



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel: Siege to continue

Israeli officials said they expect the siege on Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound to continue, despite a U.N. Security Council vote demanding an immediate halt to the operation.

Following lengthy debate early Tuesday, the council voted 14-0, with the United States abstaining, on a resolution calling on Israel to end the siege and on the Palestinian Authority to bring terrorists to justice. Since the Palestinian Authority is unlikely to meet its responsibilities under the resolution, Israel will not have to comply either, Israeli officials said.

Israel launches Gaza raid

Nine Palestinians were killed in gun battles that erupted after Israeli forces entered Gaza City early Tuesday.

Backed by tanks, bulldozers and helicopters, Israeli soldiers destroyed 13 workshops where the army said Palestinian terrorists were building rockets.

The army also demolished the house of a Hamas member who killed five Israeli teen-agers in an attack on a Jewish settlement in Gaza earlier this year.

More Jews than believed?

There are 600,000 more American Jews than previously believed, because the U.S. Jewish population has been underestimated for years, according to a new study. [Page 4]

Report: U.S. to give UNRWA more

The United States reportedly plans to announce an additional \$9.25 million in funding for a U.N. agency that assists Palestinian refugees.

U.S. officials plan to announce the contribution to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency at a gathering Wednesday in Amman, Jordan, that will bring together donor nations and governments hosting Palestinian refugees and their descendants. Including the latest contribution, the United States is the largest donor to UNRWA this year, giving more than \$119 million, according to The Associated Press.

Because of the Simchat Torah holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 30.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Should Israel retaliate if attacked? Rift looms as talk of war increases

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A disagreement is surfacing between the United States and Israel over whether the Jewish state should retaliate if attacked by Iraq during an American-led war.

For months, as talk of U.S. action against Iraq intensified, Israeli officials have said Israel cannot hold its fire if attacked by Iraq, as it did when showered with Iraqi missiles in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Coupled with those statements was the view that the Bush administration understood and would allow Israel to retaliate.

In the last week, however — as talk of war increasingly occupies the international community — U.S. officials have been asking Israel to just sit tight if attacked.

Asked Sept. 18 if the United States should restrain Israel during a war, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told the House Armed Services Committee that Israel should hold its fire even if attacked.

There is "no doubt in my mind but that it would be in Israel's overwhelming best interest not to get involved," Rumsfeld said. He reiterated the comments to the Senate the next day.

Secretary of State Colin Powell deflected similar questions from Congress. Powell said he felt Israel's 1991 decision not to fire back — made under intense U.S. pressure — "was the correct one."

He added that the Bush administration was "thinking about" available contingencies if Iraq again tried to draw Israel into the hostilities.

The United States would "be in the closest consultation with our Israeli friends and colleagues," Powell told the House International Relations Committee on Sept. 19. "Both Vice President Cheney and I have experience in dealing with this question and this problem, and I think we would know how to deal with it again."

The Bush administration is telling Israel the same thing privately, administration officials said.

"That he actually feels this way is not shocking," one U.S. analyst said of Rumsfeld's comments. "What is shocking is that he is saying it publicly."

The main U.S. concern, emphasized by lawmakers on Sunday talk shows last weekend, is that Israeli involvement could turn Arab countries against the U.S. effort or even escalate the conflict into a general Arab-Israeli war.

"I think we all recognize there is a downside, that if the Israelis go in it could just be a widespread war in the Middle East," Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

While the Bush administration is hoping to win Arab acquiescence to an attack on Iraq — as well as permission to use military bases in the Arab world — some fear that an Israeli retaliatory attack against Iraq would move the Arab states from bystanders to active combatants against Israel.

The U.S. stance is "about building a coalition, but it's also about preventing a coalition against" the United States, one Jewish official said.

But the administration's statements have rattled the Israeli government.

On the one hand, Israel hopes the U.S. battle plan will include measures to undermine Iraq's ability to attack Israel.

But many Israeli officials see the decision not to respond to the Iraqi attack in 1991

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinian sanctions added in bill

Sanctions against the Palestinian leadership have been added to the annual U.S. State Department authorization bill. The Middle East Peace Commitments Act, sponsored by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), was added to the bill in conference committee. It is expected to be voted on by the House of Representatives this week.

The sanctions require the president to assess whether the Palestinians are in compliance with agreements signed with Israel and the United States, and to implement sanctions if they are not. Sanctions include denying visas to Palestinian Authority officials, downgrading the PLO office in Washington or adding the PLO, P.A. or other groups to the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations.

E.U. may probe P.A. funds

Members of the European Parliament are circulating a petition to investigate whether the Palestinian Authority is channeling E.U. aid to terrorists. A German legislator said 43 of the 628 members of Parliament signed the motion, which needs 157 signatures before a committee of inquiry can be set up.

