



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel to get less money

The United States will propose \$3 billion less in supplemental military aid for Israel than the Jewish state had requested.

An Israeli official in Washington confirmed that Israel would be offered \$1 billion as part of a U.S. war costs bill, but that the White House is proposing \$9 billion in loan guarantees, \$1 billion more than Israel sought.

"We understand there are budgetary constraints in the United States," the Israeli official said. Israel's ambassador to the United States, Daniel Ayalon, told American Jewish leaders that the supplemental aid for Israel has been "sweetened" by agreeing to give the full \$1 billion right away.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer has said the supplemental package, which could total up to \$100 billion, would be introduced in the coming days.

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### Jews raise aid money

Jewish groups are raising humanitarian aid money for Iraqis.

The American Jewish World Service is partnering with international relief groups to provide emergency relief for civilians harmed by the conflict. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee opened a mailbox Wednesday for emergency funds as well.

Contributions to the AJWS can be made to the AJWS, 45 W. 36 St., New York, N.Y., 10018; at AJWS.org; or over the phone by credit card at 800-889-7146. Contributions to the JDC can be made at 711 Third Ave., New York, N.Y., 10017.

### Woman to head Reform rabbis

The Reform rabbinate will be led by a woman for the first time.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis has nominated as its president Rabbi Janet Marder, 48, currently vice president of the CCAR and senior rabbi of Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, Calif.

Marder will begin her two-year tenure March 29 at the CCAR's 2003 convention, after an election that is regarded as a formality.

She will succeed Rabbi Martin Weiner, senior rabbi at Congregation Sherith Israel in San Francisco. The CCAR, which represents 1,800 Reform rabbis in North America, is the largest group of Jewish clergy.

### WAR IN IRAQ

## Aid to Israel, less than requested, is included in Iraq war spending bill

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel will get significantly less in military aid than it had wanted from the United States — but a larger loan guarantee than it expected.

Hours before the United States launched its war against Iraq, Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, notified Israeli Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the administration's bill to cover the costs of war with Iraq would include \$1 billion in supplemental military aid for Israel, as well as \$9 billion in loan guarantees.

Israel had asked for \$4 billion in military aid and \$8 billion in guarantees.

According to Netanyahu's office, Rice said the Bush administration decided to up the loan guarantees because the administration was "very impressed" by the Treasury's economic reform plan. U.S. officials had demanded to see the plan to make sure that any aid would be used well.

Israel's ambassador to the United States, Daniel Ayalon, told American Jewish leaders Thursday that the supplemental aid for Israel has been "sweetened" by agreeing to give the full \$1 billion right away.

Other Israeli officials publicly expressed satisfaction with the decision.

"When you ask for these sums, you don't complain if you don't get everything you want," one Foreign Ministry official told the Jerusalem Post.

However, officials in the Treasury, who recently drew up an austerity plan because of Israel's yawning budget deficit, were disappointed, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

The total package sent to Congress, estimated to be as much as \$100 billion, will mostly be used to cover the costs of the military campaign, as well as providing additional aid to U.S. allies in the region, including Israel, Turkey and Jordan.

Israel's aid request, which comes in addition to nearly \$2.7 billion in military and economic aid already allocated to the Jewish state, preceded the certainty of war.

Suffering a deep economic crisis, Israel says it needs the additional aid to combat the increased threat of terrorism and to offset the costs of defending against a potential missile strike from Iraq.

Congressional support for the aid is strong — and tying it into the overall spending package for the war against Iraq might make its passage even easier, some analysts say.

Numerous Israeli officials traveled to Washington in recent months to work out details of the plan.

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

Aid to Israel has received a boost from congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle who have sent letters to the White House, urging that aid to Israel be included in the emergency supplemental package.

"Now, with the possibility of conflict with Iraq, Israel is confronted with skyrocketing defense expenditures to ensure that the Israeli people are not once again made innocent victims of attack by Saddam Hussein," said one letter, signed by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.).

"We are concerned that, if not addressed soon, these issues could severely affect Israel's short- and long- term security."

Similar letters have been sent by the speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.),

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel not on coalition list

Israel was kept out of a list of nations that are taking part in U.S.-led military action against Iraq, as part of an attempt to keep a low profile.

The State Department listed 30 nations this week which it defined as a "coalition of the willing," but said several other nations had asked to be kept anonymous.

"No one can have any doubt whatsoever as to who Israel is supporting here," an Israeli diplomat in Washington said. "It's clear that Israel is 100 percent behind the United States, but everyone understands it's in the interests of a successful operation that Israel keep a very low profile, and that is our contribution."

### False alarm scares Israel

An Israeli missile defense system went on high alert Thursday following a false alarm of an Iraqi missile attack.

