



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Report fails to implicate P.A.

The U.S. State Department says it cannot judge whether senior Palestinian Authority officials are involved in terrorism.

The annual Patterns of Global Terrorism report says "street-level membership of Fatah," Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's political party, have participated in terrorist attacks, but the report makes no mention of senior Palestinian leaders.

The report, released Tuesday, also says Israel's destruction of the Palestinian security infrastructure has contributed to the Palestinian Authority's ineffectiveness in curbing violence.

The report also lists seven countries that are called state sponsors of terrorism: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria. [Page 4]

Sharon stands by Shas firings

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he would not reverse the dismissals of four Cabinet ministers from the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

Sharon fired the four late Monday night after they helped defeat the government's emergency budget plan in the Knesset because it would cut spending for social welfare payments for large families.

Meanwhile, the secular Shinui Party, which holds six Knesset seats, offered to join the coalition without prior conditions. In another development, Finance Minister Silvan Shalom said Tuesday he would ask lawmakers to vote on the proposed budget cuts again on Wednesday.

Poll: Arafat's popularity slips

Yasser Arafat's popularity is slipping, a new poll shows. According to the poll, conducted earlier this month by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, the Palestinian Authority president has the support of 35 percent of Palestinians, compared with 46 percent in July 2000, before the outbreak of the intifada.

Marwan Barghouti, leader of Palestinian militias in the West Bank and now in an Israeli jail, was chosen as the second most popular Palestinian figure. The survey, which has a margin of error of 3 percent, also indicated that there is overwhelming support among Palestinians for reforms, including firing corrupt Cabinet ministers, streamlining rival security services into one and holding new elections soon.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Jewish leaders want U.S. to press Russia to cut nuclear ties with Iran

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the White House forges a new strategic relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Jewish leaders and congressional legislators are urging the Bush administration to press Russia to curb technology transfers to Iran.

"We've been assured that he will raise this issue," Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said of President Bush, who will meet with Putin in Russia beginning Friday.

For years, Israel and the American Jewish community have been concerned about the sale of nuclear technology and Russia's sharing of nuclear information with Iran.

Although pro-Israel activists are focusing even more on Mideast diplomacy because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they stress that Russian-Iranian ties are still an issue the White House needs to address.

"It has been eclipsed, but it remains a priority," Hoenlein said. "Iran remains the fulcrum of the international terrorist network and a major state sponsor of terrorism."

Russian-Iranian ties have also remained an issue for Congress. Members of both houses sent separate letters to Bush this week, urging him to press Russia on its ties with Iran during their summit.

Jewish leaders and lawmakers are hoping Bush will stress the need for Russia to break its nuclear ties with Iran for Russia's own benefit, as well as for the benefit of the United States and the international community in the struggle against terrorism.

"Time is running out, and without a sustained and meaningful effort on the part of the Russian government to stop dangerous exports now, we will soon be faced with an altered and hugely more threatening security environment in an area vital to our own strategic interests," said the letter signed by 34 members of the House of Representatives.

The State Department recently reiterated its description of Iran as "the most active state sponsor of terrorism" and Bush named it as part of the "axis of evil." It recently has been accused of smuggling weapons to the Palestinian Authority for use against Israelis, and any nuclear capability it acquires is considered a threat to Israeli security.

Recent intelligence says Iran may reach nuclear capability within three to five years.

Russia is considered the primary source for both technology and information that Iran has garnered toward establishing this nuclear capability.

According to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Russia has provided engines, guidance systems and warhead technologies for Iranian missiles, and has rebuilt a nuclear reactor that provides cover for Iran's nuclear weapon projects.

"It's a very extensive problem," said Marvin Feuer, director of defense and strategic issues for AIPAC. "It involves everything from warhead technologies and helping Iran design weapons to the basics of the Iranian program."

Analysts say the amount of nuclear information and weapons being sent to Iran is manageable, if Russia made a priority of stopping it.

That would entail more carefully review of the licensing of exports and preventing scientists who worked on nuclear proliferation during the Cold War from traveling to Iran.

But the question is whether Russia has been negligent in controlling sales to Iran or whether the sales are part of a conscious strategy. There is agreement that some companies and entities profit from the Russian sales to Iran, but it is unclear whether

MIDEAST FOCUS

Wanted: Israeli envoy to D.C.

Israel's top diplomatic post remains unfilled more than a month after former Ambassador David Ivry left Washington.

Media reports recently mentioned two possible candidates: Sallai Meridor, the chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, and Avi Pazner, currently the world chairman of Keren Hayesod and a former ambassador to Italy and France. Other names previously mentioned have included former U.N. Ambassador Dore Gold; the president of Israel's Chambers of Commerce, Danny Gillerman; and Mossad chief Ephraim Halevy. Until now, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres have been unable to agree on a candidate.

