



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel freezes Gaza operation

Israel canceled a military operation in the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer decided Sunday to halt the operation, each claiming that leaks from Israeli army officers and Cabinet ministers had given Palestinian militants time to go underground.

Sources close to the prime minister claimed Sharon feared an operation in Gaza would lead to many Israeli casualties and draw a harsh international outcry.

The operation was originally planned to retaliate for a suicide bombing last week in Rishon le-Zion. In the wake of Sunday's decision, the Israeli army released reservists who had been called up for the Gaza operation.

Likud rejects Palestinian state

Israel's Likud Party voted against the creation of a Palestinian state. Sunday night's vote of the party's Central Committee was seen as a defeat for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and a victory for former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, widely believed to be positioning himself for a political comeback.

Prior to the vote, Sharon told the committee that any decision "today on the final agreement is dangerous to the state of Israel and will only intensify the pressures on us." For his part, Netanyahu had called for exiling Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Lawmakers back extra Israel aid

A U.S. congressional committee approved \$200 million in additional aid to Israel.

On May 9, the House Appropriations Committee also approved \$50 million in additional aid to the Palestinians. [Page 3]

Israelis call for withdrawal

Tens of thousands of Israelis attended a Tel Aviv rally calling for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories. Police estimated that some 60,000 people attended Saturday night's demonstration.

Peace Now, one of the rally organizers, said the rally was the biggest peace demonstration since the outbreak of the intifada in September 2000. Among the speakers was author Amos Oz, who called for changing both Israeli and Palestinian leadership.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

U.S. immigration to Israel up, reversing recent downward trend

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Shira Shudofsky was 30,000 feet in the air when she decided to jump — en route to Israel on a summer teen tour, she caught sight of the land from her plane window and decided, in a moment, to make aliyah.

Shudofsky was 16 then. Now, after nearly seven years of waiting to become an Israeli, she'll move to Israel this month amid one of the most violent episodes in the country's history.

But that "doesn't affect my decision at all," she said.

In fact, despite — and, in some cases, because of the violence in Israel — more American Jews are choosing to move to the Jewish state.

Aliyah from the United States has been decreasing in recent years. But the first four months of this year saw 260 new immigrants from North America — up from last year's tally at this time of 207, a 26 percent increase. The number is nearly equal to where it was four years ago.

For the most part, the new American olim, or new immigrants, are Orthodox — roughly two-thirds of them. And for many, the crisis is the tipping point pushing them to Israel. It's precisely the reason why Chicago lawyer Lawrence Wolf Levin is making the move.

"The crisis brought home the fact that I have substantial ties to the country and to the people, and I believe it's the right thing to do and the right time."

The increasing difficulty has only underscored a feeling of "kindred spirits with the people there, and that's where I want to be," he said, adding that despite what he calls the "tumus" — a Yiddish word for turmoil — he feels safer and a "certain peace" in Israel.

It's not the first time a war in Israel has prompted Diaspora Jews to move there.

The record years of aliyah followed the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, according to Maurice Singer, director of the Midwest region of the Israel Aliyah Center, who added that the mass immigration after 1948 was largely a result of Jews being forced to flee Arab countries. But American aliyah is a drop in the bucket of the number of immigrants Israel absorbs from other countries. In fact, Americans have only been little more than 3 percent of the 3 million Jews who have made aliyah since the creation of the State of Israel.

That's because America has escaped the economic and political strife which has driven so many Jews to Israel, said Dan Biron, executive director of the Israel Aliyah Center for North America. With the exception of Sept. 11, "you cannot find a more secure place than America. Jews from here don't have any other reason to go to look for other places" — just ideological ones to live in Israel, he said.

Aliyah officials say the events in Israel — and even the terrorist events in America — have triggered the increase. The memory of Sept. 11 occasionally crosses the mind of New Yorker Michelle Davidowitz, who is moving to Israel in July.

After that day, Davidowitz realized, "You're not safe anywhere."

But she's wanted to move to Israel for a long time and, now, before her oldest of three daughters begins first grade, it makes sense for them to move. She's headed to Israel with her husband, Avraham, and the faith that they won't be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

"Certain days, I get very freaked out," she said. "I think I don't want to go, I don't want to go," but when a bomb explodes in Israel, they cope by pretending they already

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel pulls out of Bethlehem

Israeli troops pulled out of Bethlehem last Friday, as the standoff at the Church of the Nativity ended nonviolently. Thirteen Palestinian terror suspects were flown into Cyprus en route to other countries, while 26 others were sent to Gaza.

E.U. envoy Miguel Moratinos said Saturday the 13 are "free men," who had come to Cyprus of their own accord, adding that they are not deportees.

Israel says the 13 were involved in numerous terrorist attacks against Israelis. Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said Sunday that Israel plans to seek the extradition of the 13.

