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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Three Israelis killed in attacks

Three Israelis were killed in a Palestinian attack Saturday on a West Bank settlement.

Two Palestinian gunmen infiltrated the settlement of Karmeit Zzur in the Etzion bloc early Saturday, murdering Eyal Sorek and his wife, Yael, who was nine months pregnant.

Also killed was Staff Sgt. Maj. Shalom Mordechai, 35, of Nahariya, who died of wounds sustained during a subsequent dash with the gunmen. One of the gunmen was killed and another escaped.

The murders took place one day before the Palestinian Authority announced it is implementing some reforms. [Page 4]

Senate passes Israel aid

The U.S. Senate passed an anti-terrorism bill that includes additional aid for Israel and the Palestinians. The \$31.5 billion bill provides \$200 million for Israel, as well as \$50 million earmarked for the United States Agency for International Development to distribute in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The bill now heads to conference committee, where it will be negotiated against a House of Representatives version passed last month, which included the same amendment.

Bush: No timetable for statehood

President Bush refused to set a timetable for the creation of a Palestinian state.

Bush also said Saturday after meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who had sought such a timetable, that the two sides have to resume negotiations "quickly, so we can seize the moment." [Page 4]

Israel fires may be arson

Firefighters tried last Friday to control five separate bush fires in Israel, some of which appeared to be arson.

The largest of three blazes that were extinguished was a two-pronged fire started in the hills close to the northern Israeli Arab village of Madjal Crum.

A bush fire also broke out north of Nazareth, destroying hundreds of acres of parkland.

Fire warnings remained in effect Sunday as heat wave conditions continued.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

In the struggle to defend Israel, e-mail is emerging as new front line

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — As pro-Israel e-mails glut the inboxes of Jews throughout the world, the Internet has become a grass-roots front line in the defense of the Jewish state.

The current intifada marks the first time the Internet has been widely available during a period of war in Israel.

The new medium has produced an e-mail frenzy, giving voice, power and speed to Jewish debates, discussions and pro-Israel mobilizations — and to their Palestinian counterparts. But many say the phenomenon has its pitfalls.

One is an abundance of false information, according to Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

E-mails with outdated information, or that urge boycotts against companies falsely accused of being anti-Israel, have proved so prevalent that the ADL has devoted a section of its Web site to "debunking Internet rumors."

In one case, the organization found itself defending the Latin pop star Shakira, who was accused in an e-mail of making anti-Semitic statements.

The e-mail stated that Shakira refused to speak to an Israeli fan during a live appearance on MTV in Europe, saying she'd "rather have pigs listening to her music than Israelis."

The ADL determined that the report was a "complete fabrication."

The high "intensity of anger and concern" over the situation in Israel means fewer people worry about accuracy when they hit the send button, not realizing they could be setting off a chain reaction, Foxman said.

Apart from the hassle of devoting "too much time" to verify claims and complaints, Foxman said it's nearly impossible to manage the myths.

"How do you possibly chase it down?" he asked, referring to the labyrinthine path an inaccurate e-mail may have taken. "It undermines the credibility of our community, because anybody can set into motion an attack against anybody without any basis in fact or in truth."

Determining the veracity of material on the Internet is a specialty of Sreenath Sreenivasan, a professor of online journalism at Columbia University, who said one of the most circulated e-mail photographs of last year was a fake: a tourist atop the World Trade Center moments before the Twin Towers fell.

Heightened e-mail activity is typical when passions are inflamed, Sreenivasan said.

"By every account, e-mail volume has increased dramatically" since Sept. 11, he said, and those closely following the Indian-Pakistani conflict report a similar explosion of e-mail in recent weeks.

"In a crisis, like now in the Middle East," people "want to get control," he said. "Something in writing, if only e-mail writing, feels real, as opposed to water-cooler" discussions.

People can broadcast their thoughts to friends or mount an online petition, Sreenivasan said. He doesn't know whether such offensives affect policy, but Sreenivasan said some journalists are very receptive to feedback.

For many "virtual" Jewish soldiers, e-mail is a tool to promote a pro-Israel message. "Being an open Jew" in Dusseldorf, Germany, "I often get asked about the situation in Israel, and why Israel doesn't properly respond to the Palestinian propaganda," said Jacques Abramowicz, 33. Due to what he considers widespread media

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel blames Syria for attack

Shimon Peres blamed Syria for last week's suicide bombing in northern Israel. The Israeli foreign minister said Damascus is harboring terrorist organizations, including Islamic Jihad, which claimed responsibility for the bus attack. The attack killed 17 people.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Yehuda Lancry, sent a letter to the Syrian U.N. ambassador, who is serving as Security Council president, demanding that Syria stop aiding terror organizations.

