



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli bulldozer kills U.S. activist

An American activist was killed when an Israeli bulldozer ran her over in the Gaza Strip.

Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old student from Olympia, Wash., reportedly was trying to stop the bulldozer from destroying a house when she was killed.

Corrie was a member of the International Solidarity Movement, foreigners who volunteer as human shields to protect Palestinians from the Israeli military's anti-terror operations.

The Israeli military and the U.S. State Department had no immediate comment on the incident.

### Jews meet Rice on 'road map'

Jewish leaders asked White House officials if the announcement of an imminent "road map" toward Israeli-Palestinian peace was intended to build international support for an attack against Iraq.

More than 20 Jewish leaders met with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, hours after President Bush announced plans to present the road map to Israel and the Palestinian Authority as soon as a Palestinian prime minister with "real authority" is confirmed. [Page 4]

### 11 armed Palestinians killed

Eleven armed Palestinians were killed in clashes with Israeli troops in the West Bank.

Six Islamic Jihad members were killed early last Friday in a clash that ensued after the gunmen fired on Israeli troops who had surrounded their hideout in the Jenin refugee camp.

Troops found rifles and Israeli army uniforms in the house.

### Lieberman leads candidates

Joseph Lieberman is the leading Democratic candidate for U.S. president, according to a recently released poll.

In a recent survey of likely primary voters conducted by Zogby International, the Connecticut senator got 18 percent of the vote, while Rep. Richard Gephardt (Mo.) got 11 percent and Sen. John Kerry (Mass.) took 9 percent.

More than a third of respondents were unsure which candidate they would support, and 71 percent said they were likely to change their mind before the primaries.

## In a first, federation leader to be chairman of Presidents Conference

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — No sooner had the umbrella group of American Jewish organizations nominated its new chairman than the White House summoned leaders of the 52-member group to an emergency meeting.

The purpose was to give the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations a chance to discuss President Bush's surprise announcement that he would soon present a "road map" toward Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Contacted en route to last Friday's meeting, the nominee to head the Presidents Conference, James Tisch, told JTA the delegation would do "more listening than delivering a message."

The Presidents Conference speaks on behalf of Jewish groups, primarily on foreign affairs.

Tisch is chairman of the board of the United Jewish Communities — the umbrella organization of the North American Jewish federation system — and CEO of Loews Corp. He was selected to head the group March 13 by a seven-member nominating committee that included representatives of the three major religious streams, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the American Jewish Committee and a former chairman of the Presidents Conference.

Other top contenders for the post were Jack Rosen, president of the American Jewish Congress, and Leonard Cole, former chairman of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

"All of the candidates were very strong," said Michael Bohnen, JCPA's current chairman, who served on the nominating committee. "Jim was considered, based on his prior leadership positions in the Jewish community, including the leadership of the New York federation and United Jewish Communities, to be the strongest candidate."

Jerry Goodman, executive director of the National Committee for Labor Israel, said Tisch "brings in a local perspective, but he also has a knowledge of how things function on a national level," Goodman said.

Last Friday's White House meeting underscores the importance of the group's role as the United States prepares for a possible war against Iraq and seeks to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As the group prepares to make the transition, many Presidents Conference members told JTA they don't know Tisch's personal politics.

"Many of us are not aware of the positions Jimmy Tisch holds on the Middle East, largely due to the fact that he is not a regular attendee at Conference of Presidents meetings," said Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America.

"We haven't had a chance to hear questions he has asked, to get a sense of his position," Klein said.

The full conference will vote on Tisch's nomination April 30. If approved, he will succeed Mortimer Zuckerman for a one-year term beginning in June.

When asked his political positions, Tisch said, "my politics don't matter."

He pledged to "put my own opinions aside and really reflect the consensus of the organization."

Given Tisch's position at UJC, some Presidents Conference members suggested that his ascendancy could give the federation system undue influence over the Jewish organizational world.

But others downplayed the concern.

"We have to be very careful not to confuse the different mandates, as I would call

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Mofaz: No Scuds in western Iraq

There are no Scud missiles or missile launchers in western Iraq, Israel's defense minister said.

Shaul Mofaz's remarks, based on Israeli intelligence information, came in a televised interview Saturday following a Fox News report last week that U.S. officials saw movement of Scud missiles in western Iraq, within striking distance of Israel. Mofaz said that if Iraq attacks Israel in response to an American military strike against Baghdad, Israel should respond.

### Israel tough on 'road map'

Israel's draft response to the "road map" toward Mideast peace reportedly increases demands and constraints on the Palestinians.

