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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel withdraws from village

Israeli troops withdrew Thursday from a Palestinian village in the West Bank they had invaded a day earlier.

During the sweep through the village of Beit Rima, Israeli officials said, soldiers arrested Palestinians suspected of involvement in the Oct. 17 assassination of Israel's former tourism minister, Rehavam Ze'evi. [Page 1]

Powder found at Jewish office

A letter containing white powder was found at the New York offices of the Conservative Jewish movement.

The powder was sent for anthrax testing, and employees were told to go to their doctors.

The lower Manhattan building was not evacuated, and was slated to open Friday.

"We're taking this in stride, and not treating this as a panic thing," said a spokeswoman for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

FBI releases hate crime statistics

Hate crimes in the United States increased by 3.5 percent in 2000, according to the FBI's annual hate crimes statistics report.

Some 13.7 percent of all 8,152 hate crimes reported were directed at either Jews or Jewish institutions.

These made up 80 percent of all religion-based crimes last year in the United States, according to the report, issued Wednesday.

The Anti-Defamation League said "this high level of violence and vandalism directed against Jews is another reminder that violent anti-Semitism remains a significant problem in America."

Magazine apologizes for cover

New York Magazine is apologizing to readers angered by a cover that depicts a child's drawing of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Readers were upset that the plane in the drawing has Stars of David on its wings.

"It was drawn an hour after this six-year-old boy, whose mother is Jewish, was carried, in his teacher's arms, out of his school," the editor in chief, Caroline Miller, wrote on the magazine's Web site. "We regret that it could be interpreted in any way that causes divisiveness."

Powell tells Congress Israel is hurting chances for peace

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Members of Congress are challenging Secretary of State Colin Powell on the Bush administration's policy toward Israel and the role Israel and its adversaries will play in the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism.

While seeking more clarification, lawmakers are encouraged by administration comments this week that the coalition ultimately intends to act as well against groups that target Israel.

On Thursday, Powell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he empathized with the efforts of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to fight terror, but still considers Israel's invasion of the West Bank counterproductive.

Israel Defense Force troops have moved into six Palestinian cities and one village in the week since Palestinian terrorists assassinated Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi in a Jerusalem hotel on Oct. 17. Wednesday's raid into the Palestinian village of Beit Rima, which killed at least five Palestinians, sparked international outrage.

Israel pulled out of Beit Rima on Thursday.

Israel contends that the raids were an important counterterrorism tool, and that 42 suspected terrorists were arrested.

Israel says it made the move after Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat broke countless pledges to crack down on violence and terror against Israel.

Powell said Arafat had told American diplomats that "he is working on" arresting Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine militants who assassinated Ze'evi. Powell noted, however, that he was not sure the arrests would be "true arrests," and that President Bush had expressed to Arafat that the issue "has got to have his full attention."

Still, Powell urged Sharon to consider the long-term consequences of Israel's actions.

"While you're doing what you have to do in self-defense of your nation and of your ministers and of your people, we also have to keep in mind that ultimate security will come only when we can get back to a process of peace," Powell said. "Anything that, while defending yourself, is done in such a way that it makes it that much more difficult to get back to the path, doesn't serve your interest at the end of the day."

After calling earlier in the week for Israel to withdraw its troops "immediately," the Bush administration tempered its criticism Thursday.

"The president believes that Israel's partial pullout is a positive step," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said Thursday, referring to the withdrawal from Beit Rima. "The president continues to urge Israel to lower tensions, withdraw its forces from all Palestinian-controlled areas and to exercise restraint."

After speaking Thursday with State Department officials, visiting Israeli minister Dan Meridor said he did not sense many differences between U.S. and Israeli perceptions of the situation. U.S. officials fear that Israeli actions might weaken tenuous Arab and Muslim support for America's war in Afghanistan against Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida terrorist network.

"We understand America is at war and we take into account such facts," Meridor said. Yet, he added, "America understands the attack that Israel is under for over a year" — since the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000 — "and the killing of a minister."

On Wednesday, testifying before the House International Relations Committee, Powell repeated the State Department's criticism of Israel's policy of killing Palestinian

MIDEAST FOCUS

Security Council ponders move

The U.N. Security Council was scheduled to meet Thursday evening to consider some form of criticism of Israel for invading Palestinian territory during the last week.

On Tuesday, the Council opted to wait 48 hours to see if Israel would withdraw. On Thursday, they were expected to consider a range of options: do nothing; wait another 48 hours; have the council's president issue a statement critical of the Israeli move; or pass a formal resolution censuring Israel. The United States was said to support the first option.