In June, an E.U. official, Chris Patten assured European legislators that there was "no evidence of EU funds being used for purposes other than those agreed between the E.U. and the P.A."

Gunmen fire on official's home

Masked gunmen opened fire Tuesday on the house of a Palestinian Cabinet member who has harshly criticized Yasser Arafat. No one was hurt in the attack in Ramallah, according to the Jerusalem Post, which cited Palestinian security officials.

The apparent target of the attack, Nabil Abu Amr, has been critical of the Palestinian Authority president and reportedly was involved in efforts to appoint a prime minister to share power with Arafat.

as a grievous strategic error that undermined Israel's deterrent power and emboldened Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorist groups to attack the Jewish state.

While Israel hopes to stay out of the war entirely, Israeli officials also hope the United States will support Israel's need to respond if it is attacked.

"If attacked unprovoked, Saddam Hussein cannot presume that we will automatically repeat the restraint we exercised in 1991," said Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

At the same time, Israeli officials also note that the country is not on automatic pilot, and that decisions about retaliation will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The calculation also would depend on the provocation: A different response would be considered if an Iraqi missile landed harmlessly in the Negev Desert than if chemical warheads hit Tel Aviv.

Some analysts are concerned that Bush's comments will lead to perceptions that Israel is weak.

"It sends the wrong signal to Baghdad," said David Makovsky, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "It's perhaps implying that the U.S. could seek to restrain Israel if it is attacked by Iraq," making Israel seem like a U.S. pawn.

But is that the case? More likely, some analysts note, is that U.S. planners realize Israeli retaliation would be largely symbolic — there is little Israel could add if the United States already were leading a massive war effort — and therefore not worth the diplomatic risk.

What the episode has revealed is the divergence of interests between the United States and Israel. The United States, which seeks to gain at least Arab acquiescence to an attack on a fellow Arab regime, is "trying to tell the Arabs that this is not a U.S.-Israeli production," one analyst said.

Israel would welcome the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, whom it regards as a sworn enemy, but it also believes it important to show strength after its passivity in 1991. Several Israeli officials have expressed concern that holding fire a decade later would show an undue reliance on the United States.

There also may be political considerations: Not responding might prove detrimental to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is mindful of a potential challenge from the more hawkish former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

And hawks note that after Israel sheltered beneath U.S. wings during the Gulf War, it did not receive a reward for its restraint. Instead it was forced, against the wishes of its government, to take part in the Madrid peace conference as the United States tried to mend fences in the Arab world.

This time, they say, Israel would do well to emphasize its independence.

Yet the tiff is considered far less serious than the one between Israel and the United States during the Gulf War, when the first President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir went months without speaking to each other.

"To speculate right now about whether or not Israel will retaliate to an Iraqi attack is not constructive," said Rebecca Needler, spokeswoman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. "It is our hope that Israel will not be attacked, that Israel will not be put in that situation."

Many Middle East analysts anticipate that the United States will formulate attack plans against Iraq designed to minimize the possibility of a strike against Israel.

Labor Party legislator Colette Avital, who was in Washington last week to meet with lawmakers, said she believes the best course of action is a pre-emptive strike in the western part of Iraq, hitting bases from which Saddam could launch missiles against Israel. Similarly, when he testified before Congress on Sept. 12, Netanyahu said he believes the United States could substantially reduce the risk to Israel through preventive action.

That might include giving Israel advance warning of an American attack or helping Israel to inoculate its population against biological agents.

"We have to assume that he'll fire the missiles," Netanyahu said of Saddam before the House of Representatives' Government Reform Committee. "We cannot assume that we'll intercept all the missiles. And we cannot assume that the warheads will not distribute chemical and, what is worse, biological material. So we must take all the precautions." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Glasgow mayor blasts Israel

Glasgow's mayor accused Israel of "state terrorism," days after a yeshiva student from Scotland was killed in a Palestinian suicide bombing.

Israel "has been perpetrating state terrorism on the Palestinians since the State of Israel was formed," the city's lord provost, Alex Mosson, was quoted as saying. He made the comment after Gideon Black, who was wounded in the Sept. 19 suicide bombing, criticized the Scottish cities of Glasgow and Dundee for having twinning arrangements with the West Bank cities of Bethlehem and Nablus.

"You know you will never go on a bus in Scotland or in London and worry about it being blown up," added Black, whose friend Jonathan Jesner was one of six people killed in the bus bombing in Tel Aviv.

