

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Cease-fire a 'primary objective'

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said a cease-fire with the Palestinians is his "primary objective."

In a televised speech Sunday night, Sharon also said he is willing to release Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, who has been under virtual house arrest since December. [Page 4]

### Sharon waives demand for quiet

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon convened the Security Cabinet to weigh Israel's response to the latest Palestinian terror attacks.

During Sunday's meeting, Sharon said he had waived his long-standing demand for seven days of calm before talks on a U.S.-brokered truce plan could begin because an "extremely high level of terror" and Israel's military offensive made "complete quiet" impossible.

The Cabinet meeting took place after 13 people were killed in Palestinian terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Netanya on Saturday night.

In the Jerusalem attack, 11 Israelis were killed and at least 54 injured in a suicide bombing at a popular cafe. [Page 4]

### Muslim group sues U.S.

A Muslim charity that is based in Texas filed a lawsuit after the Bush administration froze the group's financial assets for allegedly funneling money to terrorists.

The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development denies any ties with Hamas.

The lawsuit filed last Friday in Washington contends the Bush administration violated the group's constitutional rights.

The group calls itself the largest Muslim charity in the United States.

### Cantor turns himself in

A New York-based cantor turned himself in last Friday to face charges that he sexually molested his nephew.

Howard Nevison of Temple Emanu-El is accused of abusing his nephew at least three times during visits to the boy's Philadelphia home.

A judge is slated to hear preliminary evidence on Friday. Nevison's lawyers say he plans to contest the charges.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Envoy's return to region eases vice president's Middle East trip

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Peace envoy Anthony Zinni's return to the Middle East is seen as an attempt to address mounting international pressure on the Bush administration, and ease the Mideast trip of Vice President Dick Cheney.

After saying that he would not send Zinni back to the region until Palestinian attacks on Israel fell substantially, President Bush reversed course March 7 and said Zinni would return to the region.

Zinni's second mission to the region ended in early January, at which time he set several conditions for anti-terror action by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Arafat largely has ignored the demands. Yet American officials believe that without some gesture, Cheney's trip to the region — where he plans to discuss the American war on terrorism and a possible attack on Iraq — would have been consumed by Arab calls for American action in the escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Concern for the Cheney trip "was the key element," said David Makovsky, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"They didn't want the Cheney visit to be diverted and marred by Arab-Israeli issues."

Indeed, Cheney was at the president's side when Zinni's trip was announced. He noted that the Arab-Israeli conflict was "not the only thing" on his agenda.

Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, said sending Zinni back to the region eases the pressure on Arafat to control violence.

"Having Zinni return before violence stops is a concession to the terrorism that is going on," he said.

A State Department official, however, said that is not the case.

"The violence got so out of hand, we wrote ourselves a new parameter for sending Zinni back," the official said.

"In sending Zinni right now, we can remove any excuses Arafat may claim for not doing what he must do."

In early December, on Zinni's first visit to the region, Palestinian suicide bombers launched massive attacks Israel, forcing Zinni to return to the United States.

On his second visit, a Palestinian ship was caught transporting tons of weapons and ammunition from Iran.

Some people question what options the Bush administration will have if Zinni again proves ineffective.

But other analysts say Zinni is the best, if not the only, choice right now.

Stephen Spiegel, a political scientist and a scholar for the Israel Policy Forum, said it was a mistake to announce that Zinni would not return until violence was quelled, since it allowed terrorists to veto any diplomatic progress.

In the end, it was precisely the increasing violence, and international pressure to stop it, that forced Bush to make the move.

Since Zinni was recalled in January, the Bush administration has kept rhetorical pressure on Arafat to curb terrorist attacks as the first step toward a cease-fire.

But all signs are that the policy has been ineffective.

Knowing that the United States has asked Israel not to harm or overthrow him, Arafat has waited out the Israeli siege in his Ramallah headquarters, and has taken

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Arab ministers meet in Cairo

Arab foreign ministers discussed a Saudi peace plan during weekend meetings in Cairo.

