



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

At a bloody price, terror attacks win understanding for Israel's plight

By Michael J. Jordan

Palestinians fight after arrest

Hamas supporters clashed with Palestinian police after the Palestinian Authority placed Hamas' founder under house arrest. One Palestinian was killed late Wednesday after the action was taken against Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

In a first sign of resistance to P.A. President Yasser Arafat's attempt to crack down on Islamic terrorists, clashes between baton-wielding police and stone-throwing protesters continued Thursday. Palestinian police set up checkpoints around Yassin's Gaza City home on Thursday as they clashed sporadically with more than 1,500 Hamas supporters.

Security officials to meet

Israeli and Palestinian security officials plan to hold U.S.-brokered talks Friday. Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat announced the talks after meeting with the U.S. peace envoy in the region, former Marine Corps Gen. Anthony Zinni.

Zinni met Arafat on Thursday in the West Bank city of Ramallah after holding talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Jerusalem on Wednesday.

White House doubts Arafat

The White House expressed skepticism about Yasser Arafat's efforts to crack down on terrorists. "The president remains deeply concerned that Palestinian jails" are "still built with bars in front with revolving doors at the back," spokesman Ari Fleischer said Thursday.

Palestinian security officials say they have arrested 180 Islamic militants since the weekend, but Israel has complained that those arrested are lower-level activists, and that the planners of terror attacks are still at large.

A new deadline for Zionists

The World Zionist Congress extended the deadline for voter registration to Jan. 18, 2002. Registration forms for World Zionist Congress elections are traveling through the same Washington post office where anthrax was found last month, and some are still being disinfected and quarantined.

Elections slated for next year will determine who will sit on the congress, a group regarded as the official representative of Diaspora Jewry that determines the policies of the World Zionist Organization.

NEW YORK (JTA) — Since the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the United States, Israelis and their American Jewish supporters have tried to impress upon Washington that "your war is our war."

They've had little success — until this week.

The bloodiest terrorist attacks in Israel in the post-Sept. 11 world — assaults that specifically targeted teen-agers — seem finally to have produced a bounce in sympathy for Israel from both the U.S. administration and the American public.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan also offered sympathy and condolences, as did the European Union. Yet Washington's response, especially, was taken as a sign of a change of heart.

For the first time after a major attack in Israel, the Bush administration refrained from using the "r" word — restraint — and implicitly gave Israel the green light to respond as it saw fit to the suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa that killed at least 25 and wounded nearly 300.

"We're not about to tell Mr. Sharon what he should do," Secretary of State Colin Powell said Sunday, shortly after the Hamas attacks. He did add, however, that Israel should consider the consequences of its actions.

On Tuesday, Powell was more explicit. Sharon should remember, he said, "that there will be a tomorrow and a day after tomorrow, and we have to try to get back to a process that will lead to a cease-fire and to negotiations."

In addition, Bush on Tuesday froze the assets of three organizations — the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, Beit el-Mar Holdings and Al-Aqsa Islamic Bank — that allegedly raise funds for Hamas.

The groups had been under investigation for a long time, but action against them apparently was precipitated by the weekend terror attacks.

Still, some observers wondered how long it would take before the green light would again turn red, and whether Israel would really be released from the constraints Washington has demanded while the United States pursues its own war on terrorism in Afghanistan.

Much hinges on who triumphs in an apparent power struggle between the hawkish Defense Department, led by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, and the more dovish State Department, symbolized by Powell and staffed by career Arabists.

Some are suggesting that Bush declare victory in this stage of the war on terror, considering that the Taliban has collapsed and Osama bin Laden is on the run.

Wolfowitz reportedly now is pressing to advance to "Stage Two" of the struggle, which could focus on ousting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and ending his weapons development programs. Syria, Sudan, Somalia and Colombia also are mentioned as potential targets.

Advocates for Israel say Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad should be among the next groups targeted.

"The administration is just in fits over what to do next," said Rachel Bronson, a senior fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations. "The definition of this war on terrorism is really up for grabs."

How Israel figures in later stages of the effort remains unclear.

As the dust settled after Sept. 11, Israel advocates initially figured America would

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel kills Palestinian in battle

Israeli soldiers killed an armed Palestinian during a firefight in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials said the gunman was part of a group of armed Palestinians who fired Thursday at Israeli soldiers searching for those who carried out a mortar attack on Jewish settlements in northern Gaza.

Earlier Thursday, Jewish settlements in the southern Gaza Strip also came under fire from Palestinian gunmen.

