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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

State funeral held for Ze'evi

Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi was buried in a state funeral Thursday at the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem. [Page 1]

Four bin Laden followers get life

Four followers of suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden were sentenced to life in prison without parole for the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa.

"This is a time not for eloquence, but for justice," the judge said during Thursday's sentencing hearing in a courtroom less than a mile from the destruction of the World Trade Center.

The four were convicted May 29 in connection with the 1998 bombings, which killed at least 224 people, including 12 Americans, and wounded thousands.

Peres plans Washington visit

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres plans to visit Washington in the coming days, and is slated to address the American Jewish Congress convention Sunday. Peres is expected to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and to give a speech at the National Press Club. The Israeli Embassy in Washington is planning additional meetings with Bush administration officials.

Syrian-Israeli talks urged

The United States urged Damascus to help revive the Syrian-Israeli peace talks that broke off early last year.

A spokesman at the Syrian Foreign Ministry said Thursday that U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell made the request in a message to Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa after Syria was elected to the U.N. Security Council earlier this month. Powell also expressed Washington's desire to cooperate with Syria to promote world security and stability, the spokesman said.

Anthrax hoaxes hit Berlin

The Israeli Embassy in Berlin and the headquarters of the Central Council of Jews in Germany were the victims of anthrax hoaxes. On Wednesday, they received mail containing a suspicious white powder that proved to be harmless.

Slaying of Israeli minister prompts threats and violence

JTA Staff Report

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel buried and mourned slain Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi, the government has delivered an ultimatum to the Palestinian Authority.

Using words similar to those employed by President Bush in the wake of the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the United States, the Israeli Cabinet issued a statement hours after Ze'evi was assassinated Wednesday in a Jerusalem hotel by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a radical group that is part of the PLO.

"There can be no compromise with terror. It must be eradicated, without distinction between its perpetrators and those who harbor them," the statement said.

In a challenge to the Palestinian Authority, the statement said, "The time for words has ended, and the time for deeds has come."

According to media reports, Israeli intelligence services have identified the killers and those who sent them, and has passed the information to the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli Cabinet demanded their extradition, though Palestinian spokesmen refused.

"Failure to meet these demands, which are grounded in signed agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, will leave us with no choice but to view the Palestinian Authority as an entity supporting and sponsoring terror, and to act accordingly," the Cabinet said.

The statement was left vague in an apparent attempt to leave Israel maneuvering room should the Palestinian Authority not turn over the terrorists.

The Palestinian Authority has ignored all of the numerous extradition requests for suspected terrorists that Israel has presented since the Oslo accords were signed in the mid-1990s.

Discussing a possible Israeli response, the Cabinet secretary, Gideon Saar, made reference Thursday to the U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan.

If P.A. President Yasser Arafat does not hand over Ze'evi's killers, Israel will "act against the Palestinian Authority in the way currently accepted by the international community" to act against terror-sponsoring governments, Saar said.

American officials feared that Ze'evi's killing — the first assassination of an Israeli Cabinet minister by Arab terrorists in the history of the Jewish state — would escalate Mideast violence and undercut U.S. efforts to enlist Arab support for its campaign in Afghanistan.

Indeed, violence rose Thursday as Palestinian gunmen fired on Israelis driving on the major highway connecting Jerusalem to the Dead Sea — wounding three, one critically — and as Palestinians fired a mortar shell at the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo.

Six Palestinians also died in fighting across the West Bank and from a mysterious explosion in Bethlehem.

U.S. officials have called on Arafat to arrest Ze'evi's assassins, and asked Israel to restrain its response.

But Bush's post-Sept. 11 declaration that he wanted suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden "dead or alive" has made it harder for the United States to convince Israeli officials that they should not track and kill Palestinians perceived as a security threat.

Following the assassination, Arafat outlawed the military wing of the PFLP, according to Palestinian security officials. The officials also told The Associated Press

MIDEAST FOCUS

PFLP: We did suicide bombing

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack in Israel late Wednesday night in which two soldiers were wounded, according to the Jerusalem Post. The Palestinian who blew himself up along Israel's border fence with the northern Gaza Strip was wearing an Israeli army uniform. It was the first suicide bombing claimed by a secular Palestinian group.

In another development, Israeli security forces arrested a PFLP member in eastern Jerusalem on Thursday. According to Palestinian sources cited by Israel Radio, Salah Alawi was arrested in the village of Azariya, located near Abu Dis.

