



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Gunmen fire on Jerusalem bus

A Palestinian gunman fired Sunday on a bus in Jerusalem, killing two people. At least 50 others were wounded, six of them seriously.

Police shot and killed the gunman during the attack in the city's French Hill section. The attacker was a member of Islamic Jihad from the West Bank city of Hebron, Jerusalem Police Chief Mickey Levy said.

Sharon cancels U.S. trip

Ariel Sharon canceled a planned trip to the United States. A spokesman for the Israeli prime minister cited the worsening security situation in Israel when he made the announcement Saturday.

Sharon had planned to meet President Bush on Nov. 11 during a trip to attend the annual General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities.

U.S. freezing more assets

The State Department is freezing both the organizational and individual assets of 28 organizations considered terrorist groups, including Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. [Page 3]

Peres, Arafat meet twice

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met twice at an economic conference in Spain. Spokesman for the two said they held no formal negotiations when they met on the sidelines of the conference last Friday and Saturday.

The two discussed the timing of Israeli withdrawals from Palestinian-controlled West Bank cities and the need for Palestinian forces to take up security there after the withdrawal, the spokesman said.

The two may meet again Monday, when they are slated to hold separate talks with E.U. officials in Brussels.

Israel hits mortar factory

Israeli helicopters fired missiles Sunday at three buildings in the Gaza Strip.

The buildings were used to make mortars that Palestinians had fired over the weekend at Israeli settlements in Gaza, according to the army. A Palestinian security official said the buildings were empty and no one was hurt in the attack.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Foreign aid package sailing through Congress, with a twist

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With this year's foreign aid package sailing through Congress, pro-Israel activists have lost a major forum to raise concerns about aid to Egypt and the Palestinians.

Pro-Israel activists and lawmakers say that in the post-Sept. 11 environment, they are afraid to fight any aid allocations for fear of being seen as opposed to the Bush administration's coalition against terrorism.

The \$15.6 billion foreign aid appropriations bill passed the Senate 96-2 last month, after being approved by the House of Representatives in July. A conference to work out the differences is expected in the near future.

In both versions, Israel receives \$2.7 billion in economic and military aid, and \$2 billion is allocated for Egypt.

While convincing lawmakers to support foreign aid has often been an uphill battle, this year the package — which includes aid to Pakistan, India and other countries supporting the war on terrorism — is expected to pass with overwhelming support.

Aid to Israel, which continues to be the largest recipient of U.S. foreign assistance, has also faced opposition in the past. But at the same time, support for that aid often carries the entire bill.

Israel is expected to receive the full amount requested from the Bush administration — \$2.04 billion for military aid and \$720 million for economic needs.

That allotment is consistent with a plan to add \$60 million in military aid and eliminate \$120 million for economic aid to Israel each year for 10 years.

Under normal circumstances, the foreign aid process gave Israel supporters — both in Congress and out — more than an opportunity to send money to Israel.

It gave lawmakers and advocates a chance to make their voices heard by the administration, to speak out on concerns over the Middle East.

But several provisions, originally lobbied for by Israel supporters, have been dropped.

Instead of advocating on behalf of Israel, say observers, legislators want to show a united front in the coalition against terrorism.

Lawmakers are particularly wary of doing anything that could hurt support of the Arab states, deemed essential by the Bush administration to win the war against Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida network.

"The concern right now is not wasting capital on a fight that can't be won," said a Democratic congressional aide. "The administration is going to have its way."

Before terrorist attacks struck at the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, Jewish groups were touting the Middle East Peace Commitments Act, a bill requiring the president to periodically assess Palestinian commitments to its peace accords.

The legislation, a revival of old legislation that included sanctions against the Palestinian Authority if it was not found in compliance, was never introduced in the Senate after its two sponsors, Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) bowed to White House pressure not to bring it up.

Secretary of State Colin Powell told Feinstein that the legislation would be "counterproductive" to the government's efforts to build a coalition against terrorism.

"Imposing sanctions, or even waiving sanctions following a mandatory determination that would have triggered sanctions, would undermine our ability to play a role in

MIDEAST FOCUS

Arab gunmen kill Israeli soldier

Palestinian gunmen shot and killed an Israeli soldier last Friday night.

Along with killing Staff Sgt. Raz Mintz, 19, of Haifa, the gunmen lightly wounded another soldier in the drive-by shooting at a roadblock north of Beit El.

The Al Aksa Brigade, which is affiliated with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Yemenite kids not abducted

There was no state-sponsored abductions of Yemenite children during the 1950s, according to a newly released report. Echoing the findings of earlier state-sponsored commissions, a panel headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Yehuda Cohen found that the children died of various illnesses.

