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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Funerals held for Kenya victims

Funerals were held Sunday for the three Israelis killed in last week's suicide attack in Kenya.

The victims are brothers Noy Anter, 12, and Dvir Anter, 13, and tour group leader Albert de Havila, 60.

The bodies of the victims were flown back to Israel over the weekend in a military air convoy that also brought back the 18 Israelis injured in the attack and the more than 250 Israeli tourists who were in Mombasa when the Nov. 28 suicide bombing took place. [Page 1]

Suicide attacks lauded at march

Children dressed up as suicide bombers participated in a march last Friday in Cape Town.

The children, aged between 7 and 13, led about 300 demonstrators from a local mosque to the U.S. Consulate in a march organized by the radical Muslim group Kibla. [Page 3]

Alleged attack planner captured

Israeli troops arrested a terrorist leader who was allegedly involved in planning attacks that killed 19 Israelis.

Majid Masri is also believed to have given the order to carry out last week's shooting attack in Beit She'an in which six Israelis were killed and dozens wounded.

Canada's terror list criticized

Canada added Hamas, Islamic Jihad and four other radical groups to its list of banned terrorist organizations.

The list, created under legislation passed after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, now has 13 groups that are banned from the country.

Anyone belonging to them or helping them faces a possible 10-year prison sentences.

Following the government's latest move, B'nai Brith Canada filed an appeal in federal court to have the government list all of Hezbollah, including its political wing, as a terrorist organization whose assets must be frozen.

"Canadians can no longer tolerate the progress of a government moving at a snail's pace in dealing with organizations and groups who have shown themselves to be bent on the destruction of the West," the group said in a statement.

Al-Qaida may have launched attack to lure Israel into U.S. war on terror

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — If Al-Qaida operatives were indeed behind last week's deadly terror attack in Kenya, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's vow to bring the perpetrators to justice could prove difficult.

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told Sunday's Cabinet meeting that no concrete evidence had yet been discovered proving the involvement of Osama bin Laden's terrorist network.

Just the same, Israeli and U.S. officials suspect Al-Qaida or al-Itihaad al-Islamiya — Arabic for the Islamic Union — a Somali Islamic group with alleged links to Al-Qaida.

They voiced the suspicions even though a previously unknown group calling itself the Army of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack on the Israeli-owned Hotel Paradise in the Indian Ocean resort of Mombasa.

Driving a car packed with explosives into the hotel compound, three suicide bombers killed 13 people — three Israelis and 10 Kenyans.

The attack — as well as another deadly assault that day in Israel — took place as the Likud Party held its leadership primary.

Minutes before the hotel blast, two surface-to-air missiles were fired at an Israeli charter plane taking off from Mombasa's airport with 261 passengers and crew members aboard. The missiles missed the plane by a matter of feet.

There were no injuries or damage to the Arkia Airlines plane, which later landed safely at Ben-Gurion Airport.

After the deadly hotel attack, Sharon vowed that Israel would pursue those who had spilled the blood of its citizens.

It is the "duty of all countries not only to offer condolences when we bury our dead, but also to support us when we fight terror," he said.

But it is not clear how much support Israel will get if it begins hunting down members of Al-Qaida.

Terrorism experts said over the weekend that Al-Qaida may have purposely targeted an Israeli site in order to draw Israel into the U.S. war on terror.

Al-Qaida believes that Israeli involvement will convince Arab states that the United States and Israel are teaming up to oppress Muslims around the world, these commentators say.

Such considerations may prompt the United States to pressure Israel to avoid action against Al-Qaida, they add.

Following last week's attack, Sharon instructed the Mossad to take responsibility for finding those responsible.

A report in Britain's Sunday Times newspaper said Sharon had given instructions to activate "sleeper" Mossad agents in Saudi Arabia and Yemen to track down those responsible for the Kenya attack.

According to the report, such agents are only activated in cases of emergency, with the goal of obstructing preparations by Arab countries to wage war against Israel.

On Sunday, funerals were held for the three Israelis killed in the hotel attack.

The victims are brothers Noy Anter, 12, and Dvir Anter, 13, and tour group leader Albert de Havila, 60. The boys' mother, Ora, 38, was seriously wounded in the attack. Their young sister, Adva, 8, was slightly injured.

The bodies of the victims were flown back to Israel over the weekend in a military

MIDEAST FOCUS

2 Palestinians die in Gaza raid

Two Palestinians died after Israeli forces carried out a raid Saturday night in the Gaza town of Beit Lahiya.

One Palestinian was killed during a firefight between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen. The second man was discovered under the rubble of one of three homes belonging to alleged terrorists that Israeli soldiers demolished.

