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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

House may seek more Israel aid

Republican leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives are considering adding \$200 million in aid to Israel.

Congressional sources say the additional money, which has not been earmarked by the White House as part of its annual supplemental aid package, is expected to be debated Thursday by the House Appropriations Committee and could go before the full House next week.

Suicide bombing goes awry

A suicide bomber botched an attack Wednesday near Haifa. The bomb went off, apparently prematurely, as the terrorist approached a group of soldiers waiting at a bus station near the Megiddo Junction.

The bomber was severely wounded in the blast and was brought to a hospital in Afula, where he underwent surgery. There were no other injuries.

Israel considers response

Israeli officials are considering how to retaliate for Tuesday's deadly suicide bombing in Rishon le-Zion that killed 15 and left more than 60 injured.

Possible responses include mounting a new military offensive or the possible expulsion of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

There also is speculation that a new military operation will target the Gaza Strip, the command center of Hamas, which claimed responsibility for the bombing.

U.N. condemns Israel

The U.N. General Assembly approved an Arab-sponsored resolution condemning Israel just hours after a Palestinian terror attack on a Tel Aviv suburb.

The 189-member world body condemned Israel's recent military operation in the West Bank and its rejection of a U.N. fact-finding mission into the battle at the Jenin refugee camp.

The assembly approved the resolution late Tuesday by a vote of 74-4, with 54 countries abstaining. The United States voted against the resolution.

Israel's U.N. ambassador, Yehuda Lancry, warned that passing the resolution "would be an offense to the memory of Israeli victims of Palestinian terrorism." Arab states rejected a proposal to include a condemnation of Palestinian terror attacks against Israel.

Children, security and immigrants top priorities for UJC Israel campaign

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The North American Jewish federation system has designated five priority areas for allocating funds from its Israel emergency campaign.

More than \$119 million has been raised, most of it since April 8, when the national campaign was officially launched, according to officials of the United Jewish Communities.

Already the figure, the bulk of which are funds raised at individual federations, represents the largest amount of emergency funds being designated for Israel during its latest crisis. Many of the details, including specific recipients, of the UJC allocations have yet to be determined.

But the priority areas, determined in a series of meetings and conference calls last week, are:

- child safety and protection programs, such as security around schools, summer and after-school activities that would keep children off the streets, as well as trauma treatment;
- hospitals and other medical needs;
- security initiatives, such as posting neighborhood civilian guards;
- aid to Israeli citizens directly affected by the conflict and terrorist attacks; and
- immigration to Israel by Argentine Jews facing severe economic challenges.

The UJC had earlier decided to wrap its campaign to aid Argentine Jews into the Israel emergency campaign. The UJC has already pledged \$35 million to aid the new immigrants.

Money for these purposes will start being directed to the UJC's overseas partners — the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee — in the next few weeks, said Stephen Hoffman, the UJC's president and CEO.

These agencies will provide the vehicles for distributing much of the funds.

Some other agencies in Israel, such as Jewish community centers, may also implement some of the programs, Hoffman said.

In addition, \$1 million will go to Reform movement programs for children in Israel, under an agreement with the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

It is not yet clear how the funds will be divided among the five priorities — if, for example, child safety programs will receive more or less money than aid to those affected by terrorism.

The only known allocation at this point is the \$35 million pledged for Argentine immigration.

"That's off the top so to speak and has to happen no matter what else we do," Hoffman said.

It is not yet clear whether all the money being raised by federations since the launch of the emergency campaign will be funneled directly through the UJC or if some federations — many of which began emergency campaigns before the national one was launched in early April — will opt to make their own decisions about allocations.

Until very recently, particularly when fund raising for the Jewish state was more challenging, federations often had difficulty reaching consensus about overseas funding decisions.

The UJC is asking federations to give the money raised directly to it, so it can allocate to the five priority areas, Hoffman said.

However, the UJC is also considering accepting federation dollars that are

MIDEAST FOCUS

Arafat bemoans police weakness

The Palestinian police force is too weak to combat terror, Yasser Arafat said.

The Palestinian Authority president made the comment Wednesday at the same time that he issued a statement pledging his support for the U.S.-led war on terror.

"I gave my orders and directions to all the Palestinian security forces to face and prevent any terror attacks against Israeli civilians," Arafat said. However, he added that his security forces are in disarray after Israel's recent military operation in the West Bank.

White House presses Arafat

It is high time for Yasser Arafat to decide where he stands, the White House said.

