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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel ready for West Bank pullout

Israeli forces prepared to pull out of several West Bank cities. Palestinian sources said dozens of tanks began pulling out of the city of Jenin and the neighboring refugee camp Wednesday.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said Israel would try to withdraw its forces from most Palestinian towns by Sunday.

However, he said the withdrawal from Ramallah and Bethlehem would depend on the handover of wanted terrorists who have taken refuge in Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah and at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Bush justifies Israeli incursions

President Bush said he understands why Israel remains in Ramallah and Bethlehem. Talking to reporters Thursday during a meeting with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Bush said he had received assurances from Israel that the incursions into Ramallah will end when those accused of killing Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi are handed over, and that Israel will leave Bethlehem when armed gunmen in the Church of the Nativity surrender.

Bush also said he is satisfied with the pace of Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon "gave me a timetable and he's met the timetable," Bush said.

The president met with Powell, who returned to Washington hours earlier from a mission to the Middle East, to assess the crisis there. The president shrugged off criticism that Powell's mission had failed.

U.N. discusses Jenin camp

The U.N. Security Council met Thursday to discuss investigating whether Israel committed war crimes in the Jenin refugee camp. The U.N. Middle East envoy voiced outrage when he toured the camp Thursday.

"We are shocked," Terje Roed-Larsen said after the tour. "This is horrifying beyond belief. Just seeing this area, it looks like there's been an earthquake here, and the stench of death is over many places where we are standing."

In another development Thursday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Security Council that multinational peacekeepers should be sent to the region.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Trove of captured documents a 'smoking gun' for Arafat, P.A.

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — These battleground spoils cannot explode or kill, but Israel considers them important benefits of its military operation in the West Bank: Thousands of documents, pamphlets and posters that provide written evidence of the Palestinian Authority's massive involvement in terrorism.

The documents were captured at places like P.A. President Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah and other P.A. offices, offices of the P.A.'s Preventive Security Service and Arafat's Tanzim militia, other Palestinian organizations throughout the West Bank and the PLO's Jerusalem headquarters of Orient House.

Israeli intelligence officers are just beginning to analyze the abundance of material, but the Israel Defense Force rushed to publicize parts to bolster Israel's argument that Arafat himself has been directly involved in terrorist operations and stands at the head of an enormous terror entity.

Israeli officials were said to be shocked by the extent of P.A. complicity in terrorism.

"In the West Bank, the more we enter, the more we understand," an Israeli military official told the New York Times. "This is coming directly from Arafat personally."

Some of the documents were publicized by the IDF spokesman in their original form, in Arabic. The Palestinians claim that the documents are part of an elaborate Israeli fabrication operation, pitting their word against the IDF's.

The most important finding is that senior Palestinian Authority officers were actively involved in terrorism, providing logistical and financial assistance even to supposedly oppositionist elements such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Within the more mainstream Palestinian organizations, Arafat oversees two parallel and competing structures, each with its own funding, chain of command and capability for directing bombing attacks, the IDF told the Times. The cells that carry out the attacks are located in eight regions — Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Kalkilya and Gaza. Both structures report to Arafat and receive his financial backing.

"One of the most telling revelations of the documents is that the broadly accepted view that Arafat leaves the details to others is completely incorrect," said Michael Widlanski, a Hebrew University researcher who monitors the Palestinian press. "The documents repeatedly show that Arafat is in day-to-day control of the details of all his organizations, relaying the information for comment to the senior members of his military branches."

Arafat signed off on various invoices for the Tanzim, the militia of Arafat's Fatah Party which has been responsible for a large number of terrorist attacks, including the bombing near Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market last Friday that killed six.

The IDF exposed documents showing that Arafat personally signed checks for Tanzim activists involved in terrorism. This, according to the IDF, contradicts Arafat's usual denial that he has any control over the Tanzim.

