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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bomb discovered near Jerusalem

Israeli police neutralized a large bomb Monday north of Jerusalem.

After the bomb was found Saturday in a construction site near Givat Ze'ev, police set up an ambush to try to apprehend those who planted it.

When no one showed up by Monday, police decided to defuse the device in a controlled explosion, Israel Radio reported.

Police believe terrorists may have intended to detonate the bomb in Jerusalem or a populated part of Givat Ze'ev.

Hamas vows retaliation

Hamas vowed to avenge Israel's assassination of a West Bank bomb-maker.

The threat Monday came after Israeli troops killed Mohaned Taher a day earlier in the city of Nablus.

On Israel's wanted list for four years, Taher was considered an expert bomb-maker and was suspected of involvement in several suicide attacks in Israel that killed more than 100 people.

Israeli officials handed his body over to the Palestinians early Monday.

Hamas sources in the West Bank said revenge for Taher's death is their top priority.

Sharon: Progress possible

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Israel faces an opportunity to make political progress in the wake of President Bush's Mideast address last week.

Sharon said Monday that Israel is in close contact with the United States in an effort to make progress on the diplomatic track.

Sharon also said Israel is providing humanitarian and economic aid to the Palestinians to ease their plight.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer on Monday criticized Sharon for refusing Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' request to engage in contacts with senior Palestinian Authority officials.

Because of the Independence Day holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, July 5.

NEWS ANALYSIS

As dust settles from Bush speech, two sides wonder what to do next

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — There is a brief moment, after a gun is fired or a bomb goes off, when the air is filled with a shocked silence broken only by the fluttering of birds who have been startled from their perches.

It is only when the dust settles that reality sets in.

That might be a fitting analogy for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the dust begins to settle from President Bush's recent speech on Middle East policy.

By coming down so strongly on Israel's side, Bush in one stroke changed the rules of the game in the Middle East, shocking both Israelis and Palestinians.

After years in which Yasser Arafat turned double-dealing into an art form — claiming to support a peace process while funding terrorist groups — Bush made it abundantly clear that there can be no diplomatic progress until the terror stops and Palestinians remove Arafat as head of the Palestinian Authority.

But what happens until then? Does the Bush speech mean that nothing substantial can move on the Israeli-Palestinian track until Arafat goes?

According to follow-up statements by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell, it would seem so. And that is partly why some analysts say the Bush speech, rather than breaking the Middle East deadlock, may actually have reinforced it.

Bush may have lulled Israeli leaders into thinking there is no need for them to move, analysts say, and numbed the Palestinians into resentful inaction.

The two sides seemed to be fumbling for ways forward this week. Palestinian officials alternately rallied indignantly around Arafat and offered plans to reform the Palestinian Authority — while still taking no action against terrorist groups.

Israel, meanwhile, both intensified its military operations in the West Bank and talked of offering the Palestinians a "political horizon."

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told reporters Monday that after the Bush speech, Israel faced an "opportunity of the first order" to make progress toward peace.

Sharon gave no details of the diplomatic progress he had in mind, but later told members of his Likud Party that discussions were being held in the Foreign Ministry and defense establishment on guidelines for a political horizon.

In the meantime, though, Sharon is exploiting the diplomatic hiatus and Bush's delegitimization of Arafat to take the fight to the Palestinian terrorists.

By occupying Palestinian cities in the West Bank, Sharon hopes to pre-empt suicide bombings, smash terrorist networks and seize war materiel, aides say.

The Israel Defense Force has dealt particularly severe blows to Hamas, assassinating both leading operatives in the Gaza Strip and Mohaned Taher, the organization's operational leader in the northern West Bank, who was said to be behind a string of suicide bombings that killed more than 120 Israelis. But as long as Israel remains in the Palestinian cities — and Sharon says it could be for months — it's difficult to imagine the Palestinians making the necessary moves for renewed dialogue.

Israeli left-wingers fear that the occupation of Palestinian cities could, over time, lead to a full-scale reoccupation of the West Bank.

With Bush criticized for demanding steps from the Palestinians before Israel is asked to respond with its own concessions, the White House clarified that it considered the processes to be parallel.

It was perhaps in this spirit that Sharon made his recent remarks, as he has come

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel lifts curfews

Israel temporarily lifted curfews Monday in most Palestinian population centers in the West Bank. However, the curfews remained in place in Nablus and Tulkarm, Israel Radio reported.

The army said in a statement that the curfew was lifted so Palestinians could stock up on supplies and students could take high school exams. In the Gaza Strip, meanwhile, Palestinian sources said a Palestinian youth was wounded in an exchange of fire during an Israeli army operation in Rafah on Sunday night.

