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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Fatah to curb attacks in Israel?

Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement released a letter Tuesday saying it will prevent attacks on civilians in Israel, but suggested it will continue to target Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, commanders of Fatah's military wing disassociated themselves from the letter, saying that violent struggle against Israel would continue. [Page 4]

Peres, P.A. official meet

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres reiterated Israel's willingness to withdraw from areas where the Palestinians take responsibility for stopping terror attacks.

Peres made the statement during a meeting Tuesday night in Tel Aviv with top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat.

Afterward, a statement from Peres' office said that Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer would meet in coming days with Palestinian Interior Minister Abdel Razak Yehiyeh to discuss a Palestinian proposal that Israel withdraw troops from Arab sections of Hebron.

Israeli Cabinet marks Sept. 11

Israel's Cabinet marked the first anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Addressing Cabinet ministers Tuesday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said the people of Israel identify with the families of the attack victims.

"There is no compromise in the war against terror," Sharon said at the weekly meeting. "Any display of weakness in the battle against terror is destined to claim a heavy price."

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres urged other Cabinet ministers to help refute the rumor being circulated in Islamic countries that thousands of Jews did not show up for work at the World Trade Center last Sept. 11 because they had been warned in advance about the attacks.

Sharon warns Lebanon

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon warned Lebanon against diverting water from the Hatzbani River, which feeds into the Sea of Galilee, Israel's main fresh water reservoir.

Sharon said Tuesday that such a move would be a violation of agreements regarding the distribution of water in the region and could lead to war.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

As Bush team pushes case on Iraq, Jewish groups weigh their positions

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the Bush administration seeks international support for an attack on Iraq, Jewish organizations are also crystallizing their positions.

In the next few weeks, Jewish groups are expected to meet with foreign leaders arriving in New York for the opening session of the U.N. General Assembly and anniversary commemorations of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The American Jewish Committee is planning to meet with leaders of more than 50 countries, including the foreign ministers of China, Russia and France.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations is expected to meet with the Indian prime minister as well as leaders of Jordan, Argentina and the European Union.

B'nai B'rith International will be meeting with foreign leaders as well.

American Jewish officials will seek international support for the war on terrorism and pressure for Palestinian reform.

But many conversations are expected to delve into the major issue of the day: whether to attack Iraq to thwart President Saddam Hussein's efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush is slated to address the General Assembly on Thursday, and is expected to make the case for a U.S. attack.

But most American Jewish groups have not yet decided where they stand on Iraq.

"Our policy is not to try and detail policy or recommend strategy," said David Harris, AJCommittee's executive director. "Our position is to hammer away that Saddam Hussein represents a clear danger to the rest of the world and something has to be done about it."

Harris said he does not want his organization to get ahead of the Bush administration by offering advice on what should or should not be done, but will express the need for some action.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said his meetings would focus on other subjects, and that Iraq was not at the forefront of the Jewish community's agenda.

Members of the Conference of Presidents probably will not push a specific agenda on Iraq during their meetings with foreign leaders, but will gauge international opinion, Hoenlein said.

"We're going to talk about it and we're going to hear what they have to say," he said. He also will highlight the threat that Saddam poses, Hoenlein said.

In the boardrooms and offices of most American Jewish groups, debate is continuing as to what should or should not be said on the Iraq issue.

"This is a big one," Harris said. "This is not one you want to wing."

Hoenlein said he has engaged member organizations in small group discussions about what the umbrella organization should say on the Iraq issue, and will hold a conference call with members after Bush's U.N. speech.

He also has urged groups to have discussions within their own leadership and bring their thoughts to the table, Hoenlein said.

This approach toward formulating the Conference of Presidents' position is unusual for the organization, which at times has been accused of taking stands without reaching a consensus of its membership, and of ignoring the viewpoints of more dovish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians rally for Iraq

About 2,000 Palestinians demonstrated Tuesday in the Gaza Strip to show support for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Hamas officials led the demonstration, in which marchers vowed to support Iraq if it comes under U.S. attack.

During the demonstration, local officials of Saddam's Ba'ath Party said they distributed \$10,000 checks to the families of 36 Palestinians killed by Israeli troops during the last three months.

Booklet predicts U.S. downfall

A booklet that predicts the destruction of the United States by 2004 reportedly is a best seller in Palestinian areas. The author of the 32-page booklet is a Muslim preacher from Jerusalem who said he based his predictions on the Koran, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Palestinian-bound arms found

Israeli officials recently confiscated an illegal arms shipment for the Palestinians in the port of Ashdod. According to Army Radio, the weapons were discovered two months ago in a shipment labeled as toys. A publication ban on the incident was lifted Tuesday.

