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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Congress: Aid to Israel to pass

U.S. supplemental aid to Israel will pass Congress by Passover, congressional leaders told the pro-Israel lobby this week.

Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee annual dinner on Monday that he thanks God that "Israel has a supporter in the Oval Office as loyal and devoted to Israel as this president."

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) told the audience, which included close to half of the U.S. Congress, that the president was right to re-engage in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but "when Israel chooses to assume risks for peace, Israel has a right to demand concrete and decisive steps against terrorism."

Both Daschle and Frist said the \$1 billion in military aid and \$9 billion in loan guarantees would pass the Senate soon. House leaders from both parties made similar comments.

Report blasts Israel

Israel committed "numerous, serious human rights abuses" in the West Bank and Gaza, according to the U.S. State Department.

In its annual human rights report, released Monday, the department found that at least 990 Palestinians and two foreign nationals were killed in violence with Israel last year, and that Israel carried out targeted killings in "crowded areas when civilian casualties were likely, killing 25 bystanders, including 13 children."

The report also criticized the Palestinians for not complying "with most of their commitments, notably those relating to the renunciation of violence and terrorism, taking responsibility for all PLO elements and disciplining violators."

Fund-raising group enters Russia

The main group that raises money for Israel outside the United States is operating in Russia.

"We see today the former Soviet Union as any other country in the world," said Gadi Dror, executive adviser to Keren Hayesod's chairman.

Keren Hayesod also plans to start campaigns in Ukraine and Moldova, and to begin activities in other former Soviet republics within the next five years, Dror said.

Bush administration to Jews: 'Road map' must move ahead

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration is calling out the heavy hitters to convince the American Jewish community that it won't ignore Israel's concerns as it mounts a renewed push for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Five Bush administration officials addressed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference this week, including Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.

Some Israeli officials and U.S. Jewish leaders have worried that the Bush administration will pressure Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians in order to shore up international support for its war against Iraq or to "pay back" Arab states that have supported, or at least tolerated, the war.

At issue is whether both Israel and the Palestinians are expected to move forward simultaneously — or whether Israel will be pressed to make concessions only after the Palestinians have shown that they are serious about ending terrorism and moving toward peace.

In a landmark policy speech last June 24, President Bush expressed support for a future Palestinian state — but only after an end to violence against Israel, a change in Palestinian leadership and significant reforms in Palestinian governance.

In contrast, America's partners in the diplomatic Quartet that authored the "road map" toward peace — the United Nations, European Union and Russia — expect both sides to make simultaneous concessions. Current drafts of the plan envision a simultaneous process.

The goal of the speakers at the AIPAC conference was to show that the administration stands behind Bush's original vision, and they repeatedly invoked the June 24 speech.

"The road map is not an edict, it is not a treaty," Powell told the conference on Sunday, which drew some 5,000 activists from around the country.

"It is a statement of the broad steps we believe Israel and the Palestinians must take to achieve President Bush's vision of hope and the dream that we all have for peace."

However, both Powell and Rice stressed that while the administration welcomed Israel's comments on the plan, it would not countenance major changes.

Though Bush is very popular among supporters of Israel, some prominent Jewish organizational officials said they left the sessions concerned about where the administration was headed.

And AIPAC is leaving nothing to chance: The group is lobbying Congress to pressure the White House to stick to the June 24 parameters.

The administration has been sending mixed signals on the issue in recent weeks.

Acknowledging that the road map was controversial in the Jewish community, Rice told AIPAC participants Monday that the White House "welcomed comments" from Israel and the Palestinians, but she said that "it is not a matter of renegotiating the road map," according to Jewish officials at the session, which was closed to the media.

The speakers also made clear that the administration would demand that Israel ease restrictions imposed on the Palestinian population as part of Israel's anti-terror operations, and freeze all settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel and some of its American allies have been concerned that the road map will deviate from the president's vision, and that the plan — which does not clearly demand an end to terror before negotiations began and Israel makes concessions — will be adopted by a U.S. government that seeks European and Arab support for its policies

MIDEAST FOCUS

Mofaz: Syrian remarks 'very grave'

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said Israel and the United States view as "very grave" recent statements by Syrian President Bashar Assad supporting Iraq and dismissing the possibility of peace with Israel.

Mofaz made his comments Tuesday during a visit to an Israeli army induction base.

Syria will never be able to make peace with Israel, Assad told a Lebanese newspaper, "because it is treacherous by nature." Assad also said he is worried about a possible U.S. invasion of his country.

Lawmaker free from charges

An indictment against an Israeli Arab legislator for organizing trips of Israeli Arabs to Syria was thrown out.