Palestinians protest in Gaza

Thousands of Palestinians marched on Yasser Arafat's Gaza headquarters to protest corruption and a lack of food, jobs and jobless benefits. About 4,000 demonstrators, many accompanied by their children, took to the streets during Monday's protest, some carrying empty plates.

Syria to keep backing Hezbollah

Syrian President Bashar Assad rejected U.S. calls to stop supporting Hezbollah gunmen in Lebanon. "Syria supports the Lebanese national resistance, including Hezbollah," Assad said in an interview Monday.

He also rejected U.S. pressure to expel Palestinian extremist groups based in Damascus, saying "their work is limited to political and media activities." Several of those groups have claimed responsibility for terror attacks in Israel.

Hezbollah fires on northern Israel

Hezbollah gunmen fired anti-aircraft shells over parts of northern Israel on Monday. Shrapnel fell in a number of communities, but caused no injuries.

Gabi Na'aman, a regional leader in northern Israel, told Israel Radio that Hezbollah shelling has become a regular occurrence in the past few months.



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under pressure within Israel to add a diplomatic outlook to his security policy.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer criticized Sharon on Monday for turning down Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' request to renew contacts with senior Palestinian Authority officials.

"The sense is that we can now go and let loose everything we've got in order to exercise our right to defend ourselves," Ben-Eliezer, who also is head of the Labor Party, told Israel Radio. "But this can happen only at a time when Israel every minute continues to seek and move toward any possibility of a diplomatic breakthrough."

Yet Labor seems to have little real leverage to force Sharon into a bold diplomatic gambit. The bottom line, Israeli pundits say, is that Labor won't pull out of the unity government any time soon, at least not until the leadership race between Ben-Eliezer and legislator Haim Ramon is decided sometime between October and January.

On the Palestinian side, the carrot in the Bush vision is viable statehood backed and funded by the international community, with the United States in the vanguard.

Despite his ostensible aspiration for Palestinian statehood, however, Arafat repeatedly has spurned this in practice. Whereas the Zionist movement in the first half of the 20th century was willing to compromise to obtain a state, the Palestinians have been obsessed less with statehood than with the notion of absolute "justice."

For Arafat, a state that closes the file on refugee claims and ends the conflict with Israel is not a prize but a trap. The question is how his successors will see this, and whether Palestinian society as a whole will be ready to pay the price of statehood: removal of Arafat, recognition of Israel's right to exist and readiness to live alongside it in peace.

For now there is little sign of any imminent succession. The initial Palestinian reaction to the Bush speech was to gather round their beleaguered leader and angrily reject American interference in their choice of leadership.

Moreover, Arafat himself has not indicated any readiness to bow out, and his centralizing style is such that he remains in total control of Palestinian funds.

Rumors abound, however. According to one, Arafat will retire and Yasser Abed Rabbo, one of the relatively dovish Palestinian leaders, will organize new elections. Moreover, some Palestinian leaders are saying publicly that Arafat may have been the right man to lead the revolution but is not the man to build the institutions of statehood.

In addition, popular unrest continues to grow, with several thousand Palestinian protesters taking to the streets of Gaza to criticize the P.A.'s corruption and its inability to provide food, work or unemployment benefits.

If Arafat does go, things could move quickly. Israeli officials do not think the sweeping reforms that Bush demanded of the Palestinian Authority will have to be carried out to the letter before new peace talks can begin. Sharon reportedly has told the Bush administration as much.

What will have to happen, in Sharon's view, is reform of the Palestinian security forces, whittling them down from some 15 groups to only three, under a unified command. That, Sharon argues, is an important indicator of Palestinian readiness to finally end terrorism.

Indeed, according to American sources, Sharon and Rice have discussed even the size of the pensions for heads of the Palestinian security services who would be forced to resign when the number of organizations is cut.

Given the complexity of the situation and the sensitivities involved, it seems that it will take a combination of subtle and not so subtle inducements and pressures from the United States on both sides to break the deadlock.

In a column in *Yediot Achronot*, Martin Indyk, the former U.S. ambassador to Israel, suggested that another major American initiative could be in the offing, perhaps a proposal for international trusteeship to replace the Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Bush speech, Indyk wrote, was "so one-sided in Israel's favor that the pendulum is bound to swing back in the other direction. The United States has too much to lose in the Arab world and can't afford not to balance the scales," he said.

As Powell warned, "Toughness is like a windshield wiper; it moves from side to side." □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report. JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

Russian Jews of the world, unite

The inaugural conference of an international group of Russian-speaking Jews is taking place this week. Some 350 people from around the world are meeting in Russia and Israel to establish the World Congress of Russian Jewry.

