



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel holds off on retaliation

The United States is not pressing Israel to restrain its response to Monday's terrorist attack, Israel's defense minister said. Speaking about the lack of an immediate Israeli response to the attack, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said Tuesday that Israel would respond when and how it deems right.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is under growing pressure to prevent an escalation with the Palestinians as the United States seeks international support, including from moderate Arab countries, for a possible strike against Iraq.

Ben-Eliezer blasts rabbis' call

Israel's defense minister, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, wants to prosecute rabbis who urged soldiers not to obey orders to dismantle illegal West Bank settlement outposts.

The apparent target of Ben-Eliezer's ire is the leader of the settlers' Rabbinical Council, Rabbi Zalman Melamed of Beit El, who issued a religious edict that soldiers must disobey orders to dismantle settlements. On Tuesday, Israel's chief Ashkenazic rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, also criticized Melamed.

Palestinian describes peace plan

A Palestinian official outlined what he said is a U.S. peace plan that will be presented to Israel and the Palestinians this week.

The first stage of the phased plan would begin in November and end next April, Nabil Sha'ath told The Associated Press.

During that time, Israel and the Palestinians would declare a truce, followed by Palestinian elections and an Israeli withdrawal to positions held before the start of the Palestinian uprising in September 2000.

In the second phase, from May 2003 to December 2003, a provisional Palestinian state would be established in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Israel dismantling some settlements.

Talks on a final peace deal would begin in 2004 and be concluded by mid-2005, with the establishment of a Palestinian state, Sha'ath said.

He met twice in the past week with the U.S. assistant secretary of state, William Burns, who planned talks Wednesday and Thursday with the two sides about the U.S. peace plan.

Israel campaign designates funds after school security costs reduced

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group for North American federations, has designated \$18 million in new funds as part of its Israel Emergency Campaign.

The move comes amid scrutiny of the campaign, stemming from confusion over funding for one of its designated priorities, security for Israeli schoolchildren.

The latest allocations — for medical services, trauma relief and citizen safety programs — include \$12 million that were originally targeted for school security.

Those funds were reallocated after the Israeli government reduced its estimate of the cost of installing school guards at kindergartens and nursery schools, according to UJC officials.

The Israel Emergency Campaign, the largest emergency fund-raising effort for Israel to date, was launched in April to respond to the material and emotional needs of the Jewish state amid the ongoing intifada.

Some \$319 million has been raised in moneys and pledges for the campaign, which has been extended through next year.

Allocations are determined through a special committee with 10-15 representatives from various size federations and UJC staff.

Recommendations for projects come from the UJC's overseas partners, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which work closely with the Israeli government.

After Israel's initial August estimate that it would take \$20 million for 1,500 new officers to patrol kindergartens and schools with small populations, the government cut its estimate in early September to \$8 million for 865 guards.

The number and location of schools is classified, according to the UJC.

Israeli police, too, would not give the information.

The Israeli government provides protection to all schools with more than 100 students.

A lawsuit by an Israeli father against the government for failing to place guards at his 4-year-old son's school prompted several stories in The New York Jewish Week that detailed the objections by parents and local Israeli authorities to a total allocation for school guards they deem insufficient.

Indeed, the UJC confirmed that the program to begin hiring and placing the school guards got a late start.

They had been scheduled to be placed in early September, the beginning of the school year.

Now most of the guards have been hired and placed, according to Jeff Kaye, director of financial resource development for the Jewish Agency, with the rest slated to begin work by the end of this month.

Still, officials in Israel made clear that there will continue to be small kindergartens that are not protected.

Interviews with officials at the agencies involved in the assessment and disbursal of the campaign funds — Israel, the UJC, and the UJC's overseas partner involved in the program, the Jewish Agency — revealed finger-pointing across the board.

But here's where there's consensus: Israel sharply reduced its initial assessment of the costs for school guards, and that move caught UJC off guard.

Officials with the UJC say they have to defer to the Israeli government's assessment of its needs on such matters. "I'm content to simply accept the security analysis of the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli Arabs sentenced

Three Israeli Arabs convicted of setting off a bomb were sentenced to jail terms of five to eight years Tuesday.

The three residents of Taiba were convicted of preparing a bomb, planting it on a bridge in Taiba and detonating it by remote control when a car passed, Israel Radio reported.

No one was injured in the blast.

Car bombs preferred weapon

Islamic Jihad terrorists now favor car bombs over the smaller explosive charges strapped to suicide bombers, according to a member of the group.

"We found that with the cars, we could load them with explosives and harm many people," an Islamic Jihad official told The Associated Press. The group claimed responsibility for a deadly car bombing Monday of a bus in northern Israel.

