



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 129

Thursday, July 11, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli officer killed in Gaza

An Israeli army officer was killed in a Palestinian ambush Wednesday in the southern Gaza Strip. Capt. Haggai Lev, 24, of Jerusalem, was mortally wounded as his unit was searching for tunnels used to smuggle weapons into Gaza from Egypt, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The deputy commander of a reconnaissance unit, Lev was flown to Soroka Hospital in Beersheba, where he died of his wounds.

Rabbis to sue FBI director

Several rabbis are suing the director of the FBI for not classifying the LAX shooting a terrorist act. The FBI is waiting to label the incident until there is "clear evidence indicating motive or until the investigation is concluded," said Matt McLaughlin, spokesman for the FBI in Los Angeles. The shooting is being considered a terrorist act by Israel.

The July 4 shooting by Egyptian national Hesham Mohamed Hadayet at the El Al Airlines counter in Los Angeles killed two and injured three.

Israeli intelligence optimistic

Israeli intelligence officials believe that Israel has gained the upper hand in the conflict with the Palestinians.

This is the assessment that will be presented to the newly appointed Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, in the coming days, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported. Ha'aretz quoted a senior IDF officer as describing Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat as a "dead man walking" whose fate was sealed by President Bush's recent call for a new Palestinian leadership.

Congress blasts anti-Semitism

The U.S. House of Representatives called on European governments to protect their Jewish citizens. In a resolution that passed Tuesday by a 412-0 vote, the lawmakers condemned recent anti-Semitic attacks in Europe.

"Government leaders can and must publicly and quickly condemn anti-Semitic incidents, and they must condemn them for what they are — unadulterated anti-Semitism, not merely spillover from the Middle East, as some have labeled it," said Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who co-sponsored the resolution.

NEWS ANALYSIS

New program offers rewards for info on Nazi war criminals

By Adam B. Ellick

VILNIUS, Lithuania (JTA) — A program offering \$10,000 rewards for information that leads to the conviction and punishment of any Nazi war criminal worldwide is an effort to turn up credible witnesses on Nazi crimes before it's too late.

Such a witness — an essential and oft-missing ingredient in war crime trials — is a tough find some 60 years after the Holocaust, since most suspects and bystanders are elderly or already deceased.

Also, most crimes were committed in remote locations to ensure secrecy.

What's more, national governments are often less than anxious to prosecute their own citizens because this could backfire in elections.

Operation Last Chance is organized by Nazi-hunter Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Israel, and funded by Targum Shlishi, a charitable foundation in Florida headed by Aryeh Rubin.

Although an international program under the aegis of the Wiesenthal Center, this week's announcement of the program was made in the Baltics — Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

In these countries, the topic is especially pertinent, and Zuroff expects the most responses from them.

The Baltics had among the highest rates of local collaboration with the Nazis and among the highest murder rates of the local Jewish population during World War II.

Still, not a single resident of the Baltics has served one minute in jail for Holocaust-related crimes since these post-Communist nations regained independence in 1991.

"In countries that have never taken a proactive stance, we realized that we have to do much of the work," said Zuroff on Monday in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital. "If we find the criminals and evidence, it will be that much easier for the local prosecutors to handle such cases, cases they would never otherwise have done themselves. They don't have the staff, and political will is in short supply here. We have to do the work basically."

During the past decade, that work has consisted of Zuroff's relentless prodding of Eastern European governments and media and has hardly resulted in a satisfactory number of convictions.

Now, he hopes money will talk.

Anyone can anonymously submit information to either the Wiesenthal Center in Israel, the local Jewish communities in all three Baltic nations or to the State Prosecutor's Office, which pledged to provide logistical support to the program. Zuroff invited each nation to contribute to the prize. Lithuania and Latvia never responded, while Estonia declined due to budgetary concerns.

Lithuanian Special Prosecutor Rimvydas Valentukevicius released a statement this week that said he told Zuroff during a June meeting that "charges pressed on the basis of information provided for money could be dismissed by a court as ungrounded. Yet laws do not directly ban payment for information allowing to disclose crimes or bringing those guilty to trial."

In the end, he writes: "I believe it is not necessary to ignore participation in the project."

Zuroff and Rubin see the fight to prosecute war criminals as a victory not only for world Jewry but also for these growing democracies.

"This is the last chance for people of Lithuania to redeem the injustice that has been

MIDEAST FOCUS

Cabinet to review land bill

The Israeli Cabinet plans to reconsider its support for a controversial bill that could bar Israeli Arabs from owning homes on state-owned land. Cabinet Secretary Gideon Sa'ar said Wednesday another debate on the bill would be held.

Following the Cabinet's decision Sunday to endorse the controversial bill, Defense Minister and Labor Party leader Benjamin Ben-Eliezer asked Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to hold another government debate on the matter. Both Ben-Eliezer and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres did not take part in the vote because they left the Cabinet meeting early to meet with the visiting Egyptian intelligence chief.