Economic plan challenged

Left-wing and Arab legislators in Israel filed petitions to cancel the government's economic austerity plan. The petitions were filed after the Knesset last week passed the austerity plan, which calls for budget cuts of \$2.7 billion and raises taxes.

Israel's High Court of Justice plans to hear the petitions on Thursday, Israel Radio reported. The petitioners challenge cuts in child allowances for children whose parents have not served in the military. The petitioners maintain that the cuts are discriminatory and increase economic disparity.

Israel better on 'white slavery'

The U.S. State Department has taken Israel off its blacklist of countries that traffic in women. The State Department's annual report on the so-called white slave trade, published June 4, notes that Israel has been making significant efforts to stop international prostitution rings.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell singled out Israel as one of three countries that had made progress, even though it has not succeeded in wiping out such trafficking completely. The report cites Israeli criminal legislation prohibiting trafficking in women for prostitution, special measures invoked by the state prosecution, government efforts to improve the lot of victims and special training given to investigators.

bias, "I made it my job to inform people of the other side of the story," Abramowicz said. He began by sending pro-Israel messages to his 10-person "Jewish humor list." His distribution group for the mass e-mails now includes 130 "multipliers," Jews and non-Jews who pass his stories along.

"In a way, it's my small contribution to the Israeli and Jewish cause, but one I believe is too important to simply leave for others" to do, Abramowicz said. "My reasoning is the more people that are properly informed or at least know both sides of the story, the better."

The motivation to take Israel's public relations into his own hands also drives sports advertising executive Alex Ramati, 27, to send out a mass e-mail nearly every day. Before the intifada began, Ramati did not send "nearly the volume of e-mails" as he does now.

"The majority of my forwards were jokes or funny stories" before the intifada, Ramati said. "Now 99 percent are Israel-related."

"I'm sure that a lot of what I forward gets deleted and some people may not check things out, but if they even read one of the things I send I will be doing my part to make sure people stay informed," he said.

The e-mail mobilization doesn't relieve Ramati's distress about the situation, "but it feels good to know there are others out there who may feel like I do," he said.

For John Bennett, who regularly discusses developments in Israel with friends via e-mail, the Internet has enhanced the level of conversation.

"It's a significant improvement over cocktail party finger-pointing and vacuous talk radio ranting," he said.

"For me, these e-mails are a relatively new means of participating in a debate which I've been following" for years, said Bennett, 40, who runs the Web site for a Boston-area bookstore. "E-mail certainly facilitates such debates, and in my experience actually raises the level of the discussion, away from the emotional to the logical and rational."

Mass e-mails, however, "tend to be less interactive and therefore more emotional," he said. "I generally tune them out."

Some, like Foxman, think a cloying effect may neutralize the impact of e-mail. But for now, a bounty of pro-Israel zeal has found a nurturing home in cyberspace.

Lawrence Rubin, senior scholar at the Wilstein Institute, a Jewish think tank, calls the fervent outlet an opportunity for community building.

Rubin envisions a "virtual coffee shop" that mingles the "high energy and concern of the grass-roots community" with the "expertise and insight of the national system" to support pro-Israel activity.

"What I'm trying to do is develop effective connections between a grass-roots constituency that has been energized that may not have ties already with significant mainstream institutions, and those institutions," he said.

Rubin thinks his approach will not only increase Jewish identification, but will help dispel some e-mail rumors by offering a system check. He has broached the subject with some of the major Jewish umbrella organizations, and believes they are interested.

Technology is a "tremendous opportunity" that is "influencing the way we function as a community," Rubin said.

For example, the pro-Israel rally that drew hundreds of thousands of people to Washington this April was organized in only five days. That was made possible by e-mail, Rubin said, in contrast to the 1987 Soviet Jewry rally that took weeks, if not months, to organize. The question, he said, is not whether to use e-mail to help Israel's cause, but "are we going to use it effectively or not?" □

Israeli victims mourned in Russia

MOSCOW (JTA) — Israeli and Russian politicians condemned Palestinian terrorism.

The condemnations came during a recent party in Moscow celebrating the release of "Dolphinarium: Jihad against the Children," a book about the June 2001 terrorist attack at the Dolphinarium disco that killed 21. Most of the victims were teen-agers from families that had immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union. The gathering was attended by relatives of those killed in the disco bombing, as well as the parents of victims of a bombing last month in Russia. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Religious leaders meet Mubarak

Leaders of the Reform and Conservative movements discussed anti-Semitism last Friday with the president of Egypt. Rabbis Eric Yoffie of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Jerome Epstein of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and David Ellenson of the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College met for 30 minutes with Hosni Mubarak and discussed how Egypt could help promote Israeli-Palestinian peace.

While no new ground was broken, sources said the Jewish leaders challenged Mubarak on anti-Semitism in the Egyptian media, among other issues.