Palestinians raid bomb factory

Palestinian security forces raided a Hamas explosives factory Wednesday night.

The factory in the West Bank city of Nablus allegedly was used by Hamas terrorists to prepare attacks on Israel.

Palestinian forces also captured a truck believed to be en route to distribute explosives to terrorist cells across the West Bank.

Hamas forbids infighting

Hamas forbade its members to use guns in disputes with Palestinian Authority forces.

The order, which came as Palestinian police arrested some Hamas members, was aimed at preventing a Palestinian civil war.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat has been under increased international pressure to arrest terrorists following a series of deadly suicide bombings in Israel.

Hafez Assad, take two

The wife of Syrian President Bashar Assad gave birth to their first child.

After Asthma Akhras gave birth Tuesday, the boy was named Hafez after his grandfather, the late President Hafez Assad.

The elder Hafez Assad died in June 2000.



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now grasp the Israeli reality. But that hope quickly faded as Americans asked, "Why do they hate us?" A number of U.S. pundits — and most spokesmen for Arab- and Muslim-American groups — blamed much of the anti-American animus on Washington's allegedly unwavering support for Israel against the Palestinians.

Israel was marginalized as Washington courted the Arab world for its coalition against bin Laden and his Al Qaida terror network. Vital links in the coalition, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, went so far as to accuse the Jewish state of being a "terrorist" regime.

President Bush stressed that the U.S. campaign would target only those groups with "global reach," disappointing many Jewish observers who hoped the dragnet would include Hamas and others.

Yet Bush's powerful rhetoric — including a U.N. address in which he rejected attempts to condone terror in the name of national liberation — heartened many Israelis. In fact, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon often adopts Bush's slogans to describe Israel's own struggle against Palestinian terror.

The recent Hamas attacks caught Washington in the throes of another Mideast diplomatic offensive.

Envoy Anthony Zinni arrived in the region just last week, and many observers expected that he would demand from Israel a political program that offered Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat incentives to end the intifada.

Just as Zinni was beginning his rounds of meetings, however, the Palestinian onslaught began.

"The whole subject is very uncomfortable for the administration, and it couldn't have come at a worse time," said David Makovsky, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"On the one hand, it would like Israel to stay off the radar screen. On the other hand, it can't say, 'Do what I say, not what I do.' No country would allow suicide bombers to blow up its citizens with impunity."

Still, there presumably are limits to what Washington will tolerate.

If Sharon heeds his right wing and moves to topple Arafat, American sympathy is likely to evaporate.

"This talk of not having a partner in Arafat is counterproductive, because the administration looks at Arafat as the only one to work with," Bronson said.

Moreover, Washington's basic tendency toward "even-handedness" is not likely to change.

Secretary Powell may hope that the Hamas attacks and the large death toll are just an aberration, a blip that does not dramatically affect American peacemaking efforts or its war in Afghanistan, said Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum.

His statements this week that showed greater understanding for Israel "is not a shift, but a concession," Pipes said. "The outrage is so evident that he can't just tell Israel to cool it, absorb it, and move on. So the secretary of state cannot apply his outlook on the world at this time."

Regardless, Pipes said, too much is made of U.S. pressure on Israel.

Both countries make decisions based primarily on their national interests, rather than pressure, he said.

After the latest attacks, though, Sharon's pledge that Israel will deal with the Palestinian Authority as America is dealing with the Taliban — because both are regimes that harbor terrorists — may sound increasingly reasonable to others in Washington.

"They recognize more and more that this terrorism is an interlocking network, and killing Osama won't be enough," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "Terrorism must be fought in absolutes."

To date, Israel's role in the U.S.-led war on terror primarily has been to provide intelligence. In the future, Hoenlein said, Washington may not mind if Israel takes on the Hamas "portfolio."

"The fact is, Israel is important to the war on terrorism, because every country that fights terrorism within its borders or outside its borders is taking a chink out of the armor of Islamic extremism," Hoenlein said.

"Just as Israel benefits from what America is doing in Afghanistan, America benefits from what Israel is doing against terrorism." □

JEWISH WORLD

Reform helping Sept. 11 victims

The Reform movement raised \$1.2 million to help those affected by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

At the opening plenary of its biennial convention in Boston, the movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations presented \$100,000 to the Uniformed Firefighters' Association Widows and Children's Fund.

The UAHC is distributing the rest of the money to a variety of groups, including a scholarship fund for needy dependents of those killed or disabled in the attacks; two labor unions whose members lost lives or jobs in the attacks; and several groups helping low-income families of attack victims.

