



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 9

Monday, January 14, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel details Iran-Palestinian ties

Israeli officials say they convinced the United States and Egypt of Yasser Arafat's direct ties with Iran in an arms-smuggling attempt.

Israeli intelligence officials who last week visited Washington for discussions regarding Israel's capture of the Karine A weapons ship, said U.S. officials no longer doubt that Arafat personally initiated contacts with Iran that led to the smuggling attempt, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Egyptian officials drew the same conclusion after reviewing abridged evidence presented by Israel, the paper added. Israeli security officials warned that Iran is trying to alter the strategic balance in the region by establishing ties with the Palestinian Authority as well as by drumming up support among Israeli Arabs.

French Jews protest attacks

Some 1,000 people demonstrated in France against recent anti-Semitic attacks. Sunday's protest took place in the Paris suburb of Creteil, site of a recent firebombing of a Jewish school.

Among those addressing the crowd was Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld, who said French officials "underestimated" the seriousness of the attacks.

P.A. changes story on arrests

Palestinian officials revised the number of suspects they arrested in connection with a failed arms-smuggling attempt.

On Saturday, the Palestinian Authority said one, not three, officials had been arrested. But Israel said the suspect, Fuad Shubaki, who is responsible for military acquisitions in the Palestinian Authority, is in Ramallah but not under any form of detention.

When the P.A. initially said three suspects had been arrested, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon rejected the claim as a lie. Israeli officials said that two of the suspects supposedly arrested were not even in the Palestinian autonomous areas.

JDL members indicted

A leader and a member of the Jewish Defense League were indicted. JDL Chairman Irv Rubin and his follower, Earl Krugel, face federal charges of plotting to bomb a Southern California mosque and a U.S. congressman's office. If convicted, they could face life in prison. [Page 3]

Jewish politicians gather in Israel to discuss issues of security, terror

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Put some 60 Jewish politicians from 23 different countries together with Knesset members, and there's bound to be some debate.

But when the issue at hand is security, terrorism and its recent effects on Israel and the United States, there tends to be more agreement than discord, even among seasoned politicians.

"We in the U.S. now have a better idea of what terrorism is and what Israel has gone through all these years," Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) said. "I'm not here to tell Israelis what to do but, as part of the U.S. partnership, to offer any kind of assistance or work with them in helping Israel in its time of need."

The legislators were attending the Sixth International Conference of Jewish Ministers and Members of Parliament. The event is sponsored by the Israeli Forum, a nonprofit organization that works to increase contacts between Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

During the recent five-day event, participants heard from their own numbers as well as Israeli Knesset members, writers, academics and security officials.

They discussed Jewish education, immigration to Israel and the status of women in Israel.

They heard about contemporary anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism and the formation of an international commission, created by Israel's Foreign Ministry, to combat the former.

Most of the time, however, the participants discussed the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the security situation and — the most popular topic — terrorism.

"I'm one of the few Jewish politicians in Austria," said Elizabeth Pittermann, a member of the Vienna City Council who is also a former member of Austria's Parliament.

"There are so few Jews in Austria that no one really knows about Israel and what it is to live with terrorism," she said. "So I need to make them understand these kinds of issues back home."

While 27 of the participants live in North America, which has a vibrant and secure Jewish life, some legislators have had very different experiences as Jews — and as Jewish elected officials.

"It's not an easy time to come to Israel, because the situation is very difficult," said Matyas Eorsi, a Hungarian Parliament member. "But I'm Jewish, and it's important for me to show that by coming here."

Eorsi, 47, who grew up in an assimilated Jewish home, first visited Israel for the Forum's 1991 conference.

Following the establishment of Hungary's independence, that first visit created a solid connection to the Jewish state and Judaism.

"This trip is as much about solidarity as it is for me to learn more about Israel and the situation in the Middle East," he said.

For many participants, the conference earlier this month was a solidarity mission to Israel, like dozens of other organized trips that have brought Jews to Israel during the past 15 months.

For others, it was an opportunity to gain insider information about the security situation, and consider how to apply the lessons back home.

The American politicians — particularly the New Yorkers — repeatedly referred to the Sept. 11 terror attacks. These attacks, they said, have sharpened their attitudes

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel debates Gaza demolitions

Some Israeli Cabinet members criticized the army's demolition of dozens of Palestinian refugee homes in the Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reprimanded the Labor Party ministers, including Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who criticized the demolitions, saying at Sunday's Cabinet meeting the critics were merely serving the interests of Palestinian propaganda.