Teva may produce generic Cipro

Israel-based Teva Pharmaceuticals is one of five drug makers ready to produce generic versions of Cipro to help boost U.S. reserves of the antibiotic used to treat anthrax, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Melee erupts at shopping center

An argument erupted Thursday between a Jew and an Arab at a shopping center in the Romema section of Jerusalem, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The Arab man reportedly slipped on a set of brass knuckles and punched the Jewish man in the head. Dozens of shoppers then reportedly attacked the Arab man, seriously wounding him. Both men were evacuated by ambulance to an area hospital.

Israel launches anti-Semitism site

The Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel inaugurated a Web site to monitor anti-Semitic incidents around the world.

An interactive feature on the site allows users to report incidents they experienced or witnessed. The site, available in English and Hebrew, is located at www.antisemitism.org.il.



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that they had detained eight members of the PFLP, but it remained unclear whether the Palestinian Authority would agree to hand them over to Israel.

"Israel has to understand that we don't take orders," said the secretary-general of the Palestinian Cabinet, Ahmed Abdel Rahman.

Several of those arrested just after the murder were freed several hours later, and granted interviews to Arab media.

Echoing Israeli officials' reference to the U.S.-led battle against terrorism, the Palestinian minister of information, Yasser Abed Rabbo, likened Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to bin Laden.

Israel's initial retaliation for the assassination took the form of incursions early Thursday into the West Bank cities of Jenin and Ramallah, sparking battles in which three Palestinians died.

In Jenin, shots fired from advancing tanks hit an elementary school classroom, killing a 12-year-old Palestinian girl and seriously wounding a classmate, according to Palestinian doctors.

Israeli officials denied that tanks had fired on the school.

In Ramallah, two Palestinian security officials were killed during gun battles.

In other violence Thursday, three Palestinians were killed when a car exploded in the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

One of the individuals who died in the blast was Atef Abayat, a member of Arafat's Fatah faction who was sought for a shooting attack that killed an Israeli woman in September.

Israel denied that it had assassinated Abayat, saying he likely died in a "work accident" — a sardonic term used when a terrorist's bomb explodes before he can reach his target.

The PFLP, which rejects peace with Israel, said Wednesday's attack avenged the death of its leader, Mustafa Zibri, in a pinpoint Israeli rocket attack in late August. Israel had accused Zibri of masterminding a string of bombings and other terror attacks inside Israel.

On Wednesday, the PFLP vowed to attack more senior Israeli officials, starting with Sharon.

Known for his strongly anti-Arab views, Ze'evi served for years as a top general in the Israel Defense Force, then ran the Land of Israel Museum in Tel Aviv. He was elected to the Knesset in 1988 as head of Moledet — the Hebrew word for "homeland" — a party that advocated the voluntary transfer of Palestinians to neighboring Arab countries.

Yet even his political opponents lauded his generosity, scholarship — he edited some 65 books on various aspects of the Land of Israel — and his loyalty.

He constantly wore a dog tag with the names of Israeli soldiers who were missing in action.

A sixth-generation Jerusalemite, Ze'evi, 75, was buried in a state funeral Thursday at the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem.

Earlier, hundreds of Israelis filed past his flag-draped coffin, which had been placed on a black carpet in front of the Knesset.

His son, Yiftah, spoke with evident anger at the funeral.

"You who killed my father — you temporary residents of Canaan — I tell you we are here to stay because it belongs to us," he said.

He also urged Sharon to avenge his father's death.

A day earlier, when the Knesset held a special memorial ceremony for Ze'evi, Sharon also spoke of vengeance, twice using the expression, "May God avenge his blood."

Sharon's language had a more poetic tinge when he offered a eulogy at Thursday's funeral.

"Today, we part from a determined and hard man, whose love of the land was greater than his love of man, who zealously fought for its freedom with reckless courage, and had great compassion for its wounds; its cuts cut his soul, the cutting of its borders broke him," Sharon said.

"Today, I part from a friend with whom I traveled a long road, many years and laden with emotions. We knew battles and distance, we knew agreements and differences, we knew hostility and love, we knew pain and compassion, we knew what all people who are together for so long knew: We knew friendship." □

JEWISH WORLD

Appeal sought in 1994 bombing

Two Palestinians convicted of involvement in two 1994 car bombings in London are requesting permission to appeal.

Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh are serving 20 years for organizing a bombing that injured 14 people at the Israeli Embassy and another that injured five people a day later at the offices of the Joint Israel Appeal. The two claim that relevant information was kept from their lawyers.

Site to be cleared for memorial

Construction of Germany's national Holocaust memorial in Berlin is slated to begin later this month with the clearing away of World War II-era ruins and munitions from a site near the Brandenburg Gate.

Groundbreaking for the memorial's subterranean archive and museum is to take place in the spring, according to Sybille Quack, the director of the private foundation building the memorial.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, consisting of 2,500 cement slabs, is expected to be completed in 2004 and cost about \$25 million.

