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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli killed in ambush

Palestinian gunmen killed one Israeli and wounded another in a West Bank ambush.

The Al-Aksa Brigades, affiliated with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for Monday's attack.

The group said it was avenging the death of one of its leaders, Raed Karmi, in a blast the militants blamed on Israel.

Karmi, who was killed earlier Monday, was head of the Fatah militia in Tulkarm. He had admitted to heading a cell responsible for the murders of seven Israelis, including two Tel Aviv restaurant owners killed in Tulkarm last year.

He was wounded in an Israeli assassination attempt in September that killed two other Fatah members.

U.S. envoy delaying mission

U.S. envoy Anthony Zinni reportedly is delaying his return to the Middle East.

Israel Radio quoted unnamed U.S. officials as saying Zinni would wait until after Israel concludes internal discussions regarding its relationship with the Palestinian Authority following Israel's recent seizure of a weapons ship. Zinni had been scheduled to return to the region on Friday.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on Monday to discuss Peres' contacts with the Palestinians. Peres suspended discussions with the Palestinian Authority following the Jan. 3 capture of a ship smuggling weapons to the Palestinians, but the Foreign Ministry's director general continued contacts, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Funders group opens Israel office

The Jewish Funders Network plans to open a Jerusalem office this spring. The New York-based group, which serves Jewish philanthropists and family foundations primarily in North America, is seeking to strengthen Israel's growing philanthropic sector while also working with European Jewish philanthropists.

The new office also is intended to encourage American Jewish philanthropists to partner with Israeli funders. Despite Israel's recession, "we see this as a time of growth and a time to invest in Israel," said Mark Charendoff, the network's executive director.

Reconstructionists tapping one of their own to head seminary

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has, for the first time, hired one of its own graduates as president.

The appointment of Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz, 40, to head the Reconstructionist movement's seminary is seen by many as a sign of maturation of North America's smallest and youngest Jewish stream.

A congregational rabbi, Ehrenkrantz has been a national leader in the movement, serving as immediate past president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

However, unlike many seminary presidents — particularly the current heads of the Conservative, Reform and modern Orthodox seminaries — Ehrenkrantz is not an academic.

As the RRC's fifth president, Ehrenkrantz — who is to start this summer — assumes the helm at a time of transition in the Reconstructionist movement, which is headquartered in suburban Philadelphia.

The movement's congregational arm, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, is currently looking for a new executive vice president — the top post has been vacant since November with the departure of Mark Seal and a replacement is not expected to start until the fall.

Reconstructionism, which views Judaism as an "evolving civilization," was founded in the 1930s by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, who was Conservative.

It has grown dramatically in the past 15 years, with 100 congregations now, compared with 52 in 1986.

In addition, the movement has recently produced its own prayer books, launched a summer camp and is in the process of creating a youth group.

The college has also grown, increasing its entering rabbinic student class from 10 to 18 and adding new academic programs.

The first movement to have Bat Mitzvahs and approve rabbinic officiation at same-sex commitment ceremonies, Reconstructionists have long been seen as quirky, politically progressive and on the cutting edge.

But they have also embraced many traditional rituals that the liberal Reform movement — until recently — had rejected.

However, as the Reform movement — which is America's largest stream of Judaism — has become more open to tradition and has sought to create more intimate, participatory worship experiences, some see fewer practical distinctions between Reform and Reconstructionism.

Ehrenkrantz, who starts this summer, will replace Rabbi David Teutsch, who has led the college since 1993.

Despite his lack of academic experience, officials within the movement say that Ehrenkrantz's pulpit experience will be just as valuable for the college — whose primary function is training rabbis — as would scholarly credentials.

Ehrenkrantz has served as a congregational rabbi at Montclair, N.J.'s Bnai Keshet — where he is known as "Rabbi Dan" — for 13 years.

Under Ehrenkrantz's leadership, Bnai Keshet, which has approximately 200 membership units, pioneered a family education program replicated at more than 20 other congregations.

He also oversaw a successful \$2 million capital campaign there.

Ehrenkrantz brings "a strong representation of the day to day life of rabbis working in the Jewish community," said Rabbi Richard Hirsh, executive director of the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel stops house demolitions

Israel decided to stop demolishing Palestinian homes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told a Knesset committee Monday that the damage inflicted on Israel's public image by the recent demolitions in Gaza outweighed the policy's effectiveness.

He said the decision to stop demolitions was made in a meeting with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer. Meanwhile, Jerusalem municipal bulldozers on Monday destroyed at least nine illegally built Arab structures in eastern Jerusalem.

