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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Cabinet opts for limited strikes

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon convened Israel's Security Cabinet to discuss the recent surge in Palestinian terror attacks.

At the end of Wednesday's meeting, Cabinet members agreed to continue with limited military operations rather than launch a massive campaign similar to Operation Protective Wall, Israel Radio reported.

The Security Cabinet met after four Israelis were killed in two West Bank attacks Tuesday night. In one attack, three yeshiva students were killed and two others wounded by a Palestinian gunman who infiltrated the settlement of Itamar.

The terrorist was shot dead by the settlement security guard.

Earlier, a 50-year-old Israeli was killed in an ambush as he was driving near the West Bank settlement of Ofra.

The military wing of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement claimed responsibility for both shootings.

Europeans march for Israel

Several thousand people from across Europe marched in support of Israel.

Wednesday's demonstration in Brussels, coordinated by the Belgian-Israel Friendship Association, also came in response to growing concerns about a wave of anti-Semitic attacks across Europe.

Marchers waving Israeli flags and those of several European countries called on the European Parliament to stand up against what they see as Europe's one-sided criticism of Israel. [Page 4]

Jerusalem honors Bronfmans

Mega-philanthropists Charles and Andrea Bronfman were made honorary citizens of the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert honored the couple Wednesday in a City Hall ceremony in which he presented them with awards and gold pins.

Olmert praised the Bronfmans for their contributions to Jerusalem, their role in enhancing the quality of life for all Israelis and their leadership in advancing solidarity with the State of Israel.

They are the first North American Jews to receive the honor.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Plans for peace conference vague amid who, what and where questions

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States, having committed itself to an international peace conference this summer, is now trying to determine how such a meeting can garner results.

Or whether it should take place at all.

With many options on the table about whom to invite and what to discuss, little has been determined definitively about the shape and scope of the conference, which is now being touted as a ministerial meeting.

No date or place has yet been set for the gathering, which U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced earlier this month with the leaders of the United Nations, European Union and Russia.

Planning for the conference has been complicated by the situation on the ground. When it was announced, Israel had completed a military operation aimed at bringing a halt to suicide bombings, and there was widespread support for the need for reform in the Palestinian Authority. But after a brief respite, the suicide bombings have resumed, with Israeli forces continuing operations in the West Bank to arrest suspected terrorists.

Among the more important details to be worked out is the participation of the Palestinian Authority and its president, Yasser Arafat.

The Bush administration is hinting that it would prefer to deal with a leader other than Arafat.

"If a new structure emerges that could better represent the views of the Palestinian people, we will look at that institution or structure as one that could advance the cause of peace," a State Department official said.

While the State Department is not publicly fostering a replacement for Arafat, sources suggest the administration is hoping that one emerges amid U.S. and international efforts to reform the Palestinian political and security infrastructures.

"We are talking to people inside and outside the Palestinian Authority structure," the official said.

Two American envoys were going to the region this week to work on different aspects of America's three-pronged initiative for moving forward in the Middle East: establishing security cooperation, forging a political process and working toward economic, political and security changes in the Palestinian territories.

Assistant Secretary of State William Burns' trip, which will focus on Palestinian transformation activities, is being looked to as a way to lay the groundwork for the peace conference.

"Our hope is that he makes some headway, so that we can make some progress in advance of the ministerial meeting, so that we can have some meaningful benchmark at the ministerial meeting," the State Department official.

CIA Director George Tenet, whose trip has been postponed as the administration sought to define his role as the situation on the ground changed, was expected to leave for the Middle East on Friday.

His mission, announced by President Bush during meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon earlier this month, is to help streamline the security infrastructure within the Palestinian territories into a single apparatus.

But even as the administration forges ahead in planning the peace conference, the prospect remains that the conference will achieve little, or that it will be called off entirely. The prevailing view in Washington is that the Bush administration is in flux

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinian extraditions sought

A U.S. lawmaker is seeking the extradition of two Palestinians accused of murdering an American citizen.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) sent a letter to Attorney General John Ashcroft, asking him to seek the extradition of Ibrahim Abayat and Jihad Youssef Khalif Ja'ara to face trial for the murder of Avi Boaz, a 72-year-old American from Brooklyn who was killed last year in Beit Jalla.

The two Palestinians recently were sent into exile as part of a deal to end the standoff earlier this month at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. Abayat is currently in Spain, and Ja'ara is in Ireland.

Israel launches spy satellite

Israel successfully launched a spy satellite. The Ofek-5 spy satellite was launched Tuesday on an Israeli-made rocket from the Palmachim base in the center of the country.