The false alarm went off during a news briefing by the head of the Israeli army's anti-aircraft forces at an Arrow anti-missile battery in southern Israel. Soldiers operating the system donned gas masks, but after a few minutes the alarm proved false.

### Palestinians without masks

Some 60,000 Palestinians have not been issued gas masks by Israel. The Palestinians live in areas of the West Bank that are under Israeli civilian and security control. The army pledged to distribute the kits in these areas following a court hearing on the matter several months ago.

### Palestinian kids cheer Saddam

Palestinian schoolchildren attended a pro-Iraq rally in the Gaza Strip on Thursday. Another demonstration was held in Ramallah. During the Gaza demonstration, protestors waved Iraqi flags and posters of Saddam Hussein and burned two U.S. flags.

and the House minority leader, Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). Some Jewish organizational officials said they hoped that, because the aid for Israel is such a small percentage of the Iraq war spending bill and because the bill will be introduced while troops are on the ground, there will be little resistance from lawmakers.

Still, it might be a tough battle.

Given the U.S. federal deficit, a weak economy and the lack of allies to defray the cost of war, getting additional aid through Congress may be difficult, some said.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) told a meeting of the Orthodox Union here on March 12 that supporting aid to Israel "will be a tough case to make" back home to his constituents.

"We very much need you to be making that case," Wyden told the Jewish audience.

Some, including the dovish Jewish organization Americans for Peace Now, have suggested that additional aid to Israel should be linked to movement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including a freeze on settlement development.

Most Jewish groups strongly oppose these ideas, and are concerned that the Bush administration may try to link the aid with progress towards peace.

The settlement issue was a major stumbling point in 1991, when President Bush's father negotiated loan guarantees with Israel.

The United States and Israel agreed that aid would not be used for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and any Israeli funds used for those areas would be subtracted from the amount of aid Israel received. This time around, both sides agreed on that formula as the start of negotiations. □

## Uproar over Swiss officials' letter condoning suicide attacks on Israel

By Fredy Rom

ZURICH (JTA) — Swiss legislators are calling for the dismissal of a senior Foreign Ministry official who wrote a letter that appeared to sanction terrorist attacks against Israel.

In his letter to the Swiss-based group "Pro-PLO," the head of the ministry's Middle East department, Ambassador Thomas Kupfer, described Palestinian suicide bombers as "resistance fighters" who did not "obtain the necessary success."

Kupfer, who is Jewish, added in the letter to the Swiss-based group "Pro-PLO" that such "acts of resistance are counter-productive and only provoke Israeli acts of excessive force, from which only Palestinian civilians will suffer."

Coming from such a high official, some wondered if the letter represented a change in Swiss government policy. Switzerland routinely condemns Israeli anti-terror actions because of their alleged violations of Palestinian human rights, but such criticism generally has been balanced with denunciations of Palestinian bombings as terrorism.

The Israeli Embassy in Bern is trying to clarify the matter through diplomatic channels, an embassy spokesman told JTA.

Simon Hubacher, a spokesman for Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey, confirmed that the letter, which was posted on the Palestinian group's Internet site, was authentic. The minister will launch an investigation into the affair, Hubacher said.

Some members of Parliament are recommending that Kupfer be dismissed from his post.

The uproar over the letter comes after a wave of recent anti-Semitic statements connected to the U.S.-led war on Iraq has rattled Swiss Jewry.

Some organizers of Carnival celebrations in Basel recently compared Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Hitler. Others said that Jews in Switzerland fight for the right of kosher slaughter, while in Israel they simply slaughter Palestinians.

After an outcry from the Basel Jewish community, the city's leading daily newspaper asked readers if the community's complaints were justified. More than 80 percent said no, adding arguments such as, if the Nazis had succeeded, Swiss Jews wouldn't be able to protest now.

One Israeli diplomat told JTA that recent anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic statements may be a sort of revenge for the pressure that American officials put on Switzerland and its banks in the 1990s to provide restitution for Holocaust victims. □



### Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Brussels synagogue attacked

A Molotov cocktail damaged the door of a synagogue in Brussels.

No one was hurt in Wednesday's incident at the Orthodox synagogue, though the front door was heavily damaged.

Two days earlier, eight Jewish teen-agers were attacked by boys who hurled rocks and epithets at them.

"These outbreaks of violence deepen our worries. Without giving way to mass panic, what is happening here is very serious," said Philippe Markiewicz, a Belgian Jewish leader.

### French railroad sued

The French national railroad is on trial for its role in deporting 75,000 Jews during World War II.

The lawsuit against SNCF was brought by an Austrian-born French Jew, Kurt Werner Schaechter, whose parents were killed in Sobibor and Auschwitz after being transported in French trains.

Schaechter is asking for a symbolic amount of damages but has demanded that the railway company recognize its responsibility in sending French Jews to their deaths.

