called on

MIDEAST FOCUS

Peace Now: Settlements growing

The number of homes in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew by 62 percent since peace talks with the Palestinians began in 1993, according to Peace Now.

Citing figures by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, the group said Tuesday that in 1993 there were 32,750 housing units in Jewish settlements.

Since then, another 20,371 have been added, it said.

The leftist group, which favors dismantling settlements to secure peace with the Palestinians, said the peak year of construction in settlements was 2000, when former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak was trying to reach a final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Israeli teen shot at checkpoint

An Israeli teen-ager was shot and wounded by an Israeli soldier at the Gush Katif settlement checkpoint in the Gaza Strip on Monday.

The teen-aged settler, who was driving Palestinian workers through the checkpoint, got out of his car and advanced in a threatening manner toward the checkpoint while the soldiers were checking identity cards, according to the Israel Defense Force.

The IDF apologized for the incident, but said the driver had behaved suspiciously, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Ukraine, P.A. to strengthen ties

Ukraine said it will soon send a diplomatic mission to the Gaza Strip to develop economic and cultural ties between the former Soviet republic and the Palestinian Authority.

The announcement came during a news conference held Tuesday in Kiev by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko and Palestinian minister Nabil Sha'ath.

Monday for courage and leadership for a new start. Never was that more needed than now."

The Palestinian Authority condemned the killing, and Arafat said he had ordered the killers' arrest.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon froze all diplomatic contact with the Palestinian Authority, called off plans to ease restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank and reimposed the Israeli cordon around Ramallah.

Some speculated that the easing of restrictions on Ramallah had allowed the killers to travel the short distance from there to the Hyatt on Mount Scopus in eastern Jerusalem, where the shooting took place.

"The full responsibility falls squarely on Arafat, as someone who has controlled, and continues to control, terrorism, and as one who has not — to this day — taken even one serious step to prevent terrorism," Sharon told a special Knesset session in Ze'evi's memory.

The Palestinian leader "knew that not taking steps against organizations such as Islamic Jihad would lead to terrible acts of murder and the responsibility is fully his," he said.

The Zionist Organization of America is sending a letter to Bush, asking him to press Arafat to kick the PFLP out of the Palestinian Authority, shut down the organization's training camps and help bring the assassins to justice.

The national director of the ZOA, Morton Klein, said it is wrong for the United States to be chastising Israel for taking measures against domestic terrorism at a time when the United States is launching massive military retaliation against Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaida network for the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"America is involved in a grotesque hypocrisy when they are targeting bin Laden and killers of Americans while demanding that Israel not target killers of Israelis," Klein said.

The far-left Israeli group Gush Shalom, however, said Ze'evi's death shows the bankruptcy of Israel's own policy of targeting Palestinian militants, and highlights the need for peace talks.

"If only this round of revenge does not lead to counter revenge (which itself could again lead to counter-counter revenge)," the group said in a statement, "but it is possibly too much to be expected from this government to draw the conclusion that assassinations are just not it, and that we better continue to move towards calm and renewed negotiations."

Likewise, Knesset member Issam Makhoul of Hadash — Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, Israel's Communist party, sought to equate the assassination of Ze'evi to Israel's policy of targeted killings.

"I have warned that assassinations are assassinations whoever carries them out," Makhoul said. "Whoever uses this measure creates the basis for political murders and makes them part of the rules of the game."

Some of Ze'evi's opponents, however, lauded him.

"You were an opponent who was a friend and a friend who was an opponent," said Meretz leader Yossi Sarid, whose dovish positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could hardly have been more distant from Ze'evi's.

The Palestinian Authority "cannot be silent when confronted with the spilled blood of" Ze'evi, Sarid said, "and it must carry out particularly sharp measures to suppress the murderers.

"No more dodging and no more avoiding. This test of the Palestinian Authority and Arafat is immediate and there is no possibility to postpone it. If they fail the test the land will burn with a fire that no one will be able to extinguish."

Yet the Jewish state, too, "faces a particularly difficult test," Sarid said, remembering the attempted assassination of Israel's ambassador to London, Shmuel Argov, in 1982.

That killing sparked Israel's controversial invasion of Lebanon to eradicate Palestinian terrorist groups.

Israel ended up occupying southern Lebanon for 18 years, losing hundreds of soldiers.

"We recall the hasty beginning but not the bitter end" of that episode, Sarid said. "It is necessary to remember everything, the entire lesson." □



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JEWISH WORLD

State Dept. to post reward info

The State Department has come up with a plan to post rewards for information about Palestinian terrorists who have killed American citizens.

Assistant Secretary of State William Burns, appearing before a House subcommittee Wednesday, told lawmakers that the reward announcements "should be appearing very shortly" on the department's Web site.

Auschwitz doctor ruled senile

A French appeals court found a former doctor at the Auschwitz death camp guilty of supporting Nazi war crimes and inciting racial hatred. But the court also ruled Wednesday that Hans Munch, 89, should not be sentenced because he is senile.