Some members of the Yemenite community have long alleged that hundreds of their children who arrived in the immigration waves of the early 1950s were kidnapped and sold to Ashkenazic families. The Jewish Agency for Israel is criticized in the latest report, which said no central listing was kept to track infant deaths and provide burial information to parents.

Arabs reject bin Laden appeal

The Arab League dismissed an appeal by Osama bin Laden for Muslims to join a holy war against the West. "Bin Laden doesn't speak in the name of Arabs and Muslims," the league's secretary-general, Amre Moussa, said Sunday.

Egypt's foreign minister, Ahmed Maher, also rejected the appeal, saying before the start of a meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Syria, "There is a war between bin Laden and the whole world." In a video released Saturday, bin Laden urged the world's Muslims to join him in a religious war against "infidel" Christians and Jews.

defusing the crisis and returning the parties to negotiations," Powell said in a Sept. 21 letter to Feinstein.

Powell also noted that the act would increase Arab criticism of the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

Feinstein spokesman Howard Gantman said the senator agreed with Powell's remarks.

"The current state of affairs has created an unparalleled situation," Gantman said.

While the measure is still alive, having been passed in the House Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, its progress seems unlikely now.

Also shelved for the year is the \$800 million in supplemental aid Israel has been expecting from the United States, promised by the Clinton administration for Israel's withdrawal last year from southern Lebanon.

While the supplemental aid package had been declared "dead" as far back as June by State Department officials, some were holding out hope that it would be revived.

During the summer, the Bush administration indicated its opposition to the extra aid while it was mediating a cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinians. Now it seems unlikely that the Bush administration would give extra monetary support to Israel while it is trying to maintain Arab support for its coalition.

Some in the Jewish community were originally planning to focus on aid to Egypt, concerned about the country's anti-Semitic media.

The Anti-Defamation League wanted \$100 million of Egypt's allocation to be placed in escrow until anti-Semitic cartoons and editorials were condemned by the government. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) wanted the United States to phase out military aid to Egypt, saying the country needed economic help instead.

But now few are speaking out on either Egypt or the Palestinians.

"If we were not involved in this war against terror, with the administration's strong desire to have as many Arab partners in this war as possible, there would have been major concerns raised about aid to Egypt and the Palestinians," said Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America. "Now, nobody wants to ruffle feathers."

The outspoken ZOA leader said he has found it impossible to find lawmakers to pick up the Israel mantra, having been told by many that they are afraid of hurting the war effort.

Jewish activists are choosing instead to work behind the scenes with more modest goals.

A news release by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which is always considered a major player in the foreign aid process, touted its recent successes: floor comments by McConnell against terrorism and actions by the Palestinian Authority; tough questions for Powell during congressional hearings; and a letter to President Bush from two lawmakers seeking a wide definition of terrorist groups.

Exacerbating the situation has been the logistical problems on Capitol Hill, including a stoppage of incoming mail to lawmakers' offices and anthrax scares that have canceled meetings and forced staffers to work from home.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said he believes — despite the lack of attention to foreign aid — empathy for Israel is strong, and Jewish groups will be able to galvanize that support when the waves are calmer.

"You have to do things with common sense," he said. "This is not a time when you can push on certain fronts." □

Kidnapped Israelis declared dead

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Three Israeli soldiers abducted to Lebanon a year ago are dead, the army's chief rabbi officially announced last Friday.

The army declared earlier last week that the soldiers probably are dead, but according to Israel Defense Force procedure the final decision is left to the IDF's chief rabbi.

The families have demanded concrete evidence that their sons are dead, and say the government has not done enough to rescue them. Hezbollah guerrillas abducted the three soldiers — Omar Souad, Binyamin Avraham and Adi Avitan—on Oct. 7, 2000. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Poll: Israel ties didn't cause terror

Americans do not believe the U.S.-Israel relationship provoked the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

According to a survey released Friday by the Anti-Defamation League, 63 percent of Americans say the United States' close relationship with Israel had nothing to do with the attacks on New York and Washington, while 22 percent think there was a connection.

Americans also support the Israeli position in the Mideast conflict over the Palestinian position.

Scholars leave interfaith group

Two Jewish scholars resigned from a Catholic-Jewish commission investigating the Vatican's role during the Holocaust. The resignations come months after the commission suspended its work because of the Vatican's refusal to open relevant archives, and throw the commission's future into doubt.

Israel plane may have been target

An anti-tank missile near the Prague airport may have been meant to shoot down an Israeli plane.

The missile, discovered two days after Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres passed through Prague, may have been meant to shoot down a civilian flight to Tel Aviv, according to the Czech daily newspaper Pravo.