L.A. JCCs to close

Five of the seven Jewish community centers in the Los Angeles area will be shut down next year in the face of a \$3 million deficit.

In another development, the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, long the major financial supporter of the JCCs, is falling short of its annual fund-raising goal and has fired about 40 of its 150 employees.

Bush to celebrate Chanukah

President Bush will welcome Jewish leaders to the White House on Monday to celebrate Chanukah.

The president and leaders of American Jewish organizations will light candles to celebrate the first day of Chanukah in the White House residence, followed by a reception.

It is the first time that Chanukah candles will be lit in the residence, as opposed to official rooms of the White House.

The menorah being used for the event originally is from Poland, and is on loan from the Jewish Museum in New York.

Russian group gets new leader

A businessman and Middle East political analyst was elected president of the Russian Jewish Congress.

Yevgeny Satanovsky, 42, replaces Leonid Nevzlin, who was recently elected to the upper house of the Russian Parliament.

Menorah at the Met

An 18th-century menorah is going on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

An inscription on the 60-foot-high menorah suggests that the menorah was used at a synagogue in Eastern Europe, probably in Poland.

The menorah, which will be lit Monday at the museum, is on loan from the Michael and Judy Steinhardt Collection.

The menorah will remain at the museum until Jan. 6.

Report: Ford had no control over slave labor at its German subsidiary

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Ford Motor Co. has released a study that it says proves what the company has maintained all along — that it was not responsible for the wartime activities of its German subsidiary.

The report, released this week after more than three years of research that cost millions of dollars, focused on the subsidiary's use of slave and forced labor during the Holocaust. The report concludes that Ford's U.S. headquarters had no control over what happened at the subsidiary, Ford-Werke, and that it did not profit from wartime operations at the German plant.

The report also indicates that all companies operating in Germany during the war had to use labor provided by the German government.

"The use of forced and slave labor in Germany, including at Ford-Werke, was wrong and cannot be justified," said John Rintamaki, Ford's chief of staff. "The Nazi regime chose to provide forced and slave laborers to industry."

Although Ford maintained ownership of the subsidiary in Cologne throughout the war, Ford officials insisted this week — as they have for years — that the U.S. headquarters had no control over the subsidiary's operations.

Ford spokesman Tom Hoyt said Ford did not receive dividends during the war years, and that the company started to lose control over the subsidiary in the early 1930s.

"Ownership didn't mean control," he said.

Jewish organizations reacted to the report somewhat differently.

"This highlights the need for an honest and open accounting of some U.S. companies' involvement in the Nazi era," said Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference. "These American businesses must face up to the moral issues of their past, and, where appropriate, extend some form of compensation to victims of forced and slave labor."

Ford's acknowledgment that it retained majority ownership of the subsidiary "goes directly to the question of its responsibility for the use of forced labor," he said.

The report includes Ford correspondence, reports and financial records, military reports, ledgers, oral histories and interviews.

More than 45 archivists, historians, researchers and translators worked in teams based in Dearborn, Mich., Washington and Germany.

Simon Reich, one of the independent experts Ford hired to watch over the development and release of the report, said the report sets the model for other companies to deal with their pasts.

However, the World Jewish Congress criticized the study, saying it should have been done independently and supervised jointly by Ford and Jewish organizations.

The question of Ford's wartime culpability made headlines in March 1998, when a Russian woman who was forced to work at Ford-Werke sued Ford in a U.S. federal court in New Jersey for back pay and punitive damages.

That lawsuit, which was later joined by other slave laborers, was dismissed in 1999, when the judge ruled that the claims were filed after the expiration of time limits imposed under U.S. and German law.

The total number of laborers at Ford-Werke is unknown, but it is estimated that the Ford subsidiary employed 4,000-5,000 workers over the course of the war.

None of the laborers was Jewish.

Ford-Werke, along with such giants as Siemens, Krupp and IG Farben, was among 400 German firms that used forced and slave labor.

While not admitting any culpability, Ford has made a number of contributions in the name of corporate responsibility. Ford contributed \$13 million to a \$5 billion fund created by the German government and industry for slave and forced laborers.

Along with the report's release on Monday, Ford announced that it is donating \$4 million toward human rights studies, primarily focusing on the issue of slave and forced labor.

The company also is establishing a new \$2 million center to be affiliated with a university, and it plans to give \$2 million to a humanitarian fund at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that helps Holocaust survivors. □

Israel trips plow ahead despite terrorism attacks

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two Israeli women followed the throngs of people leaving the Western Wall on Monday, wondering who would be touring the shaken state.

