



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

One Israeli killed near Hebron

One Israeli was killed and three wounded in a firefight with Palestinian gunmen near the West Bank city of Hebron.

Two of the wounded are in serious condition and one is in moderate condition. The incident began when Palestinians opened fire on a group of Israelis traveling Monday night on the road between Kiryat Arba and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

Senate leaders endorse Israel aid

U.S. Senate leaders from both parties sent a letter to President Bush, urging him to back new aid for Israel. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) told the president that new loan guarantees "can help jump-start" the Israeli economy.

In a related development, several groups are asking people to urge U.S. lawmakers on Wednesday to reject \$12 billion in extra aid to Israel.

The U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, a group led by some Jewish doves, joined the "Washington Wednesday" campaign to protest \$4 billion in military aid and \$8 billion in loan guarantees that the Bush administration may approve for Israel later this year.

The aid would come in addition to the nearly \$2.7 billion Israel receives each year from the United States.

P.A. approves prime minister post

The Palestinian Legislative Council approved the creation of the post of prime minister. Meeting Monday in Ramallah, the council approved the motion in a 63-3 vote, with four abstentions.

In an opening address, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat urged council members to endorse his choice for the position, Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat's longtime No. 2 in the PLO. [Page 4]

Rabbis ask lawmaker to resign

Six Virginia rabbis asked for the resignation of Rep. James Moran (D-Va.).

The rabbis took the step after the lawmaker made comments last week suggesting that the Jewish community is behind the Bush administration's push for war against Iraq.

Moran has apologized for the remarks. [Page 1]

NEWS ANALYSIS

As possible strike on Baghdad nears, some say U.S. is fighting Israel's war

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A furor over comments by a U.S. lawmaker is highlighting the resurgent trend of blaming Israel and the Jewish community for the impending war against Iraq.

Six rabbis from northern Virginia have asked for the resignation of Rep. James Moran (D-Va.), after he told constituents last week that the Jewish community is behind the Bush administration's push for war. Moran is apologizing to the Jewish community, and was planning to meet with area rabbis later this week.

While Moran's comments specifically linked the organized American Jewish community with a push for war, an increasing number of people are blaming the looming Iraq war on Jewish officials in the Bush administration.

The sentiments echo those made in 1991 by conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan, who said the Persian Gulf War was being touted by "the Israeli Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States."

Given widespread skepticism of the U.S. motives for a strike on Baghdad, some Jewish leaders say there is potential for the "amen corner" comments to gain as much — if not more — traction as they did a decade ago.

"There is a greater potential for mischief on this issue now than 11 or 12 years ago," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

In a town hall with constituents March 3, Moran said, "If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq, we would not be doing this," according to the Virginia-area Connection newspapers.

Moran said Jewish leaders were motivated by discussions they had with Israeli Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the hawkish former prime minister.

Rabbi Jack Moline, rabbi at the conservative Agudas Achim Congregation of Northern Virginia, is leading the charge for Moran's resignation.

Moline, who spoke with the congressman for 45 minutes last Friday, says the lawmaker's remarks are comparable to the comments of Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.), who was forced to vacate his leadership post last year after making racially insensitive comments at a birthday party.

The Jewish community has had problems with Moran for years because of his outspoken comments against Israel. They have also been frustrated by the lack of a primary challenger against him in congressional races.

"We have attempted to bridge the gap with Congressman Moran," Moline said.

"And we have attempted to persuade the Democratic Party that he wasn't the best representative for us."

Moran told JTA on Monday that he didn't intend to single out the Jewish community, but was responding to a question from a woman who identified herself as Jewish.

He said he was trying to make the point that all faith communities could affect the administration's choice to go to war.

"I slipped up and I said something that has been properly taken as offensive," Moran said. "I wish I had caught myself and reflected on it before I said it."

Ever since military action against Iraq became a possibility, the American Jewish community has been treading lightly so as not to fuel criticism that the war would be for Israel's benefit. Many are cognizant of the discomfort the Jewish community felt after

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel-U.S. cooperation hailed

The U.S. ambassador to Israel denied media reports that Israel would not receive advance warning of a U.S. military strike against Iraq. Daniel Kurtzer said Monday the reports were "without foundation" and described cooperation between the two countries as "unbelievably good" and "unparalleled."

Meanwhile, after some Israeli defense officials were criticized for their statements about the Iraqi crisis, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Shalom agreed that only the prime minister, foreign minister and defense minister would be authorized to comment, Israel Radio reported.

Journalists warned on Israel ties

Journalists in Kuwait City covering a possible war against Iraq reportedly are being warned not to deal with Israel.