Seven bombings foiled

Israeli troops recently foiled seven suicide bombers, a military intelligence officer said Tuesday. Briefing a Knesset committee, the officer also said three bombings were thwarted on Monday, the same day a suicide bombing of a bus in northern Israel killed 14 people and wounded some 50 others.

The officer said there have been dozens of alerts about planned terrorist attacks, Israel Radio reported.

Report: Arafat's Cabinet formed

Yasser Arafat has formed a new Cabinet, a top Palestinian official told The Associated Press. The new Cabinet will be presented to Palestinian lawmakers for approval next week, according to the report.

Palestinian sources said legislators are unlikely to approve the new Cabinet because it includes some officials from the previous Cabinet who have been accused of corruption.

government," which, in matters of security, knows best, said Stephen Hoffman, UJC's president and CEO.

But Hoffman said all campaign funds are being used for their intended purpose. "Nothing smells bad," he said.

"Supporters of the Israel Emergency Campaign are making a tremendous and tangible difference in the lives of Israelis during an incredibly challenging time for them," he said.

"Every single dollar raised is destined toward this objective, and those who have generously given to this special campaign know that to be indisputable."

For its part, the Jewish Agency, which served as the conduit between Israel and the UJC on the school security program, is holding out hope for more funds.

In a statement issued last week, the Jewish Agency said the government of Israel is the "only competent authority for determining kindergarten and school security requirements and criteria."

But the agency added: "Should facts in the field dictate a revision of the government's cost analysis for additional school security, the Jewish Agency, in coordination with the Government of Israel and its partner organizations, will designate" unused Israel Emergency Campaign funds to "cover revised additional school security cost estimates."

UJC officials said they did not yet know whether they would be allocating additional funds for school security, beyond the \$8 million already committed.

UJC and the federations "stand ready to examine and address the needs of the Israeli people during this critical time, and we recognize that those needs are fluid and changing day by day," said UJC spokesman Glenn Rosenkrantz.

Meanwhile, the \$12 million freed up by the lower estimate for school security is being funneled into other areas designated as priorities, including medical and psychological aid for "vulnerable populations."

When the UJC launched its campaign in April, it outlined five priority areas:

- child safety and protection programs, like school security and summer and after-school programs;
- hospitals and other medical needs;
- security initiatives, such as neighborhood civilian guards;
- aid to Israeli citizens directly affected by terrorist attacks; and
- immigration and absorption of Jews suffering economically in Argentina.

To date, the UJC has allocated \$131 million, including the \$8 million for school guards and the \$18 million announced last week.

Other funds have been allocated to:

- Argentine aliyah, providing \$7,000 for each individual immigrant to be used for housing, tutoring and employment training (\$35 million);
- day camps for almost 300,000 children, including those with special needs, this past summer, in a program that was run by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (\$25 million);
- after-school programs that began early this month, with special programming for immigrant children (\$16 million);
- special programs designated by local federations, such as the Victims for Terror Fund, which provides grants for families with needs unmet by the government (\$29 million);

For their part, local federation leaders say the confusion over the funding for school security is not an issue.

"We understand that the pace of getting the guards in place is somewhat slower than we thought it would be," said Martin Abramowitz, vice president for planning and agency relations for the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

"But overall we have confidence in the ability of the UJC to deliver," he said.

The flap is a "nonissue" at the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, said Misha Galperin, its executive vice president and CEO.

Galperin, whose community is the fourth largest contributor to the general emergency fund, after New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, said he has been assured by the Prime Minister's Office in Israel that their "needs as they spell them out are being met appropriately."

He said: "Whatever is needed, as long as UJC has the money, is being sent." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Hezbollah leader taunts U.S.

The leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon questioned U.S. military capabilities, citing the failed hunt for the sniper in suburban Washington.

"One sniper is shaking their security," Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said in a speech Tuesday. "The world's strongest security agencies are unable to find that sniper." Nasrallah made the speech as the U.S. assistant secretary of state, William Burns, visited Beirut as part of a regional tour.

During meetings with Lebanese leaders, Burns urged calm along the border with Israel in case of a U.S. attack on Iraq. Israeli officials have warned that if the United States strikes Iraq, Hezbollah may open a second front with Israel.

Suicide bombings coming to N.Y.?

Palestinian-style suicide bombings will someday strike New York, two New York security officials said. The security chief of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Louis Anemone, and the security chief of the Port Authority, Joseph Morris, made the prediction after a five-day trip to Israel, according to the Jerusalem Post. The two men were in Israel to learn about counterterrorism programs.

New York's police commissioner, Ray Kelly, said a suicide bombing is not inevitable, but said everything should be done to prevent an attack.