According to the Palestinians, Israel destroyed some 70 homes in southern Gaza on Jan. 10, displacing 100 families. But the Israeli army said only 21 buildings were razed and that all were abandoned. Israeli army officials said the structures had been used by armed Palestinian gunmen to launch attacks on Israeli targets. The demolitions were carried out after a Hamas attack last week killed four Israeli soldiers.

Israel destroys P.A. ships, runway

Israeli forces attacked the Gaza seaport and airport over the weekend. The attacks came in retaliation for a Palestinian attack on an army outpost last week that killed four Israeli soldiers.

Israeli commandos attacked the seaport on Saturday, destroying a command center and storage facilities, as well as sinking two boats belonging to the Palestinian naval police. Israel forces also destroyed the runway at the airport.

'Jew boy' apology offered

An Israeli legislator apologized for calling the U.S. ambassador a "little Jew boy." Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer and Knesset member Zvi Hendel held a reconciliation meeting last week at the home of Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, where Kurtzer accepted Hendel's apology, Israel Radio reported.

Hendel made the remark in the Knesset last week to protest Kurtzer's comment that Israel prefers investing in settlements rather than helping the disabled.

about the importance of terrorism, national security and the relationship between the United States and Israel.

Most of them have supported Israel unequivocally during their years in government, particularly since the Palestinian intifada began 16 months ago.

Several reiterated their belief that no one, including the State Department and the White House, should tell Israel how to handle its security threats.

Some took it a step further, commenting that the United States can learn from Israel's experience.

"Sept. 11 proved that we all live in the same lousy neighborhood," Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) said. "We must learn a common language in order to learn how to respond."

The terror attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were a rude awakening for Americans, Engel added.

"Now the U.S. has a better idea of what terrorism is and what Israel has gone through," he said.

"That creates a shared experience."

So too for Argentina's deputy minister of justice, Agustin Zbar, who talked about the two terrorist attacks in Buenos Aires in the 1990s that targeted Jewish institutions and killed more than 100 Argentines.

"You can recognize any Jewish institution in Buenos Aires because of the huge barricades in front of them," Zbar told the group.

"They protect against the 'third bomb' that everyone is expecting to happen at any time."

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), whose district includes where the World Trade Center once stood, said governments should think long and hard about how to deal with terrorism sensibly and intelligently.

Besides rebuilding and helping constituents directly affected by the Trade Center attacks, he wants to make sure that people don't "go off the deep end" disregarding democratic values or civil liberties.

"It's an important time, especially now, to talk to parliamentarians from other countries," Nadler said. "It provides an important context for what we have to deal with in the states."

On Jan. 7, a range of Israeli Knesset members and Jewish lawmakers presented their perspectives on the war against terrorism.

From the Israeli side, there was a range of politicians --both Jewish and Arab -- from the right and left.

Among them were Israeli Arab legislator Ahmed Tibi, Minister Without Portfolio Dan Meridor and legislator Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, a member of the secular Shinui Party.

Tibi talked about differences in defining terrorism; Meridor looked at the support terrorists receive from Iran and Iraq; and Lapid paralleled the fanaticism of the Nazis to that of Muslim terrorists.

As a group, they discussed the ramifications of the intifada, whether Israel can leave its West Bank settlements and how military action -- including targeted assassinations of suspected Palestinian terrorists -- affects the overall security situation.

Nevertheless, none of the politicians pretended to know how to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Nobody from the outside can tell Israel how to handle this," said Pittermann, the Austrian council member.

"That can only be solved by the Israeli government and its people and considering what's best for the country."

What she does want is to be able to explain to her Austrian colleagues and constituents the types of problems the Jewish people faces.

"I want them to understand what a pity it is that no Jewish population can live in peace," she said.

In many ways, the conference is about public relations, and what message these politicians will bring home.

"I plead to the Israelis to pay more attention to international public attention, because it's a tool to change government," said Eorsi, the Hungarian lawmaker. "I want the Arab countries to understand that Israel isn't alone, and to make the world understand that Israel will never, ever, be sacrificed." □



Daily News Bulletin

Ivan Michael Schaeffer, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.

© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

Supremacists rally in Pa.

White supremacists held a rally in York, Pa. Matthew Hale, leader of the World Church of the Creator, spoke Saturday to about 70 supporters inside a library in York. While he spoke, riot police separated his supporters and anti-racist protesters.

Witnesses reported minor confrontations in the streets throughout the afternoon. Police said 25 people were arrested, mostly for disorderly conduct.