Jerusalem comes under fire

Palestinian gunmen opened fire at an apartment in Jerusalem's Abu Tor neighborhood Wednesday night, according to the Jerusalem Post. This was the first time Palestinians opened fire at Jewish residents of the central Jerusalem neighborhood, police said.

'Right of return' questioned

The top Palestinian official in Jerusalem told board members of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs that he condemns violence and holds both Israelis and Palestinians responsible. In a meeting with the Jewish umbrella group in Jerusalem on Thursday, Sari Nusseibeh also argued against the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Separation proposal unveiled

Two members of Israel's Labor Party unveiled a proposal for a unilateral separation between Israel and Palestinian-controlled areas, according to the Jerusalem Post. Under the plan put forward Thursday by Haim Ramon and Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel would announce its intention to withdraw from the vast majority of Palestinian territory. It would then hand over administration of the territory to "international management" led by the United States.

terror leaders, saying it is detrimental to the goal of finding a political solution in order to end Israeli-Palestinian violence.

"We have felt that targeted assassinations — however much the State of Israel believes they are appropriate and uses their forces to conduct such activities — we believe that those kinds of activities are hurtful to the overall process," Powell said. "We are trying to reach a point where such terrorism is stopped, such violence is stopped and the need for such kind of response is no longer present."

With tension rising between the American and Israeli governments since Israel invaded the West Bank last week, lawmakers sought to clarify U.S. policy toward Israel.

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) asked rhetorically how America would react if Israel urged the United States to seek a political solution with bin Laden, believed to be behind the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"I think the answer to that would truly be laughable," Ackerman said. "And yet that's what we're suggesting to the Israelis after they've been going through this for some 50 years."

Ackerman said it is "telling" that the State Department is having trouble explaining to Israel why it should not carry out targeted assassinations while the United States pursues a similar policy against bin Laden and his followers.

"I could suggest that the reason that the State Department is struggling with this is because the policy is very inconsistent. We're telling the Israelis to do as we say, and not do as we do," he said.

Taking the opposing view, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) said if "you have indiscriminate shelling of Palestinian villages where women and children are killed in retaliation for some sort of an attack, that has to be labeled terrorism," just like aggressive actions against Israelis.

"We can't have a double standard and expect that we're going to be taken seriously in most of the world," Rohrabacher said.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) said he was encouraged by a letter from Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage pledging that organizations like the PFLP and others of Israel's antagonists would be targeted by the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism.

"Rest assured that our vision of the coalition's purpose is to end all terrorism, regardless of the target or claimed motivation," Armitage wrote in Tuesday's letter to Lantos. "We have been attacking these groups for years, are going after these groups now, and will continue to do so until they no longer represent a threat to the United States, our citizens, our interests, and our friends and allies."

Armitage also said that "rhetoric will not suffice" and that states that sponsor terrorism, including Iran, Syria and the Palestinian Authority will have to take concrete action to win U.S. favor.

"We will not allow them to cherry-pick some terrorist organizations while ignoring, or worse, aiding others," Armitage wrote. "In short, state sponsors must definitively act to satisfy our counterterrorism concerns before we will consider removing our unilateral sanctions."

American Jewish leaders said they were encouraged by the congressional support for Israel's plight.

"These members are raising some serious questions about U.S. policy toward Israel. And it is clear that concern for Israel and its war on terrorism runs far and deep among the members of this committee and the rest of the Congress," said Howard Kohr, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. □

(JTA Washington Correspondent Sharon Samber contributed to this report.)

Israeli: Attacking police stations useless

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel's policy of targeting Palestinian police stations and security bases is not an effective response to Palestinian violence, according to an Israeli minister.

Speaking Thursday at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Dan Meridor also said the United States should start to build a new world order that would focus on each country's efforts to control domestic terrorism. Meridor met with Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice during his visit to Washington. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Student paper runs Mossad lie

Jewish leaders in northern California are criticizing the newspaper at San Jose State University for printing a long letter Oct. 22 claiming that the Mossad was behind the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

According to the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California, the student newspaper's editor says it does not regret printing the letter, despite its factual errors.

The letter, by a junior marketing and political science major, repeated a widely circulated canard that Israel's spy agency framed Muslims for the attacks as a way of gaining world sympathy for the Jewish state.

Prosecution rests in rabbi case

The prosecution rested in the case of a New Jersey rabbi accused of hiring hit men to kill his wife in 1994.

In prosecution testimony late this week, the man who served as assistant rabbi to Fred Neulander testified that Neulander is a "wonderful" speaker. But Gray Mazo also testified that Neulander displayed a temper with parents who disagreed with him about their children's religious education.