The draft removes all reference to establishment of an "independent" Palestinian state, saying instead that such a state would enjoy certain characteristics of sovereignty, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Israel also reportedly is demanding that the second phase of the initiative, calling for the creation of a Palestinian state with temporary borders, be implemented only if there is an absolute halt to Palestinian terrorism, violence and incitement, disarming of terrorist groups and dismantling of their infrastructure, confiscation of illegal weapons and selection of a different Palestinian leadership.

According to Ha'aretz, the draft also rejects the demand that Israel dismantle all illegal settlement outposts erected since Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took office in March 2002.

### Territories closed for Purim

Israel imposed a full closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip amid warnings of possible terrorist attacks during the Purim holiday, which begins Monday night. Thousands of police, border police and soldiers were being deployed around the country to secure public events.



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them, of the two organizations," said Shoshana Cardin, chairwoman of JTA's board and a former chairwoman of the Conference of Presidents.

Noting that Tisch's chairmanship would mark the first time a national federation chair would lead the Presidents Conference, she said, "people have to recognize that the two responsibilities are still separate."

Some, in fact, said the appointment would be a benefit.

Tisch's control over both the federations and the Presidents Conference would help unite the facets of North American Jewry, said Marlene Post, past president of Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America.

She noted, too, that the overlap between the two positions is small: Tisch will relinquish his UJC post in November.

As UJC chair, Tisch represents an enormous constituency for the Presidents Conference, noted Malcolm Hoenlein, the conference's executive vice chairman.

Some Presidents Conference members also say the Presidents Conference appears to favor wealthy candidates. Tisch is the third successive major philanthropist to lead the conference, following Zuckerman and Ronald Lauder.

Then again, several conference members noted, the chair must pay his own way for the extensive travel required for the position, and be financially secure enough to take a significant chunk of time away from his daily job.

Tisch is a scion of the family that owns the Loews Corp., which has holdings in Loews hotels, the Bulova Corporation, and Lorillard, Inc., an American tobacco company that produces major cigarette brands such as Newport, Kent and True.

Tisch's tobacco connection inspired New York philanthropists Henry and Edith Everett to lobby against his appointment as UJC chair two years ago. Henry Everett is a member of JTA's board of directors.

The Everetts charged that it was inappropriate for a national Jewish leader to have links to the tobacco industry. But the issue apparently wasn't a factor in the Presidents Conference choice.

Tisch has been heavily involved in Jewish communal affairs. He belongs to two New York synagogues, Central Synagogue and Kehilath Jeshurun, which are Reform and modern Orthodox, respectively.

He was president of UJA-Federation of New York and president of the Federation Employment and Guidance Service, a beneficiary of the New York federation.

His family has been a major philanthropic force in New York, supporting New York University's School of the Arts and the university's medical center.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Cornell University, where he majored in economics, Tisch holds an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. □

## Croatian government throws support behind reconstruction of Zagreb shul

By Vlasta Kovac

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — Croatia's government has signaled its willingness to support the construction of a Jewish center and synagogue here. The project will rise from the ashes of a synagogue that was destroyed during World War II.

The government is providing some \$42,000 for the preliminary stage of the project, in which construction bids will be sought.

As the project moves forward, those involved expect that funding will be provided by sources including international Jewish groups, the city of Zagreb and Croatia's Culture Ministry.

The mufti of Zagreb's Islamic community said he is certain Croatian Muslims will provide financial help once the project gets off the ground.

The original synagogue was built in central Zagreb in 1867 in the Moorish style.

When demolition of the synagogue began on Oct. 12, 1941, the local Zagreb newspaper reported that it was taking place because "the synagogue does not harmonize with the general city plan of Zagreb."

After the war ended, a prefabricated department store was erected on the site of the synagogue, but it burned down in 1980.

Since that time, a municipal parking lot has been located there. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Report: Hamas may hit U.S.

Hamas members may launch attacks on U.S. facilities if Washington starts a war on Iraq, according to *Time* magazine.

U.S. intelligence officials cited by *Time* say the Palestinian group may strike U.S. bases or spots where Americans gather in Israel.

"What's more," a U.S. official told *Time*, "you can't rule out their doing something" in the United States proper.

### Shoah claims deadline extended

The deadline for filing claims to receive money from Holocaust-era insurance policies has been extended to Sept. 30.

The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims said the six-month extension would allow time to publish more names of people whose insurance policies were not fulfilled.