Iran to expand Hebrew program

Iran plans to extend the range of its Hebrew-language radio program. An official at the station told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the daily half-hour program "Voice of David" would be expanded next week to reach not only listeners in Israel, but also in the United States, Eastern Europe and Russia. The radio program began airing in June, when officials said they wanted to counter Israel's "one-sided news monopoly," the report said.

Camp memorial rehab begins

Restoration work began Monday at the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany. The site, already a memorial, will be remodeled and receive a new visitors center within three years, according to plans for the \$14 million project.

Anti-Semitism forum in Slovenia

Scholars from Europe, North America and Israel are attending an international conference this week on anti-Semitism in the Balkans.

Topics at the three-day conference in Slovenia include contemporary ethnic conflicts and their relevance to anti-Semitism; Holocaust denial; and the survival and perpetuation of anti-Jewish stereotypes in Balkan folklore, literature and art.

Teacher, border policeman, soldier among 13 killed in suicide bombing

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A retired schoolteacher. A young border police officer. A dedicated soldier due to complete his service.

These were three of the 13 victims of Monday's suicide car bombing against a bus in northern Israel.

On Tuesday, Israeli officials revised the number killed in Monday's suicide bombing from 14 to 13.

The revision was made after officials confirmed that there were two, not one, suicide bombers responsible for the attack, according to Israel Radio. The condition of some of the bodies has made identification difficult.

Israel's transportation minister, Ephraim Sneh, said Tuesday that some 80 additional guards were expected to be recruited to help secure buses.

But he acknowledged the guards could only help keep suicide bombers from boarding the public transportation. There was little they could do, he said, to prevent a car bomb from blowing up beside a bus — even as Islamic Jihad, which claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, said the destructive power of such car bombings had made them the group's weapon of choice.

A day after the attack, six people had been positively identified as victims.

Pathologists said the identification process had to be done by blood samples, a much slower process, because the state of the remains could not be matched up to other information supplied by families of missing Israelis, such as height, hair color and distinctive markings, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot reported.

Those identified were Iris Lavi, 68, of Netanya; Ofra Burger, 56, of Hod Hasharon; Sgt. Maj. Eliezer Moscovitz, 40, of Petach Tikva; Cpl. Ilona Hanokiev, 20, of Hadera; Staff Sgt. Nir Nahum, 20, of Carmiel; and Border Police Staff Sgt. Iman Sharuf, 20, of Usfiya.

Following her retirement four years ago, longtime elementary school educator Ofra Burger had immersed herself in volunteer work. Her favorite project was the environment.

"I will remember Ofra as a woman who cared," said the deputy mayor of Hod Hasharon, Moshe Erez. "She was very involved in community life. When any harm was done to the environment, she would call and inform us."

Burger was known to parents, teachers and students throughout the community, Erez said.

Burger had gone to visit her sick mother in Tiberias and was returning home on the bus when the attack occurred. She is survived by her husband and three children.

Iman Sharuf had spent the past two years serving with the border police in Hebron.

He was stationed at the border police memorial in the past week after being injured in a traffic accident. Sharuf boarded the Egged bus near the memorial shortly before the blast.

Friends described Sharuf as a quiet person, who had ambitions to advance within the military framework.

"Iman loved his family, he took care of his parents and his entire home," the paper quoted a family friend as saying. He is survived by his parents and four siblings.

Nir Nahum was due to come home Thursday on a weekend leave, but the car in which he hitched a ride had just passed the Egged bus when the explosion occurred.

Nahum served as a company sergeant in the artillery corps.

His father said he believed his son had traveled to Karkur junction to bring something to one of the troops.

"Nir was someone who was always thinking about how to contribute to the battalion and the soldiers," said his father, Rami, a reserve major. "He was an outstanding youth, and I'm not saying this because he is my son. As a company commander in the army, I've seen all kinds of soldiers, and a boy like this I've never met."

A neighbor described Nahum as a quiet, modest person who made his parents proud. Nahum was scheduled to complete his compulsory army service in six months. He is survived by his parents and four siblings. □

Rabbi faces death charges again in the 1994 murder of his wife

By Marilyn Silverstein
New Jersey Jewish News

WHIPPANY, N.J. (JTA) — Monday, the rabbi went on trial for his life.

It sounds like a sequel to "Friday the Rabbi Slept Late" or one of Harry Kemelman's other best-selling religious mysteries. But in chilling counterpoint to those works of fiction, this is a real life story of murder, conspiracy, adultery, and disgrace, in which a once-prominent pulpit rabbi is facing murder charges in the brutal slaying of his wife.