P.A. drops weapons ship charges

The Palestinian Authority dropped charges against the alleged mastermind behind the arms shipment Israel intercepted in January.

A Palestinian court in Ramallah ruled Tuesday that there was insufficient evidence against Fuad Shubaki and declared he was not guilty, according to the Jerusalem Post.

During Israel's large-scale anti-terror operation in the West Bank, Israeli officials said they found documents in Shubaki's office linking him to the arms shipment that was seized Jan. 3 aboard the *Karine-A*. Shubaki, the chief finance officer of the Palestinian Authority, is being held in a Jericho jail, where he is being watched by U.S. and British wardens.

Israeli eateries lock out terrorists

Israeli restaurants have adopted a new measure to deter suicide bombers: lock them out.

Restaurants and cafes around the country, especially in Jerusalem, have begun locking their doors and admitting diners only after looking them over, according to the Jerusalem Post.



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the government profits. Those who say Russia is involved in a strategic alliance with Iran say the Russians believe Iran is going to gain access to nuclear weapons with or without Russian aid, and that Russian support provides a cooperative relationship that can prevent Iran from targeting Russia in the future.

Others say Russia believes a nuclear Iran would be a threat and that Russia should be more active in stopping the trade.

"On the one hand, Russians look to Iran, and they're scared," said Harold Luks, chairman of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia. "But on the other hand, the Russians look to Iran and see an open market."

Congress has taken several actions over the years designed to thwart countries — including Russia — from dealing with Iran. The latest was the renewal last year of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which calls for sanctions against foreign companies that invest in Iran's energy sector.

In 2000, Congress passed the Iran Non-Proliferation Act, which required the president to report to Congress about entities providing nuclear technology to Iran and either sanction them or grant them a waiver. The bill also limited U.S. assistance to the Russian space agency until Russia takes action against proliferation of nuclear materials to Iran.

In addition, half of the annual U.S. aid to Russia unrelated to nonproliferation programs is withheld each year until the president can certify that Russia is not aiding Iranian nuclear programs.

"What the United States is asking Russia to do is adhere to international agreements and what is stated Russian policy," Feuer said.

Bush's meeting with Putin comes a week after the United States and Russia agreed to cut their nuclear arsenals by two-thirds. But Feuer said there has been no indication that the improving relationship between the two states has led to progress on the Iranian front. Still, it may open the door to future agreements that include provisions on exports to Iran, analysts said.

"We are at the start of a new strategic relationship with Russia," Feuer said. "If it's a very important matter for the United States, it could be at the core of the relationship."

While the Clinton administration stressed the Iranian issue with the Russians, the Bush White House has yet to call publicly on Russia to end its nuclear ties with Iran.

American Jewish leaders hope Bush will use his upcoming trip as an opportunity to express publicly views that he has said in private to the American Jewish community.

"The United States has an obligation to go to the Russians, very clearly and very specifically, and state what our concern is," Luks said. "And I think that's been done."

Bush's trip will include one gesture to the Jewish community — a visit to a St. Petersburg synagogue. Bush will participate in a program Sunday at the Choral Synagogue, though details have not been released.

The synagogue, which is led by St. Petersburg Chief Rabbi Mendel Pewzner, opened in 1893. Recently, it has been restored.

Some Jewish leaders had been concerned that Bush would meet with Lubavitch leadership in Russia but not other Jewish groups. But last week Bush reportedly told the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of North American Jewish federations, that he sought to invite a diverse Jewish audience to the event.

Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States, said Bush's visit will be "an incredible boost" for the Jewish community in Russia.

It will show the administration's support for the Jewish community and will be seen as "an important show of support for religious freedom," Berkowitz said. □

Former camp guard deported

NEW YORK (JTA) — A former concentration camp guard was deported from the United States to Romania.

Nikolaus Schiffer, 83, left Monday on a flight from New York, according to an official with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. He left the United States after an immigration judge ordered him deported for lying about his wartime activities when he tried to enter the United States after World War II. □

JEWISH WORLD

Court rules against Shoah denier

British Holocaust denier David Irving failed to have a bankruptcy order against him overturned. Irving was declared bankrupt by the High Court last month after he failed to pay Penguin Books some \$213,000, part of the publisher's legal costs. On Tuesday, a judge ruled "there is nothing to suggest that anything improper has arisen" that would enable Irving to avoid his legal liability.

In a highly publicized case in London in 2000, Irving lost his lawsuit against scholar Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin, after a book by Lipstadt accused him of being a Holocaust denier. Irving was ordered at the time to pay Lipstadt's legal costs, estimated at nearly \$3 million.

