

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel may take West Bank land

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Israel should take control of lands linking Hebron to the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba.

Sharon said Sunday that Israel would bolster the Jewish settlements in the Hebron area by linking up several small settler enclaves in the city and the neighboring Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, according to Israeli media reports.

He reportedly mentioned the plan Sunday when he, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and top army commanders toured the scene of a deadly ambush last Friday that killed 12 Israelis.

Following the ambush, Israeli leaders approved a large-scale operation against the terrorist infrastructure in Hebron.

Abba Eban dies at 87

Abba Eban, a longtime Israeli diplomat and Cabinet minister, died Sunday at 87. [Page 1]

El Al hijack attempt fails

Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport was temporarily closed following a failed hijacking on an El Al flight to Istanbul.

Fifteen minutes before a plane landed in Istanbul on Sunday night, a man described as an Israeli Arab attempted to stab a stewardess with a pocketknife and tried to rush the cockpit.

He was stopped by airplane guards and passengers, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The plane landed successfully in Istanbul. None of the 170 passengers was harmed.

Al-Qaida threatens more attacks

A new document attributed to Al-Qaida threatens more attacks in New York and Washington unless the United States stops supporting Israel in its battle against the Palestinians and Russia against Chechen rebels.

The document, which was received last week by a reporter for the Al-Jazeera television network, also calls on Americans to convert to Islam.

On Sunday, U.S. Homeland Security chief Tom Ridge said there is nothing new about the statements. Ridge told the "Fox News Sunday" TV program, "We don't add any special credence to it other than we know we're at war."

OBITUARY

'Founding father' Abba Eban spoke eloquently on Israel's behalf

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — After the outbreak of the 1967 Six-Day War, Abba Eban addressed the U.N. Security Council, striking a tone that simultaneously defended Israel and extended an olive branch for peace.

"There is an intellectual tragedy in the failure of Arab leaders to come to grips, however reluctantly, with the depth and authenticity of Israel's roots in the life, the history, the spiritual experience and the culture of the Middle East," Eban, then Israel's foreign minister, said.

Israel, he said, "is now willing to demonstrate its instinct for peace. Let us build a system of relationships from the wreckage of the old. Let us discern across the darkness the vision of a brighter and better dawn."

Such eloquence was not rare for the dovish Eban, who died Sunday in Israel at the age of 87. Eban, who had been in failing health, leaves a wife, Suzy, a son, Eli, and a daughter, Gila.

His most famous line came after the PLO rejected a plan for Palestinian control over most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that was part of the Camp David Accords that Israel and Egypt signed in 1978.

The Palestinians, he said, "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity."

Eban, who served Israel for more than four decades, was a "founding father of Israeli diplomacy," Israeli Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday.

The longtime Cabinet minister and diplomat — who served as Israel's representative to the United Nations and United States simultaneously from 1950 to 1959 — is likely to be best remembered for the eloquence of his speeches.

"He was a brilliant representative of the State of Israel in the United States and throughout the world," said Seymour Reich, a Jewish leader and former head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "When he spoke, people listened."

And, says veteran U.S. Jewish leader Ted Mann, Eban spoke as if he were addressing a large audience even when he was having a private conversation.

When Mann was elected head of the Conference of Presidents in 1978, he traveled to Jerusalem to meet one-on-one with top Israeli officials.

"When I met with him alone, I was sitting across the table from him and he was giving me his views of what he thought my role ought to be," Mann recalled. "And I had the feeling all the while he was speaking that he was speaking to an audience of 10,000 people behind me. He always spoke as though he was talking to a huge audience."

More recently, Eban has become known for narrating the popular public television series, "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews."

The tall, jowled Eban could be formal and aloof.

In an era when Israelis were known for their informal dress, he favored suits.

And he wasn't the type of politician who would embrace people, preferring, in the words of one U.S. Jewish leader, a "warm handshake."

Born in Cape Town, Eban grew up in England.

He studied Middle Eastern languages at Cambridge University, where he was also active in Zionist causes.

During World War II, he served as a major to the British minister of state in Cairo

MIDEAST FOCUS

Polls: Sharon lead growing

New polls show Ariel Sharon widening his lead for the Likud Party leadership.

According to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, 54 percent of Likud voters would keep the prime minister as Likud leader in the Nov. 28 primary, compared with 38 percent who favor Sharon's challenger, Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Poll: Mitzna pulling away

Haifa Mayor Amram Mitzna has a wide lead over his two challengers for the Labor Party leadership, according to a new poll. Mitzna has the support of 43 percent of party members, who will choose a leader on Tuesday, according to a poll commissioned by the Ha'aretz newspaper.