German neo-Nazi faces charges

The former leader of Germany's far-right National Democratic Party was charged with inciting racial hatred. Gunter Deckert was charged last Friday for allegedly making anti-Semitic comments in Nuremberg in August 2001.

Prosecutors did not reveal his comments, but said they echoed the hateful rhetoric of the Nazi era. Deckert has already served time in German prisons for charges related to Holocaust denial.

Shoah exhibit causes stir

An exhibit set to open in New York that features Holocaust-related artwork is generating controversy. Organizers of "Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art," to be shown at the Jewish Museum starting March 17, say the exhibition seeks to present Nazi horrors in a thought-provoking manner.

But some critics were outraged by the exhibit, which includes a Lego concentration camp kit and collages with bar codes that turn into images of Holocaust victims.

The exhibit also angered the Denmark-based toy maker Lego, whose name appears on the box of the concentration camp set. "The permission to use the Lego name was given under false pretense. We certainly do not sponsor this," said a company spokesman.

German U.N. official charged

A German U.N. official was charged with hate crimes. Matthias Gueldner, a public information officer, also was charged with arson for writing anti-Semitic graffiti on his Jewish neighbor's door in New York City and then setting the door on fire.

He admitted his actions to police in December. Gueldner's attorney says he is mentally ill and should be allowed to return to Germany for psychiatric treatment.

Cyrus Vance dies at 84

Cyrus Vance, who helped negotiate the Camp David Accords, died Saturday in New York at 84. Vance was President Carter's U.S. secretary of state when Israel and Egypt signed the historic accords, which led to the 1979 peace treaty between the two nations.

L.A. Jewish militants indicted for roles in alleged bomb plot

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A federal grand jury here has indicted two members of the Jewish Defense League for allegedly plotting to bomb a Southern California mosque and a U.S. congressman's office.

If convicted, the militant group's chairman, Irv Rubin, and a follower, Earl Krugel, could face life in prison.

Rubin and Krugel are being held in solitary confinement at a Los Angeles detention center.

According to federal officials, the men told a JDL member who became a government informant that they believed "Arabs need a wake-up call," and that the JDL needs to let people know they are "alive in a militant way."

Both men, who are scheduled to be arraigned Jan. 22 in a U.S. District Court, maintain their innocence.

Lawyers for Rubin, 56, and Krugel, 59, the group's West Coast coordinator, described the charges as a hysterical reaction to the Sept. 11 attacks — and that the two had been entrapped by an FBI informant.

The 24-page indictment charges that Rubin and Krugel recruited a person, described as someone who joined the JDL in his teens, to bomb the King Fahd Mosque in Culver City, Calif., and the field office of Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.).

Issa is an Arab American of Lebanese descent who is one of the more vocal congressional critics of Israel.

A third potential target was the Muslim Public Affairs Council, which is headquartered in a high-rise building in midtown Los Angeles, but Rubin allegedly struck this target from the list.

During the course of a dozen meetings of the three alleged plotters between October and December, the unidentified informant contacted the FBI and agreed to wear a concealed tape recorder during future sessions.

Rubin and Krugel were arrested on Dec. 11, after the informant delivered five pounds of explosive powder to Krugel's garage, according to the indictment.

In separate phone interviews, defense lawyers for the two men attacked the government's charges.

The second count, which accuses Rubin of conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction against a U.S. government office, is "outrageous," Peter Morris, who represents Rubin. "They're trying to raise this to the level of the Sept. 11 attacks."

Mark Werksman, Krugel's lawyer, said that "this case was initiated by, prodded along and overseen at every stage by an FBI informant. The informant provoked discussion about things that Krugel and Rubin would never have done on their own."

Jewish organizations, including the local Jewish federation, the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, have expressed their horror at the alleged plot.

Steve Goldberg, a friend and one-time lawyer of Rubin, criticized mainstream Jewish organizations, which he says have already "tried and convicted" the two men "without a fair hearing."

Rubin was named national chairman of the militant JDL in 1985 by its founder, Rabbi Meir Kahane. Since then, by his own count, Rubin has been arrested 40 times and has been investigated for murder and attempted murder.

He has never been convicted of a felony. □

Religious court seeks advice on missing

NEW YORK (JTA) — A representative from a leading U.S. rabbinical court is seeking Israeli rabbinical opinions on men missing in the World Trade Center disaster.

The purpose of the move by the Beit Din of America is to declare the eight missing men dead according to Jewish religious law, allowing their widows to remarry.

The Beit Din of America is the supreme halachic court for Orthodox Jewry in the United States. □

Environment slate tries to show it's easy to be green and Zionist

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A new Zionist party wants to mix blue and white with green.