"It was a very frank, honest discussion," Epstein said. "We focused basically on our hope that the president would do more to assert himself as a leader by publicly condemning violence and terrorism and taking the initiative to demonstrate that peace could come through his involvement." They also urged Mubarak to visit Israel: During two decades in power, he has visited only once, for Yitzhak Rabin's funeral in 1995.

Survivors share memories

Auschwitz death camp survivors shared stories of their experiences with young Poles and Germans. Saturday's program was financed by a \$4.8 billion fund set up last year to compensate elderly survivors of Nazi-era slave labor programs.

About 35 survivors and 160 young people from across Poland and Germany are participating in the program, held in the Polish town of Oswiecim, the Polish name for Auschwitz. The three-day program ends Monday.

Terror planned in Singapore

Hezbollah terrorists based in Lebanon reportedly plotted during the late 1990s to blow up American and Israeli ships in Singapore.

Hezbollah operatives had planned to load a small boat with explosives and use it to bomb ships in the harbor or in nearby waters, according to a newspaper in Singapore, *The Straits Times*. The paper cited the country's Internal Security Department. Last year, authorities in Singapore arrested 13 suspected members of a group linked to Al-Qaida that allegedly planned to bomb Western targets in Singapore.

New deadline for bank claims

The United States and France extended by six months the deadline for Jewish claims against French banks.

The claims may be filed by Jews who say their accounts were frozen during the Nazi occupation of France, the U.S. State Department said last Friday. The new deadline is Jan. 18, 2003.

After FBI issues new guidelines, Jews weigh security, civil liberties

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — New FBI guidelines that give the agency greater leeway in monitoring Americans' everyday lives have Jewish groups debating how far personal freedoms can be pushed in the war on terrorism.

The FBI recently announced new surveillance guidelines that the Bush administration says will help prevent terrorism. The Jewish community generally is understanding of the need to change law enforcement and intelligence gathering methods following the Sept. 11 terror attacks, but is concerned over how civil liberties will be protected.

The guidelines will allow the FBI greater flexibility to monitor Internet sites, libraries, houses of worship and political organizations, and will lower the evidentiary threshold needed to initiate investigations.

In recent years, the Anti-Defamation League has called for giving law enforcement additional tools. The ADL and most other Jewish groups gave strong support to anti-terrorism laws in 1996 and last year's USA Patriot Act, which gave new powers to domestic law enforcement and international intelligence agencies after Sept. 11.

"The movement from simply enforcing the law to preventing terrorism is necessary," said Michael Lieberman, Washington counsel for the ADL.

For some people, however, talk of increased domestic surveillance conjures up disturbing memories of the McCarthy era and the alleged abuses of power when J. Edgar Hoover led the FBI.

Law enforcement excesses in the 1950s and 1960s led guidelines to be rewritten in the 1970s. Jewish and civil liberties groups embraced the reforms, as well as subsequent adaptations over the years.

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft said that new powers are needed now to effectively combat terrorism, but that they would not allow for the kind of abuses seen in the past.

Many groups have faulted the FBI for taking an overly cautious approach in recent years.

The ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, wrote in 1999 that the Justice Department and the FBI could not act aggressively because they were so "hamstrung" by the Hoover legacy, fears of lawsuits and concerns from conservative lawmakers after the 1993 tragedy in Waco, where an FBI standoff with a religious cult ended in the deaths of dozens of people.

The current guidelines, however, are "way too broad," argues Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Saperstein recalls how the Reform movement was watched by the FBI several decades ago and how the group worked to stop abuses against other civil liberties groups.

The RAC, which also argued that the USA Patriot Act was rushed through Congress, is calling for public hearings on Capitol Hill to ensure that the new FBI guidelines are finely focused on preventing terrorism and are implemented in a way that ensures the least amount of infringement on civil rights.

Some congressional lawmakers are already sounding off about the new guidelines.

"I believe that the Justice Department has gone too far," Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) said recently.

Sensenbrenner said there is no need "to throw respect for civil liberties into the trash heap" in order to improve the FBI's ability to fight terrorism.

Some civil rights groups are up in arms over the FBI's expanded powers. The American Civil Liberties Union said Ashcroft's decision to rewrite long-standing restrictions on domestic spying "threatens core civil liberties guaranteed under the Constitution and Bill of Rights."

While the RAC raises some similar concerns, it is reserving its judgement of the guidelines.

The ADL is willing to take a firmer stance in favor of the new guidelines, though Lieberman notes that any new enforcement power has to be subject to accountability, congressional oversight and judicial review. □

Israeli officials are unimpressed as Palestinian announced reforms

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestinian Authority has unveiled some promised reforms — but terror attacks against Israelis continue unabated.

Three Israelis were killed and nine others wounded in Palestinian shooting attacks on two West Bank settlements over the weekend.

In the Gaza Strip, an attack was thwarted by Israeli troops who spotted two armed Palestinians swimming toward shore.