"It is time for the Palestinian Authority to reform. That is what the president is watching," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said Wednesday. "Is the leadership dedicated to violence or is their promise in Oslo a meaningful one?" Under the terms of the Oslo agreements, the Palestinians promised to renounce violence and terrorism, and resolve disputes with Israel through negotiation.

Italy balks at Bethlehem deal

Italy stood by its refusal to take in 13 Palestinian terrorists holed up in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. Despite U.S. pressure and appeals from the Vatican, Italian officials said Wednesday that the European Union as a whole should deal with the issue of who takes in the 13 men. "I am opposed to it," the Italian daily *La Stampa* quoted Deputy Premier Gianfranco Fini as saying. "If we took in the 13 Palestinians, we would be exposing our country to a series of grave risks."

Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations also have refused to take in the 13.



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earmarked for one of the five specific priority areas — or specific projects that fall in these categories.

While not all the federations have made their decisions yet, the top professional of one of the largest federations in North America is pledging to give most of that federation's money directly to the UJC.

Steven Nasatir, president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, which has raised \$19 million in emergency funds so far, of which it has already wired a few million to the UJC, said this is a "time where there is a real need for collective action."

While Chicago "reserves the right to weigh in" on allocations decisions, Nasatir said, it will entrust the bulk of the decisions to the North American body.

"Hopefully at the end of the day most federations will see that the funding decisions being made" by the UJC "make the most sense," Nasatir said.

The federation campaigns got a boost in late April when the Reform movement agreed to merge its own emergency campaign with the UJC's.

The Reform movement, which represents the largest religious stream of Judaism in the United States, had raised \$160,000 at the time of the agreement, and is now urging its members to give directly to their local federations or to the UJC.

Similar agreements with the Orthodox Union and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism are expected to be announced next week.

Some of the money allocated will be through their programs in Israel. In exchange, these movements, like Reform, will encourage their constituents to contribute to the federation system campaign.

Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president of the O.U., said the O.U. has no objections to the UJC agreement with the Reform movement and is encouraging its constituents to give to the UJC campaign.

"We're working with them to do something similar," he said. "Maybe they started with Reform, but I don't think we're insulted about that." □

Iranian Jews in L.A. applaud democracy push from shah's son

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — It's not often that a Jewish audience breaks into a standing ovation for an Iranian political figure.

But as Reza Pahlavi, son of the former shah of Iran, took the stage at the Simon Wiesenthal Center last week, the overflow audience of Iranian Jews rose waving Iranian, American and Israeli flags, broke into rhythmic clapping and shouted in Persian, "Long Live the Shah" and "We Love You."

The heir to the deposed Iranian monarchy had come to the heartland of America's Iranian diaspora to pursue his 20-year quest to rid Iran of the ayatollahs' theocratic regime and replace it with a secular democracy.

Pahlavi, 41, did not tailor his remarks to a Jewish audience, but his speech was greeted with enthusiasm by members of Los Angeles' 30,000-strong Iranian Jewish community.

Pahlavi spoke in English, but one woman in the audience used Persian to assure Pahlavi that the entire Iranian Jewish community was behind him and hoped to see him as Iran's future leader.

Pahlavi, who lives in exile, appreciated the compliment, but said his current role would be finished once an open referendum in Iran swept away the ayatollahs' regime.

But at that point, if "the people want me to play a part," he would be available, Pahlavi said.

The democratic Iran that he envisions would maintain a strict separation between mosque and state, Pahlavi said. He acknowledged that during his father's reign there had been some interference in government by the clergy, "but that was a far cry from what we are seeing today."

As described in his current book, "Winds of Change: The Future of Democracy in Iran," Pahlavi predicts the downfall of the ayatollahs through a process of nonviolent civil disobedience, led by the an increasingly disillusioned youth, who make up the bulk of Iran's population. □

JEWISH WORLD

Anti-Israel efforts at U.N. session

Anti-Israel resolutions may be introduced at this week's U.N. special session on children.

One resolution condemning Israel for its treatment of Palestinian children is planned for a vote Friday. If adopted, the resolution would be the session's only reference to any particular conflict.

Wash. Post boycott announced

A campaign is being launched to protest what is seen as a pro-Palestinian bias in The Washington Post's Middle East coverage.

The campaign calls for readers to cancel their subscriptions to the Post from June 10-17. The announcement of the boycott comes as two similar campaigns are being launched against The New York Times.