After the siege ended last Friday, American and Israeli bomb disposal experts defused about 40 bombs left behind by the Palestinians.

Israeli slain in Gaza Strip

A Palestinian worker allegedly shot dead his Israeli employer in the Gaza Strip. Sunday's attack occurred in the Jewish settlement of Rafiah Yam, in southern Gaza.

The suspect was caught shortly after with a pistol in his possession. Israeli military officials said the army suspects the killing was politically motivated.

Bomb explodes in Beersheba

At least four people were injured last Friday in a bomb explosion in Beersheba. The bomb went off near a Bank Hapoalim branch in the Negev city. Authorities arrested at least two suspects.

Jewish settlers arrested

Four Jewish settlers are in Israeli custody for allegedly plotting to set off a bomb in an Arab hospital. Two men were originally arrested in Jerusalem late last month, but a news blackout was not lifted until last Friday. Two more men were arrested in a subsequent investigation.



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live there, like they're one of the many Israelis who aren't budging. "That's how we're able to go. We have to just sit there and think like we're there already."

Anyway, she said, when she thinks about "how others had to fight" for Israel, "for us, going now, it's easy."

New organizations are also popping up to encourage American aliyah, like Nefesh B'Nefesh, which funds new immigrants, and Kumah, a student organization. Some synagogues are working to promote the cause.

And the crisis is churning out hundreds who want to go to Israel as volunteers.

Like aliyah, the increase in volunteers is a wartime pattern, said the Israel Aliyah Center's Singer, who himself made aliyah after volunteering in the Six-Day War — one-third of the volunteers at that time decided to move to Israel, a group Singer refers to as the "aliyah boomers."

To meet the demand as well as find replacements for army reservists and boost the morale of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora, the Jewish Agency for Israel, which handles aliyah and Jewish education, began a new volunteer program three weeks ago. The group is sending volunteers to help Magen David Adom, Israel's relief agency, or work on a kibbutz or pitch in at an army base. Of the roughly 1,400 inquiries the group has received so far, almost 800 have been from Americans.

Volunteers for Israel, which manages the army portion of the program, has already sent 400 American volunteers to Israel this year — quadruple the number they sent at this time last year.

Since the fighting began and paralyzed Israel's tourism industry, "now to have 400 people who are ready to go is amazing," said Jason Orenstein, North American director of student affairs for the Israel Aliyah Center. This momentum will "breathe life back into" the economy and people of Israel along with uniting the world Jewish community, he said. □

Ex-Nazi faces war crimes trial; prosecutor promises more to come

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — A former Nazi SS officer charged with committing war crimes 58 years ago in Italy has gone on trial in Germany.

The trial of Friedrich Engel, 92, began last week in Hamburg. Among the charges, he is accused of having given orders to kill 59 prisoners in the Marassi Prison in Genoa in May 1944. The killings came as retribution for an attack partisans launched days earlier on German soldiers.

According to eyewitness reports, on May 19, 1944, the prisoners were bound together in pairs and forced to stand on wooden planks over a pit that Jewish inmates had been forced to dig. The condemned waited their turn to die, as pair after pair was shot and fell on top of those killed before.

Engel, who has been living in Hamburg for decades and was sentenced in absentia to life in prison in 1999 by an Italian military court, has denied giving or approving the orders for the shooting. "It was a matter of following orders," he was quoted as saying.

He also said those orders had been in keeping with international law, and added that the victims suffered an "easy death."

Chief Prosecutor Kurt Schrimm told the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper that such trials make sense even though the accused have become old and frail.

"We are showing the victims, and their relatives, that to us their fate is important," said Schrimm, who heads the Central Office for the Resolution of National Socialist War Crimes. "And we are showing our society that no one who committed such terrible crimes can simply shrug off their guilt and responsibility."

Engel previously has rejected other charges lodged against him by courts in Italy.

Among those charges, he was accused of participating in wartime atrocities in the Genoa area — including the shooting of 147 people near a Benedictine cloister and the shooting of 18 hostages in a village.

Hamburg state prosecutors had filed charges against Engel and several other accused war criminals in the 1960s, but the proceedings were suspended.

Engel's case was reopened in 1999. □

JEWISH WORLD

Preschool challenges highlighted

Jewish early childhood programs enroll twice as many children as 10 years ago, according to a new study.

Just the same, the study says, such programs only reach 14 percent of American Jewish youngsters.

The survey by the Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership, a national advocacy group, offers a range of new data about Jewish pre-elementary programs.

Among the highlights: Sixty-nine percent of early childhood professionals in Jewish programs are Jewish, with the percentage of non-Jewish teachers tripling since 1994; Jewish teachers in the programs have generally low levels of Jewish education, with 45 percent having no Jewish education beyond Hebrew school; and the average salary for teachers is \$19,400, with no benefits.