The court said Wednesday it would rule May 14 on whether the case can go forward.

### Immigrant policy worries group

A new U.S. policy to detain asylum seekers from nations where Al-Qaida operates would unfairly ensnare Jews and others, a leading immigrant rights group charged.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society said a component of Operation Liberty Shield, which the Department of Homeland Defense recently unveiled, "lumps asylum seekers" with "terrorists" by allowing immigration officials a wide net to detain anyone from countries where Al-Qaida sympathizers live or where the group operates.

"Inappropriately detaining people who may have been tortured or unjustly imprisoned and came here in search of safety and protection is wrong," HIAS CEO Leonard Glickman said.

### Threats made in Brazil

Four phone calls threatening bombings were made recently to a historic Rio de Janeiro synagogue, according to a local Jewish paper.

Until late last year, the headquarters of the Rio de Janeiro Jewish federation was hosted in the basement of the shul, known as the Grande Templo.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city and largest Jewish community, a threatening letter was sent to the Israeli Consulate, signed by an unknown group, demanding the creation of a Palestinian state.

## WAR IN IRAQ

### Israel backers hold their breath as U.S. seeks missile launchers

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Advocates for Israel are hoping that the Jewish state will not be in danger in the hours or days until U.S. forces finish scouring Iraq's Western desert in search of missile launchers that could strike Israel.

Unlike during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when Israel bowed to fierce American pressure not to respond when hit by 39 Iraqi missiles, Israeli leaders this time have said they will retaliate for a major attack.

The United States is eager to keep Israel from getting involved in the war, fearing it would endanger the fragile coalition against Iraq. U.S. officials promised that one of the first orders of battle would be to search for missile launchers in Iraq's vast desert.

Some, then, were surprised when the war began Wednesday night with an isolated missile attack in Baghdad that reportedly targeted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and his close associates — followed by a prolonged lull.

"I would have preferred" that efforts against Scud missile launchers "be the first thing they did, but obviously they had other priorities," said Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

"Every minute" that the United States doesn't take out Scud launchers, the threat to Israel remains, he said.

"The whole prevailing thought that Saddam Hussein would attack Israel is that he's going to go down anyway — and by attacking Israel as he goes down, he becomes a hero in the Arab world," Neumann said.

Others cautioned that more efforts may be underway in the Western desert than are reported. While television stations prominently featured the attacks on Baghdad, there clearly isn't the same type of media presence in the desert.

Israeli media reported late Thursday that a large U.S. force had begun operating in western Iraq to prevent missile attacks against Israel.

Little is known about preemptive actions that U.S. Special Forces reportedly have taken in the desert in recent weeks and months, but it is known that scouts have surveyed Iraq's Western front for a long time.

Some have speculated that U.S. forces already have taken out the Scud launchers — or perhaps that they looked and found none.

"They're finding no evidence of Scud launchers out there," said Morris Amitay, a pro-Israel activist and former executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. "Israelis are very confident there's nothing out there."

A hopeful sign, analysts say, is the fact that Saddam retaliated for the initial strike by launching missiles into Kuwait, not Israel.

But Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a former chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force, said Saddam has not yet reached the point at which he might use weapons of mass destruction, possibly against Israel.

"I believe that Saddam is not yet ready to make it public that he has the things he swears in front of the whole world he does not have," said Lipkin-Shahak, a member of the Israel Policy Forum's Israel Advisory Council.

"It may be different when Saddam is really pushed to a corner and believes it's his last few days."

For now, Saddam will focus primarily on protecting the Iraqi capital, Lipkin-Shahak said.

"I don't think that Israel is under such a big threat," he said.

Nonetheless, Israel is taking precautions, notably with a two-tiered system of anti-missile missiles that can take out Iraqi Scuds before they hit.

The new Arrow system is designed to shoot down Scuds at high altitudes and long distances, while Patriot missiles are used to guard strategic locations and serve as a backup if the Arrow fails.

Just in case, Israelis brought gas masks to work and school on Thursday.

Despite the surprise opening of an attempted "decapitation strike," Jewish and Israeli officials were confident Thursday that Israel would be protected. □

## WAR IN IRAQ

## Jews everywhere fret for Israel, and fear an anti-Semitic backlash

By JTA Staff

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish communities around the world are divided in their feelings about the attack on Iraq, but united in their concern that Israel could be endangered — and that they themselves could suffer an anti-Semitic backlash.

At Rome's Il Pitigliani Jewish Community Center, staff members stayed up all night Wednesday waiting for the long-anticipated, U.S.-led assault to begin.

"We are all glued to the Internet," one staffer told JTA.

Besides fears that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein could send missiles against Israel, as he did in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, "people are very concerned about the risk that the Jews are going to be identified with the war, and this could lead to a backlash."