The insurance program was part of an agreement signed last October by the commission and a German foundation.

### Woman sentenced for bomb plots

A woman convicted of plotting with her boyfriend to blow up Jewish and black sites in Massachusetts was sentenced to nearly five years in jail.

Erica Chase, who was sentenced late last week, apologized for the plot, which has been described as an attempt to launch a racial "holy war."

Chase's boyfriend, Leo Felton, was sentenced in December to up to 22 years in prison.

### Pa Gibson troubles Jews

The father of movie star Mel Gibson minimized the Holocaust and denied that the Al-Qaida terrorist network was behind the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington. In a *New York Times Magazine* article about the actor's upcoming movie on the crucifixion of Jesus, Hutton Gibson denied that 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, describing it as logistically impossible.

"To bigots and anti-Semites, no amount of evidence or scientific proof is ever enough," said Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. "In their world, only hate matters."

Meanwhile, Mel Gibson told Fox News that his film "The Passion" is "meant to just tell the truth" about "why Christ came, why he was crucified."

The Gibsons belong to a strict Catholic group that believes the Vatican erred in 1965 in issuing the *Nostra Aetate*, which said the Romans, and not the Jews, killed Jesus.

Jewish leaders have warned Gibson against reviving a central canard behind centuries of anti-Semitism.

## ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

### Jewish journalists navigate mines as they work in ex-Communist lands

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — It's not easy being a Jewish journalist in the former Soviet Union.

State censorship isn't a problem, but there are other issues, some not altogether different from what Jewish journalists face in North America.

"If I had something in my newspaper that would bring to light the not-always-nice relations between various Jewish organizations, this will blemish the reputation of the entire Jewish community, and will eventually make the relations inside the community even tenser," said Boris Komsky, editor of *Shofar*, a monthly publication in the Ukrainian city of Lvov.

Diana Gantseva, editor of the *Menorah* newspaper in Yekaterinburg, a city in Russia's Ural Mountains, agreed. "It's all about self-censorship," she said.

Some 40 community leaders and journalists representing dozens of Jewish newspapers from across the former Soviet Union spoke in panel discussions and in the corridors of the Second Annual Conference of Jewish Journalists, held in Moscow earlier this month under the aegis of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, a New York-based group.

Jewish journalists in the former Soviet Union say their situation has become especially complicated in recent years, as Jewish life has become more polarized than ever due to organizational rivalry.

"There is virtually no independent Jewish media in today's Russia," says Nickolai Propirniy, who at 32 is one of the veterans of Russian Jewish journalism.

There are more than 500 Jewish periodicals in the vast region from the Baltics to Russia's Pacific coast. Most are newsletters that belong to various Jewish institutions and organizations. Most call themselves newspapers, perhaps for lack of a more appropriate Russian equivalent of "newsletter."

But even those publications that reach out to a larger regional or national audience often talk the language of their parent organizations.

As with most other services related to the Jewish community in this part of the world, Jewish periodicals are usually distributed free. Sales of paid advertisements can hardly support most of the papers, whose readership base — often elderly people who receive services from Jewish organizations — doesn't appeal to prospective advertisers.

The fear among some businessmen of being identified as Jewish also deters advertising sales.

Editors of the few papers that have paid subscriptions acknowledge that sales cover just a small fraction of their expenses, and that they couldn't survive without money from sponsors.

"All Jewish papers — even those who don't list any of the national or international Jewish organizations among their founders — depend on the funds they are getting from these organizations. This puts a clear-cut stamp on what they publish," said Propirniy, who is editor in chief of *The Jewish News*, a Moscow-based weekly newspaper published by the Russian Jewish Congress. The group's main rival, the Federation of the Jewish Communities, has its own major weekly publication, *The Jewish Word*.

"Neither of the newspapers is going to write about what the other organization is doing," says Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz, executive director of the federation. "In order to have a full picture, you need to read both."

Some Jewish journalists say the Jewish media should be fulfilling tasks other than playing up situations that reflect organizational loyalties and may divide the community.

"This situation we have, when the Jewish media is serving sometimes conflicting interests of various groups that work with the community, it isn't so terrible at all. We have to take it as is," Propirniy argued.

"What matters is how the journalists feel connected to the goals and objectives of the Jewish community in general."

*Shofar*'s Komsky added: "If for no other reason, I feel myself obliged to continue doing what I'm doing to be able to tell people the truth about Israel." □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**In shocker, Bush says 'road map' on Mideast to be presented quickly***By Matthew E. Berger*

WASHINGTON (JTA)—Israel and American Jewish groups are welcoming President Bush's announcement that a "road map" toward Mideast peace will be presented in the near future, but the possibility of friction looms as Israel proposes dozens of changes to the plan.

