



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Kidnapped soldiers likely dead

There is a "high probability" that three soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah in October 2000 are dead, an Israeli army official said. Hezbollah denied the Israeli claim, calling it a ploy to gain information.

UJC suspends mail deliveries

The United Jewish Communities suspended acceptance of all U.S. mail deliveries late last week. The move by the umbrella organization for North American Jewish federations, located in New York, came after anthrax was discovered at the main post office that routes mail to UJC. Service may be reinstated this week, according to an internal UJC memo.

Sharon may delay U.S. visit

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon may delay a planned visit to the United States.

Sharon spokesman Ra'anana Gissin said Monday the Bush administration had been informed of the possible delay, attributed to the "security situation" in Israel.

Sharon had planned to meet President Bush on Nov. 11 during a trip for the annual General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities. Some analysts said Sharon wants to avoid pressure from Bush to soften his policies toward the Palestinians.

UJC 33rd largest charity

The umbrella organization for North American Jewish federations is the 33rd largest charitable organization in the United States, and 25 other American Jewish organizations also are among the country's 400 largest philanthropies, according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

United Jewish Communities officials said their ranking had fallen from No. 7 last year not because of revenue drops — real income funneled through the North American organization has remained fairly stable at \$245 million — but was overreported last year because of different accounting procedures and because the newspaper erroneously double-counted certain sources of income.

Court won't hear school case

The Supreme Court declined to hear a challenge to a law allowing a moment of silence in public schools. [Page 4]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Some Jews in Central Asia

worry as war rages and Islam grows

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The overwhelming support that Jews in Central Asia have for their countries' participation in the U.S.-led airstrikes against Afghanistan is not creating any troubles with their Muslim countrymen, say Jewish leaders in the region.

But given the tenuous state of relations between Jews and Muslims in the region, this assessment could soon change.

"There have been no acts of anti-Semitism recently. The situation is stable," Roman Bensman of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, told JTA, praising Uzbek President Islam Karimov.

Marek Fazilov, a leader of the Jewish community in Tashkent, added: "All local Jews side with President Karimov in his support of the U.S. action in Afghanistan and in his crackdown on the Islamic extremists inside the country."

Karimov does indeed appear committed to maintaining friendly relations with his country's Jews, and to his crackdown on Islamic fundamentalism.

But the reality for the estimated 50,000 to 60,000 Jews in the region — split between Bukharan Jews, who have long been in the region, and Ashkenazic Jews, who settled here in the past 75 years — is, and long has been, far more complex.

"There has never been any real anti-Semitism here, probably because we have very close links with the locals and they perceive us" as their own people, Boris Borukhov, a leader of the 2,000-person Jewish community in Tajikistan, told JTA.

Borukhov is mainly speaking about the attitude of the Tajik population toward Bukharan Jews. Bukharan Jews, who are descendants of the ancient Persian Jewish community and speak Farsi, are believed to have settled in what is now called Tajikistan as early as the fifth century BCE.

During the first few centuries of the common era, they moved north and eventually formed large communities in what is now Uzbekistan, southern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

During the ensuing centuries, Bukharan Jews enjoyed a generally peaceful co-existence alongside their Muslim neighbors.

Manifestations of anti-Semitism, including forced conversions to Islam and even cases of blood libel, were not unknown in Central Asia.

But they were far less frequent and less numerous than in the Slavic parts of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

Bukharan Jews long made up the majority of Jews in the region, but after the mass emigration to Israel and the United States in the 1990s, they are now only an estimated one-third of Central Asia's 60,000 Jews.

Many of the remaining two-thirds are the Ashkenazic Jews who settled here during World War II after fleeing Poland and Western parts of the Soviet Union.

Many of these Jews were skilled professionals — in such fields as medicine, engineering, science and music — who formed after the war the backbone of the local intelligentsia and greatly enhanced the level of culture and technology in the region.

But as far as many ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kazakhs are concerned, the Ashkenazic Jews were Russian colonizers.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, nationalists in Central Asia started to press for the expulsion of all Russian speakers, no matter what their ethnic origin.

As a result, 80 percent of these Ashkenazi Jews left during the last decade for Israel, Russia, United States and Germany. Those who stayed occasionally meet with

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel remembers Rabin slaying

Memorial services were held in Israel to mark the anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The state memorial ceremony was held Monday at Rabin's grave site at Mount Herzl Cemetery in Jerusalem. "The bright horizon that Yitzhak was trying to reach remains vague and distant," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said of Rabin's peacemaking efforts.

Israeli pullback called conditional

Israel said it reserves the right to return to Palestinian territories if violence continues.