In another incident Sunday, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at a car on the outskirts of Gaza City. The Palestinians inside managed to escape just seconds before the attack, witnesses said. Islamic Jihad members were reportedly the target of the attack.

Israeli envoy to U.N. criticized

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday they had not approved the remarks made by Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.

Sharon and Netanyahu made the disclaimer at Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting after Yehuda Lancry said at the United Nations last Friday that Israel accepts the principle of two states for two peoples as a basis for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Plane from Ethiopia diverted

Israeli officials diverted an Ethiopian plane bound for Tel Aviv to a remote airport in southern Israel. Aviation officials ordered the plane to land Sunday at a military airfield in the Negev after deciding the security check before departure from Addis Ababa was not adequate.

Hamas prisoners recaptured

Israeli Public Security Minister Uzi Landau ordered an investigation into last Friday's escape of two Hamas prisoners from an Ashkelon jail. The two prisoners were captured following a manhunt.

air convoy that also brought back the 18 Israelis injured in the attack and the more than 250 Israelis tourists who were in Mombasa when the suicide bombing took place.

When the planes returned to Israel last Friday, anxious family members gathered at the airport to welcome home their loved ones, while ambulances waited on the tarmac to receive the wounded and take them to hospital.

"My father was hurt in the attack, and my mother was supposed to come together with him on the plane," Yaniv Kirman told the Israeli daily Ma'ariv as he waited for his parents to emerge from the flight.

"From the moment we heard about the attack, I tried to reach and locate my parents, but it was a nightmare. I couldn't get through."

When Kirman's father came off the plane, he was transferred to an ambulance. His mother, Tzipora, hugged her son and daughter for a long time.

"We were lucky, just lucky," she said. "We were among the last ones who were in the lobby. I had just gotten to the room and put the key in the lock, and then there was the explosion in the lobby."

But alongside the joyous family reunions with the wounded was the sorrow of the families awaiting the remains of their loved ones.

"This is my last trip, I will never go back to Kenya," said Rahamim Anter, the father of the two boys killed in the attack. The family had planned to spend Chanukah at the resort.

Anter recalled the final moments before the fatal blast.

"When we arrived from the airport to the hotel, we felt great, there were local dancers.

"Ora was thirsty and wanted to drink coffee. She tried to order using the phone in the room, but the line didn't work. So she went downstairs to order the coffee. Dvir wanted to go with her, and Adva and Noy ran after her. I stayed upstairs in the room, I sat on the bed, took off my shoes and thought how good it was for us to be there.

"Just then, there was a huge explosion, I ran downstairs and started shouting, looking for them. I only found Ora seriously wounded and Adva, also hurt. But more than that, I could do nothing."

Rahamim described how his wife and children had always wanted to go to Kenya, and that he and his wife wanted their children's first trip abroad to be special.

A memorial ceremony was held last Friday at the school the two brothers attended. During the assembly, several youths could not take the grieving and left the room.

"It's bad enough that we can't leave our city, because they will shoot us on the roads," one student told his teacher, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. "We can't go to the shopping mall, because there have been attacks there.

"It's even scary to be at home because terrorists can reach us there," he added. "Even when we go abroad, to breath some fresh air — even then we're not safe."

There may be doubts regarding if and how Israel will retaliate for the Kenya hotel bombing, but there are no doubts that the war on terrorism will be the main issue in Israel's election campaign.

Along with the attack abroad, terrorists also struck within Israel on Nov. 28, the same day Likud voters headed to the polls to select their leader.

At least six Israelis were killed and 30 wounded when two Palestinian gunmen opened fire on voters at a Likud polling station and passers-by in the northern city of Beit She'an. The terrorists were shot dead by Israeli police and security guards.

Voting in the Likud leadership primary continued despite the attacks, and Sharon won a decisive victory over his challenger, Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Final results showed that Sharon received almost 56 percent of the vote, Netanyahu won just over 40 percent and the third candidate, Moshe Feiglin, received nearly 3.5 percent.

Sharon quickly turned his attention to the Jan. 28 national election.

With polls showing Likud far ahead of the opposition Labor Party, Sharon's win makes him a strong favorite to remain prime minister after the January elections.

In a somber victory speech muted by that day's terrorist attacks, Sharon reiterated that terrorists had tried to influence the elections.

Sharon also predicted that the Likud would double its strength in the national elections. □



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JEWISH WORLD

African Jews: Get tough on terror

The African Jewish Congress called on African countries to get tougher on terrorism.

"All African states should display a zero-tolerance toward terrorism," Mervyn Smith, chairman of the congress, said in a statement condemning last week's terrorist attacks on Israeli tourists in Kenya. "The Jewish people will not be intimidated by murderous thugs."