But at the same time it threw out the case against Azmi Beshara, the court allowed cases on similar charges against his two aides to go forward.

The court said Beshara could not be tried for illegally organizing trips to an enemy country because he is a member of Knesset.

Consular services suspended

Passport and visa services are currently suspended at Israeli consulates and embassies around the world. The suspension is a result of strikes in Israel relating to a public-sector wage cut that is part of Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's austerity plan.

Hold the Joe, Yossi

Starbucks is shutting down its cafes in Israel. The six cafes in the Tel Aviv area are slated to be closed at the end of the week.

Analysts attributed the failure of Starbucks, which is ubiquitous in many U.S. cities, to competition from established cafes. Security issues and Israel's recession also contributed to the chain's failure.

elsewhere in the Middle East. Those concerns were heightened last month, just days before U.S. forces attacked Iraq, when Bush announced that he would distribute the road map to the Israelis and Palestinians after the Palestinian Authority prime minister-designate, Mahmoud Abbas, is confirmed with "real authority."

The government of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has major concerns about the road map, and has hoped to alter it.

The Palestinians, recognizing that the last draft of the road map is more favorable to them than the Bush speech was, do not want to allow changes.

Both Powell and Rice quoted Bush's call for Israel to freeze all settlement building as the Palestinians make progress towards peace, an ambiguous phrasing that the two sides may interpret differently. Israel hopes to allow for "natural growth" of existing settlements, which critics say is a ploy to continue building settlements.

When Powell on Sunday called settlement building "inconsistent with President Bush's two-state vision," he received applause and a smattering of boos.

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, who also addressed the conference Sunday night, met Monday with Powell, Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney.

Bush attended virtually the entire meeting with Rice, senior Israeli officials said.

Shalom's meetings touched on U.S. military efforts in western Iraq to ensure that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is not able to launch missiles against Israel.

The bulk of Shalom's meetings with U.S. officials apparently dealt with the road map, however.

Shalom told reporters here Monday that there is a "great understanding" between Israel and the United States on how to proceed on the Palestinian track, along the lines of Bush's June 24 speech. He dismissed questions suggesting that U.S. criticism of Israeli settlements had grown unusually harsh.

One Israeli official sought to square the circle by noting that while the United States will demand Palestinian action first, the time frame for Israel to respond with concessions of its own may be so compressed that for all intents and purposes the two sides will be acting simultaneously.

Meanwhile, AIPAC is working to shore up its position on Capitol Hill. AIPAC delegates lobbied lawmakers to sign onto letters urging the president to stick to the language of his speech and resist international pressure to "short-circuit the process."

"The United States has developed a level of credibility and trust with all parties in the region which no other country shares," says the House letter, which is sponsored by Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), the House majority whip, and Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.).

"We are concerned that certain nations or groups, if given a meaningful role in monitoring progress made on the ground, might only lessen the chances of moving forward on a realistic path towards peace."

Those sentiments were seconded Sunday night by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who used a dessert reception to urge AIPAC supporters to fight to minimize the role of America's Quartet partners.

In the Senate, a similar letter is being circulated by Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.).

Lawmakers will be hearing this week from many Jews who support the letters.

Such sentiments aren't universal in the Jewish community, however.

Several Jewish groups say AIPAC is using a delaying tactic in hopes of scuttling the road map altogether. These groups support the road map and want it to be imposed immediately.

"The approach AIPAC is supporting is an approach we've tried for two years, and it has never worked," said M.J. Rosenberg, policy director of the Israel Policy Forum.

"Anyone who wants the peace process to succeed is supporting the road map."

Stressing its support for the road map in front of the AIPAC audience showed how serious the Bush administration is taking the issue, Rosenberg said.

AIPAC officials dismissed the criticism.

"Those who suggest that AIPAC opposes the road map that implements the vision laid out by President Bush on June 24 are wrong," said Rebecca Dinar, AIPAC's spokeswoman.

She said that there are several interpretations of the road map, and that AIPAC is pushing for the one that closely resembles Bush's speech and Sharon's policy. □

(JTA Managing Editor Michael Arnold contributed to this report.)



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JEWISH WORLD

AIPAC Web site hacked

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee's Web site was hacked during the pro-Israel lobbying group's annual policy conference.

While there were no visible protesters during the Washington conference, the main page of the site was replaced Monday with a statement that included expletives and said "try lobbying for some peace."

The site also greeted "all Muslims and all people across the world who are opposed to this 'ZIONIST-AMERICAN oil war.'"

