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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli experts to help ID efforts

An Israeli expert will help U.S. officials identify remains of the seven astronauts killed when the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated Saturday.

Rabbinical officials with the Israel Defense Force sent an expert with the rank of lieutenant colonel to Houston on Sunday night to help in the identification process, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

If Col. Ilan Ramon's body is not found, the IDF is likely to declare him a fallen soldier whose place of burial is unknown.

If this happens, there would be no funeral, but an official ceremony likely would take place, Ha'aretz reported Monday. Meanwhile, Israel's chief Ashkenazic rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, issued a ruling that Ramon's wife is free to remarry, even though his body has not yet been found.

Kerry has Jewish roots

Two of Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry's grandparents were Jewish, according to the Boston Globe. Kerry, a Massachusetts senator who is a practicing Catholic, said he has known for 15 years that his paternal grandmother was Jewish, but had unsuccessfully searched for news of his paternal grandfather's roots.

"This is incredible stuff," Kerry told the Globe, which hired a genealogist who found the grandfather's birth records in a small town in the Czech Republic. "I think it is more than interesting. It is a revelation."

The records show that his grandfather, Frederick Kerry, was born as Fritz Kohn to Jewish parents.

Day school alarm sounded

Warning of a new generation of "Jewish ignoramuses," mega-philanthropist Michael Steinhardt urged a gathering of donors and education leaders to double financial support for Jewish day schools.

Steinhardt, founder of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, told the group's first assembly of donors, education leaders and professionals that some 700 Jewish day schools fell \$500 million short of the \$2 billion they need annually to operate effectively — at a time when only 20 percent of all philanthropy from Jews goes to Jewish causes.

"What we lack is a sense of priority," he told the conference Sunday in Los Angeles. "We must infect people with our passion for Jewish renaissance."

Jewish group urges linkage of loan guarantees, settlements

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Jewish organization is publicly urging the Bush administration to link Israel's request for loan guarantees to a freeze on Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Americans for Peace Now is calling on the Bush administration to withhold the \$8 billion in loan guarantees until there is a complete freeze on settlement growth and a pledge to dismantle settlements constructed since Oct. 1999.

The group is also calling for 20 percent of the loan guarantee funds to be set aside for housing for settlers who want to relocate to homes inside Israel proper.

The move is being criticized by other Jewish groups, with at least one calling it a "big mistake."

In the fall, Israel officially requested \$8 billion to help offset the country's economic crisis and the looming threat of U.S. military action in Iraq.

The White House is expected to submit to Congress the request for \$8 billion in loan guarantees and \$4 billion in military aid, stretched out over three years.

The guarantees allow Israel to borrow money at a lower interest rate. There is no cost to the United States if Israel repays its loan. Israel maintains that it has never defaulted on a loan.

The request, which will also include additional aid for other Middle Eastern allies, such as Turkey and Jordan, is not expected to be sent until after any action in Iraq.

But the pitch for military aid and loan guarantees could encounter serious opposition in Congress.

Although congressional support for Israel is very strong, there are major budget constraints on the government, and approving a large aid package for Israel may prove difficult amid cuts in other programs.

The United States and Israel have been negotiating the conditions since October, when Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon last visited the White House.

The White House has played down the loan guarantees until now, reportedly out of fear that it would be seen as a boost to Sharon and an interference in the Israeli elections. Sources close to the talks say they have been cordial and productive, in contrast to the ones the United States held with Israel in 1991, between President Bush's father and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

The United States refused to approve loan guarantees that the Likud government wanted to help settle immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Bush, who was firmly opposed to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, feared that the loans would free up other funds for the settlements.

The issue evolved into a major point of contention between the White House and the Jewish community.

Bush ultimately approved the loan guarantees when Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin, who had a more conciliatory policy on settlements, became prime minister in 1992.

An official familiar with the negotiations this year said that talks between the two countries this time around were based on the conditions set out in the 1992 loan.

Specifically, U.S. funds will not be allowed to be used over the "Green Line," Israel's pre-1967 border with the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In addition, all funds Israel spends from its budget on settlements in the West Bank and Gaza will be deleted from the amount of the loan guarantee, helping to ensure that U.S. money does not aid Israel's expansion of the controversial settlements. "From the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Labor won't join government

The head of Israel's Labor Party told Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Labor won't join a national unity government.

Amram Mitzna, who met with Sharon on Monday at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, said Labor's decision stemmed from a sense of "national responsibility."

Mitzna also said Labor would provide the government with a "safety net" in Knesset votes on issues of national interest.

After the meeting, Sharon's office issued a statement saying that the prime minister had briefed Mitzna on political and security issues.

These issues included the "open and secret contacts" with Palestinians interested in forging peace, aides said.

Ramon's widow: He was happy

The widow of Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon, said her husband enjoyed every moment he was up in space.

