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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. urged to see Saudi threat

A group of Pentagon advisers was reportedly told that the United States should regard Saudi Arabia as an enemy state that supports terrorism.

Sources familiar with the July 10 briefing confirmed a Washington Post report that members of the independent Rand Corporation urged the Defense Policy Board to have the United States press Saudi officials to stop funding Islamic terrorist groups around the world.

The board includes prominent intellectuals and former senior U.S. officials who advise the Pentagon on defense policy.

Board members also were told that the Saudis should be pressed to halt anti-U.S. and anti-Israel statements in their media.

The sources told Reuters that the board had reached no conclusions regarding Saudi Arabia. On Tuesday, the Pentagon distanced itself from the Rand recommendations. "Saudi Arabia is like any other country," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said at a Town Hall meeting with Pentagon employees. "It has a broad spectrum of activities and things," some of which "we agree with and some that we may not."

U.N. blasts Israeli incursions

The U.N. General Assembly issued a resolution condemning attacks on Israeli and Palestinian civilians. The resolution issued Monday night also called for an immediate end to Israeli incursions in the West Bank.

The resolution was watered down from the original Palestinian draft, which made no mention of attacks on Israeli civilians and called for a condemnation of Israeli "atrocities" and "appropriate action" against "perpetrators of war crimes."

The resolution, which is not legally binding, was approved 114-4 with 11 abstentions.

During the debate preceding the vote, many countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East denounced Israel's anti-terror military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel's deputy U.N. ambassador, Aaron Jacob, called the resolution "one-sided."

He accused the world body of ignoring the "reality of a relentless Palestinian suicide campaign" and refusing to "allow condemnation of Palestinian terrorism."

Jewish groups gearing up, hoping to avoid another Durban

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — If Sept. 11 was a wake-up call for America, then Durban, South Africa, was a wake-up call for Jews.

Neither America nor Jewish groups were prepared for the well-orchestrated attacks that hit them.

Only days before the terrorist attacks shook this country nearly a year ago, the United States and Israel stormed out of the U.N. World Conference on Racism in Durban, condemning it as a circus of anti-Semitism.

Now, as Jewish groups ready to return to South Africa at the end of August for the U.N. World Summit on Sustainable Development, they are working hard to avert another Durban.

With offensive and defensive strategies on the ground and Jewish organizations in America "on call" for extra help, a Jewish caucus of eight organizations is preparing to fight off any anti-Israel curveballs that come its way.

Already, Palestinian organizations are planning a four-day conference to express solidarity with the Palestinians to coincide with the summit in Johannesburg, which is scheduled for Aug. 26-Sept. 4.

While preparing for the worst, many Jewish activists involved say they do not expect the summit, which will focus on such issues as the environment, health, energy and economic security, to be "hijacked" the way Durban was.

Activists cite several factors, including American diplomatic efforts and the desire of key players not to let their concerns about the environment and other issues be overshadowed by the kind of anti-Israel activity that plagued Durban.

A year ago, official delegates to the U.N. conference debated language that would have revived the U.N.'s resolution denigrating Zionism as racism, which had been reversed 11 years ago.

That draft language of the official declaration was ultimately dropped, but a parallel meeting of nongovernmental organizations issued a declaration including the anti-Zionist language and branding Israel an apartheid state.

On the streets of Durban, thousands thronged in protest of Israel, with some distributing anti-Semitic cartoons and taunting that Hitler never finished the job. Even the classic anti-Semitic conspiracy text, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," was spotted for sale.

The event stunned Jewish leaders. While they had expected harsh hospitality, many said they were unprepared for the vicious attacks they encountered.

"Last year, we were really naive" about "how much our enemies really hate us," said Yehuda Kay, national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

The "level of orchestrated attack against Israel outgunned us" and "outsmarted us," said Kay, 27, who is coordinating Jewish efforts to avoid a repeat performance.

Jewish groups involved with the preparations for the Johannesburg conference point to several factors that they believe will lead to a different kind of gathering:

- American diplomacy: The U.S. has reportedly reached an understanding with Arab countries and conference organizers to avoid anti-Israel language in the governmental declaration. The State Department official would not confirm an agreement and "cautioned that any negotiations are very tenuous."

- No draft anti-Israel language: Whereas the draft declaration for Durban contained anti-Israel language, the working version of a declaration for Johannesburg does not single out Israel. There is, however, at least one section that could involve debate about

MIDEAST FOCUS

Alleged mastermind killed

Israeli security forces on Tuesday killed a Palestinian who allegedly oversaw a double suicide bombing last month. Armored vehicles and helicopters opened fire, killing Ali Ajouri and another armed Palestinian near Jenin, Palestinian witnesses said.