A link on the site directed people to an Al-Jazeera television Web page that showed Iraqi casualties of the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Interfaith group to honor Jews

An interfaith briefing and awards banquet supporting Israel is slated to take place in Washington on Wednesday.

The event is further testament to the growing partnership between evangelical Christians and Israel.

The Rev. Jerry Falwell, Attorney General John Ashcroft and Israel's ambassador to the United States, Daniel Ayalon, are among those slated to speak at the event, which is sponsored by the Interfaith Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

House leader praises Israel

Israel is a "bright and shining star of the 20th century," Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told an audience of hundreds at the Religious Action Center's Consultation on Conscience conference.

At the end of a speech Monday mostly criticizing the Bush administration's budget proposals, the House minority leader also said Israel and America share a "common heritage" and both countries were "built by pioneers and replenished by immigrants."

Pelosi criticized statements that have been made linking Jewish interests to the war in Iraq.

Twersky to AJCongress

David Twersky, the former editor of the New Jersey Jewish News, has taken a post at the American Jewish Congress. The newsman began this week as chief information officer at the AJCongress, according to its executive director, Neil Goldstein.

Twersky has worked at the Forward and written for the New York Sun.

British Jewish leader won't run

The first woman to serve as president of British Jewry's umbrella organization said she will not seek re-election. Jo Wagerman, 70, told the London Jewish Chronicle that she will not run again when her term expires later this year.

Wagerman is recovering from cancer.

Reaching beyond Iraq and Israel, Reform activists blast domestic policies

By Mica Rosenberg

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As Rabbi David Saperstein sees it, the war on Iraq is only one issue on a long list of America's serious problems.

The leader of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism for more than 30 years, Saperstein thinks that even as the country's political compass is pointed toward the Middle East, the liberal Jewish community here should not lose sight of the battles being fought at home.

"When the war in Iraq is diverting so much of our resources and attention in America, it becomes so important that organizations like ours keep a simultaneous focus on the core issues," he said.

Included in that list, he said, is maintaining the separation of church and state and abortion rights, protecting the environment and expanding the "social safety net that is supposed to help the neediest Americans."

So it was not surprising that these issues topped the agenda of this week's gathering of several hundred Reform activists from around the country who came to the capital for the organization's biennial Consultation on Conscience conference.

Saperstein's anxiety about the current state of domestic affairs was echoed by several prominent political figures — including two Democratic presidential hopefuls, Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean — who addressed the three-day gathering.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, speaking at the rededication of the newly renovated RAC facility on Sunday, criticized the Bush administration's policies on tax reform, judicial nominations and civil liberties.

"Will the Justice Department, now housed in a building named for my brother, once filled with lawyers who stayed up nights to work towards equitable housing laws and preserve civil rights, now be used to deny those very rights?" Kennedy said.

"The attorney general has used fear of terrorism as a pretext to trample on our liberties."

Kennedy said the new economic stimulus plan proposed by the White House is an "outrage."

"It cannot be peace time for the well-off and war time for everyone else," he said.

Calling the RAC more needed than ever 42 years after its founding, the president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, continued the theme, blasting what he views as a growing chasm between rich and poor. That chasm is made deeper, he said, by White House policies.

"This administration is the first in the history of our country to ask the sons and daughters of working men and women to risk their lives in war while asking the wealthy to pay less taxes," Yoffie charged Sunday night.

He also voiced concern that with conflict raging in Iraq, U.S. Jews could lose sight of the importance of human rights at home.

"My concern is that with the guns of war blazing, we will forget Guantanamo, we will forget that it's wrong to confine people without even telling them the charges against them, we will forget the balance that is required between security and liberty," Yoffie said, to repeated applause.

"If we win the war and lose the Constitution, we will have lost everything."

The president of the NAACP, Kweisi Mfume, also spoke at the rededication of the RAC, which was founded in 1961.

"At the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, we believe that colored people come in all colors" said Mfume and pointed to the RAC's history of fighting against racism and sexism, and fighting to protect the rights of "gays, immigrants and unions."

In the building's conference room, both the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were drafted by African American and Jewish leaders. □

(JTA Staff Writer Rachel Pomerance and the news editor of the Washington Jewish Week, Paula Amann, contributed to this report.)

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Among wealthiest Jews in U.S., most give most to secular causes

By Joe Berkofsky

SAN JOSE, Calif. (JTA) — In his 74 years, Arthur Sackler made a fortune in medical book publishing and amassed a collection of rare art and sculpture.

In 1999, his family foundation gave \$100 million to the Smithsonian Institution, where an Asian art gallery bears Sackler's name.