Deri granted early release

An Israeli parole board approved the early release next Monday of the former leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas party.

The decision in effect cut a year off Aryeh Deri's three-year sentence for accepting bribes and misappropriating state funds.

Report: Dahlan may get new post

Yasser Arafat is reportedly planning to appoint Mohammad Dahlan as his national security adviser.

Israel Radio issued the report Wednesday about the former head of Palestinian security forces in the Gaza Strip, citing an earlier report by Al-Jazeera Television.

Foreign workers coming to Israel

Some 57,000 foreign workers are expected to pour into Israel during the next four weeks.

Most of the workers will come from Thailand and are expected to work on Israeli farms, Israel Radio reported Wednesday. The step was taken to help Israeli farmers, who have been unable to rely on Palestinian laborers.



Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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done to the Jewish people," Rubin said. "The stain upon the Baltics will last for a long time if some of these killers are not brought to justice."

Zuroff points to Croatia as a nation that benefited from a Nazi war crime trial.

"A trial can be the best history lesson," he said. "Under the Croatian fiat, with a Croatian judge in a Croatian courtroom, a Croatian was jailed with maximum sentence and it's not the same country as it was before," noting that an anti-fascist regime is now leading Croatia.

Western governments, meanwhile, are carefully monitoring the Baltic nations as they prepare to join the NATO military alliance in November and the European Union by 2004.

Zuroff expects the \$10,000 pot will seduce some residents of the area to come forward. The average annual salary in Lithuania is about \$4,500, and it is only a bit higher in Latvia and Estonia.

Fellow war criminals are the most likely informers, says Zuroff. Many Nazi war criminals were convicted by Soviet authorities during communism, albeit for anti-Soviet crimes, and not killing Jews. Regardless, these criminals can testify today without fear of further prosecution.

Zuroff says Operation Last Chance is the first program offering monetary rewards for leads on any Nazi war criminal. The German government, he said, has offered money for information on specific criminals.

The plan is sure to rock the Baltic media and public. Every time the issue of war criminals is mentioned in the Baltics, Web sites that post reader reactions swell with harsh, anti-Semitic comments that demonstrate a lack of historical perspective as much as downright ignorance.

Rubin, who accompanied Zuroff on this weeklong mission to all three Baltic capitals, donated \$50,000 to implement the program, \$24,000 of which is earmarked for an advertising blitz in Baltic newspapers. He notes that if it is successful, the program can redirect itself to other post-Communist nations and Latin America.

The idea, Rubin's brainchild, is rooted in urgency.

"I called up" Zuroff "one day and said 'the day is coming to hang up our hats and I don't want these guys to sleep at night.'"

They began discussing various ideas; the concept of monetary rewards was partly inspired by President Bush's \$25 million bounty for Osama bin Laden.

Despite its noble intentions, Operation Last Chance has already caused concern in Baltic Jewish communities.

Cilja Laud, who has chaired the Estonian Jewish community for the past seven years, is a bit torn.

Her community in Tallinn, the country's capital, has no security. Laud says that when Zuroff campaigned in Estonia last year, anti-Semitic phone calls filled her phone lines.

"I am happy because he's very serious and does so much good, but in Estonia now it's quiet and when we speak again about this agenda it will be very bad for the community. I am afraid, I am afraid."

Since Lithuania became independent in 1991, 11 Lithuanian war criminals who escaped to the United States after World War II returned to Lithuania after the U.S. Justice Department took action against them.

Of this group, only two individuals were indicted and one was convicted, but deemed too ill for punishment.

In Latvia, only one Nazi war criminal was ever indicted but he died before he could be extradited from Australia to stand trial in Riga, Latvia's capital.

Estonia has failed to take legal action against a single Estonian Nazi war criminal and has failed to initiate any investigations of Nazi war criminals upon its own initiative.

More than 94 percent of the Jews in Lithuania and Latvia were murdered during the Holocaust. In many communities, Jews were physically attacked by their neighbors before the Nazis arrived.

Only 5,000 Jews lived in Estonia before the war, and 4,000 escaped to Russia and survived.

Of the 1,000 that remained, only seven survived. Today, there are approximately 3,000 Jews living in each of the three countries. □

JEWISH WORLD

Probe blames massacre on Poles

Local Poles, not Nazi occupiers, carried out a 1941 massacre Jews in the Polish village of Jedwabne, according to the findings of a two-year probe.

The long-awaited announcement from Poland's Institute of National Memory came on the eve of the 61st anniversary of the massacre, in which as many as 1,600 Jews were burned to death in a barn on July 10, 1941. For decades, the slaughter had been attributed to the Nazis.