The ministers considered a draft agenda for an Arab summit to be held in Beirut on March 27-28, when Arab leaders are expected to discuss the Saudi proposal, which offers Israel recognition from the Arab world if it withdraws to the borders that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War.

Palestinian officials say the proposal also demands the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees displaced during the 1948 War of Independence.

### Israeli opposition blasts U.S.

The leader of the Israeli opposition blamed the Bush administration for escalating Israeli-Palestinian violence. Yossi Sarid, of the left-wing Meretz Party, questioned why U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell waited until last week to criticize Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy.

### Katsav meets Annan

Israeli President Moshe Katsav and Kofi Annan had a "warm" meeting last Friday, according to an Israeli official.

Katsav asked the U.N. secretary-general to use his influence to tell the Palestinians to halt terror attacks on Israel, the official said. Annan reportedly agreed, but also said that Israel should restrain its use of force. Katsav replied that Israel is using only the force needed to protect its civilians, the official said.

### Israeli Arabs hold strike

Israel's Arab community held a strike to show their solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Organizers said Sunday's strike was "the most widely supported in the history" of the Israeli Arab community.

They added that 85 percent of the community heeded the call and did not go to work.

virtually no steps to stop Palestinian violence against Israel.

Instead, his mainstream Fatah faction has emerged lately as the leading militant group, carrying out virtually all the terror attacks of recent weeks through its Tanzim and Al-Aksa Brigade militias. Hamas got back into the fray with an attack in the Gaza Strip on March 7.

With United States' activity reduced to verbal salvos, the spotlight has shifted in the past few weeks to initiatives from the European and Arab states, which are less palatable to Israel.

As more states sought ways to temper the conflict, each pressed for U.S. intervention.

The United Nations, European Union and Egypt all have called on the United States to get involved, as have U.S. newspaper editorials.

The New York Times last week called on Israel to drop its demand for an end to violence and terrorism before diplomatic negotiations can resume.

Despite the demands for U.S. action, expectations for Zinni's mission are low.

"The feeling is that stopping things from hemorrhaging is something," Makovsky said.

Zinni also might be able to restart Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, Makovsky said, but little more than that.

Zinni is likely to focus on getting Israel and the Palestinian Authority to move straight to a work plan laid out by CIA Director George Tenet — including security discussions and arrest of terrorists — to ensure a cease-fire.

That is designed to allow for a cooling-off period, followed by the Mitchell plan of confidence-building measures leading to a resumption of peace talks.

"The first step toward any political solution has got to be the Tenet plan," Bush said in announcing Zinni's return.

Because the Tenet plan requires various anti-terror steps from Arafat initially, American officials hope the Israeli government will go for it.

From Israeli, it demands an end to the policy of targeted killings of Palestinian militants and the removal of troops from areas under Palestinian Authority control.

The United States also is expected to urge Israel to use some \$225 million in frozen P.A. tax funds to aid the Palestinian economy, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Pressure on Israel has been stronger in the last week, as State Department officials have openly questioned Sharon's tactics.

Most worrisome, from Washington's perspective, were Sharon's comments last week that peace talks cannot resume until Israel hits the Palestinians so hard that they realize the strategy of violence and terror is counterproductive.

"Prime Minister Sharon has to take a hard look at his policies to see whether they will work," Powell said March 6 before a House subcommittee.

"If you declare war against the Palestinians thinking that you can solve the problem by seeing how many Palestinians can be killed, I don't know that that leads us anywhere."

Analysts say Powell is not the only one to criticize Sharon's remarks.

Since Sharon stated openly that there currently is no diplomatic horizon with the Palestinians, only a military one, dissent has risen markedly among Israelis, who feel Sharon has failed in his primary responsibility to stop Palestinian terror.

"Sharon's policy was controversial in Israel, and a controversial step to many Americans," Spiegel said.