'Mein Kampf' publisher honored

A Czech publisher who was given a suspended prison sentence for publishing Hitler's "Mein Kampf" was awarded a prize. The Karel Havlicek Borovsky Institute in Prague, which promotes liberal political ideas, said publisher Michal Zitko deserved an award for "protecting freedom of expression."

The institute gave what it called an "anti-award" to a senator who filed a legal suit against Zitko for publishing Hitler's manifesto. In December 2000, Zitko was handed a three-year suspended sentence and fined \$50,000 for publishing the book without disclaimers or commentaries.

Nazi suspect could be expelled

A man accused of being a Nazi concentration camp guard during World War II could have his U.S. citizenship revoked. Federal prosecutors say Jakiw Palij, 78, was an armed guard at Trawniki, an SS slave labor camp in Poland.

The U.S. Justice Department alleges that Palij, a resident of the New York borough of Queens, played a key role in the Holocaust by rounding up, guarding and helping to murder Jews.

Pamphlets back Israel

One million pamphlets designed to help Americans support Israel are being sent around the United States.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is mailing the pamphlets to Jewish community centers, campuses and synagogues that urge people to fight against the campaign to "delegitimize Israel" being waged by Muslims.

The mailing offers specific responses to a number of "lies and misconceptions" and urges people to contact U.S. and world leaders and the media.

Congress pushes for more aid for Israel — and the Palestinians

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Congress is poised to provide \$200 million in additional aid to Israel, as well as \$50 million in humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

On May 9, the House Appropriations Committee approved an amendment to the emergency counterterrorism spending bill proposed by President Bush that would provide the additional aid.

The bill was expected to pass the full House this week.

The additional \$200 million is the second strong sentiment of support for Israel to emanate from Congress in as many weeks. Both houses of Congress recently passed resolutions expressing solidarity with the Jewish state.

Congress is stressing support for Israel in an attempt to counter what many representatives see as growing support for the Palestinians in the Arab world and in Europe — and out of a concern that Arab pressure may be shifting U.S. policy on the Middle East toward the Palestinians.

The Bush administration had been reluctant to allow additional aid to Israel, but acquiesced after it became clear the bill would likely pass over White House objections.

"Clearly, the president has supported and does support aid for Israel," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said. "We're taking a look at the exact emergency nature of this proposal, given the fact that this particular piece of legislation is emergency legislation."

The White House also expressed hesitancy for the solidarity bills. Both congressional achievements have been linked to a new activism on Israel's behalf by Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas).

DeLay, whose position as House majority whip gives him wide control over the legislative agenda, has long expressed support for the Jewish state based on his own religious beliefs. The supplemental aid bill is considered likely to become law because it also provides important funds for the war in Afghanistan and homeland security.

The Senate is expected to take up the version of the supplemental bill that passes the House after the Memorial Day recess.

The original amendment for additional Israeli aid was introduced by Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.), but revised by Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.) to include the Palestinian aid. The Palestinian money was considered a deal sweetener for the Bush administration, which has stressed in recent weeks the need to spend more resources to revive the Palestinian security and economic infrastructure.

Israel has been seeking additional funds for several years. While it currently receives \$3 billion a year through the foreign operations appropriation process, it has been advocating for an additional \$800 million promised by President Clinton to aid Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

Congress originally chose to wait until the 2000 presidential elections before taking up the matter, and President Bush has not pushed the issue since taking office.

Sources said that after the Sept. 11 attacks and the subsequent war on terrorism, Israel has realized that the \$800 million is no longer a U.S. priority and has stopped lobbying for it.

Bush also has been hesitant to give additional aid to Israel out of concern the move would be viewed internationally as a clear sign of siding with the Israelis in the Middle East conflict. The \$50 million earmarked for the Palestinians will not be given directly to the Palestinian Authority, but will instead be controlled by the United States Agency for International Development.

The Palestinians annually receive \$75 million in humanitarian aid, also largely run through USAID. Last month, Secretary of State Colin Powell offered an additional \$30 million at an international donors conference in Oslo.

But increases in humanitarian aid to the Palestinian territories have been advocated by Israel, the Arab world and the international community.

Israel may also be receiving a boost to its Arrow missile project.

A \$70 million increase in funding for the defense system was added to the 2003 Defense Department budget, which the House passed last Friday. □

Ads call on Hollywood celebrities to reconsider their trip to Cannes

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Jewish ire over a recent spate of anti-Semitic attacks in France may spread to a new battleground — the film industry.

Concerned by the attacks, the American Jewish Congress is urging Hollywood stars and studios to consider France's current and past anti-Semitism before attending the upcoming Cannes Film Festival.

