



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli soldier killed in West Bank

An Israeli soldier and a Palestinian gunman were killed during a clash Wednesday in a village near the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

Soldiers had been carrying out searches for suspected terrorists when they encountered three Palestinian gunmen.

The soldier killed in the ensuing firefight was identified as Staff Sgt. Assaf Fuchs, 21, of Kibbutz Gvat. The Palestinian was identified as a member of Islamic Jihad. Two other Palestinians surrendered after being wounded.

A total of seven wanted Palestinians were arrested in the village, where Islamic Jihad is active, Israel Radio reported.

### Anti-Israel feeling hurts U.S.

Anti-Israel sentiment in Europe has made it harder for the United States to secure an international coalition against Iraq, according to a senior Bush administration adviser.

Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board, told the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs on Tuesday that U.S. officials cannot talk to European countries about the war effort without the conversation shifting to U.S. support for Israel.

He said the growing Muslim population in Western Europe is of concern and the "deterioration of Israel's standing in Europe is a quite serious matter."

Perle also said he had a problem with the international "road map" for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because "the problem with traditional diplomacy is that it doesn't lend itself to evaluating whether the next step should be taken."

### Russia offers to return art

Russia is offering to return artworks looted by the Nazis to their rightful owners. The works, which were taken by Russian troops from Nazi Germany at the end of the war, can be viewed at two Russian-language Internet sites, [www.lostart.ru](http://www.lostart.ru) and [www.restitution.ru](http://www.restitution.ru).

A Russian Culture Ministry official told The New York Times that claimants would have 18 months from when an item is posted to file a formal petition for restitution through their governments. After that, unclaimed items will be declared Russian property, the official said.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### As deadline for war approaches, Israelis play a surreal waiting game

By Matthew Gutman

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Men clad in green-and-red rubber oxygen suits bore injured Israelis, their heads lolling off the sides of stretchers, to wailing ambulances.

It was only a police training exercise to prepare for a possible "mega-terror attack" with non-conventional weapons at Ben-Gurion Airport.

But as an anticipated U.S.-led war against Iraq approaches — and Israel braces for the possibility that Iraq may respond by lashing out at the Jewish state, as it did in the 1991 Persian Gulf War — Israelis are bombarded daily with images of impending hostilities, such as the training exercises or hulking Patriot missile batteries posted just off the beach in Jaffa.

Clouds of war have been hovering above the region for months, and the wait has blunted some of their power. Just a week before what most Israelis believe will be a final American ultimatum to Iraq, the mood in Israel is devoid of panic; it could even be called placid. According to a senior defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity, the Israeli defense establishment actually is concerned that the public is too calm. The official conceded that authorities have served the public an often contradictory menu of warnings.

Sparking mild waves of panic, Brig. Gen. Ruth Yaron, chief spokeswoman for the Israel Defense Force, announced last week that the public should begin to prepare sealed rooms and ensure that their gas masks and atropine shots — used to counter certain types of nerve gas — are in order. Then, fearing hysteria and stampedes on hardware stores and gas mask distribution centers, authorities seemed to backtrack.

The chief of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi Farkash, told an Israeli television station that same evening that "there are no surface-to-surface missiles in western Iraq right now," the only area from which Iraqi Scud missiles could hit Israel.

And then there was the police drill. Broadcast on all three Israeli television networks, the exercise, meant to fine tune cooperation among the several bodies that would respond to a chemical weapons attack, did little to allay public fears.

The uncertainty over war even is finding expression in Israeli satire.

On a recent episode of a popular TV show, two comedians dressed as soldiers wearing gas masks in sealed rooms cheered when an Israeli official announced that war with Iraq had been postponed.

Jubilantly, the soldiers stripped from the windows the tape and plastic sheeting used to seal rooms, and threw off their gas masks.

Seconds later, the official's voice returned, saying that, actually, war was imminent. Feverishly, the comedians threw up new tape and plastic to seal the room; the cycle was repeated several times. The skit seemed to capture the emotional uncertainty Israelis have been living with for months.