Some originally took Powell's comments, and other State Department rhetoric last week that was critical of Israel, as a sign that the Bush administration was returning to its original policy of "even-handed" condemnation of attacks by either side.

Others worried that Powell's comments were an attempt to garner Arab support for Cheney's agenda, reviving images that first made Jewish leaders nervous when the United States courted Arab support for its anti-terror coalition after Sept. 11.

"If you play good cop, bad cop, America can stand strong with Israel but have a corridor for the Arab world," JINSA's Neumann said. "That corridor is the State Department."

But many feel Sharon's comments warranted a rebuke.

"Clearly the situation, coupled by Sharon's comments, forced Powell's hand," Makovsky said. □



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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](http://www.jta.org).  
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## JEWISH WORLD

### Food aid to Russia may drop

A U.S. Jewish group is likely to see its food distribution program in Russia decrease by two-thirds for the next 12 months.

The decrease in the aid distributed by the Global Jewish Assistance and Relief Network would be due to U.S. budget tightening, according to Eli Livshitz, the group's director.

The Relief Network distributed 35,000 tons of food across Russia to needy individuals this year, regardless of religion, as part of a U.S. government-funded food aid program.

The group is one of five organizations distributing U.S. food aid in Russia.

### McDonald's fried on beef tallow

Some kosher groups may receive money from McDonald's in a french fry settlement.

The money would be part of an apology from the American fast food company for using beef tallow in its french fry oil without disclosing that fact.

The main recipients of the reported \$10 million settlement will be groups representing vegetarians.

Children's nutrition groups, as well as those representing Hindus and Sikhs, will also receive some of the money.

### FSU teachers learn Passover

Fifty Jewish day school teachers from across the former Soviet Union completed a seminar on how to teach Passover.

The seminar in Minsk, Belarus, which ended last Friday, was developed by the resource center of Ohr Avner, the educational arm of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Former Soviet Union.

Ohr Avner runs more than 60 day schools and educational institutions in the FSU with an enrollment of more than 13,000 children, according to federation leaders.

### Russian fired for anti-Semitism

A teacher in Russia was recently fired for hurling anti-Semitic insults at a student.

The firing in Russia's Ural Mountains region came after the 10th-grade student and his parents complained to city officials about the repeated incidents.

### Ex-Johannesburg mayor dies

A former mayor of Johannesburg who was active in the Jewish community was found dead March 7 in a hotel room on the outskirts of the city.

David Neppe is believed to have committed suicide, police said.

Neppe, 56, succeeded his father, Max, as mayor of Johannesburg.

## ARTS & CULTURE

### Oscar race marred by charges that a leading film ignores anti-Semitism

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — As next week's voting deadline for Oscar voting draws near, this year's exceptionally fierce competition has been enlivened — or demeaned — by last-minute charges that the brilliant, schizophrenic mathematician whose life is portrayed in "A Beautiful Mind" is a "Jew-basher."

The incendiary accusation was first made public last week by Internet gossip columnist Matt Drudge.

Drudge, best known for first publicizing the Monica Lewinsky scandal, charged that the director and screenwriter of "A Beautiful Mind" purposely omitted mention of Nobel laureate John Nash's alleged anti-Semitism, "cognizant that the chances of winning Oscar gold would be lessened if their film's protagonist was a basher of a religion that is disproportionately represented in the Academy voting pool."

Akiva Goldsman, the film's screenwriter, countered in an impassioned phone interview that the charges deliberately twist and exploit Nash's bizarre delusions during his decades-long struggle with schizophrenia.

Drudge declined to identify the source that drew his attention to the charges or comment on widespread suspicions that a rival contender for Oscar honors put him up to it, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

The charges in question are based on quotes compressed in two pages of Sylvia Nasar's biography of Nash, on which the film is loosely based.

