



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Hamas, Palestinian police clash

Hamas militants prevented Palestinian police from arresting a Hamas leader. Armed Hamas supporters clashed Thursday with Palestinian security forces who tried to arrest Abdel Aziz Rantissi in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas backers also threw five grenades at police. Three police officers and two bystanders were injured.

### U.N. assembly blasts Israel

The U.N. General Assembly passed two non-binding resolutions condemning Israel. In a special emergency session Thursday initiated by Palestinian supporters, the assembly called for international monitors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The body also expressed support for a declaration by signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention condemning Israel's presence in the territories and its alleged mistreatment of Palestinian civilians.

### Bush issues terrorism update

President Bush issued an update on the first 100 days of the war on terrorism.

In the report, released Thursday by the White House, Bush discusses freezing the finances of terrorist groups accused of attacking Israel and of American charities accused of funneling money to those organizations.

The report does not stipulate new actions that will be taken to combat terrorism in the Middle East.

### Palestinians blast United States

Palestinian officials attacked the "blind" U.S. backing of Israel. At a meeting of the Arab League on Thursday in Cairo, the officials issued a statement saying, "The blind following of the United States behind the Israeli leadership has led to the death of hundreds of innocent people and the injuring of thousands of others."

The statement also accused the United States of rewarding Israeli extremism and giving Israel the "green light to proceed in a direction that is against the international community's rules."

The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Wednesday, Dec. 26.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### International meeting considers ways to help poor Argentine Jews

By Florencia Arbiser

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — On the same weekend that Argentina's economy minister, Domingo Cavallo, was telling the International Monetary Fund in Washington how urgently the country needs help to weather its economic crisis, a related seminar was beginning here.

"Confronting Poverty: Solutions, Experiences and Projects" was organized by the Latin American Jewish Congress, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Tzedaka Foundation and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The two-day conference held earlier this month was called to discuss ways to help the approximately 50,000 Argentine Jews who live below the poverty line, many of them victims of the country's wrenching economic crisis.

"The myth is definitely over: There are poor Jews," Manuel Tenenbaum, director of the Latin American Jewish Congress, said at the opening session.

About 650 participants — including 200 who came from other Latin American countries, the United States and Israel — attended sessions and workshops linked to the concept of "new poverty" in Latin America, particularly in Argentina, which has the largest middle class in the region.

The conference came just weeks before the issue of poverty exploded on the streets of Buenos Aires, where rioting broke out earlier this week over the nation's faltering economy.

The concept of "new poor" refers to people who used to belong to the middle class but could not survive the economic and political policies the government implemented in the 1990s.

These policies — while they led to some short-term gains — had negative longer term effects. Many middle-class Argentines lost jobs, closed shops, went into debt and auctioned off their houses. Small businessmen, small industrialists, state employees, professionals: All were affected.

"Members of the Jewish community are the test case of these policies" because they are disproportionately represented in the middle class, said Bernardo Kliksberg, head of the Inter-American Initiative for Social Capital, Ethics and Development at the Inter-American Development Bank.

"In the 1990s, seven million middle class Argentines became poor," Kliksberg said, adding that only 25 percent of today's Argentina is middle class, as opposed to 53 percent in 1960.

According to Kliksberg, 300 Jewish families now live in shantytowns, while another 1,700 live crowded in small rooming houses.

At the unemployment office of the AMIA community center — the most important in the country for the Jewish community — the situation is changing dramatically. AMIA has received 500 work applications a month in 2001, as opposed to 1,000 for all of 2000.

Some 70 percent of the applications are coming from the young generation, according to Kliksberg.

"The situation is alarming — in the last two years, social assistance grew from 4,000 cases to 20,000," Kliksberg said.

Among the prominent figures who came to Argentina for the conference were Enrique Iglesias, president of the Inter-American Development Bank; Avi Beker, director of the World Jewish Congress; Chaim Chesler, treasurer of the Jewish Agency

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel seeks U.S. envoy's return

Ariel Sharon asked President Bush to send envoy Anthony Zinni back to the region. The Israeli prime minister made the request in a communique sent earlier this week, Army Radio reported. A Palestinian source said Zinni might return to the region after Christmas.

In another development, Zinni met with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington on Thursday to report on his failed effort to establish an Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire.

According to State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, Zinni will return to the Middle East when "he believes that his presence can be effective in moving toward a durable cease-fire."

### Israel withdraws some tanks

Israeli tanks withdrew from the West Bank city of Nablus. Israel also pulled out of two neighborhoods in Ramallah on Thursday.

But tanks remained in positions near Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah. The tanks took up positions in Ramallah two weeks ago, following terrorist bombings in Haifa and Jerusalem that killed 26 people and wounded hundreds.