"He was with the people he loved and in the place that he enjoyed so much," Rona Ramon told reporters Sunday outside her home in Houston.

Ramon added that during the entire mission, she had no sense of foreboding.

"The only thing that tears me apart now is that during the liftoff, when we were all 'high,' my youngest daughter yelled out, 'I lost my daddy.' Apparently she was right."

Mubarak plans to meet Sharon

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said he plans to meet soon with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Mubarak told an Egyptian newspaper that they would meet at the Sinai resort of Sharm el-Sheikh after Sharon forms a new government. Sharon's aides had no immediate comment.

White House view, it is a carrot and a stick to lessen settlement expenditures" by the Israeli government, the official said.

But these conditions are not enough for Americans for Peace Now, which is supporting the military aid but wants strings attached to the loan guarantees.

"Conditioning aid is nothing new," said APN's president and CEO, Debra DeLee.

"It's our way of showing Israel that the United States is very committed to relations between the two countries, that the United States wants to help Israel in its time of economic stress and that the United States wants Israel to alter its policies on the settlements."

A study released last week by APN suggests that the equivalent of more than half of U.S. economic aid to Israel is spent on settlers and settlements. It found that Israel spent \$533.6 million in 2001 in the West Bank and Gaza.

While U.S. aid to Israel does not directly go to the settlements, APN is suggesting that because money is fungible, settlement growth indirectly benefits from U.S. economic aid.

An Israeli official in Washington said the APN's figures are misleading because some of the money APN is citing is not used for expansion of settlements, but for protecting the settlements from terrorist attacks.

DeLee said it was important to place conditions on the aid, rather than seek a change in Israel's settlement policy through diplomatic means, such as the road map for a Palestinian state that is currently being constructed by the United States, the United Nations, Russia and the European Union.

"The train is leaving the station," DeLee said. "If we're going to wait for the implementation of the road map, we'll be waiting for quite a while."

Some Jewish groups criticized the APN position.

"I think it's a big mistake," said Daniel Mariaschin, executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International.

"This kind of statement is not what Israel needs," he said, adding that it could undermine Israel's ability to use the settlements as a bargaining chip in negotiations.

Israel receives \$3 billion in economic and military aid from the United States per year, and is supposed to receive an additional \$200 million. But the \$200 million has not passed both houses of Congress and is expected to be dealt with in the conference committee of the omnibus spending package for the 2003 fiscal year.

One congressional source said Israel's position for the \$200 million could be weakened now that the proposal for the \$12 billion is in the public domain because it may be seen as less of an emergency.

The \$200 million had been in an emergency anti-terrorism bill that passed Congress last summer, but the provision was vetoed by the president because it was clumped into an aid package that was seen as extraneous. Bush promised, however, to support the aid for Israel if it came up again. □

Spain OKs sale of antidote to Israel

MADRID (JTA) — As the countdown continues to an anticipated war against Iraq, Spain has agreed to provide Israel with extra supplies of a poison gas antidote.

Israel is heightening its civil defense preparations against a possible Iraqi chemical attack in case of a U.S.-led strike on Baghdad.

The antidote, known as atropine, is contained in the gas mask kits being distributed throughout Israel. It is used to fight the effects of deadly agents such as sarin nerve gas. Two injections are included in each kit.

Israel produces considerable quantities, but the government asked Spain, which also manufactures the serum, if it has enough stock to sell additional supplies to Israel if necessary, according to Israeli Embassy spokesperson Jackie Eldan.

"In a time of need, a friend like Spain was able to come through," Eldan said.

The anti-Israel attitudes expressed in the Spanish media have not affected the "strong relations between the governments and the peoples," he added.

The government of Spain's conservative prime minister, Jose Maria Aznar, has been a staunch backer of the Bush administration's efforts to disarm Iraqi President Saddam Hussein by force if necessary. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Budget includes D.C. vouchers

President Bush's budget proposal includes money for private and religious school vouchers in Washington and other cities. The president will ask Congress to approve money for pilot voucher programs in several cities, *The Washington Post* reported.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State blasted the move, saying the funds would likely go to religious schools in Washington, and would "force taxpayers to pay for religious indoctrination."

New effort to identify 'Ivan'

Polish prosecutors are trying to identify the sadistic Nazi guard known as "Ivan the Terrible" who served at Treblinka from 1942-43. Among those under investigation is John Demjanjuk, who was extradited to Israel in 1986 to stand trial for crimes against humanity.

An Israeli court convicted Demjanjuk of being Ivan the Terrible and sentenced him to death in 1988. He spent five years on death row before the Israeli Supreme Court determined in 1993 that there was reasonable doubt that Demjanjuk was the Treblinka guard. Three other ethnic Ukrainians also are being investigated in Poland, according to *The Associated Press*. "Who 'Ivan the Terrible' was is still an open question," said Andrzej Witkowski, a prosecutor with Poland's Institute of National Remembrance. "There are new witnesses and new ways to verify the identity of the man."