Argentine bomb suspect freed

An Argentine court freed a former police officer accused of playing a role in the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires.

Alberto Huici, a former police superintendent, was one of 20 people being tried in connection with the bombing, which killed 85 people and injured hundreds. Huici was freed Tuesday after spending six years in prison. He was not directly implicated in the bombing, and court officials said he already had served enough time for allegedly extorting others accused of carrying out the attack.

In another development, Argentine President Eduardo Duhalde said this week the attack on the AMLA community center has a direct connection to the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States. When court officials pressed Duhalde, he said he based his statement on an article he had read in Jane's Defense Weekly.

Russian paper blasts Israel

An article in a popular pro-Communist newspaper questioned Israel's right to exist.

The article in *Sovietskaya Rossiya* also said "the armed settlers on Palestinian lands are straightforward occupiers, and the blows struck against them by Palestinian suicide bombers are a legitimate punishment."

The article also called Israel "a vast U.S. military base in the Near East that Washington uses to control the region's oil reserves."

Rio hosts Jewish festival

Rio de Janeiro is hosting a Jewish arts festival. The May 9-16 festival will feature some klezmer music, lectures and 12 Jewish-themed films.

Some 6,000 people, Jews and non-Jews alike, are expected to attend, organizers say.

New report on anti-Semitism in Arab world called 'bone-chilling'

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — "Bone-chilling" and "hair-raising" usually are terms reserved for horror movies, not research reports.

But those words are being used to describe a new report on Muslim anti-Semitism published by the American Jewish Committee.

AJCommittee officials hope the hate literature rampant in the Arab world will no longer be glossed over, but will become an issue that is acknowledged and confronted.

"We must not let such warnings go unheeded," said David Harris, the AJCommittee's executive director.

For much of the past year, American Jewish groups have been warning of the virulent strain of Muslim anti-Semitism, particularly since the Sept. 11 terror attacks, which many in the Arab and Muslim world have tried to blame on Israel.

Many observers say the spike in anti-Semitism around the world, which includes a rise in attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions in Europe, is the worst in decades.

But the AJCommittee report says special attention must be paid to Muslim anti-Semitism, because of its ferocity and its capacity to complicate already difficult peace efforts in the Middle East.

In "Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger," Professor Robert Wistrich of the Hebrew University writes that the anti-Semitism in the Arab world's press and governments "has taken root in the body politic of Islam to an unprecedented degree."

Already present for a number of years, Arab anti-Semitism has become more widespread, intensive and radicalized, Wistrich said at a news conference in Washington on Tuesday.

In his view, Arab anti-Semitism is the "single biggest impediment to peace in the Middle East," and attempts to ignore it will boomerang, Wistrich warned.

It is a mistake to consider the current wave of anti-Semitism a byproduct of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Wistrich said.

Components of classical European anti-Semitism — slogans, images, stereotypes and conspiracy theories against Jews — now have been incorporated into Arab anti-Semitism.

The contents of the Muslim anti-Semitism often defy logic.

Even as many Arab governments or media deny the Holocaust, they compare Israel to Nazi Germany because of its treatment of Palestinians, trying to "Nazify" Zionism, Wistrich said.

Wistrich is not the only scholar to sound the alarm. Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum, a Philadelphia-based think tank, says Muslim anti-Semitism is part of a larger picture.

"It is a mistake to look at terrorism in isolation and it is a mistake to look at anti-Semitism in isolation," he said. "They are part of a totalitarian ideology of militant Islam."

The Washington-based Middle East Media Research Institute, which translates Arab media reports, has been tracking Arab anti-Semitism and incitement.

While much of the rhetoric is not new, the Internet allows the message of hate to be spread more quickly, according to Steve Stalinsky, MEMRI's executive director.

Since completing the research for the AJCommittee report a few months ago, Wistrich has seen no sign of improvement.

Arab officials have heaped praise on suicide bombers, and a Palestinian official brought up the charge that Jews killed Jesus.

Such accusations, blood libels and other charges are made against Jews and Israelis not just in Iraq, Iran and other terrorist-supporting countries. Even supposedly moderate Arab countries like Egypt are "just as bad" when it comes to spreading the message of hate, according to Wistrich.

Jewish groups have raised the issue of Arab anti-Semitism with the Bush administration. The White House has responded with words of condemnation, but nothing more. □

New survey says public blames Israel and Palestinians equally

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The majority of Americans believe both Israel and the Palestinians are equally responsible for ongoing violence in the Middle East, according to a new poll.