### Hamas denies plan to halt terror

A senior Hamas official said there had been no decision to suspend suicide attacks against Israel. Hamas has "absolutely not called an end to the operations," Khaled Mashaal said Thursday in Beirut. A day earlier, a Hamas official in the West Bank said the group was considering such a halt.

Mashaal made the announcement at a conference in Beirut that brought together some 250 delegates from various Arab countries to show their support for the intifada. A representative of Islamic Jihad also vowed to continue attacks on Israel.

for Israel; and Rabbi Israel Singer, president of the World Jewish Congress. Members of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Organization of American States also attended.

"I am worried for the future of this Jewish community," said Jeffrey Wohlberg, rabbi of Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, who worked for three years in Argentina.

For Kliksberg, the key to helping Argentine Jews is sending an SOS to the Jewish world.

Beker, of the World Jewish Congress, agreed: "Today the Jews in Argentina are suffering. They are a community in distress. We have to put this issue on the world Jewish agenda because the Jewish world is not yet aware enough." □

## Congress approves aid for Israel, Palestinian people — but not P.A.

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Congress may hope to penalize the Palestinian Authority for its failure to curb terrorism, but humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people remains intact in America's foreign aid bill.

The House passed the Foreign Operations Appropriation bill Wednesday evening by a 357 to 66 vote. The Senate approved it by unanimous consent on Thursday.

The United States is expected to send \$75 million to the Palestinians. That would be distributed through the United States Agency for International Development, and no money would go directly to the Palestinian Authority.

While many pieces of legislation have threatened to block economic aid from going to the Palestinian Authority, none of the bills targets the aid designed to improve Palestinian infrastructure and environment.

"What we are trying to do is not cut off needed services" for the Palestinian people, "when they are not the ones anyone wants to target," an official with a Jewish organization said.

The \$15.6 billion foreign aid bill provides \$2.7 billion in economic and military aid to Israel and close to \$2 billion for Egypt. The bill did not please Sen. Robert Byrd (D.-W. Va.), chair of the Senate's Appropriations Committee, who said the U.S. should "use foreign aid as a tool to leverage peace" between Israelis and Palestinians.

The bill includes a provision urging President Bush to review Palestinian Authority compliance with its peace agreements with Israel. The bill also suggests the president should impose sanctions on the Palestinian Authority and its president, Yasser Arafat, if he does not rein in Palestinian violence.

That language is a compromise worked out after Sept. 11, when Bush administration officials asked Senate leaders to eliminate binding language that would force the president to assess Palestinian compliance and impose sanctions.

The language had passed the House and had strong support in the Senate. However, Secretary of State Colin Powell urged lawmakers to abandon it after the Sept. 11 attacks, saying it was "counterproductive" to the government's efforts to woo Arab states for a coalition against terrorism. The language ultimately was changed in conference committee.

Congress passed a similar measure earlier this month in the wake of suicide attacks in Israel, calling on President Bush to suspend relations with Arafat unless there is a concerted effort to fight terrorism. That legislation also was non-binding.

Under the aid bill, Israel will 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 increase military aid to Israel by \$60 million a year and cut economic aid by \$120 million a year over a decade.

The bill does not include \$800 million in supplemental aid the United States promised after Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in May 2000.

The foreign operations legislation also included language that would deny funding to the International Red Cross unless it recognizes its Israeli counterpart, Magen David Adom. Israel's humanitarian relief movement uses a red Star of David as its symbol. It is barred from the Red Cross movement — which currently recognizes only the cross, crescent and Persian emblems — because of pressure from Arab and Muslim states. □



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Jewish agencies get funding

Jewish agencies will receive millions in U.S. aid to run social service projects.

Nearly \$3.7 million for five social service projects to be run by Jewish agencies was included in a bill for health, education and labor programs that Congress passed this week.

### Holocaust research proposed

U.S. lawmakers proposed forming a foundation to complete research on Holocaust-era assets.

Sens. Gordon Smith (R-Or.) and Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) introduced a bill Wednesday to create a foundation that will research such assets, in the United States and worldwide, and will house a database of victims' claims for restitution. A presidential commission recommended in January that such a foundation be formed to examine the fate of assets that came into the possession of the U.S. government.

### Olim expected from Argentina

Israel expects an increasing number of immigrants from Argentina because of economic unrest.

Israeli officials made the announcement Thursday after looting erupted in Buenos Aires over the nation's faltering economy.

### Two Prague shuls evacuated

Prague's Maisel and Pinkas synagogues were evacuated Thursday. The precaution was taken after the city's Jewish community headquarters received an anonymous bomb threat by phone. Police searched the synagogues but found nothing suspicious.