In 1998, Munch told a French radio station that gypsies killed in the Nazi gas chambers had been "miserable nothings" who had let their children starve to death at Auschwitz.

"It was the only solution, sending them to the gas chambers," he said at the time.

Japanese TV figure slams Jews

The Simon Wiesenthal Center wants a Japanese TV commentator fired after he alleged on air that "Jews were targeted for anthrax attacks because they control the U.S. media."

In the wake of Koji Kawamura's comments, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the center's associate dean, demanded that the TV station apologize to its viewers and the Jewish community, which has not specifically been the target of such attacks.

Touro shul named historic site

Touro Synagogue in Newport, R.I., has been named as the National Trust for Historic Preservation's first religious historic site.

Completed during the 1760s by descendants of Jews who had fled the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, Touro was the first synagogue built in the United States.

The Georgian-style synagogue, which still has an active congregation, will retain ownership of the site.

Soccer players won't go to Israel

Six players from the London soccer team Chelsea have refused to travel to Israel for Thursday's match against Hapoel Tel Aviv, apparently due to safety concerns.

The team has said it was disappointed with the players' decisions but would not take disciplinary action against them.

The body that governs European soccer recently ordered Chelsea to play the match after players expressed security concerns.

Lawmaker backs Saudi, saying U.S. Mideast policy should change

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. Jewish leaders are incensed over comments from a congresswoman who sought to tie last month's terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon to American support for Israel.

Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.) wrote to Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, shortly after his \$10 million donation to help New York City recover from the Sept. 11 terror attacks was returned last week by New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

Giuliani objected to the prince's comment that the terrorist attacks should cause America to "adopt a more balanced stance toward the Palestinian cause."

In a letter to the prince, McKinney said she agreed with other politicians that the U.S.-Israel relationship was one of the motives for the attack, and believes it should cause the U.S. to re-examine its support for Israel.

"Until we confront the realities of events in the Middle East our nation and the nations of the Middle East will be at risk," she wrote.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said the comments did not differ much from statements McKinney has made in the past.

"She could not contain herself," Foxman said. "This is part and parcel of her irresponsible approach to her responsibilities."

The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta sent a letter to McKinney on Tuesday, saying her letter to the Saudi prince "appears to endorse the contention that American policy is directly related" to the Sept. 11 attacks.

"We are profoundly disappointed that you condone linkage of any type between terrorist action and American policy," the federation wrote. "In recent weeks, we have come to learn all too well of the hatred for which [sic] Islamic fundamentalist groups harbor toward the United States and Western culture."

Rabbi Stanley Davids, of Reform Temple Emanu-El in Atlanta, said he was not surprised by McKinney's letter because she frequently makes outspoken comments.

"The congresswoman has frequently taken positions that are more directed at being outrageous than being accurate," Davids said.

McKinney's district includes many of the 100,000 Jews in Atlanta, but her constituency is predominantly African American. In her comments to the prince, the lawmaker, who is black, suggests that his \$10 million gift could be used to aid American blacks.

"It's painful that she uses this moment to sell out American values, to attack America in order to bring tainted money into the African-American community," Davids said.

Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, said McKinney's comments were "wrongheaded" and that Giuliani was not acting against free speech, but rather to avoid "tainted" money.

In the letter, McKinney thanked the prince for his gift, and said she believes his comments had merit.

"I was disappointed that Mayor Giuliani chose to decline your generous offer and instead criticize you for your observations of events in the Middle East," she wrote in the Oct. 12 letter. "Whether he agreed with you or not, I think he should have recognized your right to speak and make observations about a part of the world which you know so well."

McKinney's comments are not the first to draw a link between U.S.-Israeli relations and Osama bin Laden's acts of terror.

McKinney cites comments from Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), chairman of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee, who said U.S. support of Israel has caused animosity in the region.

However, Hyde went on to say that the country's "unwavering support for Israel" would remain in place.

Foxman said he doesn't believe McKinney is anti-Semitic, but said anti-Israel comments carry more weight when they come from more objective sources.

A spokesman for McKinney was unavailable for comment. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Ze'evi killing forces Sharon, again, to weigh revenge against restraint

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As the week began, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon resolved to confront his old friend Rehavam Ze'evi, minister of tourism, who had been urging the premier to get much tougher with the Palestinians.

Sharon had just ordered the army out of Palestinian sections of the West Bank city of Hebron, occupied a week earlier to prevent gunmen from shooting at Jewish residents. In response, Ze'evi and his seven-member National Unity-Israel, Our Home bloc threatened to secede from the government.

Sharon told Ze'evi from the Knesset podium Monday that if he left the coalition, "You'll make Arafat's day."

Ze'evi and his colleague in the Cabinet, Avigdor Lieberman, did, indeed, leave.

