



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 235

Wednesday, December 18, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. to reduce Sinai presence

The United States has convinced Israel and Egypt to accept an immediate cut in the American presence in the Sinai, JTA has learned.

According to an Israeli official, the United States will continue to lead the Multinational Force and Observers — established under the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt — but the American presence will be significantly reduced.

Instead, Israel and Egypt rejected an earlier idea proposed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to reduce the U.S. presence to as few as 26 men. Under U.S. pressure, the two countries submitted a joint counterproposal in which the American presence will be more than “nominal,” but significantly less than the current 900 men, the Israeli official said.

The plan, which has not yet been made public, received U.S. government approval Tuesday.

Umbrella group rejects Meretz

Meretz USA's bid to join the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was rejected.

Tuesday's vote at a meeting of the umbrella group of American Jewry came after the conference's membership committee recommended rejecting Meretz USA, saying it has too small a budget and too narrow a scope. However, some conference members say the 17-14 vote was political.

The conference leadership “really doesn't want us on board,” said Charney Bromberg, executive director of Meretz USA, a peace and civil rights group associated with the left-wing Israeli political party.

Anti-Israel resolution circulating

Arab nations are circulating a resolution to have the U.N. Security Council condemn the recent killings of three U.N. workers by Israeli soldiers.

Several diplomats say the resolution may be supported by 14 of the 15 council members, but the United States is likely to cast a veto if necessary, The Associated Press reported Tuesday.

In another development, U.N. Mideast envoy Terje Roed-Larsen criticized the Israeli military's conduct in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at a Security Council meeting on Monday.

He called for Israeli soldiers to behave “with greater restraint and discipline.”

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

With Gore out of running, Lieberman seems likely to announce candidacy

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Can a Jew become president in America? The world may soon find out.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) is expected to announce his candidacy for president next month. An announcement seems more likely following former Vice President Al Gore's announcement Sunday that he would not seek the 2004 nomination.

Lieberman had pledged he would not run against Gore, his partner on the Democratic ticket in 2000.

“He has not been shy in saying he's most likely going to do this,” a senior Lieberman adviser said. “But it's not 100 percent sure, it's not a done deal.”

Analysts and advisers say they have seen no evidence that Lieberman's faith would hinder his campaign.

Many cite the warm reception when Lieberman ran as the Democratic candidate for vice president as proof that American voters are ready for a Jew as president.

“I think what we learned in 2000 is that while there is anti-Semitism in this country it's not widespread in the population, and people are willing to vote for a Jew on a national ticket,” said Mark Mellman, a Democratic pollster.

One analyst said vice presidential candidates rarely help presidential campaigns — and can only hurt them. The fact that Lieberman didn't hurt Gore's candidacy “is a strong statement about America,” the analyst said.

In fact, Lieberman's devotion to his faith — he is an observant Jew — could be a draw for religious voters of all faiths.

“The people of real faith have real appeal across America,” Mellman said. “There are a whole lot of folks who appreciate a candidate of strong religious faith.”

If Lieberman does seek the White House, analysts said his Judaism will be less of an issue this time around, simply because it's old news.

“The real issues that were breakthrough issues were dealt with in 2000,” said Steven Bayme, director of contemporary Jewish life for the American Jewish Committee.

But curiosity about Judaism, which spiked during Lieberman's candidacy, likely would peak again and last longer if Lieberman seeks the White House, Bayme said.

One Lieberman adviser said Monday that the candidate faced no resistance in 2000 based on his religion.

“His attitude coming out of the 2000 campaign was that he couldn't have gotten a warmer reception from the American people,” a Lieberman adviser said. “It redeemed his faith in the American ideals.”

Lieberman said Monday that he would announce whether he'll run in early January, giving him time to consult with family and friends.

He also is traveling to the Middle East this week, where he will meet with American troops stationed in the Persian Gulf and with political leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

But many believe Lieberman will throw his hat into the ring.

“I said I probably would run if Al Gore doesn't run, and that remains the case,” Lieberman said Monday.

When he was chosen as Gore's running mate before the August 2000 Democratic convention, Lieberman evoked strong emotions among American Jews.

Jewish leaders initially were exultant about Lieberman's nomination — though

MIDEAST FOCUS

Terror attack victims sue

An Israeli family that lost four members in a terrorist attack is suing the Palestinian Authority and Hamas for more than \$40 million.

Last March, a Hamas terrorist entered the family's home in the settlement of Elon Moreh, killing the parents, their eldest son and the grandfather before being shot dead by security forces.

Arafat accepts British invitation

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat accepted an invitation from British Prime Minister Tony Blair to send a delegation to London next month.