German Jewish leaders re-elected

Paul Spiegel was re-elected leader of German Jewry. Spiegel was elected unanimously for another three-year term by community leaders who convened Sunday in Berlin. Vice presidents Michel Friedman and Charlotte Knobloch were also re-elected.

Russian hate acts highlighted

Two Jewish institutions were attacked recently in southern Russia. According to a just-released report by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, a group of men armed with pipes attacked the Or Avner Jewish day school on Oct. 25 in the city of Volgograd.

On Oct. 10, vandals threw stones through the windows of the Jewish community office in the southern city of Taganrog.

Jewish leaders convene in Brazil

Brazilian Jewish leaders gathered this week in Sao Paulo for the annual Brazilian Israelite Confederation Convention.

As part of their agenda, delegates planned to discuss the relationship between Brazil's 120,000-member Jewish community and the newly elected leftist Brazilian government. In another development, Jewish leaders from across Latin America will also meet this week in Sao Paulo. They plan to discuss efforts to fight poverty in the region.

Religious leaders oppose Iraq war

A group of religious leaders in Chicago is urging President Bush to avoid war in Iraq.

"We believe that there is ample time and latitude for pursuing alternatives that could avert warfare, saving untold thousands of lives," the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, which includes the Chicago Board of Rabbis, said in its letter.

Bush sends Chanukah wishes

Chanukah reminds Americans that "in the face of darkness, goodness will prevail," President Bush said.

"Chanukah reminds us that faith can give us the strength to overcome oppression," the president said before the holiday began last Friday. "Today, the spirit of the Maccabees continues to live and thrive among the Jewish people and in the State of Israel."

March glorifying suicide bombers shocks S. African Jewish community

By Michael Belling

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — The South African Jewish Board of Deputies is considering filing charges against the organizers of a march here that included boys dressed as Muslim suicide bombers, some even wearing mock dynamite sticks strapped to their chests.

Last Friday's march, arranged by the radical Muslim group Kibla to show solidarity with the Palestinians, has shocked the Jewish community.

The march coincided with the 55th anniversary of the 1947 U.N. partition resolution, which led to the establishment of the State of Israel — an event also marked an hour earlier by a pro-Israel Christian group demonstrating outside Parliament.

Two youths marching in support of the Palestinian cause wore Hezbollah headbands, followed by eight other young people carrying mock weapons. They led more than 300 demonstrators from a mosque close to downtown Cape Town to the U.S. Consulate, about a mile away.

The marching children, some as young as seven, carried placards stating: "Death to America, death to Israel." Marchers shouted, "One American, one bullet," echoing a slogan using during the apartheid years to refer to white South Africans — one settler, one bullet.

The march organizers asked the protesters to stop chanting these slogans.

The children also staged a mock attack on a model of an Israeli tank and ripped apart an Israeli flag.

Outside the U.S. Consulate, an Israeli flag was burned amid chants of "Death to Israel, death to Sharon."

Russell Gaddin, national chairman of the Jewish Board of Deputies, told JTA that the board respected the constitutional right to freedom of speech.

"But this goes beyond freedom of speech. It was a disgraceful display of hate speech, incitement and anti-Semitism," he said.

"It glorifies terrorism, which has been condemned by the South African government itself."

Another strong condemnation of the events came from Mervyn Smith, president of the African Jewish Congress and a former national chairman of the board.

Smith said, "It is scandalous that murderous thugs should be portrayed as heroes to young children. The sense of values seems to have been totally lost."

He added, "children should not be taught to continue the violence which is already claiming so many lives."

One of the march's coordinators reportedly said children are vital in driving home the message that Palestinians are sacrificing themselves to fight Israel.

Abdullah Ederies, a member of Kibla, said, "We need to open people's eyes to the murder happening in Palestine."

But Imam Gassan Solomon, spokesman for the more moderate Muslim Judicial Council, said, "As Muslims, we are duty bound to condemn terrorism."

He said it is irresponsible to expose children in a march of this kind, but added that the march and its message are merely symptoms of a bigger problem that needs to be recognized.

There are some 15,000 Jews in Cape Town, while the Muslim population of the city is more than 500,000.

Shortly before the march, Christian supporters of Israel demonstrated peacefully outside Parliament, only a few hundred yards from where the Muslim demonstration began.

In the last of a series of weekly Friday lunchtime demonstrations that have taken place during the past nine months, about 20 Christians held flags and placards marking the 1947 U.N. resolution.

In addition to warm expressions of support from many local Jews and Jewish institutions, many passers-by stopped to express support to the pro-Israel group.