In second place is current party leader Benjamin Ben-Eliezer at 26 percent. Legislator Haim Ramon would only receive 10 percent, according to the poll. If no candidate wins 50 percent of the vote, a runoff will be held. The poll also found that 24 percent of Ben-Eliezer's supporters and 20 percent of Ramon's supporters say they won't vote for Labor in January's national elections if their candidate does not win on Tuesday.

Peace activists detained

Israeli soldiers detained nine international protesters, including three Americans, who joined about 100 Palestinians trying to stop construction of a security fence.

An army spokeswoman said demonstrators scuffled with troops and threw rocks near the West Bank city of Tulkarm last Friday.

Witnesses said the activists were arrested as they tried to block Israeli bulldozers from clearing land to construct a security fence.

The fence is intended to stop Palestinian terrorists from crossing into Israel to carry out attacks.

and as an intelligence officer in Jerusalem. Even before the State of Israel was formed, Eban was already involved in Zionist politics, working for the Jewish Agency for Israel — and becoming the Jewish Agency's liaison to the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine.

In June of 1947, Eban toured Palestine with UNSCOP delegates on a fact-finding mission.

The UNSCOP delegates were not always well informed.

Eban told JTA in 1997 that after visiting a kibbutz, the Indian delegate said to him, "All right, we have seen a Jewish kibbutz; I assume that we shall be seeing an Arab kibbutz tomorrow?"

In 1947, Eban gave some impassioned speeches on behalf of Jewish statehood as the Zionist cause was debated at the United Nations.

When he served in his dual ambassadorial roles to the United States and the United Nations in the 1950s, Eban distinguished himself, Reich said.

"By his reasoning at the U.N., he was able in many instances to tone down anti-Israel resolutions. While he was not able to overcome the anti-Israel rhetoric in the U.N., his voice and his logic overrode the resolution itself," he said.

And his liberal ideology won him friends among Americans, Jews and non-Jews alike.

"He struck an American chord and he spoke an American language, notwithstanding his British accent," Reich said.

He was never as popular in Israel as he was abroad — which was attributed partly to his patrician style, and partly to his dovishness during the past few decades, when many Israelis were moving to the right.

Eban met with President Johnson several times in the weeks leading up to the 1967 Six-Day War.

After 1967, he quickly came out in favor of a Palestinian state, opposing Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

He once said that "Israel was 'tearing up its own birth certificate."

"Israel's birth is intrinsically and intimately linked with the idea of sharing territory and sovereignty."

But he never lost his commitment to his own version of pragmatic, dovish Zionism.

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, he helped persuade President Nixon to airlift weapons and supplies to Israel.

In later years, Eban's role in Israeli politics diminished.

In 1988, he was dropped from the Labor Party's list for Knesset seats.

A member of the American Academy of Sciences, he wrote several books and received 20 honorary doctorates — including the Israel Prize in 2001.

His lessened political role left him slightly embittered, observers said, but he never expressed this publicly, instead gracefully accepting the role of Israeli statesman around the globe.

"I could have been elected prime minister if people abroad could vote in Israeli elections," he once joked. □

Court stops pro-Palestinian speakers

TORONTO (JTA) — A Canadian court stopped two pro-Palestinian members of Canada's Parliament from addressing students.

Svend Robinson and Libby Davies, members of the New Democratic Party, were scheduled to speak at Concordia University last Friday.

Their speeches would have broken a university moratorium on Mideast-related events imposed after pro-Palestinian rioters forced the cancellation of a speech by Benjamin Netanyahu on Sept. 9.

Robinson apparently asked the Concordia Student Union to invite him to speak, and it complied.

Fearing violence, and after a request to Robinson not to come, Concordia's administration went to court seeking an injunction to stop the event.

The court ruled that freedom of expression is not justified when violence might result. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Canadian Jewish sites on guard

Four Jewish sites are on a U.S. State Department list of possible terrorist targets in Canada, according to Canadian media reports.

The synagogues and other buildings reportedly are in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, in Ottawa last week for a meeting with Canadian officials, said he is not aware of the list.

Still, the Canadian Jewish Congress is taking the threat seriously.

"We can't ignore this report, or the fact the threat could be real," said Joseph Gabay, president of CJC's Quebec Region. "We always have to take such things seriously and be vigilant."

Call issued for painting's return

Austrian authorities are requesting that a museum give up a painting believed to have been stolen from its Jewish owner on the eve of World War II.