Westerners staying in at least one of the city's Hilton hotels awoke Saturday morning to find a note placed under their doors indicating that Kuwaiti law prevents "any kind of cooperation or interaction with Israel," The New York Sun newspaper reported.

Hamas taking control of Gaza?

Israeli officials told the Cabinet that the Palestinian Authority has enough manpower to control Hamas in Gaza, but that Yasser Arafat is blocking the move.

As a result, Hamas is threatening to take control over Gaza and present an alternative to the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Israeli troops redeploy in Gaza

Israeli troop movements in northern Gaza are a redeployment, not a withdrawal, security officials said.

The officials made the statement Monday following earlier reports of a withdrawal. The army took up positions in the area last Friday to prevent Palestinians from firing rockets at the Israeli town of Sderot.

Buchanan made his comments in 1991, and want to keep Israel as much out of the mix as possible.

Israel, too, has taken a low profile, though most believe that Jerusalem supports U.S. efforts to dismantle a regime that is a threat to its security.

But some have pointedly noted that some of the strongest advocates for war in the Bush administration are Jewish, implying that their support for Israel is the rationale.

Among those being targeted are Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense; Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board; Douglas Feith, the undersecretary of defense for policy; and Dov Zakheim, the Pentagon's comptroller.

The comments are predominantly in the international media — specifically in Europe and the Arab world — but are also finding their way into print in the United States. And, in contrast to 1991, the attacks on Jewish officials have come from the liberal as well as the conservative media.

"They use code words," Lawrence Kaplan, senior editor of The New Republic, said of the commentators.

"Very rarely does anyone come out and say it's a bunch of Jews," said Kaplan, co-author of a new book with William Kristol, "The War over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission."

In an Op-Ed in The Washington Post last month, Kaplan chastised University of Illinois professor Paul Schroeder for comments he made in Buchanan's magazine — The American Conservative — that suggested the war would be fought for Israel's benefit and is being pushed by Jewish neo-conservatives.

Schroeder says he is trying to walk the fine line between criticizing policy that can benefit Israel and being viewed as anti-Semitic. He wants Americans to realize that Israel has more to gain from this war than the United States.

"Any reasonable risk assessment and cost-benefit utility analysis made in regard to the prospect of war for America and for Israel comes out very differently," Schroeder told JTA. "For the United States, this is a high-risk, high-cost venture. For Israel, this is a very low-risk, low-cost venture with potential for great benefit."

Schroeder, who says he is a strong supporter of the American-Israel alliance, says he is not opposed to the war because of Israel, but because a war "would destroy our position in the world."

He says he wrote his article hesitantly, because of concern that he would be pegged as anti-Semitic. "There's a kind of self-censorship that goes on here," he said. "You're afraid people will take your comments one way."

But Kaplan says the problem is not that people are saying a war with Iraq would help Israel, it's the insinuation that Jewish and Zionist members of the Bush administration are drumming up the war for Israel's benefit.

"Rather than being a matter of correlation, they're making it causation," he said.

He notes that there are many non-Jewish advocates for war in the Bush staff — such as Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld — but they are never mentioned in these articles that speak of Israel's interests.

Jewish leaders are reaching out to senior Bush administration officials, asking them to think about the ramifications their comments related to a war could have for the Jewish community.

But because Jewish leaders do not see the rash of remarks as a conspiracy, they say it is easier to address each comment individually, rather than speaking out publicly.

"People will always say these things," one Jewish official said. "It holds as much water as the reports that Jews were responsible for the attack on the World Trade Center."

Israel's interests are not the only rationale given by anti-war protesters for the impending military action. They also cite Iraq's oil reserves as well as the personal vendetta Bush may have — both because of his father's last go-round with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and because Saddam later tried to assassinate his father.

But the comments about a war for Israel could cause an anti-Jewish response if the war goes poorly, Jewish officials say.

"If, God forbid, the war is not successful and the body bags come back, who's to blame," Foxman asked. "There's a potential for anti-Semitism and scapegoating for people in a situation where it's not conducive." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Transsexual to attend seminary

The Reform movement's main seminary accepted a transsexual into its rabbinical program.

The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati acknowledged this week that an Oakland, Calif., man who was formerly a woman will be entering the school this fall, opening the door to the first ordination of a rabbi who has changed genders. The student, who belongs to a largely gay synagogue in San Francisco, said he wants to work for peace and justice.

List of German properties sought

The umbrella organization representing most British Jews asked the Claims Conference to publish a list of more than 8,000 properties in the former East Germany.

The Board of Deputies made the request to help Holocaust survivors transported to Britain as children reclaim property taken by the Nazis.

"It is entirely possible that some of them may have been owned by the families of Kindertransport children," the board said in a statement. "Those who came to the U.K. as children immediately before the war are extremely unlikely to have any documents relating to family properties back in Germany. But it is possible that they will know the address of their family home."