### Anthrax scare for former SS man

A former Nazi SS guard received a parcel suspected of containing anthrax.

The parcel, which was sent to 90-year-old Anton Malloth, was found to contain a white powder that proved to be harmless, according to the Czech News Agency. Malloth was sentenced to life imprisonment in Germany this year for murdering a Jewish prisoner at the Terezin ghetto in 1944.

### Ground Zero workers go Israeli

Clean-up workers at Ground Zero got a taste of Israel. Israeli chef and TV personality Gil Hovav prepared a traditional Israeli breakfast Wednesday for firefighters, policemen and construction workers at Ground Zero. Working out of Nino's Restaurant in Manhattan, Hovav explained the ingredients of shakshuka, an Israeli dish of fried eggs and tomato sauce.

"Are you brave enough to eat a spicy Israeli omelette?" he asked a fireman. Two firemen from Brooklyn said the food was different, but tasty.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Jews worry that 'baseless' report on 9/11 could be a blow to Israel

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — American Jews have been complaining that a four-part series on Fox News last week insinuated that Israeli intelligence had foreknowledge of the Sept. 11 terror attacks but didn't tell American authorities.

Israeli officials have called the stories "totally baseless," and the reports were not picked up by other media outlets. Still, some American Jews are concerned the report will foster negative images of Israel that they feared in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.

"In the conspiracy media world and the hate groups, its going to have lots of legs," said Alex Safian, associate director of the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, or CAMERA.

The series, reported by Carl Cameron in Washington, alleges that Israeli intelligence may have had foreknowledge of the Al Qaida terrorist attacks because Israelis have been spying on the movements of Arabs in the United States.

"There is no indication that the Israelis were involved in the 9/11 attacks, but investigators suspect that the Israelis may have gathered intelligence about the attacks and not shared it," Cameron said in the first segment of the series.

Israeli officials denied the spying charges, and said that most of the Israelis rounded up after the Sept. 11 attacks were held for minor visa infractions and have since been released.

Later parts of the series accuse an Israeli telecommunications company, Amdocs Ltd., of not protecting private call records and billing data, which Fox said might have hindered the American investigation into the terrorist attacks.

A second Israeli telecommunications firm, Comverse Infosys, is accused of illegal moves in providing private phone information to the Israeli government.

Critics say the pieces offer no on-the-record sources and rely heavily on innuendo and hypothesis.

Other charges against Fox News — which Jewish groups felt generally has been fair in its reportage on Israel — is that the station did not seek on-camera comments or rebuttals from Israeli officials or the companies cited, and that it recycled previously aired stories. However, American Jewish and Israeli officials are baffled about what might have led Fox or Cameron to pursue so controversial a story on the basis of evidence they regard as so flimsy.

Jewish groups that have spoken to reporters following up on Cameron's charges have been told that American government sources have debunked the allegations. Virtually no other American media organization has run a piece on the Fox allegations — a sign that the story lacks merit, Jewish leaders say.

A Fox News spokesman said, "We stand by the story," but would not go into further detail. American Jewish leaders and Israeli officials said they are holding conversations with Fox News representatives, but refused to elaborate.

Jewish organizations have been receiving frantic calls from Jews concerned that the reports may fuel anti-Semitism. In the first days after the Sept. 11 attacks, Jewish organizations feared attempts to link the attacks, and Al Qaida's hatred of the United States, to U.S. support for Israel.

While such linkage has been successfully refuted, those fears have been reawakened by the Fox report. Fox "comes to the conclusion that if maybe" the Israelis "spied, they had the information and didn't share it," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "That's insidious. It almost said the Israelis were responsible for what happened."

Foxman said the report falls just "one step below" Arab claims that Israel was responsible for the terrorist attacks. So far, there is no evidence that Arab countries or groups are incorporating the report into their anti-Israel propaganda.

"When a serious news outlet decides to run with a story that is factually incorrect, I think that more public damage is ultimately going to be done to the reputation of that news outlet than the target of the story," said Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Washington. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Many Israelis seek escape from the bitter taste of reality***By Jessica Steinberg*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Just as Yasser Arafat was announcing his intention to stop all Palestinian attacks on Israel this week, many Israelis were out buying lottery tickets.

Faced with the ongoing violence of the 15-month-old Palestinian intifada, Israelis are looking for an escape from reality.

The matzav, or situation, as Israelis refer to the violence, has taken its toll.

Just the same, Israelis appear remarkably resilient in their ability to function and look beyond a seemingly untenable situation. They use a combination of humor and chutzpah to deal with the disturbances of life.