The full-page ads, placed in *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter* — the two leading dailies covering the entertainment industry — and the *Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*, draw parallels between the collaborationist Vichy regime of 1942 and the France of 2002.

For example, the ad states, both in 1942 and 2002, "Synagogues and Schools (are) Firebombed" and "Jews (are) Attacked on the Streets," while 1942's "Chants of 'Heil Hitler' and 'Death to the Jews' heard on the streets" are replaced in 2002 with "Chants of 'Vive Bin Laden' and 'Death to the Jews' heard on the streets."

The ad also reprints a "travel advisory" issued recently by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, urging Jewish tourists "to exercise extreme caution while traveling in France."

Gary Ratner, executive director of the Pacific Southwest Region of the AJCongress, who placed the ads, told JTA that he wants Hollywood figures to rethink their plans to go to Cannes or, if they go, to raise the issue of French anti-Semitism with their hosts.

The festival was slated to begin Wednesday.

Ratner said that since the ads appeared, he received some 50 supportive phone calls and e-mails, and two or three negative responses.

He also heard reports that some personalities in the entertainment industry were indeed reconsidering plans to go to Cannes.

Though he did not mean to equate the Nazi-friendly Vichy regime with today's France, Ratner noted that anti-Semitic incidents have risen sharply this year.

Ratner also emphasized that he did not call for a boycott of the Cannes festival or tourism to France, although the ad refers readers to the AJCongress' Web site, www.boycottfrance.com.

An indignant Jean-Luc Sibiude, the recently arrived French consul general in Los Angeles, told JTA he was shocked and outraged by the "sick analogy" between wartime Vichy France and his country today.

While he did not contest the sharp rise in anti-Semitic incidents, Sibiude argued that "99 percent" were perpetrated by Arab immigrants from the former French colonies in North Africa, or their descendants, who number around 4 million.

"The anti-Semitic incidents represent almost entirely a spillover from what is happening between the Israelis and the Palestinians," he said.

If there is prejudice in France, it is directed more against Muslim immigrants than Jews, Sibiude maintained, and he urged American Jews to listen to the leaders of French Jewry, who have opposed any economic or tourism boycott of France.

The AJCongress has traditionally been a liberal organization, with emphasis on such issues as civil rights and separation of

church and state. However, in recent years, some say the AJCongress leadership has moved to the right, and in 1999, the Los Angeles-based regional chapter split from the national organization, claiming that it had forsaken its founders' liberalism.

Since then, a new regional chapter representing the AJCongress was established — and it was this new chapter that placed the controversial ad.

In another development, the Cannes Film Festival committee chose "Kedma," an Israeli-French-Italian co-production by Israeli director Amos Gitai, as one of 21 features in competition for top honors. The film centers on a boatload of European refugees trying to reach Palestine shortly before the establishment of the State of Israel.

For the first time, a Palestinian film, "Intervention Divine" by Elia Suleiman, also will be shown. □

More than half-century after death, Jewish dentist gets Medal of Honor

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Almost 58 years after U.S. Army dentist Benjamin Lewis Salomon was killed defending his aid station against Japanese troops, he has received the American military's highest decoration.

President Bush recently made the posthumous dedication of the Medal of Honor.

A Los Angeles native, Capt. Salomon was 29 years old and acting as surgeon with the 27th Infantry Division on the South Pacific island of Saipan when his battalion was attacked by thousands of Japanese soldiers on July 7, 1944.

"The advancing enemy soon descended on Capt. Salomon's aid station," Bush recounted during the White House Rose Garden ceremony. "To defend the wounded men in his care, he ordered comrades to evacuate the tent and carry away the wounded. He went out to face the enemy alone, and was last heard shouting, 'I'll hold them off until you get them to safety. See you later.'

"In the moments that followed, Salomon single-handedly killed 98 enemy soldiers, saving many American lives but sacrificing his own. As best the army could tell, he was shot 24 times before he fell, more than 50 times after that. And when they found his body, he was still at his" machine gun.

Salomon graduated from the University of Southern California's dental school, "itself a triumph at a time when American universities limited the number of Jews they accepted," the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

After graduating in 1937, Salomon tried unsuccessfully to enlist as a dentist in both the American and Canadian armies. In 1940, he was drafted and trained as an infantryman, excelling as a rifle marksman and machine-gunner.

In 1942, he was finally commissioned as a regimental dentist, but during the Saipan invasion he volunteered to replace his unit's wounded surgeon.

Salomon was an only child and was single, and had no immediate relatives who could receive the Medal of Honor in his place.

The award to Salomon is not connected to a list of 138 war veterans whose records are under review by the Pentagon to determine whether they were denied the Medal of Honor because of anti-Semitic discrimination. □