Other documents show militants within Arafat's Fatah requesting money for bomb and weapons parts, itemizing the cost of each component and how many bombs per week the organization plans to use.

Moreover, evidence from documents and captured terrorists indicates, according to the IDF, that the P.A.'s West Bank intelligence chief, Tawfik Tirawi, helped recruit, arm and dispatch terrorists for attacks inside Israel.

When given lists of "most wanted" terrorists — whom the Palestinian Authority is

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hamas military leader arrested

Israeli forces apprehended a Hamas military leader. Husam Badran, a leader of the Hamas military wing in Nablus, was detained and three other Palestinians were killed in an Israeli army operation Thursday in a village north of Nablus.

Bethlehem standoff continues

Palestinian officials cancelled a meeting with Israel on Thursday that was to discuss the standoff at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

Israel Radio quoted Palestinian sources as saying Israel refused their request to bring the European Union into the discussions.

Arms from Iran and Iraq found

Israeli forces discovered weapons from Iran and Iraq in Yasser Arafat's Ramallah headquarters. Israeli defense sources said the smuggled weapons included Soviet-made launchers for rocket-propelled grenades that were modified by Iraq and Iranian-made RPGs improved to pierce tank armor, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

The sources said the weapons, found during Israel's military operation in the West Bank, prove that the Palestinians continued to try to smuggle arms into the territories even after the capture of the Karine-A weapons ship in January.

Israeli beats odds in Bible bowl

A blind and deaf Israeli teen was one of two to win the annual international Bible quiz in Jerusalem. Avichai Sheli, 17, of Netivot, tied for first place with Meir Ben-Admon, 17, of Beersheba.

They topped 53 youths from 25 countries who took part in the annual Independence Day quiz. Sheli, who lost his sight and hearing in early childhood, said he plans to volunteer for the army when he graduates from high school.

obligated to arrest, under its agreements with Israel — Tirawi allegedly used the lists to warn the terrorists, so they could evade arrest. According to the IDF, Jamal Sawitat, the deputy head of the P.A.'s Preventive Security Service in Jenin, also constantly informed Islamic Jihad of the names of terrorists Israel was after.

Mortars and heavy machine guns, as well as yarmulkas and other disguises for suicide bombers, were found even at the headquarters of Jibril Rajoub, the head of Preventive Security in the West Bank who often is praised as a Palestinian moderate.

However, Israeli military officials did not say that Rajoub himself had directed specific attacks. Prior to the recent escalation of the situation, Rajoub often was mentioned as a possible successor to Arafat.

Some of the documents were found in the office of Fuad Shubaki, Arafat's financial aide. Shubaki allegedly masterminded the Palestinian attempt to smuggle arms from Iran on the Karine-A weapons ship that Israel seized in January. Palestinians had claimed that Shubaki's was a rogue operation and that he was under investigation for his role, but he is currently believed to be holed up with Arafat in his headquarters, along with several others of Arafat's closest aides and a host of wanted terrorists.

The army charged that members of Palestinian security services were directly involved in planning, and in some cases even perpetrating, attacks against Israelis.

Uzi Landau, Israel's minister of internal security, used the momentum to publish documents seized last year at Orient House, the Jerusalem headquarters of the PLO. Landau convened a press conference last week in which he exposed documents reinforcing the link between Arafat and the Tanzim. The documents show that Faisal Husseini, the late PLO official in charge of Jerusalem, was updated by Tanzim leaders — such as Atef Abayyat, who was later killed by the IDF — on attacks against Jews, and was asked to intervene to get more money for Tanzim operations.

Police confiscated a letter sent by Husseini to his lawyer on September 28, 2000, the day Ariel Sharon made his controversial visit to the Temple Mount that the Palestinian Authority says provoked spontaneous riots that grew into the intifada.

Husseini's letter, however, mentions the "Al-Aksa Intifada" — before it had even begun. According to Landau, this proves that the intifada was pre-planned.