"So many of them came out of the wormwood," said Rose McKenna, a Christian who was behind the demonstrations. □

Some Israeli kindergartens still missing security guards

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On a quiet street in Ramat Beit Shemesh, a middle-class suburb located halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, David Niazov, 22, patrols the perimeters of five kindergartens.

From 7:15 in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon, Niazov, who has worked in security since completing his army service two years ago, stands outside the 5-foot fences surrounding each kindergarten yard, scanning cars and people for anything or anyone suspicious.

It's a big job, given that there are nearly 500 children in this cluster of five schools within a two-block vicinity.

According to the priorities set by the Israeli government, only schools with more than 100 students, or schools set in clusters, will be guarded by security personnel this year.

But now, nearly three months into the school year, only 70 percent of the schools designated to be guarded actually have security personnel in place, according to the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Although that figure is up from 50 percent placement in early October, the municipalities are still having problems recruiting trained guards, according to the Jewish Agency.

All of the guards are expected to be in place by the end of December.

The issue has come to the fore in the midst of an Israel Emergency Campaign launched by the United Jewish Communities, which targeted improving school security as one of its main priorities.

Working in conjunction with the government and the Jewish Agency, one of UJC's overseas partners, \$20 million was initially targeted for school security.

The figure was based on the government's estimation that it would take that amount to pay for 1,500 new officers to patrol kindergartens and schools with small populations.

In early September, after school had already started, the government cut its estimate to \$8 million for 865 guards.

In its deliberations regarding security for Israel's schools, the government — with advice from the Finance Ministry, the Ministry of Internal Security, the Ministry of Education and the police — took into account several factors, including the school's location and the number of students, officials said.

The current thinking, according to the police and Israeli security apparatus, is that kindergartens and schools located in clusters or complexes are at a greater risk because of the larger number of children.

Neither the government nor the Jewish Agency would reveal how many Israeli schools remain unguarded, calling it classified information.

Every school is legally required to have a fence with a lock, as stipulated by the Education Ministry.

But not every school needs a guard, according to the Israeli government.

"We said in the beginning that we need to balance between stationary and mobile security," said Shai Weiner, an adviser in the Prime Minister's Office.

The government's decision to place security guards at schools

with more than 100 students leaves some kindergartens, particularly the small day care centers based in out-of-the-way yards and buildings, unprotected.

On a corner lot in Pisgat Ze'ev, a neighborhood that is part of greater Jerusalem but is located over the Green Line dividing Israel proper from the West Bank, there is a gated day care center overlooking the nearby Arab village of Hizma on the other side of the valley, but no security guard.

"We weren't given one," Shoshi, a harried-looking teacher said as she matched the 13 children at the center with their knapsacks before lining them up in front of the locked gate.

At the Ramat Beit Shemesh kindergarten, where there is a guard, the parents at this complex in Ramat Beit Shemesh already began to talk about raising the money themselves last summer to pay for security.

Given the location of Ramat Beit Shemesh, just off a main road that connects to the Palestinian territories, the hill feels "exposed and dangerous," said Ariella Edry, whose son, Lior, is in the same kindergarten. Having the guard "calms us, even though we're still suspicious."

Now, Edry said, the parents are talking about raising money to pay for an additional guard.

She appreciates the UJC and Jewish Agency effort to pay for guards, but she adds that she doesn't think security is solely their responsibility.

At the same time, the other half of her son's kindergarten cluster includes two fervently Orthodox kindergartens, where most parents wouldn't be able to afford to pay for an additional security guard, she said.

"We would have to figure that out," she said.

And at least one parent wondered whether one guard really makes a difference.

"Where is he now?" Daniel Rachline asked as he dropped off his daughter Noa, 3, and looked around for the guard.

"How can he guard four or five schools at the same time?" he said.

"He can barely tell what's happening at one kindergarten."

Part of the issue with placing a security guard at each and every school — or at cafes, stores and movie theaters — is that it creates a kind of false assurance, security officials have said.

People become accustomed to having a guard, and won't go to places where there isn't a guard, they said.

This creates a questionable precedent, considering that it may not be physically or financially possible for the government to sustain the cost of placing guards at every school for an indefinite period of time.

For now, the government does not plan to expand security at schools, said Weiner.

"We have a solution that answers the priorities," he said. "We can't have a guard on each kid. To my knowledge, there is full coordination and the system is working well."

As for the UJC, the organization's American and Israeli officials say they will continue to take the government's advice on security matters.

"When it comes to analyzing the security needs of schools, we're not going to second-guess the government," UJC's Hoffman said.

If the government does decide to expand security in the school system in the future, Hoffman said, the UJC would be willing to consider further funding for that purpose. □