Anti-Israel column draws fire

British Jews responded angrily to a column in London's Evening Standard questioning Israel's right to exist.

Monday's column by A.N. Wilson said, "Israel is by definition an aggressor, since it is occupying land that was already someone else's homeland," and added, "One now sees that Israel never was a state, and it can only be defended by constant war."

The Board of Deputies, the umbrella organization that represents most British Jews, wrote a letter to the editor calling the Wilson piece "shocking."

Pro-Israel rally in S. Africa

Almost 300 students participated in a pro-Israel march in Johannesburg. Thursday's march at the University of the Witwatersrand was attended by both Jewish and non-Jewish students.

Anti-Semites meet in former shul

Hungarian Jewish leaders complained to officials in the city of Zalaegerszeg that a former synagogue was used to host a meeting of a far-right political party that Jews accuse of anti-Semitism.

The city-owned synagogue was converted long ago into a concert and exhibition hall, but Jews say it has been "desecrated" in recent years by also hosting far-right gatherings, a New Year's Eve party and a male striptease contest. A Jewish leader told Hungary's leading daily newspaper that such events "not only verge on the borders of good taste, but are cynical and humiliating to our community."

Diplomat cites link between Al Qaida and bombing of Argentine Jewish site

By Florencia Arbiser

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — A possible link has emerged between suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida network and a terror bombing against a Jewish site here.

Argentine diplomat Juan Jose Etchegoyen, a former business attache in Saudi Arabia who is now posted to Geneva, told a local radio station last Friday that Argentina's embassy in Saudi Arabia received repeated telephone warnings from Al Qaida about an imminent attack against a U.S. target.

According to Etchegoyen, the warnings were issued on Sept. 23, 2000 — shortly before 17 American sailors were killed when suicide bombers blew a hole in the side of the U.S.S. Cole while it was refueling in Aden, Yemen. The group also claimed responsibility for an unspecified "explosion" in Argentina, Etchegoyen said.

It was unclear whether the caller was referring to the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 29 people, or perhaps the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in the Argentine capital that killed 85 people.

In Washington, officials said the United States does not believe Al Qaida was responsible for either attack. Just the same, Argentine officials are now questioning why Juan Jose Galeano, the investigative judge in the AMIA case, never received the information Etchegoyen provided.

Galeano, who is serving as prosecutor in an ongoing trial of 20 people accused of playing a role in the 1994 AMIA bombing, traveled to Washington over the weekend to meet with terrorism experts and FBI members.

He is expected to return to Buenos Aires in the coming days after traveling to Paris to collect information related to the trial.

Jewish groups in Argentina and around the world frequently have criticized Galeano's investigation for failing to follow important leads in the AMIA case.

More than seven years after the attack, Argentine officials have not yet found those responsible for the AMIA bombing. The trial of the 20 is now in its fourth week. □

As Gunter Grass bangs his drum against Israel, Jewish leader reacts

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — Gunter Grass, Germany's Nobel Prize-winning author, has come under sharp criticism from the head of Germany's Jewish community for recent comments about Israel.

Grass is "on a level with radical enemies of Israel," Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said in a newly released interview with Focus magazine.

On Oct. 10, Grass told the news magazine Der Spiegel that "Israel must not only get out of the occupied areas. Its occupation of Palestinian land, and its settlements, are all criminal acts. This must not only stop, but it has to be retroactive. Otherwise, there will be no peace."

Spiegel said that if one "looked closely at Grass' words, one could read the message: Get rid of Israel."

It is unacceptable to deny that "Israel is the victim and not the perpetrator in this bloody war of terrorism," Spiegel said, concluding that Grass had allied himself with "other non-Jewish intellectuals in Germany who, directly or indirectly, for years have been questioning Israel's right to exist."

Grass reportedly did not mention Palestinian acts of violence in his interview. He characterized his criticism of Israeli and American politics as helpful remarks from a friend.

Speaking in support of Grass, German Parliament member Jurgen Koppelin of the liberal Free German Party told the German news agency DPA that "Paul Spiegel just has to accept that criticism of Israel's politics is not the same as criticism of the existence of Israel." □

After attacks, Rep. Lantos emerges as point man on Judaism and Israel

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In the midst of the Monica Lewinsky controversy, as President Clinton spoke in a closed room to a dozen Democratic lawmakers, congressional representatives skirted the headline-consuming issue and questioned the president on domestic policy.

Then Rep. Tom Lantos took the microphone and told the president he wanted to address a matter that his colleagues had ignored. Anticipating the worst, Clinton turned white, but the California Democrat turned the conversation to foreign affairs.