"These documents, many of them signed by Arafat, are more than a smoking gun," said Landau. "They are a smoking pen, a pen dripping blood held by Arafat."

Landau said the Palestinian leader "cannot deny these documents, that show he and his top aides planned and financed acts of terror."

But the Palestinians have done just that, challenging the documents' authenticity and hoping that the world will not take too much notice — as, indeed, it hasn't.

"No one can say they are 100 percent authentic," Hassan Abdel Rahman, the Washington representative of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, told the Times. "And in the past, Israel was able to take many expressions out of context and distort their meaning."

The IDF has posted some of the documents on its Web site, www.idf.il. The documents and intelligence provided to the Bush administration is more comprehensive.

Other major findings include:

- The Palestinian Authority was involved in the production of arms such as rocket-propelled grenades, which they are specifically banned from having under the Oslo accords.
- The Palestinian Authority was directly involved in orchestrating anti-Israel incitement.
- The Tanzim was deeply involved in daily Palestinian life, serving very much like a government within a government.

Documents shed light on the scope of corruption within the Palestinian Authority, with large amounts of money directed to public figures for personal favors or bribery, without sufficient control over the allocation of funds. According to the documents, this trend has actually worsened since the reports of corruption in the Palestinian Authority caused a stir about five years ago.

Most of the documents were handed over to the United States before Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in the region.

The drive was intended to halt American pressure on Israel to abandon its West Bank incursion and to convince the Americans that Arafat was indeed deeply and actively involved in terrorism. However, it quickly was overshadowed by Powell's mission on the ground. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Germany: Al-Qaida involvement?

Germany raised the possibility that Al-Qaida was behind an April 11 truck explosion at a Tunisian synagogue. If verified, the blast would be the first terror attack by Osama bin Laden's network since Sept. 11.

The number killed in the attack rose to 16 Thursday when a 15-year-old girl died of her injuries. Eleven of the dead were German tourists.

Austria to make payments

Austrian officials agreed to pay the country's Jewish community for communal property stolen or destroyed during the Nazi era.

Representatives from Austria's nine provinces agreed Thursday to pay about \$16.2 million in compensation for synagogues and other property.

Bill would cut PLO travel access

The U.S. Senate introduced a bill that would impose visa restrictions on Yasser Arafat and other PLO leaders. The bill, a revised version of legislation introduced in the House of Representatives this year, also would seize U.S. financial assets of the Palestinian Authority president as well as restrict the travel of the PLO's U.N. ambassador.

L.A. Times subscribers protest

Some Los Angeles Times subscribers are suspending their subscriptions to protest what they consider the paper's pro-Palestinian coverage.

In a move coordinated with local Jewish community leaders, about 1,000 subscribers suspended home delivery for at least one day. Times editors say their goal is to provide balanced coverage.

Britain to summon Saudi envoy

The British government said it would summon the Saudi ambassador to express displeasure with his poem praising Palestinian suicide bombers.

The poem praised Ayat Akhras, an 18-year-old Palestinian who blew herself up in a Jerusalem supermarket March 29, killing two Israelis and wounding 25.

Rabbi, teacher, editor dies at 82

Walter Wurzburger, a rabbi, teacher and editor, died Tuesday at 82. Wurzburger was past president of the Rabbinical Council of America and a member of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, a leading group dealing with the Vatican.

From 1967 until last month, Wurzburger taught philosophy at Yeshiva University. He also edited *Tradition*, an Orthodox intellectual quarterly, from 1962 to 1988.

Montreal Jews turn out en masse to support embattled Jewish state

By Bram Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — It may not have been as large as the rally in Washington, but Montreal Jews are proud that they brought more than 25,000 people — one-quarter of the local Jewish community — to a rally on Israel's Independence Day this week.

Considering that many of the 100,000 Jews at the Washington rally were bussed in from elsewhere in the United States, many Montreal Jews found their local turnout Wednesday quite significant.