"Before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war," Nasar wrote, "[Nash] explained he was a left-wing Palestinian Arab refugee, a member of the PLO and a refugee" making a dent in "Israel's border, petitioning Arab nations to protect him from 'falling under the power of the Israeli state.'"

At a later point, "The grandiose delusions in which Nash was a powerful figure, the Prince of Peace, the Left Foot of God and the Emperor of Antarctica," were replaced by fears of persecution, Nasar wrote.

Nash believed, according to the biography, that "the root of all evil, as far as my personal life is concerned, are Jews, in particular John Bricker," apparently a colleague, "who is Hitler, a trinity of evil."

Nash concluded that he had to petition the Jews, and also mathematicians and Arabs, "so that they have the opportunity for redress of wrongs," which must, however "not be too openly revealed."

To screenwriter Goldsman, a man "very proud of my Jewish heritage," holding a paranoid schizophrenic responsible for these ravings is "like blaming a man with cancer for losing weight."

Goldsman said he had talked at some length with Nash, now 73 and whose schizophrenia appears to be in remission, and had detected no indication of anti-Semitism.

Has he questioned Nash about his earlier anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli statements, Goldsman was asked. "Nash has no remembrance of this or any other of his delusions," Goldsman replied.

To the accusation that he and director Ron Howard had deliberately scrubbed Nash's anti-Semitic delusions, as well as his adultery and homosexual episodes, Goldsman noted that the film was never intended as a literal portrayal of Nash's life, but rather aimed at capturing the essence of his personal struggle.

In this year's Academy Awards race, there are few clear-cut favorites in the major categories.

"The Lord of the Rings" leads with 13 nominations, while "A Beautiful Mind," nominated for best picture, director, actor and screenplay based on previously published material, is tied with "Moulin Rouge" with eight nominations.

"The decidedly nasty nature of this year's subterranean Oscar campaign — which in some quarters has taken on the tone of a brutal political campaign — has been a frequent topic of conversation," notes the Hollywood Reporter. "There have always been whisper campaigns directed against films, but this year the whispers seem to have turned into shouts." □

## Cease-fire is 'primary objective,' Sharon says after terror weekend

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For the first time in months, there are signs that Israel and the Palestinians may be able to resume seeking a diplomatic solution to their conflict.

The signs emerged just days before the U.S. envoy to the Middle East, Anthony Zinni, was due to return to the region on a mission spurred by spiraling Israeli-Palestinian violence.

That violence — including two terror attacks Saturday night that killed 13 people — had left many believing that Zinni would achieve as little as he had during his two previous attempts at peacemaking last December and January.

But, at the same time, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took steps that may help Zinni's mission bear fruit.

In a significant policy shift over the weekend, Sharon announced he is dropping his demand for seven days of quiet before entering cease-fire negotiations.

Dismissing a right-wing outcry that he is reversing his long-standing policy of not negotiating under fire, Sharon said he was acting out of national responsibility — and from the realization that seven days of quiet are currently unachievable.

Defending the policy shift, Sharon said in a televised speech Sunday night that a cease-fire with the Palestinians is his "primary objective." He added that he has an obligation to take all necessary steps to achieve the cease-fire and that he is ready to take any criticism for the policy.

In another major development that may smooth the way to a resumption of diplomacy, Sharon also said in the speech that he is willing to release Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, who has been under virtual house arrest since December.

Sharon said Arafat had fulfilled Israel's demands by arresting those who allegedly killed Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi last October.

"I said once they were arrested I would let him leave," Sharon said. "Once you achieve your demands, you must carry out your commitments." Sharon added: "This is not capitulation. We stuck to our demands, and they were met."

He said the siege on Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah would not be lifted immediately because of a suicide bombing in Jerusalem on Saturday. "But at the end of the day, I believe the conditions will exist in which we can do this," he said.

The prime minister's remarks were welcomed by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, who last week criticized Sharon's statements that the Palestinians must be "hit hard" until the learn they will achieve nothing through terror.