"Our withdrawal is a conditional withdrawal," Zalman Shoval, representing the Israeli government, told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Monday, after Israel pulled out of Bethlehem.

Shoval met with top U.S. officials in Washington last week. By publicly censuring Israel for its incursions into Palestinian areas and by expressing support for Palestinian statehood, he said, the U.S. administration had unintentionally encouraged violence.

4 nabbed for arms smuggling

Israel arrested four members of a Druse family on arms-smuggling charges.

The suspects, a group of brothers from a community in the Galilee, were charged with smuggling explosives and other weapons from Lebanon into Israel. Security officials said their investigation of the case revealed connections between the suspects and Lebanese drug lords who are connected to Hezbollah and operate on its behalf.

Tel Aviv bombing thwarted

Israeli security forces thwarted an attempted car bombing in the center of Tel Aviv, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said.



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animosity. Maria Semenova, a university instructor, says she was recently harassed and beaten by ethnic Uzbeks in a Tashkent bus on her way to classes.

When she appealed to the police, the officers held her until late at night at the police station, planted drugs in her bag and tried to squeeze a \$300 bribe out of her before freeing her, she said.

According to her, the police said, "What are you Jews still doing here? We're the masters of the place. You have nothing to do here."

As Mikhail Degtiar puts it, "There is no state anti-Semitism. But on the everyday level there is a permanent pressure. All Russian speakers live in a state of a constant fear. Besides the Islamic terror, there is the terror of the authorities against everybody."

Degtiar, a sociology professor, would know.

Until recently, he was a Jewish community leader in Uzbekistan.

But after the authorities pressed charges against him for an article he published in a journal in which he predicted the end of Jewish life in Uzbekistan, he fled to the United States.

Jewish leaders report that Muslim-Jewish relations have not deteriorated, but some worry that tensions could mount as the war in Afghanistan intensifies.

"The situation is stable, there are no anti-Semitic outbursts, but there is an uneasy feeling because the war is drawing nearer," Rosa Fish, the leader of the 2,500-strong Jewish community in Kyrgyzstan, considered the most democratic country in the region, told JTA.

Indeed, reports from provincial cities in Tajikistan say Islamic activists are distributing leaflets blaming the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on Zionists who wanted the United States to launch a war against Islam.

These leaflets echo a lie that has gained widespread currency in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The unease that some Jews are feeling is not the only problem in the region, according to some human rights groups.

Though Uzbek President Karimov is viewed by the U.S. administration as the main guarantor of stability in the region and a crucial ally, some of these rights groups are not happy with his methods.

"We are very concerned about the situation for Jews in Central Asia as Islamic fundamentalism becomes increasingly strong," Nikolai Butkevich of the Washington-based Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union told JTA.

"At the same time, Uzbekistan is a classic case study of how not to deal with radical Islam. By arresting and harassing people simply because they demonstrate Islamic piety by growing beards or wearing head scarfs, the government is pushing them into the arms of the fanatics." □

Croatian president to apologize in Israel

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — Croatia's president was expected to address Israel's Knesset and apologize for his nation's Holocaust-era crimes against the Jews during his visit to Israel this week.

Stipe Mesic arrived in Israel on Sunday on a three-day visit.

The first visit by a president of independent Croatia was expected to focus on the wartime crimes of the Croatian Nazi regime, which ruled from 1941 to 1945, and the murder of about 30,000 Jews who lived in territory controlled by Croatia's Nazi puppet government.

Mesic has promised to keep up his fight against the right wing and nationalist factions in Croatia who still deny the Holocaust.

His predecessor, Franjo Tudjman, the former Croatian president, tried to diminish the Ustashe crimes and to minimize both the scale of the Holocaust and Croatia's part in it.

In contrast, Mesic has taken a clear stand against the Croatian Nazis and the nature of their regime.

Earlier this year, he offered his help to promote Holocaust education in Croatian schools.

Mesic was expected to meet Israeli President Moshe Katsav and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. He also was hoping to promote Israeli investment in Croatia. □

JEWISH WORLD

German Muslims call for holy war

Extremist Muslim clerics in Germany are calling on followers to fight a "holy war" against the United States.

According to a report in the German magazine Focus, calls to fight alongside Afghanistan's Taliban leaders have been made in German mosques. "We have definite evidence that several mosques are trying to recruit fighters for Afghanistan," a German official was quoted as saying.

Vandals burn French school

Vandals burned down part of a Jewish elementary school in southern France.

Two trailers used as classrooms at the Pardes Elementary School in Marseille were destroyed Sunday before firefighters brought the flames under control. The vandals left behind spray-painted messages that said, "Death to the Jews" and "Bin Laden will conquer," police said Monday.