Israeli officials say Ajouri dispatched the two suicide bombers who killed five people in a July 17 attack near Tel Aviv's old Central Bus Station. The Israeli army had previously demolished Ajouri's home and issued orders to deport his brother and sister from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.

Court upholds house demolitions

The army is not required to give the families of Palestinian terrorists prior notice of house demolitions, Israel's High Court of Justice ruled Tuesday.

The court rejected petitions filed on behalf of some 40 families of Palestinian terrorists who had received demolition orders and demanded 48-hour advance notice in order to appeal.

Israeli, P.A. ministers talk

Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer met with senior Palestinian officials Monday night.

In talks in Jerusalem with Interior Minister Abdel Razak Yehiyeh and intelligence chief Amin Hindi, Ben-Eliezer presented a plan to resume security cooperation, beginning in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Jericho. Yehiyeh and other Palestinian officials are slated to meet later this week with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington.

Two Arabs may lose citizenship

Israel's interior minister wants to strip two Israeli Arabs of their citizenship for their alleged involvement in terrorism. In a move sparking debate across Israel, Eli Yishai also revealed plans to cancel the permanent residency status of a third Arab linked to terror.

Israel. The section calls for the elimination of obstacles to self-determination such as foreign occupation.

Sources said U.S. officials agreed to this section at the same time that they got Arab countries to agree to add a section that calls for "concerted action against international terrorism which causes serious obstacles to sustainable development."

- Different content: Environmental and developmental issues are too pressing to be sidelined, especially in a country as underdeveloped as South Africa, according to Jewish leaders.

- Different set of participants: While some of the same NGOs that instigated anti-Israel activity in Durban, such as a Palestinian human rights organization known as LAW, are expected to return, major environmental NGOs, such as the World Wildlife Fund, have promised Israel and Jewish groups to keep the forum on track.

- Increased attendance: Some 60,000 people are expected in Johannesburg, compared with the roughly 12,000 who converged in Durban. Many say the large numbers may make it harder to stage an orchestrated anti-Israel assault.

- Durban fatigue: In the end, Durban was considered by many who participated to be a waste of time, money and the opportunity to address serious issues. In particular, African countries, who allied with the Arabs in exchange for backing on reparations for slavery, felt upstaged. There is a strong sense by Jewish leaders that Africans will not support the Arabs this time around.

Despite promising signs, Israel and Jewish groups are planning to counter any attacks. "In terms of being organized, being ready, being galvanized," the Jewish community is "far more advanced than we were at Durban," Kay said.

Although there will be fewer Jewish organizations represented in Johannesburg than there were at Durban, more than 100 Jews will be there, up from about 80 who attended the Durban conference.

The organizations in the Jewish caucus are the Jewish National Fund, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Board of Jewish Students, the South African Zionist Federation, the World Union of Jewish Students, U.N. Watch, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Kay described a multipronged strategy — a public relations offensive, with the Jewish delegates set to penetrate the NGO forum with positive examples of Israeli innovations in development; defensive tacks at the NGO meeting and on the street; and prepared media kits.

For Jewish groups, the "vision is to ideally use the conference as a way of promoting Israel," Kay said, citing Israeli innovations in agricultural development and in home care for the aged. Israel's Foreign Ministry has packed promotional materials along with its delegation.

Jewish groups have also been forming alliances with environmental groups in South Africa. And Kay phones the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs on a weekly basis to arrange back-up plans in America.

In addition to monitoring the program, Reva Price, JCPA's Washington representative and the coordinator of the American efforts, said she has a list of Jewish contacts on site, news releases she can prepare and a phone tree of Jewish and non-Jewish activists to mobilize should she get word of trouble from Kay.

If the problems come at all, they are expected to emanate from the NGO forum.

"There's not a lot of red flags on the government side, but NGOs with an agenda will be there," said Stacy Burdett, associate director of government affairs for the Anti-Defamation League.

"I think the fact that some of the same actors that were so pernicious in Durban will be in Johannesburg means that we could see some of the same tactics."

Still, participants are holding out measured hope.

"We're a year older, we're a year wiser," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. This time, the Jewish caucus is a tight team that is "not going to take it lying down," he said.

At the same time, he and others cautioned, this conference is under the auspices of the United Nations, where anti-Israel activity often erupts.

"It's not going to be a totally quiet event," Cooper said. "We're not going to be that lucky." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Hebrew U. to honor victims

Hebrew University plans to honor the victims of last week's terror attack at a school cafeteria.

A ceremony will be held Wednesday, one week after seven people were killed and more than 80 wounded in the terrorist bombing. Representatives of countries whose citizens were murdered or injured are expected to attend.

U.S. Consulate moving

The State Department is planning to move part of the U.S. Consulate out of eastern Jerusalem for security reasons.