At the same time, Powell made clear that during Zinni's mission, the United States expects that Israel and the Palestinians will take meaningful steps to implement a cease-fire plan drawn up last year by CIA Director George Tenet. Zinni is not coming back just to travel between Ramallah and Jerusalem, Powell said.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was reportedly involved in efforts to try to calm the situation on the ground ahead of Zinni's arrival. There were also reports that the two sides would hold meetings as early as Monday.

But the question remained whether events on the ground will enable Sharon to follow through on his announcements — and whether Arafat will be able, and willing, to reduce the level of Palestinian attacks. Both Israel and the Palestinians absorbed heavy

casualties over the weekend in another cycle of Palestinian terror attacks and Israeli military actions. Thirteen Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Netanya on Saturday night.

In the Jerusalem attack, 11 Israelis were killed and at least 54 injured in a suicide bombing at a popular cafe.

Cafe Moment in the Rehavia neighborhood was filled with young people when a 22-year-old Palestinian detonated a massive bomb at 10:30 p.m., gutting the restaurant.

The cafe is located some 200 yards from the office of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon where, earlier in the evening, some 300 Israeli peace activists had gathered to demand an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In the Netanya attack, two Palestinian terrorists shot dead two Israelis and injured about 50 on Saturday. An Israeli civilian also was killed in the crossfire between police and the terrorists after the attack, which occurred in the city's seaside hotel district.

The names of the 13 people killed in Saturday night's terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Netanya were released Sunday.

The victims of the Jerusalem suicide bombing are Limor Ben-Shoham, 27; Orit Ozerov, 28; Avraham Haim Rahamim, 29; Livnat Dvash, 28; Dan Emunei, 23; Tali Eliyahu, 26 — all of Jerusalem; Uri Felix, 25, and Nir Borochoy, 22 — both of Givat Ze'ev; Danit Dagan, 25 of Tel Aviv; Natanel Kochavi, 31, of Kiryat Ata; and Baruch Lerner, 29, of Eli.

The two people killed in the Netanya shooting attack were identified as Israel Yihye, 27, of Bnei Brak, and Avia Malka, a 9-month-old infant from South Africa whose family was visiting relatives in Israel. Israel launched reprisals following the two terror attacks. As part of those reprisals, Israeli helicopters pounded Arafat's compound and an adjacent security headquarters in Gaza early Sunday morning.

In another incident on Saturday night, an Israeli soldier on leave was killed by an army jeep. The Israeli had gotten out of his car after it came under fire from an ambush. Israeli troops arriving at the scene mistook him for a terrorist and ran him over.

On Sunday, an Israeli was killed and another wounded Sunday in a shooting attack at a Gaza Strip settlement. The man killed was Staff Sgt. Kobi Eichelboim, 21, of Givatayim.

Meanwhile, Israeli air, sea and land bombardments continued in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinian officials said 42 Palestinians were killed in Israel's weekend military operations. Last Friday alone, more than 30 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed during Israeli raids on villages and refugee camps.

Ending the bloodiest week since the intifada began in September 2000, Staff-Sgt. Edward Korol, 20, was killed during fierce fighting in the Tulkarm refugee camp.

Among the 30 Palestinians killed in the fighting was a general in the Palestinian Authority security services. The Israeli raids aimed to destroy the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure.

The raids came after five Israeli teen-agers were killed and 23 others wounded by a Palestinian terrorist in a Gaza settlement on March 7. The five were killed when the terrorist cut through fences into the settlement, opened fire and threw grenades.

The dead were identified as Asher Marcus, Ariel Zana and Eran Picard, from Jerusalem; Tal Kurtzweil from Bnei Brak; and Arik Krobiak from Beit El. All were 18 years old.

On Sunday, Israeli troops withdrew from Tulkarm and took up positions at the entrance to the West Bank city. During the Israeli incursion in the Tulkarm refugee camp, some 1,300 Palestinians — some 200 of whom were armed — turned themselves in. □