Stephen Jay Gould dies

Stephen Jay Gould, a scientist who criticized the use of "pseudoscience" to characterize Jews and others as inferior human beings, died at 60.

Gould, who died of cancer in New York, was a prolific essayist who taught at Harvard and other prestigious universities. He also earned a National Book Award and a MacArthur "genius" grant.

"The Mismeasure of Man" explains how racial theories were used to justify restrictions on immigration in the United States after 1920.

U.S. shuls to help terror victims

A new program will pair Israeli families scarred by Palestinian suicide bombings with synagogues based in the United States. The initiative is a joint effort of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform streams of the U.S. Jewish community.

The program, created by the One Family Foundation and the Israel Emergency Solidarity Fund, already has signed up synagogues in Europe, South Africa and the Far East.

Study: Surgery reduces cancer

Preventive surgery reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancers in women with gene mutations that are common among Ashkenazi Jews, according to a new study.

In the study, only seven women with the BRCA-1 or BRCA-2 mutations out of 101 who had their ovaries and fallopian tubes removed had these cancers or later developed it, compared with 13 women among 72 who did not have the surgery. The genetic mutations, which are linked to breast and ovarian cancers, are more frequently found among Jewish women of Ashkenazi descent than among the general population.

The incidence of cancer among Ashkenazi Jews is not higher than among those in the general population, but more of their cancer risk stems from genetic factors.

Synagogue attack in Quebec City is latest in string of racist crimes

By Bram Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — A synagogue in Quebec City has become the third Jewish house of worship in Canada attacked this year.

A bomb exploded Sunday morning at Beth Israel Synagogue, the only synagogue in Quebec City, but caused no injuries.

The blast shattered windows, damaged a door and left black powder stains on the walls of the single-story stucco building.

A 27-year-old man was arrested in connection with the blast. Police described him as mentally unstable, adding that he was found uttering anti-Semitic remarks in the area after the explosion.

Following Sunday's attack, the premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry, phoned local Jewish leaders to voice outrage and offer support.

In April, arsonists struck historic synagogues in Toronto and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage to holy books and property.

Also this year, vandals have defaced numerous other Jewish buildings, including the Toronto headquarters of Reena, a Jewish charity for the disabled.

The attacks are believed to be linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Meanwhile, members of Montreal's Jewish community also are concerned about a resurgence of anti-Semitism.

Following a massive rally in Montreal last month, when some 25,000 people celebrated Israel's Independence Day, several young Jews were denied service by the owner of a Second Cup franchise, a coffeehouse chain similar to Starbucks.

When the young Jews entered, carrying rolled-up Israeli flags, the store's owner made anti-Semitic and anti-Israel comments and told them to leave.

Second Cup's Toronto headquarters immediately issued an apology.

Another incident occurred the next week in Ottawa, where a pro-Israel rally drew an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people.

Following the rally, several young Jews were verbally abused, chased and threatened by security guards when they attempted to enter the Rideau Centre, the city's major downtown shopping mall.

The guards also made anti-Semitic remarks. □

Croatian Jews upset after paper demands that they criticize Israel

By Vlasta Kovac

Zagreb, CROATIA (JTA) — A Croatian newspaper is calling on the country's Jews to criticize Israel's recent military actions against the Palestinians.

The Jewish community's newspaper compared the call to a similar Communist-era campaign.

The recent editorial in the leftist Feral Tribune paper blamed Croatian Jewish intellectuals for turning a deaf ear to "the terrible events in the Middle East and mass killings of Palestinian civilians in Jenin."

The editorial failed to mention Palestinian terror attacks against Israelis.

For years, the newspaper has been considered a brave, satirical voice opposing extreme nationalism in Croatia and those who want to downplay Croatia's actions during World War II, when the country was ruled by a pro-Nazi puppet regime.

The paper's pro-Palestinian stance is well-known, but the editorial angered some of Croatia's nearly 3,000 Jews.

In response, the Croatian Jewish bimonthly Hakol published a letter written in 1970 by Lavoslav Singer, then-president of the Zagreb Jewish community, in which he reported on a meeting at the offices of the Croatian World War II Veterans Association.

A leading Communist had given orders that Jewish communities sign a statement condemning Israel for bombing an Egyptian factory. None of the veterans signed, even though some risked their professional careers. □

Jewish groups call terror report a 'whitewash' as Arafat gets pass

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The State Department continues to separate the Palestinian leadership from responsibility for terror attacks, an approach that has caused concern — and anger — among Jewish leaders and analysts.