"How many times can you cry wolf?" asked Nomi Baum of the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psycho-trauma. "The first scare was in October; it passed. Then came the January deadline; it also passed, as did the new moon of early March. Israelis have simply become a little apathetic to the war." The real stress, Baum said, comes from the country's economic malaise and the constant fear of terror attacks.

In Jaffa, the new home of Israel's largest battery of Patriot anti-missile missiles, residents' reactions to the possibility of war seemed to confirm Baum's comments.

"Seeing those limp bodies and men in oxygen suits does not exactly comfort us,"

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Majority leader blasts 'road map'

U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) told members of the Orthodox Union on Wednesday that he opposes an international "road map" for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The Jewish state has every right to reject proposals that will undercut her fundamental ability to defend herself," DeLay told the O.U.'s Mission to Washington. DeLay said the diplomatic Quartet sponsoring the road map — the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia — consists of "morally ambivalent nations that are more concerned with their popularity among Arab dictatorships than the peace and security of the free world."

### Controversy over gas masks

A controversy erupted over the disclosure that Israel has been selling foreign workers gas masks considered unsuitable for the country's citizens. Channel Two Television reported Tuesday that hundreds of gas mask made before 1984 were being sold to foreign workers, even though the Israeli army urged Israelis to exchange any kits manufactured before this date.

The Israeli officer in charge of gas mask distribution maintained that the kits are 100 percent suitable for providing protection from a non-conventional weapons attack. He said the decision to distribute the newer kits to Israelis was because they keep them in their homes for a longer period, while the foreign workers were only expected to purchase the kits in the event of an emergency.

### Arab sentenced for aiding terror

An Israeli court sentenced an Arab man to three years in prison for aiding two terrorists who carried out a double suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

Twenty-three people were killed in the Jan. 5 attack near Tel Aviv's old Central Bus Station.



## Daily News Bulletin

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said Shaul Rokach of Jaffa's Buy Fish — Don't Worry wholesale fish store, referring to the televised police drill.

Nevertheless with war looming ever closer, Rokach is one of only about 10 percent of Israelis who say they will not seal a room and have not prepared gas masks.

"Listen, at the end of the day we have enough problems with the Palestinians and suicide bombings," he said. "Anyway, I don't think we'll see any Scuds."

Symbolizing the surreal nature of these days of waiting, the Patriot battery in Jaffa's Ajame neighborhood has become a somewhat macabre tourist attraction.

This past Saturday, hundreds of Israelis approached the barbed wire surrounding the little base that has sprung up in this largely Arab community, trying to catch a better glimpse of the missiles and the American soldiers manning them.

Retirees Dalia and Arieh Amir strolled about a sandbank overlooking the batteries, holding hands. The couple, now sexagenarians, fell in love in this neighborhood when they were youths, and for 40 years lived just a few yards from where the missiles are now posted. The couple marveled at the contrast between the army base that had been set up in the sand dunes and the shimmering sea behind it.

"We decided to take a little vacation to come back to the old neighborhood, and of course to visit these things," Dalia Amir said, pointing toward one of the Patriots.

Abdel Kadir parked his pickup truck on the bank of a dune just behind the missile batteries. He, his wife and three screaming children in the back of the cab had arrived from the Israeli Arab town of Taiba, near Netanya.

"You see, I'm unemployed and we figured we'd take a day to see the sights of Tel Aviv and Jaffa," Kadir explained. "For the kids something like this is much more interesting than seeing a museum.

"Plus," he noted, "it's free."

Besides tourism and security, the Patriot missiles have boosted the neighborhood's flagging restaurant business. Munching on a cucumber, Atina Salame, 56, owner of the renowned Atina et Raouf fish restaurant, poked at a reporter's notebook.