College sued for anti-Semitism

Three professors who allege they have been denied promotions and equal pay because of anti-Semitism sued a Minnesota college.

The move comes several months after a university-commissioned report by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas determined that there is a "strong perception" of anti-Semitism at St. Cloud State University.

One professor alleged in the lawsuit that he was denied an interview for a tenure-track position after giving a lecture on the Holocaust.

Group helps church rebuild

The American Jewish Committee gave \$10,000 to help rebuild a Greek Orthodox church buried under the rubble of New York's World Trade Center.

The AJCommittee said it was responding to the desire of the congregation of the 85-year-old St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church to rebuild its house of worship following the Sept. 11 attack.

Survivor joins sports hall of fame

A Hungarian Holocaust survivor who later won 10 Olympic medals in gymnastics was inducted Monday in New York into the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame.

Agnes Keleti won her medals at the 1952 and 1956 Olympics, and later moved to Israel. Keleti survived the war by purchasing the papers of a Christian girl and escaping to a small Hungarian village, where she worked as a maid.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

U.S. gov't called hypocritical for blasting Israel's war on terror

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish lawmakers are accusing the Bush administration of hypocrisy for condemning Israel's policy of targeted killings — and the State Department is coming under growing pressure to review its position.

While Israeli advocates hoped the Sept. 11 terror attacks in New York and Washington would increase empathy for the Jewish state's plight and loosen the reins in Israel's fight against terror, the State Department has continued to criticize Israel's policy of killing Palestinian terrorist leaders.

After the assassination of Israel's tourism minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, on Wednesday, pressure is likely to mount on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to take more proactive steps against Palestinian terrorism.

Sharon has demanded that the Palestinian Authority turn over Ze'evi's killers or be deemed a supporter of terrorism — with all that implies in the changed international environment since Sept. 11. The question remains whether the United States will continue chastising Israel for its counterterrorism actions even as the Bush administration works from a similar playbook.

Several members of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee said Wednesday they could not understand the difference between U.S. tactics in its war on suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida network — tactics that have broad popular and political support — and Israeli tactics that the State Department criticizes.

"It seems to me that if an American pilot with a very smart weapon would succeed, through targeted assassination, to kill Osama bin Laden, he would get the Congressional Medal of Honor and a tickertape parade down Fifth Avenue," said Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the ranking minority member of the International Relations Committee.

"And I'm just wondering what degree of hypocrisy prompts a State Department spokesman to criticize an Israeli sharpshooter for successfully putting an end to the life of a man who planned, organized and directed the assassination of 22 Israeli teenagers."

The United States has decried the Israeli policy of targeting leaders of militant Palestinian movements for assassination as perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Israel says the killings are necessary to counter the constant threat of terror and head off attacks in the planning stages. Israeli officials also note that they focus exclusively on militants, and do not target Palestinian political leaders.

After the United States became the target of terrorism on Sept. 11, the State Department seemed to change its position on retaliatory tactics.

"I think when you are attacked by a terrorist and you know who the terrorist is and you can fingerprint back to the cause of the terror, you should respond," Powell said at a news conference on Sept. 12, one day after attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon killed an estimated 5,000 people. "If you are able to stop terrorist attacks, you should stop terrorist attacks."

This week, however, as Israel resumed its targeted killings, the State Department resumed its criticism. The Bush administration in recent weeks has made several statements in support of the Palestinian Authority, which it deems a crucial player in American attempts to build Arab and Muslim support for its war in Afghanistan.

Assistant Secretary of State William Burns did not elaborate on the differences between the U.S. and Israeli situations, but said he felt Israel and the Palestinian Authority should look for a "political solution" instead of meeting violence with violence. "It's not a question of handcuffing anyone," Burns told the committee Wednesday.

Burns' comments enraged Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), who asked why the United States wasn't seeking a political solution to the threat from bin Laden.

Burns said he understands lawmakers' concerns about inconsistencies, and denied accusations that the State Department's rhetoric is calculated to build support for the U.S. war against bin Laden and Al Qaida. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

As world honors U.N. with Nobel, Israel and Jewish leaders are leery*By Michael J. Jordan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Consider this week in U.N. history: The organization and its leader win the Nobel Peace Prize for being at “the forefront of efforts to achieve peace and security in the world” — while Syria, a state long accused of sponsoring terrorism, is elected overwhelmingly to the Security Council.

If nothing else, the bizarre confluence of events underscores the fact that supporters of Israel view the world body much differently than does the rest of the globe.

Given the U.N.'s history of Israel-bashing, Israeli officials will continue to resist the organization's push for a greater role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — peace prize or no peace prize.