That contradicts numerous recent polls that have found that Americans favor Israel over the Palestinians.

"There is a silent majority that has not been getting a lot of attention," said Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland. "The public takes a much more even-handed approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Kull's recent poll of 802 Americans finds that 58 percent of Americans believe both Israelis and Palestinians are responsible for the failure to reach peace in the Middle East.

Almost 30 percent say the Palestinians are responsible, with 7 percent blaming Israel.

The survey, which has a 3.5 percent margin of error, found that 67 percent believe the United States should not take sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 22 percent think America should take Israel's side and 3 percent want the United States to favor the Palestinians.

That contrasts with what respondents perceive as current U.S. policy: Some 58 percent said they believe the United States favors Israel, and 22 percent said America is being even-handed.

Kull and other analysts at the University of Maryland say the poll results show a major disconnect between Congress and the American people.

Just last week, lawmakers overwhelmingly passed resolutions supporting the State of Israel and equating its military incursions with the U.S. war against terrorism.

But Americans may not see it that way.

The poll found that only 17 percent believe the Middle East conflict is part of the U.S. war against terrorism, and 46 percent said it is a conflict over land.

"Congress misperceives the public," Kull said. "They tend to focus on those who speak out."

Others, however, say it's Kull and his pollsters who are mistaken.

Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, said he considers the survey biased.

It was "designed to demonstrate that the American government should be more even-handed," he said.

The poll finds that 70 percent of Americans think President Bush did the right thing by getting more involved recently in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and more than half would support tougher measures against Israel if it does not comply with U.S. demands.

"The message of this poll is that the president has considerable running room," said Jerome Segal, director of the Jerusalem Project at the University of Maryland. "The American public wants more involvement and wants it to be even-handed."

Almost 80 percent of respondents said they supported Secretary of State Colin Powell meeting with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, and 52 percent want Israel to be forbidden to use U.S.-made weapons in its military operations.

The poll questions were written in consultation with the Israeli

Embassy in Washington and the Palestine Liberation Organization's mission at the United Nations. The respondents were given both sides' arguments about key issues in the conflict, and their views were gauged.

More than half of the respondents said they believed Israeli invasions of the West Bank were intended, at least in part, to punish the Palestinian population.

Another 30 percent said the primary purpose was to root out terrorism, and civilian casualties were unintentional.

Three-quarters of Americans said Palestinian arguments for targeting Israeli civilians are unjustifiable.

But more than half of the respondents said Israel should not be building settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Another key message from the poll, Segal said, was the amount of support the Palestinians would receive if they were to use nonviolent forms of protest.

More than 80 percent of respondents said they would favor additional pressure on Israel if suicide bombings ceased.

The pollsters said they were struck by the fact that three-quarters of respondents said they follow the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at least fairly closely, and by the amount of support for U.N. intervention.

The poll was taken before Tuesday's suicide bombing, which killed at least 15 people.

The attack likely would increase support for Israel by several points, Kull said.

Other recent polls by media organizations have given mixed assessments of public support regarding the Middle East.

An ABC News/Washington Post poll taken in April found that half of the 1,207 people surveyed felt the Palestinians were to blame for the violence in the Middle East, compared with 19 percent who blamed Israel and 18 percent who blamed both sides.

That poll also found that 59 percent of Americans equated Israel's military actions with the U.S. war in Afghanistan.

A Gallup poll taken last week found that 24 percent of Americans think the United States should take Israel's side, compared with 2 percent who think the United States should side with the Palestinians and 68 percent who want to remain neutral.

The Gallup poll found that 45 percent believed the Bush administration was favoring Israel, and 43 percent believed it was being even-handed.

Kull said the wide discrepancy in results is based on the fact that most surveys do not offer respondents the choice of saying that both Israelis and Palestinians are responsible for the violence, and count only those who volunteer the answer. His poll, however, specifically provided that option.

"We're asking the question that fits more with what people want to say," he said.

Tobin, however, said the phrasing of the questions is problematic.

"Given the construction of the questions, the responses are predictable," he said, adding that Americans tend to move to the middle in assessing conflicts, and are more likely to choose neutral answers if the option is given.

"Americans' tendency is to be fair and even-handed, but that does not really touch on how they really feel about the Middle East," he said.

Tobin said his organization would rewrite the questions "the way nonpartisan social scientists are supposed to ask them," and examine the differences. □