Black leader meets Arafat

The Rev. Al Sharpton met with Yasser Arafat as he began a three-day visit to Israel.

The black leader and civil rights activist brought a message from Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres that the Palestinian Authority president should do more to crack down on terrorism, according to a news release. Sharpton previously said he would not meet with Palestinian officials during his visit.

He also met with Peres and former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

On Tuesday, Sharpton plans to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem and meet Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau.

London columnist blasts Arabs

A London columnist defended an anti-Israel article he wrote. But after saying in the Evening Standard last week that Israel is "by definition an aggressor," A.N. Wilson placed responsibility on the Arab world for solving the Middle East conflict.

Wilson wrote Monday that the region needs an "Arab Gandhi, but so far he or she has not emerged." Wilson's column last week drew protests from England's chief rabbi and the umbrella organization that represents most British Jews, as well as from hundreds of Standard readers.

Czech rescuer honored

A 93-year-old Czech woman who saved several Jewish families from the Nazis was presented with a special award by Czech president Vaclav Havel. Albina Wiesenbergerova, who received the award, also spent 15 years in prison for helping students involved in politics escape from the former Communist regime.

Jew who loses security clearance blames anti-Semitism in the military

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Jewish reserve officer says the U.S. Army stripped him of his security clearance and forced him to give up command of an intelligence unit because of his ties to Israel.

Maj. Shawn Pine, commander of the 300th Military Intelligence Company of Austin, Texas, holds dual U.S.-Israeli citizenship and received his top security clearance in 1990 — until it was revoked this summer.

While Pine says the reasons are rooted in anti-Semitism, the army says it's just implementing a simple rules change.

Pine's story, which first appeared in the Jerusalem Post, brings up concerns of heightened sensitivity in the U.S. armed forces to officers with Israel connections.

Pine was born in the United States and immigrated to Israel with his family in the late 1970s. Like other Israeli citizens, he entered the Israel Defense Force, serving in the elite Golani Brigade. After his discharge, Pine returned to the United States to attend Georgetown University. He later chose a military career and served nine years as an officer in the U.S. Army.

In 1995, Pine returned to Israel to study international relations at the Hebrew University, simultaneously doing his occasional IDF reserve duty.

Pine says he discussed his Israel connection with the U.S. Army when his security clearance came up for a routine update. He even agreed to the unusual step of taking a polygraph test, Pine says, saying it seemed fair because he had "a lot of interaction with Israel."

But now Pine says his career is ruined, as it's unlikely that private companies that get government contracts for security-related work would hire him without a security clearance.

Pine claims there is a "blatant" connection between his case and that of Lt. Col. Jeremiah Mattysse, a senior intelligence officer who converted to Judaism and went AWOL in Israel last year. There was speculation that Mattysse had passed on military intelligence to the Jewish state, but he eventually was cleared.

Pine was contacted about his security clearance update only a month after the Mattysse incident.

"They're looking for Jewish officers," he said.

The Army Reserves says it is implementing new rules that prevent anyone who holds dual citizenship from having top security clearance.

Pine is "not the only one caught up in the rules change," said Joe Hanley, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Reserve Command.

"This is not a punitive action," agreed Steve Stromvall, another spokesman.

A research associate at the Ariel Center for Policy Research in Israel, Pine has published many articles on military and strategic affairs in the Middle East. His writings have appeared in Israel Affairs, The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence and the Jerusalem Post.

The Anti-Defamation League's Houston office said it had been contacted by Pine and is investigating the case.

Jewish sensitivity to accusations of dual loyalty has increased since the infamous case of Jonathan Pollard. A former analyst for U.S. Navy intelligence, Pollard was convicted of espionage in 1985 for passing secret U.S. military information to Israel, and was sentenced to life in prison.

Anti-Israel feelings may be "endemic" in the U.S. Army's intelligence community, Pine believes. "When they see a Jew, they see a Jonathan Pollard," he said.

There is no doubt that certain quarters of the U.S. intelligence community harbor an underlying suspicion of Jews with connections to Israel, attorney Neal Sher said.

Sher represented former intelligence officer Adam Ciralsky, who charged that the CIA placed him on leave in 1997 because of his ties to Israel. Ciralsky sued the CIA last year, claiming that rampant anti-Semitism within the agency destroyed his career.

Sher said he does not know the details of Pine's case, but said it is reasonable that anti-Semitism and anti-Israel animus could have played a role.