The Norwegian-based Nobel Committee, commemorating its centenary and its aim to “strengthen organized cooperation between states,” described the United Nations as a global advocate for refugees, the poor, children and AIDS education. The “only negotiable route to global peace and cooperation goes by way of the United Nations,” the Nobel committee proclaimed.

Israelis, however, beg to differ: They note the guaranteed advantage Palestinians enjoy at the United Nations, where the Arab-Muslim bloc dominates the 189-member body.

“Even when times were better between Israel and the U.N., we maintained that the U.N. has no place in resolving this conflict,” said an Israeli official who asked not to be identified. “It would be the Palestinians' ultimate dream to have us negotiating with the U.N.”

Indeed, as Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat lauded the Nobel choice, he simultaneously endorsed an enhanced U.N. role. Erekat was quoted as hoping the United Nations would “gather the necessary strength” to end the Israeli presence in territory the Palestinians claim and establish a Palestinian state with eastern Jerusalem as its capital.

But when criticizing the United Nations, Israeli officials and U.S. Jewish leaders distinguish between the institution and its top official. The Nobel committee awarded the prize “in two equal parts” to the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, himself a Nobel laureate, praised Annan as a humanitarian who “really worries about the poor of the world” and is “changing the face of the U.N.”

Jewish leaders note that Annan has rejuvenated the world body in his five years at the helm. And while they recognize that he must tread carefully with his largest constituency — the Arab-Muslim bloc — they say he has been more sympathetic to Israel than have previous secretaries-general.

“I've seen up close the U.N.'s remarkable strengths and its glaring weaknesses,” said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, who recently spent a year monitoring U.N. activities in Geneva.

“That's why, for me, Kofi Annan truly deserves the award, but I don't have the same feeling for the institution he represents,” Harris said. “Despite its noble aims, it's too imperfect, too politicized and too blatantly unfair in its treatment of some member-states, including Israel.”

Israeli officials and American Jewish leaders have a litany of grievances with the United Nations from the past six months alone.

Topping the list is anger over events surrounding the kidnapping last year of three Israeli soldiers across the Israeli-Lebanese border by Hezbollah gunmen.

Israel long had complained that after pressuring Israel for years to comply with U.N. resolutions and withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon, the world body went strangely silent when Lebanon ignored the same resolutions and left its newly liberated territory under the control of Hezbollah.

On Oct. 7, 2000, Hezbollah gunmen attacked and kidnapped the Israeli soldiers, who were on a routine patrol of the border near territory monitored by U.N. peacekeepers.

The U.N. troops videotaped the aftermath of the incident, but for months denied to Israel that such a tape existed.

In July, U.N. officials finally admitted that the tape existed and apologized for suppressing it. Still, they refused to give Israel a copy of the tape, allowing Israeli officials only a quick viewing — of an edited version — to avoid angering Hezbollah or Lebanon.

Haim Avraham, whose son, St. Sgt. Benny Avraham, is one of the soldiers still missing, denounced the recent Nobel choice as a “downright shameful disgrace.”

This isn't the first Nobel selection Jews have protested. There's an ongoing campaign to strip Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat of his 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, which he shared with Peres and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Concerning the United Nations, Jewish leaders point to several other examples of worrying politicization that hinders its mission:

- In May, the United States was ousted from the U.N. Commission for Human Rights, which includes representatives from such human rights aggressors as Sudan, Syria, Cuba and China.

- In early September, Israel and the United States stormed out of the U.N. World Conference Against Racism because of the level of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic vitriol.

- On Oct. 8, Syria — which the United States and Israel accuse of harboring and sponsoring terrorists — was elected overwhelmingly to the U.N.'s 15-member Security Council, despite the body's stated goal to “maintain international peace and security.”

Jews were not the only ones criticizing the Nobel selection.

Voices of protest also came from Rwanda and Bosnia, home to two of the worst genocides since the Holocaust. Annan was the head of U.N. peacekeeping missions when those genocides took place, in 1994 and from 1992-95, respectively.

Annan and the United Nations were condemned for not doing enough to prevent the massive loss of life, and for failing — in the interest of “neutrality” — to spotlight which side was the aggressor and which the victim. While many continue to call for reform of the United Nations, no one expects it to change its stripes soon.

In a news conference last week, President Bush said the United Nations should be the pivotal organization in the anti-terrorism campaign, handling both the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and, once the military action ends, the task of nation-building. That has Jewish leaders leery.

If the Arab world continues its efforts to use the United Nations to demonize and isolate Israel, the added credibility of the Nobel prize could facilitate the effort.

The prize “is a reminder to those who dismiss or underestimate the significance of the U.N.,” said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. “It's a reminder of why we should continue to focus on it and some of the dangerous trends there we have witnessed of late.” □