When they learned it was a United Jewish Communities solidarity mission, they were shocked.

"Tell them thank you; tell them thank you," the women said.

Relaying the story by telephone from Israel, Caila Bitran, director of missions at the UJC, said the recent terror attacks in Israel have only heightened their purpose.

Joel Alperson, national chairman of the current UJC solidarity mission, said he was "really energized" by the couple hundred people waiting with him to fly to Israel on Sunday, a day after the horrific events in Israel.

"I was heartened to see so many other people going to see Israel together," he said of the 500-strong group. "Finally, I could do something," noted the past board member of the Jewish Federation of Omaha.

The UJC is not alone in its determination to move ahead with trips to Israel. Birthright Israel, which provides free 10-day trips for young adults, decided on Tuesday to go ahead with its winter programs, scheduled for December through February.

But determination aside, the flurry of conference calls and emergency meetings this week show that groups with missions and programs in Israel are worried that the latest attacks in Israel will further harm their already-hurting programs.

The UJC's special national solidarity missions began with the onset of the second intifada in October 2000 and have been consistently bringing nearly 500 people to Israel every month for five to seven days, say UJC officials.

Since then, there have been 20 national solidarity missions, and they are scheduled through next spring.

"We don't cancel missions," said Bitran, who says the current emotion and energy has propelled the missions and given them new meaning.

She said that only 23 people canceled their plans for the current mission after Saturday night.

According to Arthur Naparstek, vice president of the Israel and Overseas Pillar for the UJC, the only change in the program when terrorism occurs is that they try to address changing issues in Israel.

On the current mission, for example, participants have held a memorial service, made shiva, or condolence, calls and helped to assemble wheelchairs at a rehabilitation center.

Birthright Israel is also committed to maintaining its course.

According to Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, Birthright's executive vice president in North America, Birthright's steering committee voted unanimously Tuesday to proceed with the program.

Still, Birthright's numbers will be down.

The program had originally hoped to attract 10,000 participants from around the world this winter, but program organizers now only guarantee an excess of 5,000.

But they would not venture a guess on how many Americans would participate.

Jennie Berman of Brooklyn is one who has already canceled.

"To go on a free trip and an incredible program like that is very enticing, but I don't feel that I would be safe to go over there right now, and I don't want to put my family through that."

Brian Schultz of Seattle, Wash., says he, too, is re-evaluating his decision to attend this winter's Birthright biking tour.

"That decision," he said, "is not just based on what happened over the weekend, but where things may be headed."

Despite the cancellations, Zimmerman said, "The presence of thousands of young people will be one of the greatest moments for the Jewish people."

By the end of this winter, Birthright estimates that more than 27,000 people from around the world will have visited Israel since the program began in 1999. Birthright plans to bring 100,000 18-26 year olds from around the world over five years.

Already thinking ahead to summer's youth programs, which took a huge hit this past summer, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is currently sponsoring a trip for parents to scout out the situation for their children. Yossi Garr, central shaliach, or emissary, for the movement's United Synagogue Youth, is in Israel with 16 parents from 15 USY regions.

The organization fully subsidizes each parent for the three-and-a-half day program, which offers a glimpse into the organization's summer, yearlong and semester programs in Israel. □

OBITUARY

Gerhart Riegner dies at age of 90, first to tell world about Nazi plans

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Gerhart Riegner, who first alerted the world to the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews, died of pneumonia Monday in Switzerland at the age of 90.

Riegner was working for the World Jewish Congress in the summer of 1942 when he received intelligence information that the Nazis were planning to murder Europe's Jews.

On Aug. 8, 1942, he gave his cable to U.S. representatives in Switzerland. "Received alarming report" that the Nazis are discussing a plan "according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany, numbering 3-1/2 to 4 million, should, after deportation and concentration in east, be exterminated," the cable read.

Riegner asked the U.S. government to pass the cable to Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the World Jewish Congress.

However, the State Department said it would not pass on cables from private sources. Instead, it checked with the Vatican and the Red Cross, which both said they didn't know of any plans to exterminate Jews.

"Never did I feel so strongly the sense of abandonment, powerlessness and loneliness as when I sent messages of disaster and horror to the free world and no one believed me," Riegner later wrote. Despite these feelings — or perhaps because of them — Riegner devoted his life to Jewish causes and human rights.

After World War II, Riegner was active in interfaith efforts and established the main Jewish group involved in dialogue with the Catholic Church, the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.

He also was a key player in the early years of the United Nations, where for a time he headed the consortium of nongovernmental organizations. □