Along with the weapons, the shipment including cigarette lighters featuring photographs of the World Trade Center and a picture of Osama bin Laden, Army Radio reported.

Barenboim performs in Ramallah

Pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim gave a solo recital Tuesday in Ramallah. Barenboim, who recently made statements condemning Israeli military operations in the West Bank, gave a concert three weeks ago at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. "It is important for Palestinians to have positive feelings about someone from the other side," Barenboim said.



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members. Jewish leaders say the change in tactic reflects the seriousness of the issue at hand.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations and a frequent critic of the Presidents Conference's management style, says the small-group dialogue approach is an improvement.

But it still does not address his major concern, which is that the conference's public stand be based on a consensus of its members, Yoffie said.

"Clearly this needs to be dealt with by bringing together the leaders of the conference and having in-depth discussions and debate," Yoffie said. "Ultimately, everyone has to be sitting together in the same room."

Yoffie said he had not been contacted about engaging the UAHC membership. He was invited to a small-group meeting being held by the conference, but did not attend, he said. In any case, he feared that Hoenlein and the chairman of the Conference of Presidents, Mortimer Zuckerman, still would control the position of the conference, because members would not know what their peers had said at other small-group meetings, Yoffie said.

But Yoffie said he believed debate would be "completely manageable" because the Jewish community is not dramatically divided on Iraq.

Yoffie said he agrees that "something needs to be done" about Saddam, but is not sure what exactly. The UAHC national leadership has not taken a formal position on the issue, and may or may not broach the subject when the group meets in a few weeks, he said.

It is expected that many Jewish groups ultimately will support a U.S. attack on Iraq. Many analysts believe regime change in Iraq would reduce the security threat to Israel and remove a key Palestinian ally.

The Israeli government has expressed strong support for American efforts, which is likely to boost American Jewish support.

But there is considerable concern that Iraq will hit Israel with biological or chemical weapons in retaliation for any attack by the United States, and Jewish groups may be hesitant to enthusiastically support military action that puts Israelis in immediate danger.

There also is concern among Jewish groups that Israel will be pressured to restrain itself and not respond to an attack from Iraq, as the United States demanded in the 1991 Gulf War. This time, however, Israel has been adamant that it will respond if attacked.

There also is a debate as to how vocal American Jewish groups should be if they support a war. Some contend that outspoken support could lead critics to describe a U.S. attack on Iraq as a fight on Israel's behalf — as some critics did in 1991 — and that the Jewish community would be wiser to keep quiet during the debate.

"I'd rather we all debate this as Americans rather than as an ethnic group, to avoid the impression that Israel is desirous of the U.S. going into Iraq and that the American Jewish community knowingly is following Israel's lead," said Seymour Reich, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

But Hoenlein said the Presidents Conference and other Jewish groups could play a role in supporting Bush, and must develop a policy so they can answer questions that will arise about the Jewish community's view.

Deciding how outspoken to be is one of the topics the conference leadership will debate, Hoenlein said. "A lot will depend on the president's speech and how we respond to it," he said. □

UNICEF funds P.A. terror camps?

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Anti-Defamation League said it is concerned by reports that UNICEF is funding summer camps where Palestinian children are given an "education in terror."

"Summer camp, where children traditionally participate in sing-alongs and color wars, has been warped by the Palestinians into a sickening display of hatred and intolerance," said the ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman. "It is imperative that UNICEF scrutinize the camps it sponsors and immediately withdraw funding from those whose only service is to provide an education in terror." □

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish museums mark Sept. 11

U.S. Jewish museums are sponsoring activities and exhibitions to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The Council of American Jewish Museums is coordinating the events. For more information, contact cajm@jewishculture.org.

Candidate: Israelis should leave

The leading candidate to become Brazil's next vice president says Israelis should leave the Middle East.

Interviewed by Jewish journalist Boris Casoy last week about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Sen. Jose Alencar said, "There is only one exit: Israel must buy territory somewhere else. Otherwise there will be an everlasting problem in that area. The United States could help."

Clearly astonished, Casoy reminded Alencar that "Israel is a country that has existed for more than 50 years," and asked why should Israel leave and not the Palestinians. Alencar, who is widely expected to become Brazil's next vice president, replied that the "Palestinians occupy a much larger area and they are much superior in numbers."