Saudi envoy causes new stir

British officials criticized the Saudi ambassador for saying that Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is worse than anything Europe experienced under Nazi Germany.

"This is a war of occupation, far more severe than anything the Germans did," the Jerusalem Post quoted Ghazi Algosaiibi as saying. A British Foreign Office spokesman called Algosaiibi's remarks "wrong and insensitive," the paper reported.

Algosaiibi sparked a controversy in April when he wrote a poem praising an 18-year-old Palestinian who blew herself up in a Jerusalem supermarket in March, killing two Israelis and wounding 25.

S.F. State fills studies post

A San Francisco university that has been embroiled in Middle East-related controversy named a scholar to fill its chair in Jewish studies.

Marc Dollinger, a specialist in 1960s Jewish liberalism, will take over the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Chair in Jewish Studies and Social Responsibility at San Francisco State next month.

In one incident earlier this year, pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian supporters scuffled at a demonstration.

Zurich rallies banned

Zurich police banned pro-Palestinian rallies that have been taking place in the Swiss city on a weekly basis. The police took the move after a lawmaker asked the Zurich prosecutor to investigate rally organizers for violating Switzerland's anti-racism laws.

Culture Day draws 120,000

More than 120,000 visitors took part in activities across Europe on the third annual European Day of Jewish Culture, organizers said Tuesday.

Some 500 events, including exhibits, concerts, conferences and the opening of Jewish heritage sites to the public, took place June 16 in 230 towns and cities in 22 European countries, the statement said.

The number of visitors was lower than the 170,000 registered last year, but organizers said the initiative was a success given current security concerns in the wake of Sept. 11 and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Another booby-trapped sign explodes as Russia hate bill set to become law

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jewish leaders here are viewing this week's explosion of another booby-trapped anti-Semitic sign in Russia as further reason for a new hate crimes law in Russia.

Authorities in the Siberian city of Tomsk were quick to declare the incident, which injured two people, an act of hooliganism, a relatively minor crime in Russia.

But Berel Lazar, one of Russia's two chief rabbis, says authorities need to take acts of anti-Semitism more seriously.

This act shows the need to turn a proposed hate crimes bill into law, Lazar says.

Monday's incident was at least the third involving a booby-trapped sign targeted at Jews in Russia in the past six weeks.

Racially motivated attacks and skinhead violence have been on the rise across Russia in the last several years. Foreigners of Asian and African descent and people from southern parts of the former Soviet Union are primary targets of these attacks.

Jewish institutions have also been frequent targets for vandals although violence against individual Jews is rare.

The bill is being presented by the government as an important step in the ongoing international effort against terrorism.

The new bill, which passed the upper house of Russia's Parliament this week, should become law soon, after President Vladimir Putin approves it, which he is expected to do.

But some liberals and members of Russia's human rights community — and, ironically enough, some Communists — are wary that the bill might open the door for a crackdown on free speech.

The most criticized part of the bill, the first such legislation in Russia, is its definition of extremism. It includes any actions that impede the functioning of the federal authorities by force or other illegal means.

The bill also contains prohibitions on "extremist activity" and "extremist organizations," which it defines as any organization so recognized by a court.

If the bill becomes federal law, it will be the first time that Russia has outlawed the use of Nazi symbols and the bankrolling of extremist activities.

The bill also includes other prohibitions already on the books in Russia, including a ban on the promotion of ethnic or religious hatred.

Critics across the political spectrum say the often-vague wording of the bill could result in a clampdown on political dissent.

Communists are particularly unhappy with one of the sections that includes a ban on "inciting any social animosity," which they fear could be used to crack down on critics of the government.

One of the most outspoken critics of the bill said it would only expand police power. Sergey Kovalev, a Duma deputy and a longtime human rights activist, said the "declared purpose of this bill has nothing to do with the real purpose," which he believes is cracking down on free speech.

Kovalev and other critics contend that the bill's definition of extremism could allow police to close down religious or human rights organizations, or even the Communist Party. They say it could also allow courts to hand down severe punishments for demonstrators at unsanctioned protests.

Vladimir Pekhtin, leader of the pro-Kremlin Unity faction that supported the bill, argued that the state "must respond to violence with violence."

Critics argue that Russia already has sufficient laws to fight extremism and bigotry, and that rooting out intolerance in Russian society as a whole could be done more effectively by changing attitudes using education or the media.

But Jewish leaders say that most importantly, the new bill prioritizes the goal of fighting extremist activities, including anti-Semitism.

Leonid Stonov, a Jewish and human rights leader in Russia, says he understands the fears of the human rights community about the new law.

But the bill "can alert the Russian society to dangers of anti-Semitism and extremism, can send out a signal that the problem does exist," he said. □

BACKGROUND**Israeli army presence in West Bank harks back to outcome of 1967 war***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Thirty-five years after Israel's army moved into the West Bank, it once again has assumed control over the area.