"We maintain the theory that the weapon got near the airport in connection with a planned attack against an Israeli target," the daily quotes a "well-informed source" as saying. Interior Minister Stanislav Gross refused to confirm the information, saying investigations are continuing.

E.U. may not fund P.A. books

The European Union may cut off funding for anti-Semitic Palestinian textbooks.

A group of European Union Parliament members attached a rider to the organization's budget prohibiting E.U. funds from being used for Palestinian Authority textbooks unless anti-Semitic references are removed, the Jerusalem Post reports.

A spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry called the move "a moral victory" and the most significant step yet in the struggle to remove incitement from Palestinian school books.

Crash victims' relatives get help

The Russian Jewish Congress is helping relatives of victims of last month's Sibir Airlines crash. The program includes legal support for lawsuits relating to the tragedy over the Black Sea.

Some 78 people, including 66 Jews, died in the Oct. 4 crash of the plane, which was traveling from Tel Aviv to Novosibirsk, Russia.

U.S. labels Palestinians groups as terrorists, freezes their assets

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The State Department has agreed to freeze the assets of a number of groups identified as terrorist organizations, widening the scope of the fight against terror to include organizations that target Israel.

The decision places Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine on a par with the Al Qaida network of Osama bin Laden, considered the mastermind behind the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

Now, all 28 groups listed as foreign terrorist organizations are subject to the executive order President Bush signed soon after the Sept. 11 attacks, meaning that the assets of the organizations and individuals associated with them will be frozen.

Until now, only Al Qaida and five other groups were subject to the executive order.

"We do think it's important that we have these tools, particularly if it's enhanced tools in the new executive order, so that we can go after all terrorism because that's the goal of the campaign," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said.

Several government agencies have come out with lists of terrorist groups since the World Trade Center attacks, but the State Department list will have the most effect overseas. The Justice Department list of terror organizations, announced Oct. 31, is still being finalized. In any case, it would only affect domestic monitoring and deportation.

The FBI list, announced earlier this fall, is used only for investigative purposes.

Boucher said he was confident that Middle Eastern countries would work to curtail the actions of anti-Israel terror groups.

Israeli and Jewish leaders hailed the State Department decision, saying it is a sign that the Bush administration is not differentiating between terror against U.S. civilians and attacks against Israelis.

"Terrorism is terrorism," said Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington. "There can be no distinction between blood and blood."

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee commended the Bush administration for "deciding to aggressively go after all forms of terrorism," spokeswoman Rebecca Needler said.

Leaders of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations say government officials they met last week were sympathetic to their calls to add anti-Israel groups to the terror list.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said he believes lawmakers and Bush administration officials are beginning to understand that the web of terrorist groups is interconnected.

Meanwhile, a U.S. diplomat closely involved with Middle East affairs on Friday called on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to confront Palestinian organizations listed as terrorist organizations.

"It is in Chairman Arafat's fundamental interests — not Israel's, not ours, but his — that he act decisively to confront these elements," David Satterfield, a deputy assistant secretary of state, said in an address to the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine. "In the absence of such concrete steps, it is very difficult to establish the credibility necessary to advance a meaningful political process."

Satterfield said Arafat's public image has been tarnished since the violent Palestinian uprising against Israel began more than a year ago. □

Jewish Webcast attracts 1,500

NEW YORK (JTA) — More than 1,500 members of synagogues in North America and Israel participated last week in a 45-minute live Webcast in reaction to the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

The Oct. 29 Internet event was called "Fear and Courage: A Jewish View," and featured Rabbis Irving "Yitz" Greenberg and David Wolpe. It was one of the first efforts of the Chicago-based STAR Tech, an effort to use technology to link North American synagogues of different denominations. The Webcast is archived at www.starsynagogue.org. □

OBITUARY

**Rabbi Eliezer Shach dies,
a giant of Orthodox Jewry**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — “We won’t be seeing his likes again” is the kind of elegaic hyperbole one so often hears at funerals and reads in obituaries. Rarely is it a literal truth.

In the case of Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Shach, who died last Friday and was buried in Bnei Brak — his age estimated at anywhere from 103 to 108 — the statement is indeed fact.

Shach’s uniqueness lay not in his learning or his saintliness. These were much admired in fervently Orthodox circles, but so are the learning and saintliness of other rabbis, living and dead.

Rather, Shach’s uniqueness lay in the authority he wielded.

A “late bloomer,” Shach wielded power from the mid-1970s, when he was already elderly, through the mid-1990s, when he gradually succumbed to physical infirmity and withdrew from active public life.