"Write this down: These missiles are the best thing that has happened to us here," she said. "We served 200 meals last Saturday, more than we have since the outbreak of the intifada" more than two years ago.

Until last weekend, Jaffa's once-bustling restaurants had been desolate.

"Either they're afraid or they want to punish the Arabs after every terror attack," Salame said of Jewish customers who had stopped coming to the mixed Jewish-Arab city. Business is down by at least half from its pre-intifada peak, Salame estimated.

But the missile batteries also have engendered no small amount of anxiety in the neighborhood. Peter Salame, 22, Atina's goateed nephew, feared that if the missiles are used "the explosion from their launch could shatter the entire neighborhood's windows." In addition, he said, his mother is frantic with worry that Iraq will target the missile battery, or that one of the missiles will explode upon launching.

Defense Ministry officials describe the likelihood of either scenario as "very low."

"What I would really like to see," Atina Salame mused, "is people coming here because there is peace.

"If peace breaks out, it's fish on the house for a week," she laughed, and went back to chewing on her cucumber. □

## Campus war guide released

NEW YORK (JTA) — Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life released a guide for student discussion about the anticipated war against Iraq. "Confronting War and Discussing Peace on Campus" was released to more than 500 campuses in North America last Friday. "Jewish students, like their other classmates, desire to discuss this issue," said Wayne Firestone, director of Hillel's Center for Israel Affairs. The guide will provide students with resources to take an informed stance "one way or the other," Firestone said.

Hillel also has launched a Holocaust education program on campus that features grants for Holocaust-related programming, collaboration with the Anti-Defamation League against Holocaust denial and a program for journalism students to explore the lessons of the Holocaust. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Serbian premier friend to Jews

Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who was assassinated Wednesday, was a friend of the local Jewish community.

Djindjic, 50, was shot outside a government building in Belgrade. He died later while undergoing surgery.

One year ago, on March 17, 2002, Djindjic visited the Jewish community in the northern Serbian city of Subotica and pledged support for efforts to restore an abandoned synagogue there.

"This building is so beautiful," he said at the time, following a performance by Jewish Sunday school students inside the dilapidated sanctuary. "I look forward to coming back here for the inauguration ceremony when the restoration work is complete."

### Hillel opens in Buenos Aires

Hundreds of Jews from the United States, Israel, Argentina and other Latin American countries gathered to celebrate the opening of the first Hillel house in Argentina.

Among those attending Tuesday night's event were mega-philanthropists Edgar Bronfman, Lynn Schusterman and Michael Steinhardt, all of whom serve on Hillel's International Board of Governors.

Gabriel Trajtenberg, executive director of Hillel Argentina, told JTA that the opening represents a "seed of hope" for a community suffering from more than a year of financial crisis.

Last August, Hillel opened temporary quarters in Argentina.

According to Trajtenberg, 1,600 young Jews have already enrolled in Hillel activities and 1,000 are participating in a weekly regular activity.

### Wells Fargo agrees on restitution

The fourth-largest U.S. bank said it would pay more than \$250,000 to Holocaust survivors. Wells Fargo reversed itself Tuesday after earlier refusing to take part in a settlement with the Belgian Jewish community.

Wells Fargo was the only holdout among 22 banks that agreed last year to pay nearly \$60 million to settle claims brought by Holocaust survivors over money seized from Belgian Jews during World War II, according to Reuters.

Wells Fargo had said it did not owe the money because it did not have any relationship during the war with the Belgian bank in question. It inherited the liability through a 1996 takeover.

On Tuesday, a bank official apologized for the earlier stance:

"We sincerely apologize to the Jewish community and deeply regret any misunderstanding that our original decision may have caused."

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Palestinians still support Saddam, but are less open than in Gulf War

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Mahmoud Abbas, the choice for Palestinian Authority prime minister, hardly could have been appointed at a worse time: Just when Abbas could use a little help from his American friends in establishing his clout, the Palestinian street is erupting in support for Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration's worst enemy.