Israel high on unemployment list

Israel has the second-highest unemployment rate among Western nations. Based on a survey of 30 industrialized nations, Israel came in behind Spain, the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* reported. According to October 2001 figures, unemployment in Israel was 9.4 percent, compared with Spain's 13 percent.

Intifada cost Israel \$3 billion

The Palestinian uprising has cost Israel more than \$3 billion since it erupted in September 2000. According to figures released by the Bank of Israel on Sunday, the economic damage totaled some 4 percent of Israel's gross domestic product. The report also said that in addition to direct financial losses caused by the violence, there were indirect losses, such as a drop in foreign investment.

Sea of Galilee gets boost

Heavy rain and snow that fell last week in northern and central Israel raised the level of the Sea of Galilee by more than 6 inches. According to the Jerusalem Post, rising waters in the Jordan River and its tributaries are expected to give a further boost to the still-depleted waters of the sea.



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Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. Hirsh described Ehrenkrantz as "an interesting combination of a very precise thinker and serious learner — he takes ongoing learning seriously."

Ehrenkrantz has "been practicing in the field, which is a big plus," said Marilyn Price, an RRC board member who sat on the search committee.

Not being a scholar "would be a major issue if weren't someone of substantial intellect, but Rabbi Ehrenkrantz has shown himself to be a person who is of substance, thoughtful and deeply rooted in the sources of our tradition," Teutsch said.

Ehrenkrantz acknowledges his limited academic credentials.

"I'm lucky to come into an academic institution filled with talented, capable academic professionals," he said. "Because I don't bring academic credentials, I need to make sure the academic credentials elsewhere are maintained at the highest levels."

"The choice of a rabbi who has had over a decade of experience in the congregational rabbinate is a good and courageous choice for an academic institution that is devoted to the training of rabbis," he said.

As president, Ehrenkrantz said he expects to see the movement and college continue to expand, and hopes to implement a center for Jewish education and center for "Jewish creativity in the arts."

"Much of the way into Jewish spiritual life can be achieved through a variety of arts," Ehrenkrantz said.

He said he would also like to see the college focus more attention on Israel-Diaspora relations — particularly the different ways Jewish identities are constructed in Israel and North America — as well as social action.

The college, which trains rabbis and cantors and has a small masters and doctorate program, already has an ethics center and center for gender studies.

Ehrenkrantz grew up in Berkeley, Calif., and the Westchester County suburbs of New York. Although his family belonged primarily to Conservative synagogues, its religious outlook was closer to Reconstructionism, he said.

He also was active in the Habonim Dror Zionist youth movement.

He is married and has two children, ages 8 and 10. □

Middle East lawmakers meet in South Africa for 3-day talks

By Michael Belling

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — South Africa has made a bid to play a stronger role in the Middle East peace process.

But it remains unclear whether the bid, highlighted by a three-day set of peace talks held here last week, will translate into the increased role that the South African government appears to want.

The three days of meetings hosted by South African President Thabo Mbeki focused largely on the South African experience of conflict resolution that led to a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994.

Former South African Foreign Minister Roelof "Pik" Botha and Roelf Meyer, the National Party's chief negotiator with Nelson Mandela's African National Congress in the early 1990s, were among the leaders of the apartheid regime who participated in the talks.

Mbeki was present throughout, along with several members of his Cabinet. Among them was the minister of water affairs and forestry, Ronnie Kasrils, a Jewish politician who recently came out with a controversial call for South African Jews to join him in signing a petition on the Middle East that was regarded by many South African Jews as pro-Palestinian.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders who participated in the meeting in South Africa called for a return to peace talks without preconditions.

The group also called for an immediate freeze on Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Among these participants were Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, Knesset speaker Avraham Burg and Israel's former justice minister, Yossi Beilin. Their declaration is not expected to have an effect on either side's leadership. □

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish journalists meet in Russia

A four-day conference for Jewish journalists in the former Soviet Union opened in Moscow.

"The time is ripe to invest in Jewish journalism in the former Soviet Union," which is an important tool of developing the local Jewish community, said Jerry Hochbaum, the head of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, which is sponsoring the event.

Schools linked to terrorism

The Anti-Defamation League claims some charter schools in California have links to terrorist organizations.

The ADL wrote to the California State Superintendent of Education urging the state to suspend its funding and investigate the activities of GateWay Academy charter schools because of alleged links to the Muslims of the Americas, which the ADL calls a virulently anti-Semitic and homophobic group.

Muslims of the Americas has been accused of serving as a corporate front for Al-Fuqra, a militant Islamic group.