With this as a backdrop, Israeli officials were not impressed Sunday when the Palestinian Authority announced some reforms.

With Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat under internal and international pressure to implement reforms, Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo announced Sunday that the Cabinet would be reduced from 31 to 21 ministers.

Rabbo also announced the appointment of an interior minister, Abdel Razak Yehiyeh, to oversee the Palestinian security services. Arafat has kept the title for himself since the Palestinian Authority was created in 1994.

Israeli officials, however, downplayed the changes.

"If we see fundamental change in the behavior of the Palestinian security forces in which they intercept the attacks against Israel and not collaborate with them, we'll know that something big has occurred," Dore Gold, a senior adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was quoted as saying Sunday.

Sharon, who is meeting this week with President Bush at the White House, repeatedly has said there can be no meaningful Palestinian reforms as long as Arafat remains in power.

Sharon gave an indication of what he plans to tell Bush in an Op-Ed piece that appeared in Sunday's New York Times, where he reiterated his position that Palestinian violence must stop before there can be negotiations.

"Israel has made painful concessions for peace before and will demonstrate diplomatic flexibility to make peace again, but it requires first and foremost a reliable partner for peace," Sharon wrote.

Blaming the failure of previous talks with the Palestinians on the wide gaps between the sides, Sharon advocated a long-term interim agreement and ruled out a return to the pre-1967 borders.

"The only serious option for a successful negotiated settlement is one based on a long-term interim agreement that sets aside for the future issues that cannot be bridged at present," he wrote.

"For this reason, Israel will not return to the vulnerable 1967 armistice lines, re-divide Jerusalem or concede its right to defensible borders under Resolution 242.

"Movement from a long-term interim agreement to a permanent settlement can only be guided by changes in the reality of Israeli-Palestinian relations on the ground and not by a rigid timetable."

Israeli commentators speculated that Sharon would find a receptive audience in Bush. Over the weekend, Bush reiterated that Arafat has failed the Palestinian people. Bush also refused to set a timetable for the creation of a Palestinian state.

After meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who had sought such a timetable, Bush said the United States is "not ready to lay down a specific calendar" for the creation of a

Palestinian state, but added that the two sides have to resume negotiations "quickly, so we can seize the moment."

Bush also said that before a timetable could be set, the Palestinians need to build "the institutions necessary for the emergence of a Palestinian state."

For his part, Mubarak said he does not "think that violence will come to an end unless the people feel that there is hope for peace and there is something to show that peace is coming."

Last Friday, Bush said he would speak about the next steps toward Middle East peace after the separate meetings with Mubarak and Sharon.

Meanwhile, the deadly pace of Palestinian terror attacks continued.

On Saturday, three Israelis were killed and nine others wounded in Palestinian attacks on two West Bank settlements.

Two Palestinian gunmen infiltrated the settlement of Karmei Tzur in the Etzion bloc early Saturday, murdering Eyal Sorek and his wife, Yael, who was nine months pregnant.

Also killed was Staff Sgt. Maj. Shalom Mordechai, 35, of Nahariya, who died of wounds sustained during a subsequent clash with the gunmen. Two other residents of the settlement and three soldiers were wounded during the exchange of fire. One of the gunmen was killed and another escaped toward Halhoul, north of Hebron. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

The army was investigating what it said were flaws in the response of some of its troops to the infiltration.

Israeli army officials said there had been warnings of possible infiltration attempts in the area, but the army lacked enough seasoned personnel to respond to the threat. The soldiers who initially discovered the infiltration were recent draftees, according to the officials.

In another incident later Saturday, four Israelis were wounded, two seriously, by Palestinian fire on the settlement of Yitzhar near Nablus.

One Palestinian gunman was killed by Israeli fire. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility. On Sunday, Israeli forces entered the gunman's village and imposed a curfew.

Also on Sunday, Israeli tanks entered Tulkarm, where two Palestinian gunmen were reported wounded during clashes. In northern Gaza, an attack was thwarted last Friday when Israeli troops spotted two Palestinians swimming near the shore next to the settlement of Dugit.

The troops opened fire, killing one of the Palestinians. The body of the Palestinian, who was armed with a rifle and hand grenades in waterproof bags, was found the next morning. The second Palestinian is believed to have drowned.

Israeli army officials said the terrorists' intended target was not immediately clear, but some reports said they may have planned to carry out an attack at an Israeli beach.

Also in Gaza, three Palestinians were killed over the weekend when bombs they were trying to place near the fence separating Israel from Gaza exploded prematurely.

In another development over the weekend, Israeli troops discovered traces of explosives in a Palestinian ambulance.

The driver was held for questioning after the discovery at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, Israel Radio reported. Israeli officials repeatedly have charged that Palestinian terrorists have operated under cover of Red Crescent ambulances, a violation of international treaties. □