For several reasons, Palestinian support for Saddam goes back to the first Persian Gulf War 12 years ago: Saddam dares to confront the United States, which many Palestinians perceive as their enemy; Saddam is perceived as another "underdog" in the Middle East; and Saddam has been one of the main supporters of the intifada, sending payments of \$10,000 to \$25,000 to the families of Palestinians killed fighting Israel, with special premiums paid the families of suicide bombers.

Unlike in 1991, when Arafat openly backed Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and later supported him against an international — and Arab — coalition for war, Arafat this time has avoided bombastic statements of support in favor of expressions of solidarity in more subtle forums, such as sending Saddam greetings on Muslim holidays.

Yet support for Saddam cuts across Palestinian society. Thousands of demonstrators in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have turned out for pro-Saddam rallies at which they burn American and Israeli flags.

Even Palestinian schoolchildren have gotten into the act, conducting mock trials of President Bush.

"The Young Palestinian Parliament," a youth group of P.A. President Yasser Arafat's Fatah Party, recently conducted a mock trial in which Bush was convicted as a war criminal responsible for the murder of Palestinian and Iraqi children.

Friday prayer sermons in Palestinian mosques also use strong language: In one recent prayer sermon on official Palestinian Television, religious leader Ibrahim Madiras defined America as "the foremost enemy of the Muslim nation."

Madiras compared Bush to ancient Egyptian pharaohs, suggesting that war against Iraq would be an imperialist war over oil, just as the war on terror is a cover for the theft of Arab oil.

"The entire world is standing there saying 'no' to war against Iraq and 'no' to war against the Arab nation," Madiras said. "Yet America is saying what Pharaoh said: 'There is no God beside me.'"

In an interview with JTA, Palestinian legislator Ziad Abu Ziad offered a different take.

"I want to tell you unequivocally: There is no support for Saddam Hussein," Abu Ziad said. "We support the Iraqi people, because we feel that they are victims of the situation. Those Palestinians who do sympathize with Saddam do so out of a shared hatred for Israel, he added.

But As'ad Ghanem, a political scientist at Haifa University, said most Palestinians make no distinction between Saddam and the Iraqi people — they support them all.

Palestinian commentators draw a straight line from the expected American offensive against Iraq to Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Both are perceived as part of a general Western offensive against Islam. Moreover, commentators such as Ali Abunimah claim that Israel will use the cover of a U.S.-led war against Iraq to carry out a mass exile of Palestinians.

Israeli officials dismiss such allegations as lunacy. Yet they do believe that a war with Iraq would affect the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon; the coordinator of government affairs in the territories, Maj. Gen. Amos Gilad; and Israel's national security adviser, Ephraim Halevy, all have said that this year will be "the year of decision" in the intifada.

According to this school of thought, toppling Saddam will lead to sweeping changes in Middle East regimes. Arafat will be one of the first to go, they say, opening the way for renewed peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. □

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

## French officials taking action against anti-Semitism in schools

By Philip Carmel

PARIS (JTA) — Outside Olivier's former school in Paris' 20th District, there is a plaque listing the names of the school's Jewish children who were deported from their homes to Nazi death camps.

Last year, Olivier, 10, was one of many in his class who volunteered to read out the names. Later that semester, he recounted the story of his grandfather, who lived in the same cosmopolitan district and was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust.

That simple action identified Olivier as Jewish.

Suddenly, he became the target of a torrent of anti-Semitic abuse from erstwhile friends in his school, the majority of whose pupils are Muslim.

By the end of the year, the school director was forced to call in Olivier's mother for a meeting. He told her he could no longer guarantee the safety of her child, and that Olivier would have to find another school. The mother protested that, rather than force the victim to move on, the school should expel those who had regularly subjected Olivier to anti-Semitic insults. But the school director said he "did not want to enforce the principles of the Republic on the back of the child."