Forum to map racism response

Jewish leaders from around the world will gather in New York next month to discuss how to respond to a new surge of anti-Semitism, the Anti-Defamation League said Monday. "Jew-hatred emanating from the Arab and Muslim world spreads instantaneously through the Internet and satellite TV," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, which is sponsoring the conference. "We must develop strategies and allies to fight back."

College sukkah vandalized

A sukkah at the Boulder campus of the University of Colorado was defaced with swastikas over the weekend. Members of the campus Hillel foundation found swastikas inside the sukkah Saturday.

Meanwhile, in a show of solidarity, 25 members of other religious groups at the campus, including the Muslim Student Association, helped repair the sukkah Monday and also shook lulavs and etrogs. "We were really able to turn this hateful act against us into a really positive event that brought the community together," said Matthew Vogel, a Hillel member.

Also this week, the campus building that houses the local chapter of the Jewish fraternity ZBT was spray-painted with an anti-Semitic phrase. No one has been arrested in either incident.

Alleged camp guard charged

The U.S. Justice Department is seeking to deport a man who allegedly served as a concentration camp guard during World War II. The department's Office of Special Investigations filed charges Tuesday seeking to remove the U.S. citizenship of Theodor Szebinskyj, 76.

Between January 1943 and February 1945, Szebinskyj allegedly served in the Nazi SS Death Head's Guard Battalion, which committed atrocities at several concentration camps, including Sachsenhausen.

Szebinskyj now lives outside Philadelphia.

House leader's comments on Jews called 'breathtaking in their ignorance'

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish Democrats are blasting the comments of House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas), who said liberal Jews have a "shallow, superficial intellect."

Speaking at a campaign forum on Middle East issues in Florida for congressional candidate Katherine Harris last Friday, Armey was asked why there was a division between liberal and conservative Jews.

"I always see two Jewish communities in America," Armey replied, according to the Bradenton Herald.

"One of deep intellect and one of shallow, superficial intellect."

Armey continued, saying that conservative Jews have "occupations of the brain," like economics and science, while liberals have "occupations of the heart," including the arts.

"They're going to be liberals . . . because they want to feel good," he was quoted as saying.

Armey's spokesman, Richard Diamond, told JTA his comments were about liberals and conservatives in general, not Jews in particular, and it mirrors comments he has made about other groups and the American public in general.

"He was making an anti-liberal comment," Diamond said. "He is making no charge that he wouldn't make of the country."

He also said the comment is being used as a political attack against Armey, who is retiring from Congress at the end of this session.

But the comments have infuriated some of Armey's colleagues on Capitol Hill, as well as Jewish officials.

"If accurately reported, Dick Armey's comments are absolutely breathtaking in their ignorance," Reps. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) and Martin Frost (D-Texas) said in a joint statement.

"It's very disappointing to us that a high-ranking leader of the Republican Party and the House of Representatives would make such divisive remarks."

The lawmakers called on Republican leaders to disavow the comments or "we can only assume he was speaking for the Republican Party."

Art Teitelbaum, southern area director of the Anti-Defamation League, said he believes that Armey's comments are "simplistic, if not mindless," but that they are not anti-Semitic.

"Congressman Armey demonstrated that there is a narrow line between off-the-cuff and off-the-wall comments," he said.

Teitelbaum said he did not think Armey's comments would raise red flags to Jewish leaders about their relationship with the Republican Party.

"The Jewish community is wise enough to realize that Mr. Armey is responsible for his comments, and no one else," he said.

Much has been made in the last year of Jewish voters presumably moving toward the Republican Party, and Armey and House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Texas) have both sponsored legislation that would benefit Israel.

But while the support of the majority leadership in the House has been welcomed by Jewish leaders, many have been quietly skeptical of the bond.

Comments like Armey's highlight those concerns.

"This guy should be an embarrassment to the Republican Jews and the Republican Party," said Ira Forman, the executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

"To reduce liberalism or progressive thought to people who want to feel good is simple and silly," Forman said.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, defended Armey, saying the House leader "has been a longtime friend and supporter of the Jewish community and his understanding and support of issues of concern to the Jewish community are beyond question." □

Jewish population undercounted? New study launches a new debate

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — There are 600,000 more American Jews than previously believed, because the U.S. Jewish population has been underestimated for years, according to a new study.

A national survey by the Institute for Jewish & Community Research found 6.7 million Jews out of 288 million Americans, far higher than the closest, most recent estimate of 6.1 million American Jews.

"Jews have been systematically undercounted for decades," said Gary Tobin, president of the San Francisco-based institute.

But Tobin cast an even wider net than any other demographer has to date when it comes to measuring people who are "connected" Jewishly, capturing a total of 13.3 million people with a variety of Jewish ties and defying what he calls a mistaken notion of "a shrinking Jewish population."