In a surprise move last Friday, Bush announced that he would present the "road map" for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — drafted with the aid of the European Union, United Nations and Russia — to Israel and the Palestinian Authority after a new Palestinian prime minister who has "real authority" is confirmed.

Bush also called for an end to Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "as progress is made towards peace."

The U.N. envoy to the Middle East, Terje Roed-Larsen, was slated to report on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the "road map" to the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday.

After Bush's speech, Jewish leaders were invited to Washington to meet with Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice. They expressed strong concerns that Israel was being used as a pawn in an effort to drum up support for a strike against Iraq, and that a plan that has raised grave concerns among supporters of Israel had been placed back on the administration's front burner.

European and Arab countries fear the United States will let the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fester while it takes on Baghdad. Analysts say Bush's speech was not only a major signal to the Palestinians that their proposed prime minister must have real authority, but was an attempt to convince U.S. allies that war in Iraq won't divert the president's attention from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The administration's current initiative sets a terrible precedent by appearing to placate those nations who are opposed to America's confrontation with Iraq," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Under intense international pressure, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat recently created the post of prime minister for his longtime No. 2, Mahmoud Abbas.

However, Arafat will retain control over Palestinian security services and negotiations with Israel, and will have the power to dismiss the prime minister. That has led many to wonder just how much authority Abbas, who has criticized the Palestinians' use of terrorism in the intifada, would have.

One participant said U.S. Jewish leaders pressed Rice "about whether the prime minister is going to have any real power at all, and why should the U.S. give this sop to the Palestinians."

Other Jewish leaders were satisfied with the speech's content, especially the pressure it placed on Arafat to give the prime minister real power.

Israeli officials were pleased with the Bush announcement, Israel Radio reported, saying that they also wanted to ensure that the Palestinian prime minister would have real power.

However, Israel is preparing a response to the road map that reportedly omits all mention of an "independent" Palestinian state, mentioning only "certain attributes of sovereignty."

In addition, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, the Israeli

response sets stiff conditions for moving from one stage of the road map to the next.

Israel also rejects the demand that it immediately remove all illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank, and says it will freeze new settlement building only after "a continuous and comprehensive security calm." Israel also rejects calls to end building that meets existing settlements' "natural growth."

Bush indicated Friday that even after it is presented, the road map will be open to modification by Israel and the Palestinians — though changes proposed by either side seem likely to spark controversy. Israel's proposed response thus raises the prospect of serious friction in the future with the United States and the other members of the diplomatic "Quartet" who helped draft the plan.

Bush's speech shattered the administration position that it would not deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict until after an expected war against Iraq.

But a confluence of events changed the White House's plans. First was the appointment last week of Abbas, more commonly known as Abu Mazen. The White House wants the new position to be much more than a figurehead.

The second factor was a need to reach out to Europe, Russia and the Arab world, all of which are resisting the U.S. push for war with Iraq.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the timing of the speech was a coincidence, but few in Washington are buying it.

Analysts said the speech reflected the U.S. difficulty in persuading the Security Council to pass a new resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force against Iraq, and the harsh criticism that Blair — Bush's staunchest ally in the campaign against Iraq — is facing at home.

"Bush's comments should be seen in the context of trying to change two regimes in the Middle East and preserve one in Britain," said David Makovsky, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Secondly, the speech indicated to France and Russia — which have pledged to veto a resolution authorizing force against Iraq — that the Iraqi standoff would not prevent the United States from working within the international system on other issues.

It also made clear that if the Palestinians took the necessary steps, the United States would be willing to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even while heavily engaged in Iraq.

However, Israel and many American Jewish leaders have grave concerns about the road map. They feel it places too much pressure on Israel to make concessions without preliminary or reciprocal steps by the Palestinians, and gives too much influence to international players they consider biased toward the Palestinians.

Many in Israel object to the fact that the Quartet will have the final say over whether each side has sufficiently fulfilled its duties to progress to the next stage of the road map.

Some fear the Quartet will push Israel to make concessions despite spotty Palestinian performance — as was the case throughout the years of the Oslo peace process — in order to maintain diplomatic momentum.

But Bush stopped short of seeking to implement the road map immediately.

"We will expect and welcome contributions from Israel and the Palestinians to this document," Bush said, leaving the impression that there is room for negotiations. □