Olivier's aggressors have since been disciplined by the principal. Some have shown remorse, but others continue to taunt Olivier whenever they see him. "We're going to get rid of all of the Jews in the school," they shout at him.

According to Chaim Musicant, executive director of CRIF, the umbrella organization for secular Jewish institutions in France, Olivier's case shows that there is a "deep malaise within the French school system and in French society in general."

"This is a real scandal," Musicant told JTA. "You have here a case where the school was not capable of guaranteeing the victim's safety. In effect, the victim was the one who was punished and had to leave the school, whereas the perpetrators were allowed to remain."

Incidents involving increasing physical and verbal violence against Jewish students — as well as a reluctance among teachers in certain "problem" schools to teach the history of the Holocaust — have led Education Minister Luc Ferry to demand that government inspectors get tough with school anti-Semitism.

Ferry announced a series of measures last week that include legal action against anyone using physical or verbal abuse in the classroom to target someone's religious or ethnic background.

"We have to demand of school directors that they apply the greatest firmness in order to maintain secular republican principles in schools and to avoid the importation of the Middle East conflict into the classroom," Ferry said.

Among the measures is the creation of a 20-person team at the Education Ministry that will be on call to intervene at any school where assistance is required to deal with racist or anti-Semitic activities.

A commission will also be appointed to prepare a booklet to "actualize the republican ideal and make it a living thing" in the classroom, Ferry said.

In addition, the commission will provide a list of reference texts to pupils and educators in the event of conflict.

Ferry has decided to convene representatives from different organizations present in the schools, including school directors, teachers unions and even high school student associations.

However, he has not invited the participation of the high school teachers union, an organization that he believes has been reluctant in the past to deal with classroom anti-Semitism.

"What worries us is that we are beginning to see a new form of anti-Semitism that benefits from a relative tolerance from adults," Ferry said.

"There is often a certain form of anti-Zionism, particularly from left-wing intellectuals and other democrats, which criticizes the State of Israel but which often veers toward anti-Semitism," he added.

Such remarks have angered the teachers unions, with the largest high school union, SNES, condemning Ferry's comments.

"Casting aspersions on the teaching establishment and suggesting that teachers tolerate racist and anti-Semitic remarks results in transferring the responsibility for the problem onto the teachers, when they are more often the victims of such remarks," the union said in a statement.

For its part, CRIF welcomed Ferry's proposals.

"We met the minister a few months ago to outline the problem in the schools," Musicant said.

He added that the group presented Ferry "with a dossier cataloguing anti-Semitism against students and teachers, and the minister told us he was very worried about the problem."

CRIF President Roger Cukierman also "raised the issue with Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, and the Ferry proposals are part of this process," Musicant added.

For some, anti-Semitic abuse of students is only part of a wider problem. In some areas of France, particularly in the suburbs of the larger cities, there has been a growth in school violence for reasons other than anti-Semitism.

"There's a general problem with the lack of authority and respect in certain schools, and that's a wider problem than that which affects Jews," Musicant said.

According to testimony by a group of teachers published in a recent study, *The Lost Territories of the Republic*, there are certain schools where teachers are afraid to enforce national educational guidelines in the classroom — including teaching the history of the deportation of French Jews by the Nazis.

One of the rare teachers to allow her name to be published in the study, Barbara Lefebvre, claims that in areas with large populations of North African, or Maghrebin, origin, it often is the pupils who set the tone in the schools, rather than the educators.

"Certain Muslim pupils want to enforce their own community's principles in the schools, and they are quick to pick out a scapegoat. It's very effective," she said. "The youngsters line up against the Jews, and the school does nothing about it."

One of the effects of the rise in anti-Semitic incidents at state schools has been a large increase in the enrollment of children in Jewish schools. "The parents are scared," Musicant told JTA. "For two and a half years now, they've seen synagogues burning and Jews attacked."

Nevertheless, the majority of French Jews still want their children exposed to secular values, and there is definitely "a place for French Jews within the state system," he said. □