Confronted with a long series of Palestinian terror attacks, Israeli forces last month took over most of the Palestinian population centers in the West Bank.

Given this turn of events, it is useful to look back on the recent history of the region.

Israel first captured the West Bank from Jordan during the 1967 Six-Day War, after Jordan's King Hussein refused to heed Israeli warnings not to have his army join the Egyptian and Syrian forces arrayed against the Jewish state.

Israel's lightning-fast victory gave it control over what came to be known as the territories — the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

At first, it seemed as if the Palestinian population was not interested in resisting the Israeli presence.

This may at least partly have been a result of the "Enlightened Occupation," a policy introduced by then-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.

The policy allowed for open bridges between the West Bank and Jordan, family visits for those on opposite sides of the Jordan River and a considerable degree of self-government on the municipal level.

For the most part, the local Palestinian leadership was not interested in terrorism. It was pro-Jordanian and feared the radicalism of Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Those who did engage in terrorist attacks against Israel were caught, and by the end of 1967, the PLO leadership decided that it could not fight Israel from within the West Bank.

The PLO's failure to launch a "people's war" against Israel in 1967-1970 led to a wider use of terrorism launched from Jordan and Lebanon. The PLO also embarked on a campaign of international terrorism that included hijacking airplanes and — in their most notorious assault — targeting Israel's athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

During this period, Israel tightened its hold over the West Bank with the creation of a string of Jewish settlements.

The establishment of the first Jewish settlement in Hebron in 1968 was followed by others in the areas known historically as Judea and Samaria.

The driving force behind the settlement campaign was Gush Emunim — Hebrew for the "Bloc of the Faithful" — whose members were mostly associated with the National Religious Party.

At first, the Labor-led government resisted the private settlement initiatives, but it eventually gave in.

When Menachem Begin and the Likud Party came to power in 1977, settlement efforts intensified.

All West Bank land that was not privately owned was declared state land — which was then used for building settlements and roads. Israel also tightened its hold over the West Bank and Gaza Strip by creating an administration that handled the day-to-day civilian needs of the Palestinian population.

Although the Palestinians were required to pay taxes, the

government invested very little in the development of an economic infrastructure. The Palestinian economy relied heavily on tens of thousands of Palestinian day laborers working in Israel.

During the early 1980s, there was a slow process of politicization of Palestinian society.

In 1987, this process culminated in the intifada, or Palestinian uprising. Israeli soldiers soon were confronted with demonstrations, riots, stone-throwers and stabbings. Unlike the current conflict, however, there was little use of firearms or explosives.

The dimension of the rioting surprised Israeli officials, whose initial efforts to crush the uprising were ineffective.

A year after the start of the intifada, Hussein declared in July 1988 that Jordan was renouncing all claims to the West Bank.

In November of that year, the Palestine National Council — the Palestinian parliament-in-exile — met in Algiers and issued a formal declaration of independence based on U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181, which in 1947 partitioned Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab.

After Arafat renounced the use of terror during an appearance at the U.N. General Assembly in December of that year, the United States lifted its ban on dealing with the PLO.

As the intifada continued, the Israeli public became increasingly willing to reach a political settlement with the Palestinians.

The intifada gradually died out by 1990 and international support for the Palestinians waned with their support for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which led to the Gulf War.

The growing influence of the United States in the wake of the Gulf War, combined with the diminishing power of the PLO and Syria, led to the Madrid Conference that began in October 1991.

Though it produced no tangible results, it did pave the way for the Oslo peace process launched under the Labor-led government of Yitzhak Rabin, which was elected in 1992.

Agreements reached in the Oslo process led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. For the first time, Palestinians enjoyed limited self-rule in the territories.

Israeli withdrawal from the territories began in the West Bank city of Jericho and the Gaza Strip in May 1994.

Arafat's return to the territories in July 1994 stirred up hopes among the Palestinian population that independence would follow soon. Further Israeli withdrawals followed, but so did new momentum for the settler movement.

At the same time, the fundamentalist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad succeeded in slowing down the peace process with a wave of massive terrorist attacks.

By September 2000, following the failure of a summit at Camp David earlier that year, Arafat gave the green light for a new round of violence — the so-called Al-Aksa Intifada.

For the past two years, Israeli officials have sought a response to the steadily mounting number of Palestinian terror attacks.

In April and June, Israel responded with massive anti-terror campaigns in the West Bank.

In June, the coalition government of Ariel Sharon announced a new policy that Israel would retake control of the West Bank in response to terror attacks.

Israeli tanks and troops are now stationed either inside or on the outskirts of Palestinian population centers that for a relatively brief period were under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

Arafat's Palestinian Authority is still in power, but his regime — long denounced as corrupt by Palestinians and outside observers alike — is shaky. □