In its annual Patterns of Global Terrorism report, released Tuesday, the State Department says members of the Tanzim militia were responsible for attacks against Israeli targets, but does not link those attacks to senior members of Fatah, the political party of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

The report describes Tanzim as “made up of small and loosely organized cells of militants drawn from the street-level membership of Fatah.”

“We’ve made it very clear that there are members of Tanzim that are also members of the Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade,” said Francis Taylor, State Department coordinator on counterterrorism. “That’s not a secret. What we have not been able to determine or to make a final judgment is how far up and who in the P.A. may be, or could be, or had been directing this activity. We have not found that linkage.”

Taylor said the State Department confirmed the authenticity of documents that Israel says show a clear link between Arafat and terrorist organizations, but said the documents are still under review.

Analysts and American Jewish leaders call the report a “whitewash.”

“This report gives short shrift to Palestinian terrorism in general, certainly to Palestinian Authority involvement in terrorism,” said Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow in terrorism studies at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. “There is concrete evidence that senior Palestinian officials called for, incited and conducted terrorist attacks.”

Significantly, there is only brief mention of the Karine-A, a ship carrying 50 tons of weapons to the Palestinian territories from Iran. The \$50 million operation is believed to have been supervised by the top echelons of the Palestinian Authority.

State Department officials say the ship seizure was omitted because it was not intercepted until January 2002, while the report examines incidents only through December 2001. Yet Levitt notes that the abduction and murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan, which is described in detail, also occurred in January.

The report noted significant attacks on Israel by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, all members of the State Department’s Foreign Terrorist Organization list. The Al-Aksa Brigade, a military wing of Fatah, was added to the terrorist list earlier this year.

The report also cited attacks by Jewish extremists on Palestinian civilians and properties in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and attacks by the Israeli military on the Palestinian Authority’s security apparatus.

“Israel’s destruction of the P.A.’s security infrastructure contributed to the ineffectiveness of the P.A.,” the report said. “Significantly reduced Israeli-P.A. security cooperation and a lax security environment allowed Hamas and other groups to rebuild terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian territories.”

The report also says that Palestinian Authority counterterrorism activities “remained sporadic throughout the year,” which Jewish leaders said is euphemistic. “It’s implying that there is counterterrorism activity,” said Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Some have argued that Palestinian leaders received a pass in this report — and in other recent assessments by the Bush administration — so the United States could continue a political dialogue with Arafat and other Arab leaders, who continue to see Arafat’s participation as critical to ending the Middle East conflict.

“There are few left in this administration and Congress that doubt that Arafat’s actions, or inaction, have led to an escalation and perpetration of violence against Israel,” said Rebecca Needler, spokeswoman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The annual assessment of international terrorism largely focused on the Sept. 11 attacks and the ensuing coalition against terrorism that is currently waging war in Afghanistan. While several Middle Eastern countries were praised for condemning the World Trade Center attacks, Iran and Syria were accused of seeking “to have it both ways,” by continuing to support Palestinian violence.

“On the one hand, they clamped down on certain terrorist groups, such as Al Qaida,” the group accused of masterminding the Sept. 11 attacks, the report said. “On the other hand, they maintained their support for other terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, insisting they were national liberation movements.”

Syria and Iran remain on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, along with Cuba, Libya, Sudan, Iraq and North Korea.

Iran was again named the “most active state sponsor of terrorism,” and the report says Iranian support for Palestinian terrorist groups has intensified. Iran was accused of providing “varying amounts of funding, safe haven, training and weapons” to Palestinian groups.

Damascus was called the “primary transit point for the transfer of Iranian-supplied weapons” to Hezbollah. Syria also was cited for its role as a safe haven and facilitator of terrorist groups.

Iraq was cited as the only Arab or Muslim country that did not at least formally condemn the Sept. 11 attacks, and for meetings Iraqi leaders held with leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Lebanon was cited for condoning the actions of Palestinian terrorist groups, and for failing to hand over to the United States senior Hezbollah operatives accused of participating in a 1985 airplane hijacking.

Saudi Arabia, which the United States has embraced in recent months as a key contact toward ending the Middle East conflict, was praised for reaffirming “its commitment to combat terrorism.” Israel has attempted to show links between Saudi officials and Palestinian terrorism. □

Politics at Miss Universe pageant

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Miss Lebanon is boycotting this year’s Miss Universe pageant, saying she will not participate alongside Miss Israel.

Yamit Har-Noy, a 20-year-old member of the Israel Defense Force, called Miss Lebanon’s decision “very distressing.”

“It is only a beauty pageant,” Miss Israel said of the competition, slated to take place May 29 in Puerto Rico. “It has nothing to do with politics.” □