ADL also charges the school has violated the First Amendment by teaching religion in the state-funded school.

Latin Jewish prize established

A group of anonymous Jews from Latin America established the first "Jewish Nobel Prize." The award will be given to Jews who have excelled in the categories of culture and art, social sciences, liberal arts, applied sciences and Judaism, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

Each winner will receive \$1 million. Nominations for candidates are slated to take place during the next few months.

Teetotalers spout anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism pervaded a recent anti-alcohol demonstration in Russia.

The teetotalers held signs saying, "If you drink wine and beer, you are a lackey of Tel Aviv," and yelled anti-Semitic slogans, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the former Soviet Union.

Jew is real 'Survivor'

A Jewish soccer player won \$1 million and the title of "Sole Survivor" on a reality TV show. Ethan Zohn, 27, won "Survivor: Africa," the CBS prime-time program, last week.

The fan favorite beat out a 57-year-old woman in the 39-day test of endurance, strategy and popularity.

Zohn kept his nice-guy image throughout the show, seen by an average of 19 million people, refusing to become like other contestants who try to outwit each other to avoid being voted off the program.

OBITUARY

Cyrus Vance, who helped broker Camp David peace deal, dies at 84

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Though he served as U.S. secretary of state during one of the most pivotal times in Arab-Israeli relations, Cyrus Vance did not make a forceful impression on the American Jewish leadership.

Instead, he is remembered as a quiet, thoughtful public servant who worked steadfastly behind the scenes.

Vance, who died Saturday in New York at age 84, served as the nation's chief foreign policy administrator under President Carter, when the United States negotiated the Camp David peace accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978.

Despite his position, however, Vance was seen as a minor character in Middle East diplomacy at the time.

"He was not that forceful and stayed in the background," said Morris Amitay, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee during the Carter administration. "Carter was too much of a micro-manager to give anyone that much influence."

Amitay, now a private consultant, said Vance's style differed greatly from that of his predecessor, Henry Kissinger, and that Israeli activists did not deal with Vance often.

"The watchword then was to use Congress to influence policy," Amitay said.

Vance also did not get along with Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, as the two struggled for influence with the White House. But the two did work together during Camp David, trying to negotiate a compromise between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

The first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state was signed on the White House lawn the following year.

"He was a man of principle, whose quiet contributions were often the difference between success and failure," Secretary of State Colin Powell said Sunday in a statement.

Vance's principles led to his most famous decision, his 1980 resignation protesting Carter's decision to use force to try to rescue American hostages in Iran. The plan failed, leaving eight U.S. servicemen dead.

Hyman Bookbinder, the former longtime Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee, said Vance was not anti-Jewish, but neither was he a champion of Jewish causes or Israel. □

Neo-Nazi charged with incitement

BERLIN (JTA) — A German right-wing extremist has been charged with inciting hatred against Jews.

The former leader of Germany's far-right National Democratic Party, 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, 62, has already served time in German prisons for charges related to Holocaust denial.

He has been dropped from the membership rolls of the National Democratic Party, which now is headed by Udo Voigt.

The German government is nearing a decision on whether to ban the party for hatemongering.

Like the other two largest extreme right-wing parties in Germany — the Republicans and the German People's Union — the NDP currently avoids making illegal statements, such as Holocaust denial, that might give the federal government grounds to ban them.

The right-wing extremists tend to describe themselves as victims who eventually will overcome an oppressive government campaign. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**For Arab soldiers in Israeli army, fatal attack shows risks, hardships***By Gil Sedan*

HAIFA (JTA) — The Christmas decorations were still hanging in the Abu-Ghanem residence here when the unbearable news reached the family: Their son, Hanna, was among the four Arab soldiers killed last week in a Palestinian attack on an Israeli army outpost.

The joyful decorations soon were replaced with signs of mourning — the erection of a traditional mourning hut, black dresses, the silent sound of weeping and a constant flow of visitors.

Death has been a guest in too many Israeli and Palestinian homes during the past 16 months, the heavy toll of the Palestinian intifada. But it is not often that Arab soldiers die in serving the Israel Defense Force.

The four soldiers killed last week near Kibbutz Kerem Shalom near the southeastern border of the Gaza Strip served in the Desert Patrol Unit, a special unit that in recent years has been in charge of security patrols along the Gaza Strip.

The other three soldiers killed -- all Bedouin -- were Ashraf Mazarib, Ibrahim Hamadieh and Mufid Sawayid.