The board made the request even though the deadline for making claims has passed.

Students petition Mandela

South African Jewish day school students are trying to enlist former President Nelson Mandela in the war on terror.

The New York-based group Mothers Against Teaching Children to Kill and Hate gathered a petition by more than 1,000 students in Cape Town and Johannesburg this month asking the Nobel Peace Prize winner to help stop schools in some Islamic nations from promoting ideologies leading to suicide bombings.

Molly Resnick, a former NBC news producer and head of the group, says suicide bombing is a humanitarian crisis that Mandela can help solve through diplomatic channels.

Hot dog umbrellas to go down

A U.S. judge ruled that a Maine restaurant must comply with a local town code and remove table umbrellas advertising Hebrew National hot dogs.

The restaurant owner had claimed that an order given him to remove the umbrellas had smacked of anti-Semitism. Town officials, however, said the owner had failed to comply with an ordinance that allows a maximum of three signs.

Anti-Semitic incidents hit record in Canada last year, report says

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Anti-Semitic incidents in Canada are on the rise, according to B'nai Brith Canada.

In its newly released Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, the group reported 459 such incidents across Canada in 2002, an increase of more than 60 percent over 2001.

It was the highest number ever tallied in the audit's 20-year history.

Of that total, 282 incidents were classified as harassment, 148 as vandalism and 29 as violence.

The latest audit marks the first time that B'nai Brith considered it necessary to keep track of violence in a separate category.

Rochelle Wilner, B'nai Brith's national president, called the latest statistics "alarming" — particularly those that seem to indicate a new level of violence.

"Twenty-nine cases of physical assault are 29 cases too many," Wilner said. "We want to know why the anti-racist community in Canada remains so silent about anti-Semitism."

Experts suggest that the incidents reported to B'nai Brith's "anti-hate hotline" may be just the tip of the iceberg and that the actual number may be 10 times higher.

As the audit points out, the number of reported incidents rose sharply in April 2002, when Israel launched a massive anti-terror operation in the West Bank. At that time, there were also a series of persistent media charges — later refuted by the United Nations — that Israeli soldiers had committed a massacre in the Jenin refugee camp.

Although the massacre charge was eventually fully discredited, its widespread dissemination "led to a climate that proved a fertile ground for anti-Semitic outbursts," the audit said.

Canada's Jewish community numbers roughly 350,000, or just more than 1 percent of the nation's total population of about 31 million.

Almost half of Canada's Jewish population lives in the Greater Toronto area, which last year had a total of 217 anti-Semitic incidents — 87 percent more than the 116 reported in 2001.

There were 87 incidents reported in Montreal and 43 in Ottawa.

The audit provided a month-by-month list of examples of reported incidents, beginning with an episode in Montreal in which "two jeeps with Arab-speaking youths armed with bats surrounded a car filled with Jewish youngsters who were threatened with assault."

In other incidents, anti-Semitic fliers were distributed in Regina, Saskatchewan; a synagogue was firebombed in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; a rabbi received death threats in Calgary, Alberta; and a pipe bomb was thrown at the only synagogue in Quebec City.

The most tragic incident reported in the audit is the stabbing death of 49-year-old David Rosenzweig outside a Toronto kosher pizzeria last July.

Although the police have so far reserved judgment in the case, B'nai Brith officials classified the murder as a hate-motivated crime, noting that Rosenzweig was easily recognizable as an Orthodox Jew and that his now-jailed assailant uttered anti-Jewish epithets before the murder.

The audit also discussed the controversy that Canadian Indian leader David Ahenakew sparked last December by publicly airing his Nazi-leaning sympathies and his hatred of Jews.

The B'nai Brith report noted positively that other Indian leaders and even Prime Minister Jean Chretien unequivocally denounced Ahenakew's comments.

In a section called "On Campus," the audit recalled last September's riot at Montreal's Concordia University that forced former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to cancel a lecture. A few scuffles and physical threats also occurred in 2002 at Toronto's York University, the audit noted.

Other campus examples included a discussion of Jewish "complicity" in the Sept. 11 attacks in a lecture hall at the University of Alberta in Calgary, and Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic materials found on the Web sites of university-sanctioned clubs such as Concordia's Student Association for Muslim Awareness. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Palestinian prime minister hailed as potential breakthrough

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are hailing the choice of Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian prime minister as a potential watershed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one that creates hope for a cease-fire and a new political process.

For months now, Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, has been speaking out against the militarization of the intifada against Israel, which he calls a “strategic mistake” and a “dead end.”

But will he be able to impose his will on the various Palestinian terrorist organizations to get them to stop the violence?