The satellite again gives Israel early-warning capabilities, which ended after the Ofek-3 satellite went out of use more than a year ago.

The satellite will orbit about 300 miles above the earth and will be capable of discerning objects as small as a yard in length. The first images are expected to start transmitting in about two weeks following tests of the satellite's operating systems.

Panel: Water crisis to worsen

An Israeli panel recommended declaring a state of water emergency for the next two years.

The declaration would be part of measures to offset what experts predict will be a worsening water shortage. The recommendations were included in a 300-page report dealing with Israel's water crisis.

Other recommendations included moving responsibility for the water in the State of Israel to the Prime Minister's Office and establishing an independent water authority.



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on how to move forward in the Middle East, and that the conference was announced without a clear agenda.

"It is my sense that this conference was a reflection of not an idea, but the absence of an idea," said Danielle Pletka, vice president for foreign and defense policy at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

"This is a reflection of the fact that the Bush administration is at a loss."

But Powell, speaking to reporters in Rome on Tuesday, said the administration is moving forward with the vision previously laid out by Bush.

He also reiterated the administration's commitment to the meeting "sometime in the summer."

But another State Department official told JTA, "There's always a possibility that it wouldn't happen."

While the term for the talks has been changed from "international peace conference" to "ministerial meetings" in an attempt to lower expectations, proponents say the meeting is still the next step in U.S. efforts to curb continuing violence in the Middle East. Officials and analysts are debating just what substance the meeting can and will address.

One view is that the meeting should have a broader focus and resemble a regional conference, with discussions to include the international war on terrorism and the Iraqi situation.

This approach, favored by Sharon and being dubbed "Madrid Plus," after the Madrid Peace talks in 1991 that launched the Oslo peace process, would create an environment for a discussion about the peace process, rather than getting into specific details.

An alternative possibility suggested by observers is to have a more structured forum on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, complete with timelines and agreements.

Indeed, reports surfaced this week that the administration is working on an agreement that would serve as the basis for discussions.

The effort, as reported by The Washington Post, would address some of the final-status issues such as Jerusalem, borders and refugees that previous administrations and regional leaders have failed to agree upon.

But while a State Department official won't deny that an effort is under way to flesh out final-status details, he also said there is reluctance to present an agreement that would replace the need for direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Responding to the report, Powell, in Rome, said, "We are not at this point prepared to table an American plan with specific deadlines."

Also in flux is who will represent Israel. A meeting of foreign ministers, which was suggested to overcome Sharon's objections to Arafat, would likely lead to Shimon Peres representing Israel.

But the Israeli foreign minister's Middle East outlook differs significantly from Sharon, and the prime minister may want to attend on his own.

An Israeli official said the differences between Sharon and Peres are overstated, and that a delegation from the country would represent the view of the unity government. Also being considered is how to approach Arab leaders.

While the Bush administration has embraced the recent words of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah and Jordan's King Abdullah, there is a feeling that the Arab leaders have been unable to convince Arafat to halt terrorism, and it is unclear how much more leverage the countries are willing to exert.

Although the conference was originally the idea of the Arab world, some Arab leaders are now hesitating after Sharon began to push the idea himself. Now both sides are concerned that the meeting will be played out on the other's terms.

As one American Jewish leader put it: "Everyone is seeing how they can maximize it for their own best interest."

And a great deal of skepticism remains.

"The best definition of the conference I could gather is that it will bring the parties together and see what overlaps," said Richard Murphy, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"It doesn't have to be a formal get-together for that level of abstractness or generality." □

JEWISH WORLD

Group plans Israel solidarity trips

A U.S. Jewish group is sponsoring a campaign to bring more American Jews on solidarity trips to Israel. The program, called Am Yisrael Chai Missions, is sponsored by Emunah of America, the Religious Zionist women's organization.

The program seeks to drum up support for Israel and assist the country's ailing tourism industry, according to Marcia Genuth, the group's national president. In recent weeks, six missions have visited Israel under the program's auspices, she said.

Coexistence programs get grants

The Abraham Fund awarded \$1 million in grants to 62 groups advancing Jewish-Arab coexistence in Israel.

At a ceremony this week near Tel Aviv, the fund's chairman, New York businessman Alan Slifka, said the fund is "accelerating its advocacy efforts this year to increase Arabic study in the school system, lobby the government to do more and to have an impact on public opinion." Since its founding in 1989, the fund has contributed more than \$7 million to over 600 projects.