The painting, "Wayward Shrine, Houses and Trees" by Egon Schiele, was taken from Henrich Riger, a Viennese man who died at Theresienstadt in 1942. Under Austrian law, paintings taken from Austrian Jews during Nazi rule must be returned to their rightful owners or heirs.

Man sentenced in shul threat

A man was sentenced to jail for threatening to blow up a historic U.S. synagogue. Joseph Nixon was sentenced to two years and nine months in jail last Friday after pleading guilty to charges he mailed a threatening letter to the Touro Synagogue in Newport, R.I.

While in custody, Nixon, 25, sent a second letter threatening an attack on a temple in Providence.

Book marks solidarity rally

A new book commemorates last spring's rally in Washington for Israel.

More than 200 photographs and text of the speeches highlight "America Stands With Israel: A Day of History and Unity."

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American Jewish Historical Society are publishing the book.

Israel Education Month planned

A new initiative aims to bolster Israel education in North America.

Resources for Israel Education Month, which is slated to be held Jan. 19 through Feb. 16, are expected to be available soon on the Internet at www.israeleducationmonth.org. The idea is a joint project of the United Jewish Communities, the Jewish Agency for Israel and other Jewish groups.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Terror threat has German Jews in a panic, community leader says

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — German Jews are panicked by the possibility of terrorist attacks, according to the president of the country's Jewish community.

Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, made his remarks at a Nov. 14 news conference with Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Interior Minister Otto Schily at which the government announced greater financial support for the Jewish community.

The recently renewed threats by Islamic extremists, including an audio tape released this week that is believed to be from Osama bin Laden, have created a mood of "terror and anxiety" among German Jews, Spiegel said.

Twenty years ago, he said, Jews in Germany felt uncomfortable walking past police guards each time they wanted to attend services.

Today, however, "they are refusing to go to the synagogue if there is no security force outside," Spiegel said.

Despite that concern, six Berlin synagogues opened their doors to the public on Saturday night for a "Long Night of Synagogues," including tours, readings and performances.

"We have been talking all day with the security department," said Adriana Altaras, director of Berlin's 16th annual Jewish cultural program, late last week. "If there is a madman who wants to do something, he will do something. We know this from New York. We have to live with it."

"I am afraid, too, if you want to know," the 42-year-old director and actor told JTA. "I am not crazy about the fact that we have to be afraid, but I cannot let fear dictate my life."

A spokesperson for Berlin's Jewish community declined to discuss security measures. But embassies and Jewish venues have increased their surveillance since Sept. 11 and a rise in anti-Semitic incidents across Europe linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Schily said at the news conference that while Germany is taking terrorist threats seriously, there have been no concrete warnings about potential attacks.

But the fear of attacks against Jewish venues here is not unfounded. Germans had a wake-up call last April, when 19 tourists — including 14 Germans — were killed in a terror attack on an historic synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba. Al-Qaida claimed responsibility for the attack.

Berliners also had reason for concern on their own turf. After two visiting American rabbis were attacked on the street last March, German Jewish leaders called for greater security for Jewish venues.

Then a young Jewish woman wearing a Star of David necklace was attacked in a Berlin subway station. In both incidents, police reported that the attackers appeared to be Arabs.

Also in April, a Holocaust memorial on Berlin's Pulitzer Bridge was vandalized, and there was an attempted arson attack at Berlin's Frankfurter Synagogue.

Michel Friedman, a vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said at the time that protection was "urgently needed" to prevent anti-Semitic attacks in Germany.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the Berlin police department has upped the number of police with machine guns posted outside most Jewish venues.

Some locations have double police barriers as well. New barriers recently were erected around a kosher grocery store located near a synagogue in former East Berlin.

Despite security concerns, Altaras said she was looking forward to the synagogue night, which she considered an important symbol for an open society and normalization of Jewish life in Germany.

As usual, visitors will have to pass through metal detectors. Based on past experience on open house nights, the lines are likely to be long. □

Latest terror attack in Hebron prompts calls for sharp response

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel may respond to the latest Palestinian terror attack by taking more West Bank land.

On Sunday, two days after 12 Israelis were killed in a Palestinian ambush in Hebron, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was quoted as saying that he wants Israel to take control of lands connecting Hebron to the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba.

Sharon said Israel would bolster the Jewish settlements in the Hebron area by linking up several small settler enclaves in the city and Kiryat Arba, according to Israeli media reports.

He reportedly spoke of the plan when he, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and top army commanders toured the scene of last Friday's ambush in Hebron.

According to Israel Radio, Sharon also said the army must create a situation that will ensure the safety of the Jews living in the divided city. He added that the army should greatly reduce the presence of Palestinians in the area in which the settlers live.