Less than 48 hours later — the time needed for his resignation to take effect — Ze'evi was dead, killed by a Palestinian assassin's bullet in a Jerusalem hotel corridor.

As the week ended, Sharon still confronted the same dilemma, only this time with more poignancy.

The murdered man's colleagues — who rescinded the resignation and said they would reconsider after the mourning week — along with others on the right of Sharon's unity government were urging the premier to ratchet up Israel's military measures against the Palestinians.

Some ministers were explicitly demanding that the Israeli army target Palestinian political leaders in response to Ze'evi's killing.

From the other wing of his government, Sharon heard voices questioning the wisdom of the "targeted killings" policy. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for Ze'evi's slaying — in revenge, the group said, for the Aug. 27 killing of the PFLP secretary-general, Mustafa Zibri.

Following a string of terror attacks in Israel carried out by the PFLP, an Israeli helicopter gunship fired two missiles into the window of the Ramallah office where Zibri worked, killing him and leaving the rest of the building intact.

Over the phone, from Washington and from China, where Secretary of State Colin Powell is traveling, world leaders called on Sharon to exercise restraint.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, also facing U.S. pressure, telephoned Foreign Minister Shimon Peres late Wednesday to say he was cracking down on the PFLP. The organization's spokesman in Bethlehem, Ali Jeradat, who was the first to take public credit for the killing of Ze'evi, has been arrested, Arafat said, along with two others.

"Arrest them all," Peres replied somberly, "or else one pistol shot will have set fire to this entire region."

By mid-evening, Israel Television was reporting that Jeradat was free again.

Earlier, Sharon told the Knesset in a special mourning session that Arafat "and Arafat alone" was responsible for the assassination. He had done "nothing serious" to curb terrorism, Sharon said, despite his pretense to the world that he had taken action. By doing nothing, he had in effect given the go-ahead for attacks such as the one that killed Ze'evi, Sharon implied.

Sharon did not explicitly threaten to move against the Palestinian Authority chairman — as Ze'evi had urged repeatedly in recent

months. But there was an ominous undertone in his words.

Ze'evi's killing clearly has heightened tensions and dangers in the region. Yet it could, paradoxically, enhance prospects for an end to the violence and a return to peace negotiations.

If Arafat, under American prodding and fearful of massive Israeli retaliation, finally takes convincing action against terrorist elements — and if Sharon again, as he did at the beginning of the week, chooses moderation — it could add to the incremental momentum toward a stable cease-fire and new talks.

Israel said Wednesday it would cut off further diplomatic contacts with the Palestinians until there was a firm cease-fire.

But the Americans are certain not to be deterred by that initial reaction. And, despite his fury and his determination to strike back, close aides say Sharon will be mindful of Washington's call for restraint when deciding on reprisal actions.

If the military response is relatively moderate, and if the Americans press on with their peacemaking efforts, then presumably Ze'evi's seven-man faction — which consists of his National Unity Party and Lieberman's Israel, Our Home immigrant party — will quit the government after all. That would dangerously weaken Sharon's survival prospects.

The prime minister still would have a comfortable margin of 16 seats in the 120-person Knesset, but looks can deceive.

If Shas, the Sephardic Orthodox party that has 17 seats and a largely hawkish electorate, were to defect, Sharon would lose his majority. And Shas will be under constant pressure to do so, because it is competing for some voters with the National Religious Party, which is not in the coalition.

Similarly, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, a smaller coalition party that also serves the Russian immigrant community, will be vying for voters with Israel, Our Home, which by that time would be in the opposition.

However, if he veers rightward to keep those parties Sharon risks losing Labor, which itself is subject to constant sniping from the dovish Meretz Party and is divided internally over its junior role in Sharon's government. And in the wings, Benjamin Netanyahu is waiting to challenge Sharon for leadership of the national camp.

Meanwhile, as with Yitzhak Rabin's killing six years ago, the assassination has raised questions about the efficacy of the Shin Bet's bodyguard department.

Avi Dichter, director of the Shin Bet, issued a statement Wednesday accepting full responsibility for the failure to protect Ze'evi. In fact, not all Israeli ministers are guarded at all times, and the tourism minister had not had guards with him in the hotel, where he often stayed when in Jerusalem.

Ze'evi, moreover, was a particularly obstinate client for the Shin Bet. He often bristled at protection even when it was available, arguing that he deserved no greater security than any ordinary citizen.

Still, the Shin Bet has set up an internal inquiry board, and its work could be followed by an examination by an external panel if the results are unsatisfactory. Sharon Wednesday night issued a statement voicing his full confidence in Dichter.

On the personal level, Ze'evi's tragic death seemed to bring out the best in Israeli politics, as the Knesset united to mourn him. Despite his far-right views, "Gandhi," as he was universally known since his days in prestate Palestine's Jewish fighting forces, was well-liked across the board.

"He knew how to respect a fellow human being," said Abdulmalik Dehamshe, an Arab Knesset member and bitter ideological foe of Ze'evi. □