Yale honors Steven Spielberg

Director Steven Spielberg received an honorary doctorate from Yale University. Along with honoring Spielberg on Monday for his many films, Yale cited his efforts to preserve the memory of the Holocaust, both in his film "Schindler's List" and in his Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

In another development, the foundation recently announced a new campaign, the California Challenge. The campaign seeks to raise funds necessary to catalog the testimonies of Holocaust survivors recorded by the foundation in California. The catalog would help students, researchers, and the general public learn about the Holocaust and about California as a place of refuge after World War II.

Rabbi who helped D.P.'s dies

Rabbi Zwi Azaria-Helfgott, one of the spiritual leaders of Jews in displaced persons camps after World War II, died at 88. Helfgott, who died May 22, served in the Yugoslav Army during World War II. After the war he headed the rabbinate in the British zone of Germany and at the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp. He later divided his time between Israel and Germany.

"He will be remembered as one of the rabbis who said Kaddish over the mass graves of Bergen-Belsen, married many of the survivors and officiated at the bris of the children born in the D.P. camps," said Menachem Rosensaft, a leader of the second generation of Holocaust survivors.

Internet site provides pizzas to Israeli soldiers on active duty

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Mushrooms, peppers and extra cheese, please — but hold the explosives.

Concerns about booby-trapped pizzas have led the Israel Defense Force to impose restrictions on the use of a Web site that allows users to spice up Israeli army service by sending pies to soldiers.

More than 5,000 pizzas have been sent to members of the IDF since the service began operating about a month ago, says Shimon Aharon, a British-born Israeli and one of the co-founders of the site, www.pizzaidf.org.

Initially for IDF members serving in the West Bank, the pizza deliveries will become available for troops in the Gush Katif bloc in the Gaza Strip starting next week.

After news organizations reported on the site, however, the army began to worry that Palestinian terrorists would take advantage of the deliveries to send "pizzas" with more than just explosive taste.

IDF officials recently instructed soldiers not to accept any pizzas they had not ordered themselves.

The army said in a statement that the directive was issued "due to concern that hostile elements would make use of the pizza deliveries."

The restrictions may take a slice out of his business, but Aharon stresses that his Web-based pizza delivery service works in cooperation with the IDF.

Requests for pizzas come in from army units, and deliveries are coordinated with them, he says. Most of the online pizzas have been sent from the United States, with others sent from Europe, South America, Australia, Hong Kong and Turkey, according to Aharon. □

Soccer star hopes to win World Cup and become more Jewishly involved

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Jewish soccer star Jeff Agoos was so angry when he was the last player cut from the 1994 U.S. World Cup squad that he threw his uniform into a fireplace and burned it.

"I had gone through two years of grueling training and was very disappointed," said the 34-year-old defender for the San Jose, Calif., Earthquakes.

Agoos made the World Cup team in 1998, when the United States was eliminated in the first round, but didn't get to play.

He made the roster again this year and hopes to be in the starting lineup when the United States plays its first match, against Portugal, on June 5 in Suwon, South Korea. Japan and Korea are jointly hosting the 2002 World Cup.

The World Cup pits the globe's top soccer nations against each other every four years, and is considered the world's greatest single sporting event.

American soccer is still catching up with the rest of the world, and advancing beyond the first round this year would be considered an achievement for the Americans.

Born in Geneva, Jeff was raised in a "somewhat religious" home, halfway between Reform and Conservative. "I went once a week to Sunday school and we observed the holidays," he said.

Six months after his birth, his parents moved to South Africa, and four years later moved again, this time to the United States, settling first in Atlanta and finally in Dallas.

After a professional stint in Germany, he started playing U.S. soccer in 1996. In February 2001, he was traded to the Earthquakes and led the team to its first Major League Soccer Cup championship, while winning the MLS Defender of the Year award.

Agoos starred on the U.S. team in the 1985 and 1989 Maccabiah Games, both won by the host Israeli team.

In his personal life, Agoos is a bachelor. "I'm not as much Jewishly involved as I would like to be, but I observe some of the holidays," he said. □

European Jews converge for Israel rally in Brussels

By Toby Axelrod

BRUSSELS (JTA) — From Austria, Greece, Italy and England they came. From France, Germany Switzerland and the Czech Republic.

And, of course, from Belgium, where the rally took place.

Usually concerned with local problems, European Jews took a big step toward uniting their voices with a rally that drew nearly 10,000 people Wednesday to Brussels, the seat of the European Union.

The rally — the first continent-wide Jewish demonstration since the Palestinian intifada began 21 months ago — was intended to express solidarity for Israel and concern about increasing anti-Semitism in Europe.