Jewish observers were saddened that the leading candidate for the presidency, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, and Sao Paulo Mayor Marta Suplicy — both of whom are affiliated with Alencar's Workers Party — did nothing to distance themselves from Alencar's comments.

Insurers must list WWII policies

A U.S. court called on European insurers to abide by a California law and list their Holocaust-era insurance policies.

As a result of the court's decision, the insurers have until next week to make their lists public.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center hailed the development.

"Within a week, unless U.S. Supreme Court Judge Sandra Day O'Connor intervenes, victims of the Nazi Holocaust will finally be able to learn what was stolen from them half a century ago," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the center's associate dean.

Barenboim performs in Ramallah

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Barenboim, who recently made statements condemning Israeli military operations in the West Bank, gave a concert three weeks ago at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank.

"It is important for Palestinians to have positive feelings about someone from the other side," Barenboim said.

Pro-Palestinian hotbed in Montreal erupts, canceling Netanyahu speech

By Bram Eisenhal

MONTREAL (JTA) — Concordia University long has been a center of Palestinian nationalism, but the Montreal school's pro-Arab fervor reached new heights this week.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled a speech at Concordia on Monday after pro-Palestinian demonstrators wreaked havoc in the building.

Protesters threw chairs and other objects at police, who responded with tear gas.

By the time the smoke had cleared, the university's main lobby was littered with broken glass and chairs.

After the speech was canceled, pro-Israel activists, whom police had asked to remain quietly inside the auditorium, spoke out.

"This is our school. This is not Gaza, this is not Bir Zeit University," shouted Yoni Petel, the president of Montreal Hillel.

"If tomorrow there is another riot, we will not let them take it away from us. We will stand here proudly once again."

Thomas Hecht, the Quebec chairman of the Canada-Israel Committee, had more disturbing news.

Hecht was spit on and kicked while accompanying the yarmulke-wearing Rabbi Mordecai Zeitz through the growing mob. Later, it was learned that many others were also attacked.

The pro-Palestinian demonstrators later argued with Netanyahu supporters.

"To prevent an open debate, a lecture in a university, by a representative of a democratic society, of course that is wrong," an angry Netanyahu later said at a news conference.

The incident was more violent than one in November 2000, when pro-Palestinian demonstrators prevented Netanyahu from speaking at the University of California at Berkeley.

Concordia's rector, Frederick Lowy, said the university administration had been worried about the speech when it agreed to host Netanyahu.

"Sure, it was a concern, with lots of potential for trouble at our multi-cultural campus," he told JTA. "Because of their numbers, those who are pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel dominate the scene here. It is frustrating for us, in that the activities on our campus are distracted by these events."

Because of the university's emphasis on freedom of speech, it was decided after consultation with security officials that the Hillel request would be accepted.

Academic Norman Finkelstein, a critic of Holocaust groups and of Israel, is slated to speak at Concordia next week, Lowy said.

B'nai Brith Canada denounced the pro-Palestinian protests.

"The leadership of the Palestinian cause in Canada has failed in its responsibility to ensure that their supporters act with restraint and respect the rights of others," the group's executive vice president, Frank Diamant, said in a statement. "Using violence and intimidation to silence other points of view may be the way things are done in certain Middle Eastern dictatorships, but in Canada we must uphold the democratic principles that allowed every community the right to speak out within the limits of the law."

Approximately 250 people staged a more peaceful protest Monday night outside Netanyahu's speaking engagement in Winnipeg, where he called for democracy in the Arab world.

Speaking to the media after Monday's incident, backed by Montreal Jewish leaders, Netanyahu denounced the protesters.

"What these people showed you today is that they're absolutely intolerant, absolutely extreme, in their totalitarian mentality," he said. "This is exactly totalitarianism versus freedom, which is at the heart of the battle being waged on the world stage."

He also accused the demonstrators of supporting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and Al-Qaida terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Calls for reform, nonviolence grow as intifada sputters after two years***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat condemned Palestinian attacks inside Israel this week, he wasn't only trying to please Israeli moderates.

He also was responding to calls from a growing number of Palestinian figures who believe that the two-year-old intifada has reached a dead end, and that the Palestinian struggle against Israel must take a more moderate turn.

The two most prominent voices in this context are Nabil Amer, the P.A.'s former minister for parliamentary affairs, and the new interior minister, Abdel Razak Yehiyeh.

In an article this week in *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, the P.A.'s house organ, former editor Amer urged Arafat to admit that he had erred when he turned to violence two years ago, and that the Palestinians were unlikely to receive now what they had been offered by President Clinton and former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Camp David summit in July 2000.