That extraordinary donation was among the top handful of 188 "mega-gifts" of \$10 million or more that the nation's 123 wealthiest Jews handed out between 1995 and 2000, amounting to \$5.3 billion. But while the country's wealthiest Jews may be generous philanthropists, few of their biggest gifts go to Jewish causes, a new study shows.

The study comes as Jewish institutions are struggling to fund a multitude of causes amid a weakened economy. And it raises questions — and some debate — over why so many major Jewish philanthropists are overlooking Jewish causes.

The report by the Institute for Jewish Community & Research in San Francisco found that of the \$5.3 billion that major Jewish philanthropists dispersed — 22 percent of the \$29.3 billion in big-ticket giving overall — only \$318 million of their gifts went to Jewish institutions.

The \$318 million, transmitted through 18 mega-gifts, accounted for nearly 10 percent of all philanthropy to Jewish causes during that period, including to Jewish federations.

Compared to the amount of Jewish money non-Jewish charities received, the Jewish community got "virtually nothing" from Jews, said Gary Tobin, president of the institute and an author of the study.

"There is clearly a huge disconnect between the major donations and the Jewish community."

Tobin released the study here this week at the conference of the Jewish Funders Network, which serves as the unofficial umbrella for family foundations and independent philanthropic ventures operating outside the Jewish federation system.

According to Tobin's study, the majority of mega-gifts from Jews and non-Jews — 80 percent — were distributed in the areas of education, health and arts and culture.

Jewish giving to higher education — nearly \$2.6 billion, 61 percent of all their gifts — was consistent with the trend in philanthropy in general.

Fifty-six percent of mega-gifts from all philanthropists went to colleges and universities.

Some of those gifts went to Jewish institutions of higher learning, including the Technion — Israel Institute of Technology, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the University of Judaism, Brandeis University and Yeshiva University.

The findings raise many questions for those who are involved in Jewish philanthropy.

Tobin cautioned that the study does not say the Jewish community is not philanthropically healthy.

After all, the annual North American federation campaigns totaled more than \$900 million and Jewish family foundations gave \$2 billion in grants last year.

Perhaps the biggest mystery, Tobin said, is what motivates

major Jewish philanthropists to ignore their own community.

Philanthropies are supposed to "connect" Jewish donors to causes, he said, but "something's wrong with the facilitators," he said, referring to Jewish institutions.

Tobin's report suggests the need for follow-up studies to explore these issues more deeply to find out. He said he has already begun interviewing philanthropists — Jews and non-Jews — about their giving habits.

Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and a co-author of the study along with the institute's Alex Karp, said one problem could be "structural" — that Jewish institutions are not designed to capture higher-end donations.

When it comes to seeking high-end gifts for Jewish communal needs, Solomon posed a basic question: "Are we asking?"

Mark Charendoff, executive vice president of the Jewish Funders Network, put the onus on Jewish organizations and institutions to convince the big donors to give — and to give more.

"The two biggest challenges the Jewish community has vis-a-vis funders is inspiration and trust — it can't be one or the other, it's got to be both," he said.

And in this rocky economic climate, he said, Jewish institutions must approach givers with solid business plans.

"More and more, people are looking at major charitable efforts as "investments and not gifts," he said.

Brian Gaines, executive director of the San Francisco-based Joshua Venture, which funds young Jews launching innovative programs, said he has succeeded in winning support from such mega-givers as Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation; the Rhoda Goldman Fund, the Walter & Elise Haas Fund and the Bronfmans' fund.

Still, he said, "people are concerned about their money, and rightly so. They want to see results, they want to see impact."

Claire Ellman, of La Jolla, Calif., whose family launched the Jeremiah Foundation, which focuses on Jewish day school education as a vehicle for Jewish survival, says much bigger challenges lay ahead.

Mega-donors such as the Bronfmans and Michael Steinhardt are "the old guard" of givers who represent a generation that is expected to transfer an estimated \$1 trillion to \$3.5 trillion to the next generation in the coming years.

"Younger funders are not so committed to Jewish education" and other Jewish issues, Ellman said. "Who's going to fund the Jews if the Jews don't?"

Sanford Cardin, executive director of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, said Jewish philanthropists who give to non-Jewish causes "should be applauded."

Even so, he said, his foundation, which gives an unusually high 75 percent of its funding to Jewish causes, believes that "people of significant Jewish wealth should also be giving significant amounts of money to Jewish causes." □

Remains of ancient city found

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Remains of an ancient city were uncovered in the seaside city of Ashkelon, along Israel's southern coast.

The find of the city, believed to date to the third century BCE, includes the remains of a road, houses, cooking implements and a collection of bronze stones, Israel Radio reported. □