The congress hopes to support Russian-speaking Jews wherever they live and to support the international effort against terrorism.

Evangelicals speak out for Israel

A former U.S. presidential candidate delivered a letter of support for Israel from a broad range of American evangelicals.

"We condemn the moral relativism that confuses those being murdered with those doing the murdering," read the letter brought to Israel by Gary Bauer, president of a group called American Values. "We demand that the United Nations and other international bodies end their silence on the atrocities committed against civilian men and women, young and old in Israel." Bauer ran as a Republican candidate in the 2000 presidential primary.

Among the 27 people who signed the letter were former Watergate figure Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship, David Blewett of the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, James Dobson of Focus on the Family, Sandy Rios of Concerned Women for America and talk show host Janet Parshall.

Jewish literacy effort launched

A new Jewish literacy campaign was launched in North America. As part of the campaign, the Baltimore-based Jewish Literacy Foundation plans to distribute 1,000 copies of the book "Israel in a Nutshell" to marginally and unaffiliated Jews across the continent.

The group plans to provide one new Jewish book from the "Nutshell" series every six months during the next several years. The books cover issues such as God, holidays, spirituality and interpersonal relationships.

"More and more Jews are alienating themselves from Judaism," said Yigal Segal, executive director of the foundation. "Education is the most potent tool we possess." More information about the project is available at jewishliteracy.org.

Shoah memorial in Taiwan

Taiwan's first Holocaust memorial was inaugurated in a Christian church. According to the Taipei Times, the memorial in the county of Tainan was created with the assistance of Israeli diplomats in the capital of Taipei.

Israel's representative to Taiwan, Menasheh Zippori, said the memorial would help people understand what happened during the Holocaust.

JDL leader faces fraud charges for trying to sell 'Hitler suicide gun'

By Henry Benjamin

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — The head of the militant Jewish Defense League in Australia has been accused of fraud for his attempts to sell the pistol Hitler purportedly used to kill himself.

Ze'ev Korwan, 51, faces a September court date on 139 counts of fraud.

Korwan, who was charged under his real name of Michael O'Hara, allegedly forged documents using ink produced in Germany in 1936 in an effort to authenticate Hitler's gun as well as a second gun owned by Geli Raubal, Hitler's niece and lover.

The documents — including letters from SS chief Heinrich Himmler and Emile Maurice, Hitler's driver and bodyguard — then allegedly were inserted into archives in Germany and Russia.

Asking \$2.5 million for each gun, Korwan put them on the world market through dealers in Melbourne, Australia, and Greensboro, N.C.

The sellers claimed the guns had been taken from Hitler's valet by the Russians, kept in Stalin's safe and then stored in KGB archives.

The sale allegedly was being made on behalf of an Austrian family that had paid \$700,000 to get the guns out of Russia.

However, the Melbourne Sunday Age newspaper and the German publication Der Spiegel uncovered the alleged fraud after they combined forces to investigate the authenticity of the guns.

Korwan has been described in the media as a private investigator, British soccer player and swimming coach.

He told an Australian newspaper that "through the Hitler guns, the JDL identified several major illegal arms operators supplying so-called legitimate Arab royals, who then passed the weapons on to terrorist cells."

In his capacity as the Australian representative of the JDL, Korwan has been visiting synagogues and attempting to raise funds for the group.

But Jewish officials in Melbourne and Queensland's Gold Coast have barred him from entering synagogues, and Jewish communities throughout Australia have been placed on alert.

"We do not believe Mr. Korwan is Jewish, and I have advised the community to have nothing to do with him," said David Paratz, the leader of the Queensland Jewish community. □

Australian Jews' numbers growing

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Australia's Jewish community is growing, according to the latest census figures.

Those figures show some 84,000 Jews in Australia, or about 0.5 percent of Australia's total population of 19 million.

The total is 4,000 higher than in 1996, but the actual number of Jews may be even higher, as religion is an optional question on the census form.

Jewish community leaders believe the actual number of Jews is around 120,000.

About a quarter of Australia's population preferred not to answer the religion question, according to officials.

Jewish leaders believe that many Holocaust survivors are among those who prefer not to disclose their religion.

Adelaide was the only city to show a decrease in its Jewish population. Melbourne has the nation's largest Jewish population.

Most recent Jewish emigres come from South Africa, the census showed.

The census also found that for 6,000 Australians, Hebrew is the preferred language at home.

Yiddish is spoken at home by 2,667.