The main characters are Rabbi Fred Neulander, founder and former religious leader of Congregation M'kor Shalom, a thriving, 1,000-family Reform congregation in Cherry Hill, N.J., and his late wife, Carol, who was found lying dead in a pool of blood on the living room floor of the family home in Cherry Hill on the night of Nov. 1, 1994.

In what has been alleged to be a classic case of murder for hire, Fred Neulander, 61, stands charged with arranging for his wife's murder so that he could carry on his love affair with former Philadelphia radio personality Elaine Soncini.

One year ago, in Camden, N.J., his first trial in the capital murder case ended in a hung jury.

After declaring a mistrial, Superior Court Judge Linda Baxter made the decision to move the second trial away from Camden County, where the glare of publicity had been so strong.

If Neulander is found guilty on the capital murder charge, he could face the death penalty.

This is thought to be the first time in modern history, and certainly the first time in the state's history, that a pulpit rabbi has faced such a charge.

On Oct. 21, eight years after Carol Neulander was bludgeoned to death, the rabbi again went on trial for his life — this time at the Monmouth County Court House in Freehold, N.J.

Outside a second-floor courtroom, members of Carol Neulander's family, including her brothers, Edward Lidz of Montclair, N.J. and Robert Lidz of New York, awaited the judge's opening gavel.

Inside the courtroom, a pensive Neulander sat beside his attorney, Michael Riley — at one moment staring into the distance, at another point closing his eyes and holding his palms together, as if in prayer. As opening arguments got under way, Camden County Assistant Prosecutor James Lynch told the jury panel of nine men and seven women that people had looked up to Neulander as a religious leader. However, he said, the rabbi failed to live up to his role.

"The man was deeply, deeply flawed," Lynch charged as he sketched some of what he described as the clear and compelling evidence against the rabbi. "This was a man of God who acted in a thoroughly ungodly fashion.

"He planned and plotted and conspired to take the life of his wife."

Neulander's defense counsel reminded the jury that despite the prosecutor's words, the burden is totally on the state to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

"As Fred Neulander sits here this afternoon," Riley said, "he is cloaked in the mantle of innocence."

The journey from the last night of Carol Neulander's life to the first day of Fred Neulander's second murder trial has been a long one. It began with the rabbi's fall from grace in early 1995, as the murder investigation unearthed his marital infidelities. In March 1995, in the wake of those revelations, Neulander resigned from his pulpit, acknowledging "information I am not proud of" and "behavior that brings no honor to me."

In the spring of 1996, the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis suspended Neulander's membership, effectively denying him the CCAR's placement services.

Still, Neulander continued to officiate at funeral services and weddings — including the wedding of Leonard Jenoff, the man who later confessed to beating Carol Neulander to death at the rabbi's behest. In 1998, Neulander was arrested and indicted on charges of accomplice murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

In June 2000, on the eve of Neulander's scheduled trial on those charges, the case was rocked by a stunning development.

Two alleged hit men — Jenoff, now 55, and Paul Michael Daniels, now 28 — came forward on their own and confessed to the murder, alleging that the rabbi had hired them to kill his wife. Neulander was alleged to have promised Jenoff \$30,000 to carry out the contract. In light of the confessions, a Camden County grand jury indicted Neulander anew on charges of capital murder, felony murder, and conspiracy to commit murder.

At a hearing on June 21, 2000, Baxter revoked the rabbi's bail. He was led away in handcuffs to a cell in New Jersey, where he remains.

A few rabbis contacted for this story said the story is a back-burner issue for them. But for one Reform rabbi in the area, Rabbi Richard Levine of Adath Emanu-El in Mount Laurel, N.J., the Neulander case is still very much on the front burner.

A personal friend of both Fred and Carol Neulander's, Levine is on the witness list for the retrial.

"I'm sorrowful," the rabbi said, noting that whenever he happens to be leading a graveside service at the Crescent Burial Park in Pennsauken, he walks over to Carol Neulander's grave to say a prayer.

"I knew both parties. I have mixed emotions," said Levine. "In my heart, I would pray he had nothing to do with it. In my head, I see all the evidence and I understand the direction in which things are going."

He can still remember rushing over to M'kor Shalom the night Carol Neulander was murdered to try to help congregants and friends deal with the shocking news, Levine said.

"How can you not be touched by it? This is something that the south Jersey community especially has to come to some kind of resolution they can live with," the rabbi said.

He said he is looking forward to the time when he can say, "It's done. It's over. Whatever is, is. Now let's pick up the pieces and move on." □

E.U. may tax settlement goods

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are trying to block higher E.U. tariffs on products from Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The officials negotiated last week with the European Union, which says goods produced in the territories are not covered by a trade agreement granting Israeli exports low-tariff or tariff-free access to the 15-nation bloc. □