The rally featured loud Israeli music, lots of flag-waving, speeches from spiritual and community leaders and a march through the downtown core. It also was significant because representatives from 35 ethnic communities turned out to support Israel.

"Israelis have been suffering for many years, and we would like to see them have a happier life," said Cecil Alfred, representing Montreal's Trinidadian cultural organization. "They should not be afraid when they wake up every day. And, in light of what happened Sept. 11, we would like to see a better society, one where all people can be safe."

Elsewhere in Canada, thousands took part in an Independence Day rally in Toronto on Wednesday.

There was "a sea of blue and white flags up Bathurst Street," Toronto Rabbi Moshe Shulman observed proudly.

In Montreal, a French Canadian supporter, waving a blue-and-white fleurs de lys of Quebec that mirrored Israel's national colors, said he came to support the Jewish people.

"My people have big hearts, and it was important for me to come and tell the Jewish people we are behind them," said Jean Rochefort. "Because they often feel sorry for the oppressed people of the world, many Quebecers support Palestinians as well."

"But the Jewish people have been oppressed since the beginning of time and I think they deserve the support of anyone who believes in a free, just world," Rochefort continued.

"Israel deserves to exist in safety and without constant fear. If the Palestinians really do want peace, these attacks against Israel must stop."

On the other side of barriers manned by dozens of police officers, some 100 pro-Palestinian demonstrators chanted and waved signs of their own. A group of anti-Zionist, fervently Orthodox Jews — who believe the Jews should not have a state until the Messiah arrives — held aloft banners with messages such as "Jerusalem: Undivided Capital of Palestine."

At one point, things got ugly when members of the protesters' group began shouting at the pro-Israel demonstrators. Riot police appeared, but scuffling was kept to a minimum.

Elsewhere, a small group of people calling themselves the Jewish Alliance Against the Occupation quietly waved placards reading "The Occupation Is Killing Us All" and "Dismantle the Settlements Now."

For many Montreal Jews, however, there was no doubt that their rally sent a powerful message.

"This is the largest pro-Israel rally in Canadian history," said well-known activist Rabbi Reuben Poupko, one of the event's organizers. "It sends a clear message to the world that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Israel, at a time when she needs her friends the most."

Also showing solidarity with Israel was Montreal builder Benjamin Sternthal, 30, who departed for Israel this week with a group of young adults that he organized with the help of the Federation CJA.

The group of volunteers will assist families of bombing victims and work as civil guards wherever needed.

Indeed, increasing numbers of young Montrealers are asking how they can help Israelis cope with the increasing violence and embattled atmosphere they face.

And, on Sunday, thousands of Jews are expected to travel to Ottawa to participate in a solidarity rally outside Parliament Hill. □

(JTA Correspondent Bill Gladstone in Toronto contributed to this report.)

For Argentines, UJC mission elicits pain — and some pride

By Florencia Arbiser

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — For three days last week, dozens of North American Jews moved around this rainy, autumnal city aboard four large, green-and-white buses.

The group from the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella of the federation system, was on a fact-finding mission to see firsthand how the ongoing economic crisis is affecting Argentine Jews.

Some people from the local Jewish community had the chance to talk to them.

Others just saw them pass by with the name tags around their necks, notebooks and pens in hand.

Although most of the Argentine Jews interviewed by JTA said they felt the mission's visit was a positive one, many also said it raised difficult questions for the local community:

Who will make the decisions about what to do to rescue the once-thriving community?

Were the mission members able to fully grasp the extent of the crisis here?

Did the local Jews understand that in the final analysis, the solutions will have to emerge from the Argentine Jews themselves?

The mission participants came from nearly 50 communities around North America to see how UJC's \$42 million campaign will help Argentina's Jews.

UJC's overseas partners, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, will be the recipients of those funds, with \$35 million earmarked to the former for immigration and absorption to Israel and \$5 million to the latter for relief on the ground.