State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said Tuesday that several offices may move to the western part of the city. The consul general's office, however, is expected to remain there. The consulate primarily deals with relations with the Palestinian Authority.

Bomb fuse found at Warsaw shul

A fuse for a bomb was found at Warsaw's Nozyk Synagogue. It was placed near an electric box on one of the synagogue's outside walls, and was found by communal security officials.

Security had been tightened after several incidents had aroused suspicions. Police tried to downplay the incident, saying that only some electrical wires were found.

Cyprus wants to expel Palestinian

Cyprus wants to deport a Palestinian who was expelled from the West Bank by Israel, saying he is "causing trouble with the authorities." Abdullah Daoud, 41, was one of 13 Palestinian terrorists expelled in May as part of a deal to end a siege at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

The 12 others have moved on to European host countries, but Daoud, considered the most dangerous of the group, is still in Cyprus because no country is ready to take him. Cyprus' justice minister complained Tuesday that "Daoud refuses to conform to the terms of his residence in Cyprus, he rejects police protection or escort, he moves around without informing the authorities and generally creates trouble."

Wallenberg memorial in Budapest

A memorial was held in Budapest to mark the 90th anniversary of Raoul Wallenberg's birth. Hungarian President Ferenc Madl sent a message to the ceremony in which he called Wallenberg a "hero," adding that he was a "man of deeds with humanistic values." A Swedish diplomat, Wallenberg helped save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during World War II. He was last seen being taken into custody by Soviet troops on Jan. 17, 1945.

After bombing, some students cancel on Reform program in Israel

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Hebrew University bombing and other Palestinian terror attacks have led at least 18 aspiring rabbis and cantors to skip a year in Jerusalem at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

In most circumstances, the Reform movement's college requires rabbinical, cantorial and Jewish education students to spend the first year of their program in Jerusalem.

Given the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence, however, HUC leaders have allowed for exceptions — and more students are taking advantage of them.

That comes after HUC officials had noted, just more than a month ago, that almost all members of the entering class were choosing to attend the Israel program.

"I do believe that the bombings at Hebrew University made a significant difference in the minds of some students," said Rabbi David Ellenson, HUC's president, noting that some students were friends with some of the five Americans killed in the July 31 attack.

Sara Yellen, 24, was childhood friends with Marla Bennett, who died in the bombing.

After learning of Bennett's death, Yellen decided not to go on HUC's Israel program.

"She was my Israel mentor," Yellen said of Bennett, who was doing joint graduate work at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies.

Yellen had resurrected their friendship when she learned Bennett was studying in Israel.

"The way she lived there was the way I was going to model my life there," Yellen said.

But Bennett's death "hit close to home," Yellen said. Although she already had resolved not to take buses or visit pedestrian malls in Israel, she began to question whether she would be safe at all in Jerusalem.

Ultimately, she decided to stay in the United States.

"I do feel I'm going to miss something," she said. "But at the same time, I feel I will have opportunities to go to Israel, and life is a balance."

Ellenson said he anticipates that a few more students may choose to stay home before the rest depart for Israel next week, but that close to 50 will go to Jerusalem.

He said there will be programs in one of HUC's stateside campuses for the students who choose to remain in the United States, and an effort will be made to bring all the U.S. students together, though details have not yet been worked out.

"It means that for some of these students, the type of community that had been experienced in previous years won't be as strong," he said.

Stacey Nolish, 25, said she's still going to Israel next week, but that the experience will be different without some of her peers.

"It's disheartening," she said. "There was a sense of solidarity, that you were all in this together."

Many of those who chose to stay in the United States had "been on the fence the whole time," and seeing others choose to stay stateside affected their decisions, Nolish said.

"I definitely think that people who were friends talked to each other and influenced each other," she said.

Ellenson said it was important for HUC to keep its program in Israel this year, but allow students to make their own decisions.

Choosing to move the program to the United States would be "tantamount to handing a victory to murderers, and that's something we are unwilling to do," Ellenson said.

"Each individual has to make a choice and we respect those choices," he said. "Similarly, we feel HUC as an institution must fulfil its own commitments at this moment." □

U.S. Jews favor Palestinian state, but polls show shift right in Israel

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two years into the intifada, most American Jews still support the creation of a Palestinian state, but feel closer to Israel than ever, according to a new poll.

Israeli Jews, on the other hand, increasingly are turning away from the idea of a Palestinian state, hardening their attitudes toward the Palestinians and worrying about their own safety, according to a new Israeli study by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University.

The U.S. survey, conducted by pollster Stanley Greenberg for the American Jewish Committee, also shows that an overwhelming majority of American Jews believe peace talks can't resume until the Palestinians end terrorism and the Palestinian Authority institutes real reforms.