Atlanta cantor embezzles

An Atlanta-area cantor resigned after embezzling synagogue funds. Steven Weiss of Temple Kol Emeth in Marietta, Ga., resigned last month after admitting he used money from his synagogue's discretionary fund for personal use, according to the *Atlanta Jewish Times*.

An audit of the temple's books uncovered the embezzling, though it is not clear how much money Weiss took. The synagogue's board is preparing to hire outside accountants to investigate further.

Vandals destroy rescuer memorial

Vandals destroyed a memorial to an Italian man who saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust. The vandals attacked the monument to Giorgio Perlasca over the weekend in the northern Italian town of Cernobbio.

Stranded in Budapest during the German occupation of the city in 1944, Perlasca was horrified by the mass deportations of Jews and other anti-Jewish persecutions. He passed himself off as a Spanish diplomat and, working alongside other diplomats from neutral nations, signed thousands of identity documents that protected Jews from deportation.

ARTS & CULTURE

Massive new work traces fate of Lithuanian Jews in Holocaust

By Moira Schneider

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — Dr. Saul Issroff is a dermatologist by training, but his interest in genealogy certainly is more than skin deep.

After five years of effort, Issroff and fellow genealogist Rose Lerer Cohen have produced the first substantive record of the Jews of Lithuania who were murdered in the Holocaust.

Lithuania's Jewish community numbered 250,000 before World War II. Some 94 percent of them were killed in the Holocaust.

Issroff visited more than 100 shtetls in Lithuania in his efforts to memorialize a world that has all but disappeared.

"Seeing and appreciating the sheer devastation of the country's Jews" transformed "intellectual curiosity" into action, he said.

The result was a four-volume opus, "The Holocaust in Lithuania, 1941-1945: A Book of Remembrance."

"For many of the families there is no graveyard, no tombstone, and a book becomes a way of recording the deaths of these people," he said.

Issroff, a native of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, who lives in London, and Cohen, a Capetonian who resides in Jerusalem, began their effort by studying archives in Lithuania, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

"We found that there was material that had never been pulled out and put together, and that's where the concept of creating a database and eventually publishing a record of it came out," Issroff told JTA.

In the foreword, Stephen Smith, the non-Jewish founder of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Center in Nottingham, England, describes the book as a "mitzvah of the highest order. The book is about the struggle against forgetting, in the shadow of mass death.

"Nowhere is the struggle to reclaim, remember, represent, commemorate and teach more urgent than in Lithuania," Smith wrote.

"Without the tenacity required to ensure that these names were printed on these pages, death would not have been the worst thing that happened to these people, but the oblivion that followed."

The book, described by Issroff as a resource guide, traces the movements of people from the time they were removed from their homes and sent to labor or deportation camps, recording the places and dates of their deaths.

The book also provides background information on the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania, together with extensive references to work by historians.

Lists of Lithuanian Jews killed in the Holocaust were compiled from a variety of sources, including burial records, memorial books and census lists from the Vilna and Shavli ghettos.

Some of the material comes from prisoner record cards from the Dachau concentration camp, the destination for many Lithuanian Jewish males.

Other lists were obtained from the NKVD — the Soviet secret police force that was the precursor of the KGB — and other Russian records compiled after the Soviet occupation of Lithuania at the end of the war. The book also includes detailed reference lists of films, books and articles on the Holocaust in the Baltic nation, as well as a small selection of oral testimonies of survivors.

One such testimony comes from Dana Pomerants-Mazurkevich, now a professor of violin at Boston University.

The daughter of Daniel Pomerants, a famous violinist in Lithuania, she recounts the story of her childhood escape from the Kovno Ghetto.

After she had survived 13 "selections," her parents arranged for her to be smuggled out of the ghetto to the safety of non-Jewish friends.

Miraculously, Pomerants and her parents survived the Holocaust. The family was reunited through the Red Cross in 1947. □

U.S. Jews back strike on Iraq, says survey, but still Democratic

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Despite holding hawkish views on Iraq and the Palestinians, American Jews remain as Democratic as ever.

That's according to the 2002 version of American Jewish Committee's Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, released this month.

But another new study found that younger Jews are less likely to be Democrats than their older counterparts.

The AJCommittee survey, which the group has conducted since 1997, not only reaffirms the traditional liberalism of American Jewry but also echoes the organization's earlier polls in showing that Jews perceive anti-Semitism as their greatest threat — even greater than intermarriage.

According to the AJCommittee's survey of 1,008 Jews nationwide, 59 percent both approved of a military strike against Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein and supported President Bush's handling of the war on terrorism — though that satisfaction with Bush has waned from a post-Sept. 11 high of 85 percent.