And will he be able to do anything significant against the will of Yasser Arafat, who remains Palestinian Authority president and who retains much of his executive power?

On Monday, Palestinian legislators confirmed Saturday’s PLO Central Committee decision to create the post. The council has yet to approve the selection of Abbas to hold the post, though it’s considered likely.

In any case, the new prime minister’s duties may cause tension with Israel and the United States.

According to reports, the new prime minister would control the day-to-day running of Palestinian government, while Arafat would continue to exercise control over negotiations with Israel and over the Palestinian security services — precisely the levers that Arafat uses to prevent progress toward peace and to promote terrorism, Israeli officials say.

The notion of appointing a prime minister alongside Arafat came after President Bush called for extensive Palestinian reforms last June, including the replacement of Arafat by a Palestinian leadership not tainted by terrorism.

The idea was promoted by Israelis, members of the international community and even many Palestinians — but Arafat, who saw it clearly as a ploy to circumvent him, resisted it.

As long as Arafat remained in charge, Israeli government officials argued, there would be no reforms, no cease-fire and no possibility of peace talks. Appointing a strong prime minister with authority and real power, they said, could change things.

The European Union and the United Nations, which continued to maintain contacts with Arafat after Israel and the United States boycotted him, bought into the prime minister idea late last year, and used their close ties with Arafat to push it forward.

The key meeting came last month when the U.N.’s special Middle East envoy, Terje Roed-Larsen, told Arafat bluntly that if he appointed a prime minister he could still be the Palestinian Nelson Mandela, the symbol of Palestinian freedom and independence — but that if he didn’t, he might end up a Palestinian Haile Selassie, turned on and expelled by his own people.

The tough talk did the trick. Emerging from the Feb. 14 meeting, Arafat announced his readiness to make the appointment.

At first, however, it seemed that Arafat merely intended to go through the motions by appointing a puppet he could control, rather than a strong-willed individual with real power. His first choice was a wealthy Nablus businessman, Muniv al-Masri.

But senior officials in Arafat’s own Fatah movement rebelled, passing a resolution to the effect that the prime minister would have to be one of them. That opened the way for the appointment of

Abbas, the most senior Fatah official after Arafat.

At 67, Abbas is seven years younger than Arafat. He is a founding member of Fatah and is considered one of the organization’s top experts on Israeli society.

He has a doctorate from Moscow University on “contacts between the Zionist movement and the Nazis” — according to the Washington-based Middle East Media Research Institute, Abbas wrote that Zionist officials collaborated with the Nazis to create a situation where the world would agree on the necessity of a Jewish homeland — and for many years he was head of the PLO’s Israel desk.

After the 1991 Middle East Peace conference in Madrid, Abbas was given responsibility for the PLO’s negotiating strategy with Israel, and was the man pulling the strings on the Palestinian side in secret negotiations that led to the 1993 Oslo peace accords, which Abbas co-signed with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Crucial questions remain: What powers will the prime minister get, and what powers will the president retain? Who will control the finances, who will head the armed forces and who will make the final decisions if and when talks with Israel resume?

The appointment won’t be complete until Abbas and Arafat agree on the composition of a new government. Abbas has made said he won’t accept the position unless he is able to form the government he wants.

In any event, a power struggle between President Arafat and a Prime Minister Abbas could lead to a new dynamic that could have a major impact on the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Israeli politicians on the right and the left have welcomed the choice of Abbas.

“Abbas is not a moderate but a pragmatist,” says Labor’s former justice minister, Yossi Beilin, who played a major role on the Israeli side of the Oslo negotiations. But as a pragmatist Abbas is someone Israel can deal with, as long as there is someone on the Israeli side willing to make a fair offer, Beilin says.

In 1995, Beilin and Abbas developed a peace plan that was similar to the proposal made by President Clinton at Camp David in July 2000.

Without going into detail, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon describes Abbas’s appointment as “a positive move in the right direction.”

Arafat will have to survive Arafat’s efforts to clip his wings; he will have to establish international credibility the way P.A. Finance Minister Salam Fayed has done; and he will have to find a way to stop violence against Israel if a peace process is to proceed.

That could mean taking on the Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which reject any suspension of violence against Israel.

One of the reasons Fatah people pushed for reform of the Palestinian Authority is because they sensed they were losing ground in the Palestinian street to Hamas. How Abbas goes about restoring Fatah’s supremacy could determine whether or not the intifada finally stops.

Some of Abbas’s supporters, former security chiefs like Mohammad Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub, may push for a showdown with Hamas.

But taking on the fundamentalists could be tantamount to Palestinian civil war.

That’s why Arafat always avoided it. Will Abu Mazen? □
(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report. JTA correspondent Naomi Segal contributed to this report.)