Talks will focus on Palestinian reform and a Middle East peace accord. Separately, Blair has invited Israeli Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna to London, but declined a request to meet with Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

E.U. approves aid funds for P.A.

The European Union approved more than \$8 million to help support reform of the Palestinian Authority.

The aid includes \$2.6 million to support a team that will monitor Palestinian elections. It's not clear if the elections will be held as scheduled in January.

"Despite the extremely difficult security situation," said the European Union's external affairs commissioner, Chris Patten, the Palestinian Authority "must continue to advance the reform agenda."

Mofaz meets with U.S. officials

Israel reserves the right to retaliate if attacked by Iraq during a U.S.-led war, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told U.S. officials.

According to a senior Israeli defense official, Mofaz discussed the "road map" for Middle East peace with U.S. leaders, and re-emphasized the need for it to be based on performance, not timetables.



Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.

some feared an anti-Semitic backlash. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, says that while American voters have "matured" to the point where they can accept a Jewish candidate, some Jewish leaders worry that a Jewish candidate would be seen as a public spokesman for the religion, and any misstep could give the faith a black eye.

"The experience of the last go-round is that elements of the American Jewish community are insecure, worried and anxious," Foxman said.

Lieberman made no major mistakes during the 2000 campaign, but he did face criticism from some American Jewish leaders, including Foxman, for consistently invoking God in his campaign appearances.

"The line of church and state is an important one and has always been hard for us to draw, but in recent years we have gone far beyond what the framers ever imagined in separating the two," Lieberman said in an October 2000 speech at the University of Notre Dame. "So much so that we have practically banished religious values and religious institutions from the public square."

Those comments and others drew criticism from ADL leaders, who said that "appealing along religious lines, or belief in God, is contrary to the American ideal."

While Lieberman generally is considered a strong supporter of Israel, some Jews feared that — more than a Christian candidate — Lieberman would go out of his way to prove that his Judaism did not make him a tool or an apologist for the Jewish state.

Lieberman is considered to have a decent shot at the 2004 Democratic nomination, consistently ranking in the top half of polls along with Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), former House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.). It is unclear whether any Democrat would have a shot against President Bush, whose popularity ratings are high.

Lieberman advisers say he has been talking to potential campaign staffers, and generated good will among party loyalists for his commitment not to run against Gore.

However, polls in the key primary states of New Hampshire and Iowa indicate that Lieberman is among the candidates many people say they never would vote for, trailing only Rev. Al Sharpton. The reason for Lieberman's lack of support was not clear.

While there may be some people who will not vote for Lieberman because of his Judaism, the fact that it is not being brought to the surface is "healthy," Bayme said, because it means that people recognize it is wrong to say such things.

Lieberman is considered a hawk on foreign policy and defense issues, and spoke in favor of a Homeland Security Department before it was backed by the White House.

His work on that issue will be key in the first presidential election to be held since Sept. 11, said Simon Rosenberg, president of the New Democratic Network, a political committee Lieberman helped form in the 1990s.

"Lieberman is well positioned to be a qualified national spokesman for the Democrats," he said.

In a race where most Democratic candidates will work to attract the votes of liberal party loyalists, Lieberman could cast himself as a moderate alternative, some analysts said. In fact, Lieberman has parted company with a majority of the Jewish community on his support for faith-based initiatives, which allows government funding for religious organizations that offer social services.

Lieberman co-sponsored failed legislation on the issue in the Senate.

Lieberman would not be the first Jew to run for president on a major ticket. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) sought the Republican nomination in 1996 but dropped out before the first primary. The late Milton Shapp, a former governor of Pennsylvania, ran briefly for the Democratic nomination in 1976.

If he does run, Lieberman is not assured of the Jewish vote. Howard Dean, the outgoing governor of Vermont who already has declared his candidacy, is married to a Jewish woman and is being advised by Steve Grossman, a former president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Dean visited Israel earlier this month, pledging support for U.S. loan guarantees to Israel.

Yet even Grossman praised Lieberman.

"The Jewish community and the pro-Israel community feel enormously close to Joe," Grossman said. "I think he will earn an enormous amount of support from the Jewish community, both financial and otherwise." □

JEWISH WORLD

Canadian Indian leader says sorry

A Canadian Indian leader distanced himself from remarks he made praising Hitler.

"I cannot describe the feelings of regret that I have for making those comments," David Ahenakew said, reading from a statement. "Certainly apology alone, no matter how sincere, is insufficient."

The Canadian Jewish Congress gave qualified praise to Ahenakew's words.

"This a positive gesture," said the national president of the group, Keith Landy. "But Mr. Ahenakew himself said that words are not enough, and it will require actions to make amends. In our view, it will require extraordinary actions."