It also found that there are more than 280,000 Muslims in Australia, or about 1.5 percent of the total population. □

In Europe, anti-Semitic bias not a thing of the past, says poll

By Max Heuer

NEW YORK (JTA) — Thirty percent of Europeans cling to traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes, according to a poll by the Anti-Defamation League.

The poll of 2,500 Europeans in five countries also found that 62 percent of respondents believe the recent violence against Jews in Europe is a result of anti-Israel sentiment.

“These findings are especially disturbing because they show that the old, classical form of anti-Semitism has been joined by a new form fueled by anti-Israel sentiment,” said Abraham Foxman, the ADL’s national director.

The survey, the first such poll the ADL has conducted in Europe, was taken from May 16 to June 4, as a series of suicide bombings and Israeli military operations dominated global news.

Pollsters conducted 2,500 telephone interviews — 500 each from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The 30 percent was an average of answers to four questions that measured more traditional anti-Jewish stereotype.

For example, 45 percent of Europeans believe that Jews are more loyal to Israel than their own country, and 16 percent said Jews are more willing than others to use shady business practices to get what they want.

In addition, 39 percent of Europeans believe Jews talk too much about the Holocaust.

Although some of the figures in the new survey were admittedly rough — the pollsters “cannot always translate or transmit, and certain questions Europeans simply won’t answer” — Foxman told JTA that anti-Semitic attitudes are higher in Europe than in the United States.

In a recent ADL poll of anti-Semitic attitudes among Americans, 33 percent of respondents said Jews are more loyal to Israel.

The question about the Holocaust was not asked in the American survey, which uses an index of 11 questions to map the anti-Semitic landscape.

The survey also found that 69 percent of Europeans said they are either very or fairly concerned with violence directed against European Jews, and 24 percent of Europeans feel their government is not doing enough to protect Jews.

The survey also reported that:

- 63 percent of Europeans say they know “little or nothing” about the history of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, while 57 percent say they follow media coverage of the Middle East “a great deal” or a “good amount.”

- 35 percent of Europeans believe the Israelis and the Palestinians are equally at fault for the violence, with 27 percent blaming Israel more and 20 percent blaming the Palestinians.

- 56 percent of Europeans view the current Israel government unfavorably, while 50 percent view the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat unfavorably.

- 29 percent of Europeans lend their sympathies more with the Palestinians, compared to 14 percent with the Israelis. Thirty-two percent said neither, and 12 percent said both.

- 75 percent of Europeans believe that attacks carried out by the Palestinians are terrorism, and 86 percent feel there is no justification for suicide bombers targeting Israelis.

- 60 percent of Europeans believe Israel’s use of military force is excessive and will not stop the attacks.

Foxman blamed anti-Israel sentiment on European governments, specifically French, Danish and Belgium leaders who condone violence against Jews as “political” and not anti-Semitic, he said. The ADL leader said not all criticism of the Israeli government is anti-Semitic.

But he argued that the increased tension “rationalizes and legitimizes” acts of violence against Jews. He also called it “absurd” that more Europeans view Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unfavorably than Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, explained the level of European sympathy for Palestinians as an issue, in part, of perception.

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has captured the world the same way South Africa did, and right now the Palestinians are viewed as an underdog,” he said.

Noting numbers of Europeans who disapprove of suicide bombing, Tobin also questioned whether the poll shows overwhelming anti-Semitism. While 60 percent of Europeans that believe Israeli military use has been excessive, “so do a lot of Jews,” he said. □

Palestinian group loses funding over fracas at university protest

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — San Francisco State University has suspended funding for one year to a Palestinian student organization for its confrontational actions during a pro-Israel peace rally on campus.

In addition, the university administration put the General Union of Palestine Students on probation, while also issuing a warning letter to the campus Hillel chapter. The move followed a flare-up of tensions over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the California campus and at other colleges across North America.

The actions, announced by the university’s news bureau recently, followed an investigation of the May 7 confrontation between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian students, during which police had to escort some Jewish participants to safety following a shouting match between the two groups.

No injuries were reported, but the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office is reviewing the events.

After viewing videotapes and questioning witnesses, university investigators found that anti-Israel demonstrators had violated campus rules by yelling racial and ethnic epithets, using bullhorns and drums, and failing to remain in their designated area.

University spokeswoman Ligeia Polidaro told The Los Angeles Times, San Francisco State authorities closed down the Palestinian students group’s Web site, because it displayed an animated image throwing a rock against a Star of David and carried a link to another Web site that accuses Jews of ritual murder.

The warning letter was sent to Hillel because some of its members also hurled racial and ethnic slurs and hung flags in the Student Center without permission, while one member used a bullhorn, Polidaro said.

Disciplinary proceedings are pending against three students, whose affiliation was withheld by the university. □