Representatives from AMIA, the main Jewish institution in Buenos Aires, and DAIA, the Jewish umbrella organization, made it clear that the presence of such a large group from UJC demonstrated the level of concern and interest of a sister community that is trying to understand what is going on in Argentina.

However, both representatives expressed some concerns.

Daniel Pomerantz, the administrative director of AMIA, said that "although it is valuable, it is very limited what the mission can get out of a three-day visit."

For his part, Alfredo Neuburger, the spokesman for DAIA, said the Argentine Jews should not be fooled into thinking that the UJC "came here to save us."

"The Argentine Jewish community," he said, "has to be aware that the solution will have to come from our own local community."

In that regard, he said, many decisions have been made in Israel and New York and "that is not worthy of us," Neuburger told JTA.

Rabbi Sergio Bergman of Libertad Temple agreed that the mission's trip should not be perceived "as if they came to sort out our problems."

For that reason, he pointed to the give-and-take roundtable discussions between the mission participants and members of the local community as one of the most valuable elements of the trip.

At one such session, UJC visitors mingled with local Jewish representatives at 25 separate tables in the elegant Roof Garden hall of the Alvear Palace Hotel.

Seated with two American rabbis and three federation representatives were Rosana Kuravsky, from the young Jewish organization, "Einstein Virtual Group;" Jorge Zeiguer, from Keren Hayesod; and Silvia Pruss, a volunteer and head of the Women's Program of the Tzedaka social service organization.

As the voice of the young leadership, Kuravsky emphasized that "the mission's visit allows us to review our situation, to think it over and over."

For her part, Pruss said it was important to "show the mission how much we work inside the local community and how much solidarity has grown" as a result of this crisis.

Zeiguer, who works on educational projects at Keren Hayesod, the international counterpart to the United Jewish Appeal, said his first reaction to the UJC mission was one of "anguish" because it showed just how much local institutions were desperate for help.

Prior to the visit, he said, his staff received a flood of calls from schools, asking what they could do to demonstrate to the mission their individual needs.

Baruj Zaidenknop, the director of the ORT Jewish school, said the needs of the community differ from institution to institution.

Some of the institutions "are beaten because of the current crisis," he said, while others, such as ORT, do not have economic problems per se, but the families from the schools are in trouble.

Among the ordinary Argentine Jews who encountered the UJC mission, there were mixed reactions.

Noemi Casabe, a volunteer at the welfare center at Bet El Jewish Congregation, said she felt proud when she saw some 40 members of such an important delegation walk through the dining room where she serves food to Jews in need every day.

But Gloria Trachter, the head of welfare programs at Bet El, said she felt mainly "sad" because it made her realize that "despite all the work we do daily, our own community" has become so needy.

During the mission's visit, a group of elderly people was having tea in the basement dining room.

The group had been asked to arrive earlier than usual to meet the mission, but in the end it was a brief encounter.

"They just came, looked and left. And I wanted to tell them how insecure I feel," said 80-year-old Fany Paluba.

Others also said they wished they had been better informed about who this group was and what they were doing here.

Still, others, however, were grateful.

"I study architecture and all my savings are focused on my studies," said Sebastian Klymkiewicz, 28, who is scheduled to talk to the Jewish Agency about making aliyah.

"I know when I graduate I will have no more money. But the Jewish Agency will help me to make aliyah."

Seeing that these visitors wanted to hear his story and are behind his plans, he said, "I feel so lucky." □

Israel's population at 6.5 million

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On its 54th Independence Day, celebrated Wednesday, Israel's population totaled 6.5 million.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the population has increased eightfold since the establishment of the state in 1948.

Of the 5.3 million Jews living in Israel, 63 percent are natives and the rest are immigrants. Israel accounts for 37 percent of the world's Jewish population, compared to only 6 percent in 1948.

Only the United States has a larger Jewish population. □