In a profanity-laced address at a conference last Friday, Ahenakew, 69, said Hitler carried out his genocidal campaign against the Jews because "the Jews damn near owned all of Germany prior to the war."

Bombing suspect in Somalia?

Kenyan police believe a key suspect in the Nov. 28 suicide bombing of a hotel popular with Israelis is in Somalia.

Based on information provided by the suspect's wife, investigators also believe the bomb used in the attack at the Hotel Paradise was made in the apartment the couple lived in during the months preceding the attack, reports said.

Rio, Ramallah now sisters

Jewish leaders in Rio de Janeiro are questioning a decision by city officials to declare Rio the sister city of Ramallah.

Members of the Jewish community are asking members of the City Council how the twinning arrangement came about and what it will entail, the new president of the Rio de Janeiro State Jewish Federation, Osias Wurman, told JTA.

Last June, the Rio City Council awarded its highest honor to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, who has his headquarters in Ramallah.

'Lost tribe' dictionary published

A dictionary was published that translates Hebrew words into a language spoken by a group that describes itself as one of Israel's lost tribes.

According to the Jerusalem Post, the dictionary contains hundreds of entries in Hebrew, English and Mizo, the language spoken by the Bnei Menashe in northeastern India.

Members of the Bnei Menashe believe they are descended from the biblical lost tribe of Menashe.

Several hundred have immigrated to Israel in the past few years after undergoing formal conversions to Judaism.

Worried about access, Jews largely silent on Lott remarks

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish leaders are condemning recent statements by Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) that have widely been seen as racist, but — with a few exceptions — they are doing so privately.

Lott, the incoming Senate majority leader, has been in hot water for comments he made Dec. 5 at the 100th birthday party for retiring Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).

Speaking of Thurmond's 1948 run for the White House on a platform endorsing racial segregation, Lott praised the fact that Mississippi had voted for Thurmond.

If Thurmond had won, Lott said, "we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either."

The remarks caused a stir, and reports of other comments and actions by Lott have since led some to claim a pattern of racism.

Jewish groups normally are quick to condemn comments that are considered racist or defamatory of minorities. But while many Jewish leaders are criticizing Lott privately, only a few Jewish groups — including the Anti-Defamation League, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and the National Jewish Democratic Council — have spoken out publicly against Lott's comments.

"The senator's praise for a candidacy based on segregationist policies was irresponsible and unacceptable, and unbecoming of a leader of his stature in Congress," said Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director. Lott's "disavowal only underscores the imperative for responsible leaders to speak about these issues with clarity and sensitivity."

Other Jewish groups have stayed silent. Kenneth Bandler, director of communications for the American Jewish Committee, expressed disappointment with Lott's comments, but said his group would not take a public stand.

Republican senators are expected to meet next month to vote again for majority leader, a position Lott won just last month. Jewish leaders say they're wary of antagonizing Lott, since they will need to work with him if he keeps his post.

"Why get involved?" one Jewish leader asked. "It's a fight now within the Republican Party."

One Jewish official said the decision not to speak out was "all about access."

"Most Jewish groups want access to the Republican leadership," he said. "They are not about to burn that bridge."

What makes the Jewish community's silence more noteworthy is the fact that many others — including President Bush — have publicly condemned Lott.

The Republican Party has been working to make inroads into minority communities, including the American Jewish community.

Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said the comments were "indefensible" and don't represent the views of his organization.

"I think you can speak out on what you feel about his comments, but ultimately this is a decision that 51 members of the Senate need to make," said Brooks, referring to the Republican caucus. "I'm not sure weighing in or not weighing in accomplishes anything."

For Jewish groups — who often are among the first to speak out on racist or bigoted comments against minorities — the silence is unusual.

The ADL had an exchange with Lott in 1999 after he spoke to the Council of Conservative Citizens, an organization widely considered racist.

"I can't imagine being associated with an organization that promotes any form of racial supremacy," Lott said in the 1999 letter to Foxman. He also said he could never support a group that "disdained or demeaned my friends, my neighbors, my staffers or my constituents because of their race or religion."

Foxman said Monday that he believed Lott's words to him over the years were sincere. But that did not stop him from calling on other groups to speak out against Lott's latest gaffe.

"I don't understand what's political about it," he said. "Whether he remains chairman of the party, that's political." □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**E.U. expansion is challenge and chance for European Jews***By Ruth E. Gruber*

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Last week's agreement to expand the European Union eastward did away with the last vestiges of the Iron Curtain and opened broad new prospects, as well as challenges, for Jews in the region.

Jewish representatives in Eastern and Central Europe praised the move, saying it will have a positive impact on their home countries and on the development of Jewish life in Europe.