“His pronouncements and his talks when he was active would regularly capture the rapt attention of the entire Orthodox world,” said Rabbi Avi Shafran, spokesman for Agudath Israel of America in New York. “The simple knowledge that our world hosts a person like him evokes a sense of great gratitude on our part, and also brings a feeling of great security to Jews. When they leave, it leaves us feeling not just that we miss them, but vulnerable. The merit of their greatness protects us all.”

Through most of history — save in rare epochs, such as the time of Maimonides — rabbinic authority has not been vested in one living sage but has been conferred, by unarticulated popular consent, on several rabbis simultaneously.

The fervently Orthodox world is likely to resume this practice of the past, observers in Israel say.

A return to the historical pattern already has been discernible in the fervently Orthodox world in recent years, after Shach became too ill to provide public and political leadership on a daily basis in the mid-1990s.

Since then, two major figures in the non-Chasidic or “Lithuanian” yeshiva world — Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman in Bnei Brak and Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliashiv in Jerusalem — effectively have shared the leadership. In the United States, a number of younger yeshiva heads have risen to prominence, but none has assumed a position of overarching eminence.

Like Shach, Steinman is a dean at the large Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Eliashiv, a former judge on Israel’s Supreme Rabbinical Court, is considered the leading posek, or arbiter of Jewish law.

Shach was dismissive of secular Israeli culture, deriding kibbutzniks as “breeders of rabbits and pigs” and saying the Labor Party wanted some new, artificial Torah to replace the real one. Yet many considered Shach close to the Israeli left on diplomatic issues, as he called Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip “a blatant attempt to provoke the international community.”

In 1996, however, Shach surprised pundits when he declined to back Labor Party candidate Shimon Peres, effectively throwing decisive Orthodox support to the Likud Party challenger, Benjamin Netanyahu, in his razor-thin victory.

Shach likewise rejected the tendency among some Chabad Chasidim to revere their rebbe as the Messiah, blasting it as “total heresy. Those who say so will burn in hell.”

Many have noted Shach’s vigorous refusal to compromise tradition for the sake of modernity. Despite this, his son Ephraim earned a doctorate in philosophy and joined the national religious camp, and two of his grandchildren are secular, according to the Israeli daily Ha’aretz.

Shach also was memorable for the remarkable revolutions he wrought in Orthodox life and in Israel’s broader political life.

He was the longtime symbol and standard bearer of what a leading Israeli sociologist has called “the society of learners.”

Under his aegis, fervent Orthodoxy in Israel developed a life pattern — unprecedented in Jewish history — whereby young men spend years, and often their entire lifetimes, studying Talmud. They learn in kollels — yeshivas for married men — which grew exponentially during Shach’s leadership.

The salaries they draw are modest, supplemented by transfers from state and local coffers.

These students do not serve in the Israeli army or participate in the regular work force. Many live in penury as the heads of large families where the mother is the only breadwinner.

To an extent, this lifestyle, which was invested with ideological underpinnings during Shach’s era, has radiated from Israel to America and other countries where fervently Orthodox communities flourish. There too, though not to such a universal extent, many young men continue learning full time long even after marriage. This is even more true of the non-Chasidic community than of the Chasidic one.

On the broader political plane, Shach is considered one of the most powerful forces in the evolution of Israeli society.

His place in Israel’s political pantheon was achieved not only by his vigorous leadership of his own yeshiva world but by his leadership, during its formative period, of the Shas movement.

Shas, which left Shach’s wings in 1992 after a dispute over joining Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s government, today has left its Ashkenazic patrons in the dust, becoming the third largest political force in the country.

As a member of the Agudat Yisrael Council of Sages in the 1970s and early 1980s, Shach was consistently outspoken in his support of the grievances being articulated — at first diffidently, later with increasing vehemence — by young Sephardic Orthodox scholars and communal leaders.

They felt they sidelined and discriminated against by Agudah’s Ashkenazic leadership. Despite their numbers in Agudah, they were not appointed to fill its Knesset seats. They were not helped or funded to set up separate yeshivas for Sephardic students — yet they were ignored or belittled in the old-style Lithuanian yeshivas, they claimed. The result was the creation of Shas, which exploded onto the Israeli political scene with four Knesset seats in the 1984 general elections.

Especially since he ceased most activity in recent years, Shach had become more important to the fervently Orthodox world as an icon than in any practical sense, according to Samuel Heilman, author of “Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry” — though that hardly diminished his stature.

“More than him personally, there is this sense that is dominant in the” fervently Orthodox “community that the great leaders and men are no longer with us,” Heilman said. The attitude “is that the giants lived yesterday and we’re pig meat today. The older one is, when he dies there’s a feeling that ‘woe is us, there are no greats to take his place.’ ” □

(JTA Staff Writer Julie Wiener in New York contributed to this report.)