Most of the soldiers in the Desert Patrol Unit are Bedouin, members of nomadic tribes who through centuries of desert wandering have acquired special pathfinding skills.

Since its early days, the IDF has recruited Bedouin pathfinders. The unit also includes Christian and non-Bedouin Arabs.

Likud legislator Moshe Arens long has been a champion of enlisting Arabs, particularly Bedouins, in the IDF. He followed the spirit of his ideological teacher, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who believed that despite the national conflict over the land, Arabs and Jews could live in harmony under Jewish rule.

Two and a half years ago, then-Defense Minister Arens set a target of enlisting 800 Bedouin soldiers this year.

However, the intifada, the Israeli Arab riots in October 2000 — which led to the deaths of 13 Arab citizens at the hands of Israeli police — and ongoing discrimination against Arabs and Bedouin in Israel have cut that number considerably. It now is doubtful that there even 200 Bedouin will volunteer for the IDF this year.

In addition, increasingly radicalized Arab legislators and propaganda efforts backed by the Palestinian Authority are further eroding Arab citizens' sense of allegiance to Israel.

One major force working against Arab enlistment is Israel's Islamic Movement. The radical group — major factions of which reject the State of Israel — reportedly raised more than \$30,000 during Ramadan for scholarships for Bedouin students.

Thus, when a Bedouin youth must choose between studying with all expenses paid by the Islamic Movement or enlisting for potentially dangerous military service at a meager salary, the choice is rather clear.

Arens, head of the Knesset lobby on behalf of the Bedouin, recently raised some \$30,000 through the Abraham Fund for a project to encourage 20 Bedouin high schoolers to enlist, promising them help with their studies both before and after army service.

"It's a modest effort," Arens says. "The government has to understand that this is both a humanitarian and a political mission."

The decreasing number of Arab volunteers also is a function of the general atmosphere among Israel's Arabs. Last year, an Arab

soldier, a resident of Acre, was killed in a clash with Hezbollah on the border with Lebanon.

The qadi, or religious judge, of Acre refused to provide religious services during his funeral, and leaders of the Arab community in Acre called the soldier a "traitor" for enlisting in Israel's army.

While never fond of army or any other kind of national service, Arab society in Israel has become even less tolerant toward Arab soldiers in recent months.

Reserve Gen. Rafael Vardi recently completed a special report on the state of the Bedouin soldiers. Vardi reported that, rather than winning praise for going against the general anti-Israeli trend in Arab society, Bedouin soldiers suffer discrimination in the army, enjoy few opportunities for professional mobility and face difficulties in finding security-linked jobs after they are discharged.

That is only part of a general situation of neglect and discrimination against the non-Jewish segments in Israeli society. Bedouin villages suffer from a lack of land reserves and housing development projects, Bedouin towns in the Negev have the highest unemployment rates in the country and education and health projects are far below the national average.

Some Bedouin settlements even lack running water and electric power.

"Only when a tragic incident occurs do they remember us," says Mohammad Sawayid of Bar-Ilan University, a Bedouin from northern Israel. Sawayid is convinced that young Bedouins join the army not as a means of livelihood but because they want to integrate into Israeli society.

"Unfortunately, they do not enjoy full civil rights," Sawayid said.

The attack near Kerem Shalom is hardly likely to increase the number of Bedouin recruits. Young Arabs have learned the hard way that once they join the army they face not only strong criticism from their own society, but — like all Israeli soldiers — the danger of death.

Before the intifada, patrols along the Gaza border used to be easy. Now they remind many of the deadly patrols in southern Lebanon before Israel withdrew from its security zone in May 2000.

Bedouin activists worry that the deaths of the four soldiers could further erode the already weakened will of Bedouin youth to enlist.

"Nowadays, in effect, there's no enlistment," says Salameh Abu Ghanem, a veteran enlistment activist among Bedouin in the Negev Desert and an adviser to National Infrastructures Minister Avigdor Lieberman.

"In another year or two, the Bedouin Desert Patrol won't be a Bedouin unit, or will simply cease to exist, because there won't be any more Bedouin ready to serve," Abu Ghanem predicts.

The government at times appears detached from the political atmosphere among the pro-integration elements in Arab society, not honoring the wishes of the bereaved families from the Kerem Shalom attack. Shortly after news of the soldiers' deaths emerged, representatives of the bereaved families announced that they did not want the killing avenged, "so that no more blood will be spilled."

Forty-eight hours after the attack, however, the IDF demolished more than 50 houses in Gaza's Rafah refugee camp in response to the attack.

No blood was spilled, but the bereaved families' plea for peace was ignored. □