In last Friday's attack, three Palestinian snipers opened fire and tossed grenades at security forces escorting Jewish worshipers from the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron to nearby Kiryat Arba following Sabbath prayers.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack, which came several weeks after Israeli soldiers pulled out of most Palestinian areas of the city.

The army chief of staff told the Cabinet on Sunday that the cell believed responsible for the ambush was Hebron-based and had returned to the city following the recent Israeli troops redeployment.

Twelve Israelis were killed and 14 others wounded in last Friday's attack before Israeli troops killed the three terrorists during a lengthy gun battle.

Of the Israeli dead, four were soldiers and five were border police.

Three members of Kiryat Arba's security response team who rushed to the site when the shooting began were also killed.

The dead included the commander of Israeli forces in Hebron, a colonel, who is the highest-ranking officer to be killed since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict erupted more than two years ago.

Funerals were held Sunday for most of victims.

They were identified as the brigade commander in Hebron, Col. Dror Weinberg, 38, of Jerusalem; border police Chief Superintendent Samih Sweidan, 31, of Al-Aramshe; Sgt. Tomer Nov, 19, of Ashdod; Sgt. Gad Rahamim, 19, of Kiryat Malachi; Staff Sgt. Netanel Machluf, 19, of Hadera; Staff Sgt. Yeshayahu Davidov, 20, of Netanya; Sgt. Igor Drobitsky, 20, of Nahariya; Cpl. David Marcus, 20, of Ma'aleh Adumim; and Lt. Dan Cohen, 22, of Jerusalem.

Also killed were three civilian members of the Kiryat Arba emergency response team: Yitzhak Buanish, 46; Alexander Zvitman, 26; and Alexander Dohan, 33.

Following what has been called the "Sabbath Massacre," Israeli leaders approved an anti-terror operation in Hebron.

As part of the operation, the army imposed a curfew and renewed patrols in Palestinian parts of the city. The army has arrested at least 40 Palestinian terror suspects since Saturday.

In addition, the army demolished six Hebron-area houses

belonging to Palestinians allegedly involved in terrorist activity.

The weekend operation was seen as a prelude to a broader campaign against the terrorist infrastructure in Hebron.

Until last Friday's attack, Hebron had been considered one of the quietest of the Palestinian cities. Three weeks ago, Israeli troops redeployed from most Palestinian neighborhoods there.

Israel's operation in Hebron — while in line with previous army responses to terrorist attacks — seemed to dash hopes for gradually transferring areas in the southern West Bank back to Palestinian control. This initiative had been championed by former Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer.

At Sunday's Cabinet meeting, Sharon was urged by hard-line ministers to retaliate forcefully for the latest attack.

Several ministers, including Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — who is seeking to wrest the Likud Party leadership from Sharon in advance of elections scheduled for late January — renewed their calls to send Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat into exile.

Sharon refuses to take the step — and his aide said Sunday that a previous Cabinet decision not to expel the Palestinian leader remains in effect.

The United States opposes the expulsion of Arafat at a time when it tries to maintain Arab support for a possible strike against Iraq.

During an exchange between Sharon and Netanyahu at the Cabinet session, Netanyahu was quoted as saying it would be easier for Israel to explain why it banished Arafat than why it leaves him alone. Sharon reportedly countered that the problem cannot be solved with slogans.

The ambush has meanwhile ignited debate over what to do in Hebron.

Meretz legislator Mossi Raz, who opposes the Jewish presence in the city, protested that the government should not "exploit the legitimate anger and pain" over the attack to "sink further into the Hebron mud," the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot quoted him as saying.

Meanwhile, Tourism Minister Yitzhak Levy proposed that a promenade be built along the route taken by the Jewish worshipers last Friday.

On Saturday, more than 1,000 Israelis demonstrated near the site of the Hebron attack. Gathering under heavy security, the demonstrators called for government retaliation. They also demanded construction of a Jewish neighborhood at the attack site.

The Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, called for cancellation of the 1997 Hebron accords, which gave the Palestinian Authority control over 80 percent of Hebron.

Government deliberations about how to respond to the attack came as politicians stake out their positions for the nation's general elections. They also came amid international calls for restraint.

The U.S. State Department denounced the ambush as a "heinous crime," but also urged Israel to act with restraint.

A State Department spokesman said the United States understands Israel's need to take anti-terrorist action, but urged Israeli troops to prevent Palestinian civilian casualties.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on all Palestinian groups to halt acts of terror.

In another development, Mofaz phoned U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell late Saturday to update them on the situation. □