"We failed in the management of the historical process that we faced," Amer wrote.

This week, there was another call for an end to violence — although it did appear to justify some acts of terror.

On Tuesday, Arafat's Fatah movement released a letter saying it will prevent attacks on civilians in Israel, but suggested it will continue to target Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

There was some confusion, however, surrounding the letter. A Fatah leader in the West Bank said it was not the final version and that the Fatah leadership still had some reservations about the text, *The Associated Press* reported.

Amer, 53, resigned four months ago from the P.A. Cabinet, demanding general reform. He spearheaded the demand for the establishment of a Cabinet of technocrats who would help unify all security bodies, ensure judicial independence and call for early elections.

Palestinian legislators meeting this week in Ramallah echoed those demands. Indeed, some of the legislators threatened Tuesday to topple Arafat's new Cabinet. The lawmakers said the Cabinet, reshuffled by Arafat in June, still contains corrupt ministers.

The Palestinian legislative council convened this week for a vote on the Cabinet, but it was not clear whether Arafat supporters would try to delay it.

The council convened a week after Yehiyeh's dramatic appeal in a Reuters interview for an end to violence against Israel. He repeated those comments in other interviews over the weekend, including interviews to the Palestinian media.

Instead of violence, Yehiyeh suggested, Palestinians should resort to nonviolent resistance.

The encouragement of suicide bombing has been destructive not just to the Palestinians' international image but to the younger generation of Palestinians, Yehiyeh said.

Arafat recently appointed Yehiyeh, 63, in an effort to show the Bush administration that indeed he was interested in reform. Thus, some analysts said, Yehiyeh's moderate statements reflect Arafat's new line.

In fact, the analysts said, Yehiyeh can express views that

Arafat himself is reluctant to express for fear of antagonizing militants in Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aksa Brigade of Arafat's own Fatah movement.

Others speculated that Yehiyeh is part of a good cop/bad cop routine in which moderate statements are made to please the international community while P.A. forces do little against terrorist groups. An Israeli official told Reuters that he welcomed Yehiyeh's remarks, but said Israel wanted action, not words.

"There is a need to assume authority, to take full control of the situation," the official said. "If they don't control the streets, the terrorists will control" them.

Even if Yehiyeh's intentions are good, he is still finding it difficult to implement them. Last week he met in Gaza with representatives of Palestinian political groups and tried — in vain — to convince them to hold their fire.

Yehiyeh's main line of argument was that the Palestinians should give a chance to the "Gaza/Bethlehem First" deal he reached with Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer.

Under that deal, the Palestinian Authority will resume control for security in those areas, and Israeli troops will withdraw. If quiet prevails, the arrangement will be extended to other areas.

Every Palestinian "has to help us to make the rule of law prevail in our areas, from the areas that the Israeli troops leave," Yehiyeh told Reuters. "If the situation remains as it is, we will never be able to set up our state."

However, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Fatah militias all announced that they opposed the deal, and would continue their "acts of resistance" against Israel.

At the end of the day, Yehiyeh has failed to meet the two major conditions Israel and the United States set: unifying all militias and P.A. security bodies under one umbrella and ensuring that the fundamentalist organizations accept the authority of the Palestinian Authority.

Some feel Yehiyeh will find support for his position among the Palestinian population. Analysts point to recent demonstrations in the Gaza Strip in which Palestinians called on their government to provide "bread and work," and a recent public opinion poll that showed Palestinian support for a more moderate line.

A recent survey by Search for Common Ground, an organization devoted to conflict prevention and resolution, showed that 80 percent of Palestinians would support a large-scale nonviolent protest movement, and 56 percent would participate in its activities.

Skeptics, however, point to other polls that have shown strong popular support among Palestinians for suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks against Israelis. According to the Common Ground survey, carried out by the Palestinian Jerusalem Media and Communications Center, 62 percent of Palestinians think a new approach is needed in the intifada. Overwhelming majorities — from 73 to 92 percent — approve of various methods of nonviolent action, according to the poll.

Large numbers of Palestinians also told the pollsters that they would be willing to participate in specific nonviolent actions, including boycotts and forms of mass civil disobedience.

Thus, some wondered if the Palestinian political atmosphere was ripe for a new policy along the lines Yehiyeh was urging.

Even Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said last week that he believed the Palestinians were realizing the futility of their assault on Israel, making him optimistic that the two sides might soon return to peace talks. □