Not only will it foster investment and business exchange, they said, but it will bolster the growth of democratic pluralism and a sense of European Jewish identity and integration.

"I doubt there are any Jews in Poland or among our neighbors who are not in favor of us joining the E.U.," said Stanislaw Krajewski, a longtime Jewish activist in Warsaw.

"The financial negotiations people focus on are not the essential point," Krajewski, who also is the Poland consultant for the American Jewish Committee, told JTA.

"The main thing is that we will be in one body," he said. "For Jews this will mean that the idea of forming 'European Jewry' will be easier to explore. The national differences" — such as cultural identities and patriotic feelings — "will remain, but there will be an administrative background to European Jewish identity."

At a summit in Copenhagen on Dec. 12-13, the European Union decided to admit 10 newcomers — Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta and Cyprus. They will become full E.U. members on May 1, 2004, enlarging the union to 25 states.

Except for the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus, the new members are states that only a decade or so ago were under Communist domination — and several did not even exist as independent entities.

Their inclusion in the European Union formally abolishes the East-West frontier that divided post-World War II Europe for decades. As such, it validates the emerging Jewish communities in these countries as part of the European and Jewish mainstream.

"Jews typically support universalistic ideas, a united liberal market and the defense of minorities," Budapest sociologist Andras Kovacs said. "In this sense, the attitudes that characterize Jews approach what we call Europe."

For Jews in Eastern and Central Europe, the transition from East Bloc to E.U. member is particularly remarkable. Little more than a dozen years ago, Jewish communities in the region were generally written off as dying remnants of the pre-Holocaust past.

But the end of the Cold War saw a revival of Jewish communal life in post-communist countries. It also enabled Jews from all parts of Europe to take first steps toward pooling their energies and developing a role as a potential "third pillar" of world Jewry, alongside American Jews and Israel.

It was in this spirit, for example, that the Czech capital, Prague, was chosen as the site of a European Council of Jewish Communities meeting in November that grouped presidents of Jewish communities from 40 countries.

"E.U. enlargement brings European Jews even closer together and will enable us to test out the 'third pillar' premise," Konstanty Gebert, publisher of the Polish Jewish monthly *Midrasz*, told JTA.

"What's going to be interesting now is to watch whether there will be an immigration of Jews from western Europe into the countries of East-Central Europe," said Yechiel Bar Chaim, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's country director for the Czech Republic. "Prague has all the infrastructure; will it get an infusion of Jews?"

Over the past decade, Paris-based historian Diana Pinto has been an important voice in linking Jewish development in Europe with the overall development of post-Cold War civil society across the continent.

She describes Jews in Europe today as "voluntary Jews," who make a conscious personal commitment to identify as Jews and remain in European societies as such.

For Pinto, the E.U. enlargement decision comes at a symbolic moment.

"It is 13 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall — Bar Mitzvah time," she told a conference in Rome this month examining the impact the fall of Communism had on European Jewry. "We have to stress the anti-Semitism we see and other dangers, but why not also celebrate?"

The E.U. enlargement should provide a framework for Jews in former communist states to continue their process of development in countries evolving as pluralistic democracies, she said.

The Jews there, she said, "are the ones who know what freedom and democracy are about for strengthening a Jewish identity. They are the ones who can 'relativize' the Holocaust by bringing it back into lived history," and "they are the ones who still know what universal values are about."

Jewish leaders say the E.U. enlargement should also have an impact on E.U. policies of Jewish concern, such as stands on Israel and fighting anti-Semitism and other forms of racism.

"Joining Europe means making a commitment to democracy, human rights and freedom of religion," said Michel Friedman of Germany, who recently was named president of the European Jewish Congress.

Jews in Eastern and Central Europe feel that E.U. membership also will mean increased pressure on right-wing extremist movements, which often embrace anti-Semitic positions.

"As Jews, E.U. membership will put us under the protection of E.U. laws on minorities," Gebert said.

He said he had been called in by the Polish government this week to discuss a draft law setting up an office to inspect, monitor and intervene in cases of discrimination.

"It's a very tough law and will get opposition in Parliament, and it's explicitly based on an E.U. law," he said.

The governments of new E.U. members such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are much more pro-Israel than current E.U. members, and this, too, could have an impact.

"We have to monitor that Eastern and Central European countries entering the E.U. do not sacrifice their pro-Israel policy to please Paris," the executive director of the American Jewish Committee, David Harris, told the European Jewish meeting in Prague in November.

For the Middle East, the European Union could serve as a model of enemies eventually making peace.

"There is no more blood-drenched soil than Europe," Harris said. "The E.U. is the most successful peace project in history. Its members now live in peace and prosperity, with a commitment to democracy and human rights. The E.U. should show the Arab world how to emulate Europe." □