Such sentiments were echoed in Jewish communities across Europe, North and South America and elsewhere as the first bombs began raining down on Baghdad.

"This war is going to have terrible consequences for Jews in France," Alain Seror told JTA.

Seror had come to buy his regular morning croissant at a kosher bakery in Paris's popular Belleville district, a neighborhood shared by Jews and Muslims and where Islamic bookstores and butchers intermingle with kosher delis and falafel joints.

Seror and others had little doubt that the war would further increase tensions between the two communities.

Muslim youths are considered largely responsible for several waves of anti-Semitic attacks since the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000. With many Muslims arguing that the United States is out to attack Islam in general — and with some even saying that the United States is acting at Israel's instigation — the potential for a new outburst of violence is clear.

"Every Arab in France is going to regard this as a personal attack on Islam," Seror said. "Yes, we are afraid."

Across the border, the president of the Consistoire Central Israelite de Belgique, the official representative body of Belgian Jewry, said the community was "living moments of high anxiety."

"We are scared that Saddam Hussein will use weapons of mass destruction against Israel," Julien Klener said.

Philippe Markiewicz, president of the body that coordinates all of Belgium's Jewish communities, noted sadly that Jews in Belgium "are always a 'privileged target.'"

"The Jewish communities in Europe will suffer from the war, by the way it will be portrayed in the media," added Martha Mucznik, a Portuguese national who serves as executive director of the European Union of Jewish Students.

In Russia, Jews by and large agreed with their government's anti-war stance. Concern was felt primarily for the huge population of immigrants from the former Soviet Union now living in Israel.

"The first thing people in the synagogue asked me this morning was, 'What's going to happen with our relatives in Israel?'" said Berel Lazar, one of Russia's two chief rabbis. "I'm telling people nothing bad will come out of the situation for their families in Israel."

Not all were comforted, however.

"More than a million of our compatriots live today in Israel.

Many of these people are Russian citizens," Yevgeny Satanovsky, president of the Russian Jewish Congress umbrella group, said in a statement released Thursday evening.

The war "makes these people hostages to the global interests of the United States," Satanovsky continued. "We call on the United States to end this war as soon as possible with as few civilian victims as possible."

Such concerns reached as far away as South America, where Jews expressed mixed feelings about the U.S. attack.

"We have never lived through a war up close in Brazil. Wars on TV look like Hollywood," Sao Paulo resident Marcia Sasson said. "But a war that involves the United States also involves all of us, and particularly the Jews for our connection to Israel.

"My heart will be torn apart when I see that some soldier surnamed '-berg' or '-man' was killed in this war, and I'll be completely sympathetic to his family in the U.S., saying kaddish for him," she added.

Particularly worrying to Brazilian Jews was the potentially radicalizing effect the war could have on Arabs living in the area where Brazil borders Argentina and Paraguay. Extremist Muslim groups are known to have strong bases there.

"In general, our Jewish community lives peacefully with the Arab community here, but it's always prudent to be alert," university student Frances Baras said. "I have heard — and I don't doubt it — that" local Arabs "might react somehow. That's why I condemn any war."

Many Jewish communities said they had discussed security concerns with authorities. In Argentina, the justice and security minister, Juan Jose Alvarez, said security had been reinforced along the country's borders and at Jewish communal buildings.

In Montreal, Jews are in "close contact" with police and government authorities about security at Jewish institutions, according to Rabbi Reuben Poupko, chairman of the Montreal Jewish Community Security Coordinating Committee.

In France, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy announced last week that security would be heightened at more than 700 Jewish institutions across the country if war broke out.

In Italy, security at Jewish institutions has been tight for years — sources said some 74 police in Rome, or about one officer for every 200 Jews, are assigned to protect Jewish interests — and events such as an Israeli film festival were to go ahead as planned.

Security in Serbia already was high because of the state of emergency imposed after the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic last week, but it was raised even further around synagogues and other Jewish sites.

Rabbis in England and South Africa acknowledged the strong anti-war sentiment in their countries. "Clearly there is moral justification for getting rid of the totally evil regime of Saddam Hussein by means of war," South Africa's chief rabbi, Cyril Harris, said. "The United Nations was far too slow. The only alternative — a diplomatic solution — could have taken years and years."

But, he added, "Everyone is praying that it's going to be very brief, with a minimum of casualties." □

(JTA correspondents Ruth Gruber in Rome, Philip Carmel in Paris, Jonathan Fisk in Brussels, Florencia Arbiser in Argentina, Marcus Moraes in Rio de Janeiro, Katka Krosnar in Belgrade, Serbia, Lev Krichevsky in Moscow, Agnes Bohm in Budapest, Moira Schneider in Cape Town, Claire Levy in London, Bram Eisenthal in Montreal contributed to this report.)