Perhaps it was a sign that “the Jews of Europe are waking up,” Harry Kney-Tal, Israel’s ambassador to the European Union and NATO, told JTA. “Up until recently, each European Jewish community was involved with their own particular issues. But now they are getting more coordinated.”

The rally was “the first manifestation of this awakened consciousness and the need to move from being passive to becoming proactive,” he said.

The demonstration was initiated by the European Jewish Congress and coordinated by several Belgian organizations. It was timed to coincide with an E.U. parliamentary session, though neither the Mideast nor anti-Semitism were on the Parliament’s agenda.

With flags whipping in a wind that turned sunny skies cloudy, marchers made their way from Brussels’ main synagogue to a square facing the European Parliament buildings.

French, English, Flemish, Italian, German, Greek and Czech could be heard among the ranks of the parade. When it came to singing, however, everyone turned to Hebrew.

“We are not here to protest against a Palestinian state, or against the Palestinian people,” said Michel Friedman, a vice president of the European Jewish Congress and of the Central Council of German Jews. “We are here to protest in solidarity with Israel, and to say that if the Palestinians want to have a country they have to deny terrorism.”

Some non-Jews also took part in the rally.

“As a German — or, as I would like to say, a European of German origin — I know my responsibility and duty,” said European Parliament member Elmar Brok, who is not Jewish.

“The security of the State of Israel and the safety of its people is a condition for anything else,” said Brok, who has been involved in a campaign to stop European funding for Palestinian school-books that spread hatred of Israel.

Ryk van Damm, a Dutch member of the European Parliament, said he came “to express my disgust at the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe.”

“No Jew has attacked a mosque, no Jew has attacked an Islamic school, no Jew has attacked an imam,” said Roger Cukierman, president of CRIF, the umbrella group for secular French Jewish organizations.

More than any other country in Europe, France has seen a wave of attacks against Jews and destruction of Jewish property since the Mideast crisis escalated.

Other speakers included former Belgian Cabinet minister Willy de Clerk; Cobi Benatof, president of the European Congress of Jewish Communities; Serge Cwajgenbaum, secretary of the European Jewish Congress; and members of the E.U. Parliament from France, Germany, Holland and Italy.

Organizers said Jewish attendance from some countries was far less than hoped.

Some 3,000 demonstrators came from France, which has a Jewish population of 700,000.

Germany, with some 100,000 Jews, sent four buses, and Austria sent about 60 participants from its community of 7,000.

Organizers estimated that about half of the Jewish demonstrators came from Belgium, which has about 35,000 Jews.

Benjamin Albalas, vice president of the Central Board of the Jewish Community of Greece, which has about 7,000 Jews, said he brought 21 young Greek Jews with him to Brussels. There also was a group from Crete.

Despite the turnout, the mood at the demonstration was enthusiastic, organizers said.

Demonstrators agreed that pro-Palestinian media reports on the Mideast pose a serious danger both to political support for Israel and popular sentiment toward Jews.

“The public does not get the truth anymore,” said Frederique Ries, a Belgian member of the European Parliament, who also fought to freeze E.U. money to the Palestinian Authority over the textbook issue.

“Everything is in reverse,” Ries said. “When Israel makes an incursion, the media doesn’t speak about why. They only minimize.”

“We are trying to fight against misinformation,” said Betty Dan, director of Radio Judaica, a 24-hour Jewish station in Belgium.

She gets daily calls from listeners “who have received anti-Semitic flyers with such words as ‘Dirty Jew, We will kill you,’ and ‘Don’t buy from Jews,’ ” Dan told JTA. “For the first time in 22 years of this radio program, we have received such letters.”

“Jews of Europe are menaced every day,” Belgian Chief Rabbi Avraham Guigui said. “I myself was attacked in December on the street in Brussels.

“But I believe that one must not generalize” and blame all Arabs in Europe, he continued. “We must create relations with the Arabs in Belgium and in Europe.”

The demonstration drew young and old. Moshe Prys, 79, a resident of Brussels who survived the Holocaust in Switzerland, came to show his solidarity with Israel.

Sam Topor, a 77-year-old Auschwitz survivor, wore a concentration camp cap bearing his prisoner number.

“Auschwitz must not happen again,” he said.

Some European Jewish leaders are calling for the creation of a European Jewish lobby that would meet with E.U. legislators in Brussels, as American Jewish groups do in Washington.

A proposal for such a lobby was presented at the October 2001 annual meeting of the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem.

Wednesday’s demonstration may be a step toward building momentum.

“This is a pan-European demonstration,” said Daniel Stimmer, an executive of the Jewish Council of Representatives in Belgium. “And it is the first time that Belgian Jews have supported Israel in the street.” □