For the first time, an environmental Jewish party has gathered enough signatures to get onto the ballot for the elections.

The Green Zionists Alliance got the boost from more than 600 signatures on a petition, which qualified them to run in the upcoming World Zionist Congress elections.

A promotional campaign is intended to get even more name recognition and support.

There are 145 seats in the U.S. delegation of the Congress, which determines the policies, priorities and programs for Zionist organizational activity through the World Zionist Organization.

Party organizers hope to get at least one seat on the Congress. Such a seat would give them a voice in one of the Congress' main functions, determining how the \$350 million budget of the Jewish Agency for Israel is distributed.

The Jewish Agency is involved in Israeli immigration and absorption, and it runs religious, political and educational programs throughout the world.

The launching of the party is more than just a call for environmental improvements in Israel, members of the party slate say.

A Jewish environmental party also can attract unaffiliated Jews to play a role in the Zionist movement, they argue.

"Five Minutes of Your Time Will Save Israel's Environment and Breathe New Life Into The Zionist Movement," the group's Web site claims.

Although other parties include environmental issues in their platforms, there never has been a strong voice raising these issues in the Congress, according to Mark Jacobs, director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, a New York-based group.

American and Israeli environmentalists first seriously discussed the idea of launching a party last year.

While teaching at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies in Israel, Rabbi Michael Cohen talked with the institute's then-director, Alon Tal.

The two decided the time had come for the Zionist movement to become a leader in ecological conservation, says Cohen, a longtime environmental activist and the rabbi emeritus at Israel Congregation of Manchester Center, Vt.

"Zionism stands not just for returning the people to the land, but also the care of that very land so that the Jewish people may thrive on it," he said.

The Green Zionists Alliance says it will call for the creation of an environmental officer in the Jewish Agency who will have authority to review the ecological implications of Zionist-funded activities.

Other platform issues include:

- Directing a "sizable portion" of Zionist movement-sponsored programs to projects and organizations designed to improve Israel's environment.

- Supporting the Jewish National Fund in preserving open spaces, confronting Israel's water crisis and promoting river restoration, forestry and other environmental initiatives.

- Asking for all Zionist educational institutions and programs supported by the Jewish Agency to integrate ecological education topics into their curricula and programs.

The Congress also selects the board of the JNF, which helps determine environmental policy in Israel.

Just how many seats the party can hope for still depends on how many people register and then actually vote.

There will be more than 100,000 registered voters, said Karen Rubinstein, executive director for the American Zionist Movement, which administers the elections for the U.S. delegation.

This year, numbers of voters are expected to be down from the last elections in 1997, possibly because of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Organizations had a difficult time getting their campaigns out, and people seem to be more focused on U.S.-based programs, Rubinstein said. □

Refugees still stuck in Europe, although U.S. lifted moratorium

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — New security regulations imposed after Sept. 11 could keep hundreds of Jewish refugees stranded in Europe for months.

Many of the refugees already have been waiting in Moscow and Vienna for entry into the United States.

After the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, all refugee interviews and processing stopped because of security issues. Processing and admissions have started up again, but at a very slow pace, activists say.

The cessation — the first in U.S. history — was part of the United States' general re-evaluation of immigration policies after Sept. 11.

While the moratorium was still in place, Leonard Glickman, president of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, called it "an overreaction" from the federal government.

The annual review of how many refugees will be admitted this year was completed on Nov. 21 and approved by President Bush, two months later than normal.

But there was no movement on the refugees until December, when new security rules were finalized.

As a result, only 61 HIAS-sponsored refugees were admitted to the United States in the last three months of 2001. By comparison, 1,995 HIAS-sponsored refugees were admitted during the same period in 2000.

"We're waiting for the U.S. system to get unstuck," said Gideon Aronoff, Washington representative for HIAS.

In November, 470 people in Moscow and 119 refugees in Vienna who had been approved for admission to the United States were awaiting the lifting of the moratorium, according to HIAS.

In addition, the cases of more than 200 Jewish refugees who had yet to be approved for admission were pending in Vienna.

Jewish leaders and heads of other refugee organizations have met with White House and State Department officials several times recently to press for a speedy admittance of the refugees.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration at the State Department says it is moving as quickly as possible given the new security procedures.

Airplane flights of refugees, which in the past have held hundreds of people, now are limited to 30 passengers. New arrivals are fingerprinted at their point of entry and name checks are performed against the databases of various intelligence community and law enforcement agencies. □