The AJCommittee poll was conducted by phone between Dec. 16 and Jan. 5 and carried a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

Despite support for Bush's war on terror, 48 percent of Jews said they're Democrats, 18 percent Republicans and 32 percent independent. Asked about their political views, 37 percent ranged from extremely to slightly liberal; 34 percent were moderate; and 29 percent ranged from extremely to slightly conservative.

These political positions differ somewhat from the other Jewish opinion survey, conducted by Steven Cohen, a professor of sociology at Hebrew University's Melton Center. Cohen found younger American Jews are turning to the right.

That survey, which Cohen detailed in the *Forward*, probed deeper into where Jews stand politically. Cohen maintains that while 71 percent of Jews older than age 65 identify themselves as Democrats, only 52 percent of those 35 and younger do.

Cohen's mail-in survey of 1,386 Jews nationwide in November and December, with a margin of error of less than 3 percent, also found a tilt to the right among wealthier Jews.

Of those earning under \$150,000, Cohen showed a 67 percent to 17 percent Democratic-Republican split; the gap narrowed to 53 percent to 25 percent among those earning \$150,000 or more.

While Cohen's survey may signal a political shift, the longtime social and political liberalism of American Jewry isn't fading fast, said the AJCommittee's director of research, David Singer.

"There may be a revolution in the making, but the revolution is a long way off," Singer said.

Cohen's survey showed Jews favoring Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) in a 2004 presidential face-off against Bush, 57 percent to 14 percent.

The AJCommittee found:

- Seventy-eight percent believed Americans will have to surrender some personal freedoms to make America safe from terrorism.
- Eighty-six percent supported expanding spying on groups under suspicion.
- Sixty-five percent favored greater camera surveillance on streets and in public places.

• Sixty-seven percent favored a national I.D. system for U.S. citizens.

Still, 62 percent rejected racial or religious profiling. Only 35 percent favored such law enforcement methods.

In the survey, more than half of Jews favor war with Iraq, although 62 percent fear it would increase the risk of terrorism against the United States and 56 percent said it would likely blow up into a wider Mideast war.

People feel "the threat of terror is real, that you can't turn the other cheek to terror and to Saddam," said Steven Bayme, the AJCommittee's national director of contemporary Jewish life.

Jewish hopes for an Israeli-Palestinian peace have continued to erode, reflecting a downward slide AJCommittee polls have tracked since the second Palestinian intifada erupted in September 2000.

Asked about their hopes for peace, 49 percent said they were less optimistic than one year ago — up from 42 percent in 2001.

Distrust of Arab intentions is also growing. When asked if the "Arabs" want Israel's destruction rather than the return of the West Bank and Gaza, 82 percent agreed and only 15 percent disagreed.

One year earlier, 73 percent agreed with that statement and 23 percent disagreed. Despite those rising concerns, 49 percent of U.S. Jews favored the creation of a Palestinian state. Approximately 47 percent opposed one, and 98 percent felt Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is not doing enough to stop terrorism.

The Cohen survey, meanwhile, found 53 percent favored a Palestinian state as part of a peace agreement, while 14 percent opposed one. Some 33 percent remained unsure.

As earlier AJCommittee polls have shown, American Jews remain wary of anti-Semitism, with 66 percent in this year's poll calling anti-Semitism "somewhat" of a problem in America, and 29 percent saying it was "very serious."

Anti-Semitism on U.S. college campuses and in Europe is also an increasing concern. Eighty percent of respondents in the AJCommittee survey said they see anti-Semitism on college campuses as a "very serious problem" or "somewhat of a problem."

In the Cohen survey, 41 percent of Jews aged 65 and older saw a "great deal" of anti-Semitism, while only 29 percent of those 35 and younger felt that way.

In the AJCommittee poll, 66 percent maintained anti-Semitism is a "greater threat" to U.S. Jewish life today than intermarriage, and 31 percent saw Jews marrying outside the faith as more threatening.

While some Jews reacted strongly when the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey showed that 52 percent of Jews who had married in the previous five years married non-Jews, Bayme said "anti-Semitism trumps everything."

Regarding other American subgroups, 57 percent of Jews say most or many Muslims are anti-Semitic, and 33 percent said some are. Some 39 percent said most or many in the religious right are anti-Semites, and 37 percent said some are.

Such wariness comes even though anti-Semitism is said to be socially marginal in the United States and Jews have achieved unparalleled acceptance.

Although 73 percent of Jews said caring about Israel was important, 63 percent have never been to the Jewish state; 20 percent have gone once; and 17 percent more than once.

That means about the same number of American Jews have visited Italy as have visited Israel, Singer added, an equation he called "a scandal." □