"The organized Jewish community should take this very seriously," he said. □

Poll: Israelis see anti-Semitism up, and feel more Jewish as a result

By Toby Axelrod

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A new poll released by the World Jewish Congress shows that Israelis feel increasingly worried about worldwide anti-Semitism and see themselves as responsible for rescuing Jews in danger anywhere.

Supporting the truism that bad times make better Jews, both secular and religious Israelis say they have a stronger Jewish identity after more than a year of Palestinian violence and the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States.

The poll of 501 Israeli Jews was conducted Oct. 18-22 and released on the eve of the WJC's 11th plenary assembly, titled "Securing the Jewish Future."

Some 800 people from 70 countries have come to Jerusalem for the annual conference, which is to include meetings with Knesset members, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Discussions will focus on Israel-Diaspora relations, Jewish identity in the new millennium, Israel and world public opinion and human rights and intergroup relations. The conference will be held from Tuesday through Thursday.

"When we conceived of the conference title, we thought it would mean securing a stronger Jewish identity, Jewish education, the struggle against assimilation," said Avi Beker, the WJC's international director. "Through a twist of history we are engaged with the same topic, but dealing with our physical security."

Noting that Jewish identity traditionally grows stronger during times of crisis, Beker added that it is "a challenge for us, as leaders of the Jewish community gathered here, to focus on the positive aspects of Jewish identity. It should not be negative forces that build our unity and strength."

The task is daunting, considering the poll results. While 63 percent of respondents said that spiritual assimilation is the most serious threat to Diaspora Jews, 30 percent said physical danger was even more serious.

Some 57 percent said there is more anti-Semitism in the world today than 10 years ago.

Most — 75 percent — agreed that international anti-Israel sentiment is motivated by anti-Semitism.

In addition, 67 percent said anti-Israel politics at the United Nations is driven by anti-Semitism. Respondents had little interest in seeing the United Nations play a role in the Mideast peace process, WJC officials said.

Among the other findings:

- Forty-eight percent of respondents identify primarily as part of the Jewish people, 36 percent as citizens of the state of Israel and 13 percent as members of humanity;

- Fifty percent said their sense of Jewish identification had grown stronger because of the past year's events, while 45 percent said it had not;

- Thirty-seven percent said they would strongly oppose intermarriage for their child or grandchild, while 31 percent said they would neither support nor oppose such a marriage;

- Fifty-four percent said the most important thing Diaspora Jews can do to support Israel is to make aliyah;

- The most admired characteristic of U.S. Jews is "their cultural and political influence" — 34 percent — followed by

"Jewish pride — 22 percent — and their "sense of unity and community" — 21 percent;

- Fifty percent of respondents said the United States was a safer country for Jews than England, France, Germany and the former Soviet Union — but 26 percent said none of those countries is truly safe for Jews. □

Supreme Court staying mum on silent moments in schools

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A key church-state issue remains unresolved after the Supreme Court refused to hear a case on moments of silence in public schools.

The court on Monday declined to hear a challenge to a Virginia law mandating a moment of silence in public schools.

Jewish activists who follow the issue cautioned against reading too much into the decision, however, saying the Supreme Court could have declined to hear the case for any number of reasons.

In another religion-related case Monday, the Supreme Court also refused to hear the case of an employee who was fired after giving Bibles to co-workers and praying with them, a practice known as "witnessing."

The employee, a born-again Christian, claimed he was harassed because of his religion. His employer, however, cited concerns that the company could be sued by other employees for tolerating a religiously hostile work environment.

Jewish activists considered the moment of silence case more significant.

A federal appeals court had upheld Virginia's moment of silence law in July, ruling that it does not violate the First Amendment's ban on state-sponsored religion for public school children to begin each day with a minute of meditation.

Many Jewish groups oppose moments of silence in public schools, arguing that it violates the constitutionally guaranteed separation of church and state because such moments could be used to persuade children to pray.

Orthodox Jewish groups, however, generally support such moments of silence.

The court's action today means the daily minute of silence will continue, and opponents are left with no immediate options for challenging it.

It is not surprising that the Supreme Court declined to hear the challenge, said Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department.

Some school prayer advocates could misinterpret the denial as court approval for prayer in school and may want the court to go even further, Stern said.

Those opposed to the 2000 law say it promotes religion because it requires all of Virginia's one million public school children to set aside a minute each morning to "meditate, pray or engage in other silent activity."

The American Civil Liberties Union wrote in its brief that the statute was enacted "specifically to facilitate and encourage school prayer at that fixed time."

It's possible that the court is waiting for a stronger case to test the moment of silence, a case with a "cleaner" legislative history that does not refer to religion or prayer in the law, said Steven Sheinberg, assistant director of the Anti-Defamation League. □