Jews "have deep roots in American society," Tobin said. "Jews are not disappearing, they're transforming."

But several prominent Jewish demographers questioned Tobin's findings and their significance.

Ira Sheskin, a University of Miami professor involved with several Jewish population studies, said Tobin painted too big a picture of American Jewry.

"I could claim my dog too, if you want to stretch the net far enough," Sheskin said.

Tobin's study, which paints a far more optimistic portrait of American Jewry than earlier studies, comes on the eve of the long-awaited National Jewish Population Survey 2000-2001, which is widely expected to be seen as the benchmark in measuring the U.S. Jewish population.

Tobin's study surveyed 250 households.

The NJPS 2000 has a sampling of 4,500 households.

The last edition of the NJPS shook American Jewry in 1990 with a finding that 52 percent of Jews who wed between 1985 and 1990 married non-Jews. Though the NJPS' main finding was that U.S. Jewry numbered 5.5 million, the intermarriage figure became the study's hallmark, stirring intense communal introspection and tens of millions of dollars being spent on programs to strengthen Jewish identity.

Final tallies of the latest NJPS have been closely guarded by officials of the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella, which is overseeing the survey.

While only a few researchers involved in the latest NJPS have seen the data, some of which is being released early next month, more recent counts have put the Jewish population far closer to the 1990 NJPS than Tobin's calculations.

In 2000, UJC researchers Jim Schwartz and Jeffrey Scheckner relied on local communal counts — lists provided by the nation's 200 federations in the largest Jewish centers, along with figures by communal "experts" such as rabbis in less populated Jewish areas, to arrive at an estimate of 6.1 million U.S. Jews.

That figure of 6,141,325 appeared in the 2001 edition of the American Jewish Year Book.

Schwartz has been the lead researcher on the UJC's NJPS survey, which, with a sample size of 4,500 is expected to be the most comprehensive survey of American Jews to date.

In 2001, sociologist Egon Mayer, director of the Center for

Jewish Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, produced a study meant as a companion to the 2000 NJPS, which is due to appear nearly two years late.

Mayer counted 5.5 million U.S. Jews, either by religion, by Jewish parentage or by upbringing. That figure matched the 1990 NJPS, and used much of the same methodology.

One key shift in Mayer's findings from the 1990 NJPS, however, was that intermarriage seemed to be increasing and Jewish identification shrinking.

And according to that 2001 CUNY survey, nearly 1.4 million adult Jews — those with Jewish parents or who were raised Jews — said they belonged to a non-Jewish religious group.

But Tobin insisted previous studies have been wrong. First, these studies undercounted Jews because many Jews deny their identity in phone surveys, out of fears of anti-Semitism, he said.

To test that theory, Tobin said his study used similar screening questions about Jewish identity to those used in the NJPS in 1990 and 2000 with "known" Jews, and found that 13 percent — which he extrapolates to 850,000 people — said there was no Jew in the household.

Second, this latest study, which surveyed 10,204 randomly selected U.S. households to get to the 250 homes with a Jewish connection, used a line of questioning about people's backgrounds that made them "feel much more comfortable" before delving into Jewish issues, he said.

What Tobin found is that 2.5 million Americans are a subgroup "socially or psychologically connected" with Judaism, though they are not Jews themselves.

Looking even further afield, Tobin said 4.1 million more Americans have at least one ancestor — "a grandparent or beyond" — who is Jewish. What all that means, Tobin said, is that "there is enormous potential there. These are people who are self-identified as Jewish in some way."

But just how the Jewish community should relate to this much larger Jewishly connected group is, as Tobin admitted, "up for grabs."

Sheskin, a member of UJC's National Technical Advisory Committee, which oversaw the 2000 NJPS, said, "There are probably millions and millions of Americans out there who had a Jewish ancestor at some point and feel close" to Jews in some way.

What was missing from the Tobin survey, Sheskin said, were questions about the nature of Jewish observance. Both the 1990 and 2000 NJPS, Sheskin added, found people "who identified as Jews because Jesus was a Jew. We didn't count those folks."

Tobin said his study did not get into questions of levels of observance because his was "a sociological study, not a halachic one" based on Jewish law.

But Jonathan Sarna, a professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University, said both Tobin's study and the upcoming NJPS will show that, in fact, the numbers of "strictly halachic" Jews are declining.

While Sarna said Tobin's rosier portrait is not based on "utter nonsense," since "vast numbers" of Americans today are indeed tied in some way to Jews, that does not say much about the future of American Jewry.

But 20 million American also have ties to French Huguenots, a culture that died out, he added.

"Many of these people who have a piece of Jewish heritage" aren't selecting that piece and "see no reason why Judaism should be central to them or their children," he said. □