For the 21 years that Lantos has represented the San Francisco Bay Area in the House of Representatives, foreign relations has been his top priority. But for most of Lantos' tenure — without a cold war or significant military objective — his comments have fallen on deaf ears.

Since Sept. 11, Lantos has found a more receptive audience.

"Sept. 11 is for many of my colleagues, particularly my younger colleagues, the first historic milestone in their political career," Lantos, 73, told JTA. "I have many dates in my mind. I am probably more engaged in this situation than most people, but there is little doubt in my mind that I am more calm than most people in viewing this situation, because I have perspective," he said.

In his first term as the ranking Democrat on the House's International Relations Committee, Lantos is one of a few foreign policy experts in Congress.

As a Holocaust survivor and a leading human rights activist, Lantos has gained the admiration and trust of many, both in the Capitol and among world Jewry.

It was virtually impossible, in fact, to find someone willing to criticize Lantos.

"He's the go-to guy for a lot of these issues," said Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), who leads the Democrats in the House's Middle East subcommittee. "He has a certainly unique base of first hand experience, envied by none and appreciated and respected by all."

A week before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Lantos led the U.S. delegation in walking out of the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. His staunch opposition to comments denigrating Zionism as racism catapulted Lantos to the top of Jewish lists of friendly lawmakers.

"I saw the ugly face of naked anti-Semitism in such clear, stark, ugly tones, which I have not seen since the 1930s," Lantos told the American Jewish Congress on Sunday. "It was the United Nations at its ugliest."

Lantos' tactics, which included frequent media interviews as well as backroom negotiations and strategy sessions, also won him the admiration of the White House, which consulted with him before deciding to pull the American delegation.

As the country bands together after the terror attacks, Lantos has taken upon himself the task of reminding the Bush administration of Israeli concerns regarding the coalition against terrorism. American Jewish leaders have remained relatively silent in recent weeks, fearful of angering a popular and focused Bush administration, and have looked to Lantos to take the lead.

"We don't have the luxuries a congressman has," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "If a congressman has the courage and cares, it's a lot

easier for a congressman to speak out, because it's his job."

Lantos says he understands the delicacy of the Jewish community's position.

Now is a time for smart rhetoric; Lantos declares that the "age of frivolity in the United States is over."

"The American Jewish community will clearly need to understand that it will take considerable maturity on the part of both them and Israel to deal on a day-by-day basis with the unfolding, new global war against international terrorism," he said.

Lantos pauses often when he speaks, searching for the perfect words. He rarely mentions President Bush's name without acknowledging his strong leadership in the last month and giving Bush his full support.

Lantos has taken to heart Bush's words at a joint session of Congress last month: He expects the struggle against terrorism to go beyond Afghanistan and eventually target aggressors against Israel.

Still, he does not shy away from expressing his true feelings.

He has called it "hypocritical" that the United States condemns Israel's policy of "targeted assassinations" while planning similar actions against Osama bin Laden and others linked to the Sept. 11 attacks.

Lantos has petitioned the White House to add Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad to the coalition's list of targets, and he has expressed concern over Syria's role in the U.S.-led coalition.

But it is Lantos' bluntness and unorthodox matter of making his point that have raised eyebrows.

When three distinguished former envoys to Israel addressed the committee last month, Lantos bypassed an opening statement. Concerned that people were forgetting the victims of Palestinian violence, Lantos instead asked the audience and the ambassadors to rise for a moment of silence to a young mother killed in Israel earlier that week.

Last week, when William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, did not specifically tell the panel the difference between U.S. policy toward the Taliban and the Israeli policy of "targeted killings," Lantos chastised the diplomat.

"When we ask questions, we know what we ask," he continued. "We know you know the answers to what we ask, and we ask you to give us the respect of answering the questions and not dancing around the questions."

Lantos acknowledges that his history — which he calls his greatest asset as a lawmaker — permeates his analysis of legislation and the way he questions every witness who appears before his committee.

"I am relying on my own lifetime of experiences, with respect to standing for principles, opposing appeasement and focusing on underlying, fundamental values," he said.

As a teen-ager, he served as a leader in underground anti-Hitler and anti-Communist movements in Budapest. Along with his future wife and thousands of others, he eventually was rescued from wartime Hungary by Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who he says is one of his heroes.

A half century later, as his colleagues and the rest of the country see the horror of domestic terrorism, Lantos likens himself to someone who has lived through many love affairs and needs to counsel someone going through his first breakup.

"Every time the person who has had his first love affair go sour says 'You can't imagine the anguish I'm going through,' it's sort of useful to say, 'Hundreds of millions of people have gone through that experience,'" Lantos said. □