The lottery has become one popular diversion.

Israelis have spent more than \$45 million for lottery tickets in the last few weeks, seeking to win a \$12 million jackpot courtesy of Mifal Hapayis, the state-run lottery.

On Tuesday, 12 lucky winners shared the prize, receiving about \$1 million each.

Every hour, when Israelis check radio updates to hear if there have been any new Palestinian suicide bombings, they hear a catchy jingle urging them to spend a few hard-earned shekels on a lottery ticket.

The lottery is but one example. Israelis will seek out most any diversion that will offer them respite from the matzav.

Malls, for instance, may be off-limits to wary American tourists visiting Israel, but they're packed with Israelis.

Over the Chanukah holiday, Israelis filled theaters, malls and shopping centers to entertain their children during the eight-day school break. Thousands of Israelis spent \$8.75 a ticket to see the recently released "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," being shown in English and in Hebrew at local theaters.

The book on which the movie is based is the top-selling paperback at Steimatzky's, an Israeli bookstore chain.

It isn't hard to understand why Israelis are looking for activities to divert their attention from the news.

If each hourly news broadcast doesn't begin with an attack, it opens with news of the 2002 budget, which government ministers are slashing in an effort to deal with the faltering economy.

Some Israelis have taken to museum-going to escape their woes. James Snyder, director of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, described it as a matter of seeking "culture in complex times."

A third of the museum's visitors used to be tourists, with the remaining two-thirds Israelis, half of those from Jerusalem. But the ongoing violence has taken a bite out of the tourist business.

As a result, museum officials were not expecting any big numbers in July, when they opened an exhibit of treasures from China.

They were pleasantly surprised to have 3,000 people at the opening. It was a similar story when the Chanukah Festival opened last week, as crowds of parents and children flocked into the museum.

"They're coming because it makes them feel good," Snyder said. "In a crazy way, we're kind of expected to help them sustain a sense of robustness and vitality."

Israelis seeking an escape have been driving down to the Dead Sea in increasing numbers, according to hotel managers in the

region. "Israelis are getting lots of deals these days," said Daniel Shalev, a manager at the Grand Nirvana Resort.

There are currently 15 hotels on the Dead Sea, providing a total of some 4,000 rooms in need of occupants.

Most of the hotels are offering three-night deals and two-for-one spa treatment packages in an effort to entice Israeli visitors.

"Israelis aren't afraid to drive down here, and they know they can get rest and relaxation," said Gabi Beck, manager at the newly built Royal Hotel. "That's what everyone needs these days." □

**Trade an Arafat for a bin Laden? Sept. 11 cards have political ring***By Amy Sara Clark*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Baseball players. Pokemon monsters. Terrorists. What do they have in common?

They're featured in trading cards.

Late last month, a line of "Anti-Terrorist Trading Cards" came on the market. While suspected terrorists make up the lion's share of the cards, the series also features U.S. leaders, U.S. weapons, forms of biological warfare and heroes and symbols such as rescue workers, the White House and the Statue of Liberty.

Detractors say the cards' creators wanted to make a quick buck off the Sept. 11 terror attacks on New York and Washington. But one of the cards' creators, who wishes to remain anonymous, says he designed them to disseminate accurate information about suspected terrorists.

"For me it's strictly to get the information out," the creator said. Because of the cards' high production cost and relatively low price, "the cards won't have a high profit margin," he said.

The series categorizes Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat as a suspected terrorist. The cards' creator, who is Jewish and has family in Israel, is aware that not everyone considers Arafat a terrorist.

"He's a terrorist leader; he's a confirmed murderer," the creator said. "This man has shaken hands with our president. It's not something I think should be happening. So by putting their names on these cards we're just letting people know that we think they are terrorists."

Arafat's is only one of 42 cards in the "suspected terrorist" category, but it's the one featured on the company's Web site.

The creator of the anti-terrorist cards said his company was aware of the Topps series, but didn't realize that it includes an Arafat card.

To depict him "as anything other than a terrorist is a lie," the creator said, adding that hearing about the Topps card reinforces his belief that his own cards are badly needed.

So far, business has been slow. The company has done little advertising, and its Web site, which is the sole method of distribution, has received just 500 hits and one order since its launch several weeks ago.

The cards' creator remains hopeful, however, figuring that business will pick-up in the next few months through word of mouth. Meanwhile, he focuses on his mission:

"I'm going to get the American people interested and get them angry at the right people." □

(The "Anti-Terrorist Trading Cards" can be seen at [www.terroristtradingcardcentral.com](http://www.terroristtradingcardcentral.com). The Topps cards can be seen at [www.topps.com](http://www.topps.com).)