The poll of 392 Jews across the denominational spectrum was taken July 11-21.

It is part of a major public opinion research project the AJCommittee is undertaking to gauge and build American support for Israel, AJCommittee spokesman Kenneth Bandler said.

According to the survey, 86 percent of American Jews expressed strong ties to Israel, with 48 percent feeling "very close" and 38 percent "fairly close."

In annual public opinion polls that the committee conducts separately, American Jews have not voiced as strong a kinship to the Jewish state.

For example, the AJCommittee's 2001 Survey of American Jewish Opinion, which questioned 1,000 American Jews, found that 29 percent of American Jews felt "very close" to Israel and 43 percent "fairly close."

A similar survey in 2000 showed that 28 percent of American Jews felt "very close" to Israel, while 46 percent felt "fairly close."

The new poll also found that a huge majority of American Jews — 85 percent — support Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians.

Of those, 64 percent strongly back Israel.

"Jewish support for Israel is rock-solid," Greenberg said of the latest survey. "This is a unified community, and the seriousness of the current conflict has only intensified their commitment."

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, who is managing the AJCommittee polling project, called it noteworthy that so many U.S. Jews back Israel.

Typically, "you put two Jews in a room, you get three opinions," she said. "That kind of support of Israel is extremely significant."

While U.S. Jews feel closer than ever to Israel, their support for the eventual creation of a Palestinian state has not waned, despite two years of violence that have killed more than 600 Israelis.

Some 63 percent of U.S. Jews said they favor the establishment of a Palestinian state; 38 percent of them said they "somewhat favor" a Palestinian state, while 25 percent "strongly favor" one.

Meanwhile, 33 percent of U.S. Jews oppose a Palestinian state, with 25 percent of them strongly opposed.

The AJCommittee's Bandler said the two positions — feeling closer to Israel, while supporting a Palestinian state — are hardly at odds.

"One of the few people in the world who doesn't realize that

the endgame is a two-state solution is" Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, Bandler said. "The majority of American Jews recognize it, and even" Israeli Prime Minister "Ariel Sharon has mentioned it."

Most American Jews echo President Bush's stance on Mideast peace, Bandler said.

This latest survey took place in the weeks after Bush's June 24 Mideast speech, in which he called both for Arafat's ouster and a two-state solution.

The survey did not ask U.S. Jews exactly what shape or form a Palestinian state should take.

Previous surveys taken before the intifada have shown that many American Jews, if not a majority, feel Israel and the Palestinians should live in two adjoining states..

An AJCommittee survey from May 1999 showed 42 percent of American Jews supporting Palestinian statehood.

In Israel, meanwhile, Palestinian violence continues to push public opinion rightward.

The Jaffee Center's annual National Security and Public Opinion Project, which surveyed 1,264 Israelis between Jan. 29 and Feb. 27, showed that 92 percent of those polled were afraid they or a family member could fall victim to a terrorist attack.

Such fears for personal safety have grown markedly during the intifada, which has brought almost daily suicide bombings, shooting ambushes or other terror attacks against Israelis.

In 2001, with the uprising only several months old, 85 percent of Israelis voiced concern for their own safety, up from 79 percent in 2000. Such worries had reached what the Jaffee Center ironically calls a low of "only" 58 percent in 1999.

Israelis' fears for their well-being coincided with a weakening of support for territorial concessions to the Palestinians or for a Palestinian state at all.

In the latest survey, only 37 percent of Israelis said they were willing to trade land for peace. That percentage fell from 42 percent in 2001, 49 percent in 2000 and 47 percent in 1999, down from a high of 53 percent in 1997.

At the same time, just less than half of Israelis, 49 percent, still approve of the concept of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Such support has dwindled, however, from 57 percent in 2001 and even from 53 percent in 1993, when the first Israeli-Palestinian peace accords were signed.

However, 58 percent of Israelis, a new high, believe that reinforcing the country's military strength, rather than focusing on peace talks, is the way to ensure peace with the Arabs.

While most U.S. Jews still support a Palestinian state, that support is tempered by a reluctance for Israeli concessions until the Palestinians stop terrorist attacks.

The AJCommittee survey posed the following question, to which 81 percent of respondents agreed:

"Now is not the right time to discuss creating a Palestinian state. First, the violence must stop, then the Palestinian Authority must begin real reforms. Then, and only then, can the future be discussed."

However, eight of 10 Jews surveyed said they expect the United States to pressure Israel to make concessions so as not to jeopardize America's relations with Arab allies.

At the same time, 85 percent of U.S. Jews surveyed agreed that "the final goal, at the end of any negotiations, must be two states — Israel and Palestine — which accept each other's right to exist and live in peace." □