



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 73

Wednesday, April 16, 2003

86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Troops nab Abu Abbas

U.S. forces in Baghdad reportedly captured Mohammad "Abu" Abbas, who masterminded the 1985 terror attack on the Achille Lauro cruise ship.

Abbas' Palestine Liberation Front hijacked the Italian cruise ship and killed Leon Klinghoffer, a disabled American Jew, and then dumped his body overboard. Abbas' group also led a failed speedboat attack on a Tel Aviv beach.

Abbas has been living in Baghdad for years, but is wanted in Italy and the United States for the Achille Lauro attack. Abbas is a member of the PLO Executive Committee, and in the wake of the Oslo peace accords Israel allowed him into Gaza to vote for the nascent Palestinian Authority.

He is not related to Mahmoud Abbas, who was recently named Palestinian Authority prime minister.

### Six killed in violence

Three Israelis and three Palestinians were killed in violence on Tuesday.

A Palestinian terrorist killed two Israeli civilians and injured six near the Karni Crossing in the Gaza Strip before soldiers killed him.

An Israeli army officer and two senior Hamas militants were killed in clashes in the West Bank city of Nablus. The Israeli officer was identified as Lt. Daniel Mandel, 24, of Alon Shvut.

In another development, Palestinians said an Islamic Jihad militant was killed by Israeli fire near Rafiah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

### Sharon presses U.S. on Syria

The United States should pressure Syria to oust Palestinian terrorist groups from Damascus and Hezbollah forces from southern Lebanon, Israel's prime minister said.

In an interview published Tuesday in the Yediot Achronot newspaper, Ariel Sharon repeated allegations he raised before the U.S.-led war in Iraq that Baghdad had moved military equipment to Syria on the eve of the conflict. [Page 1]

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Thursday, April 17 and Friday, April 18.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### What's next on Bush agenda? Everything at once, it seems

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For months, analysts and pundits have wondered what would be the next item on the Bush administration's agenda after war in Iraq.

Suddenly, it seems the White House is tackling most of its agenda items at once.

In the hours after Iraq's major cities fell last week, U.S. attention began shifting to the Middle East's numerous other trouble spots.

Among the priorities is the presentation of the "road map" toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, rebuilding Iraq and, unexpectedly, pressuring Syria to change its belligerent policies.

All have major implications for Israel. The American Jewish community and other pro-Israel activists have been closely monitoring developments in the region, seeing both opportunities and concerns in the reshaping of the Middle East.

It long was expected that the administration would focus on rebuilding Iraq and resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict immediately after the war.

But the pressure on Syria seemingly came out of nowhere last week.

Bush administration officials began blasting Syria for sending shipments of military supplies to Iraq, harboring terrorist organizations and alleged Iraqi war criminals, and allowing men to infiltrate Iraq to fight U.S. forces.

"In recent days, the Syrians have been shipping killers into Iraq to try to kill Americans," Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz told Congress on April 10. "I think it is important that Iraq's neighbors not meddle with Iraq."

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon joined the chorus, reviving allegations he made last winter that Iraq had moved military equipment to Syria, either to hide it from the United States or to transfer the equipment to Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based terrorist organization that is supported by the Syrian and Iranian governments.

Sharon labeled young Syrian leader Bashar Assad "dangerous," arguing that he is inexperienced and capable of misjudging the strategic landscape.

"During the war in Iraq he proved he does not have the ability to reach the right conclusions from relatively obvious facts," Sharon told the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot on Tuesday. "All those who considered the facts could have known that Iraq would lose. But Assad thought the United States was going to lose."

Syrian officials reportedly have said they want to turn Iraq into "America's Lebanon," a reference to the insurgency that Syrian-supported guerrillas waged for years against Israeli troops occupying southern Lebanon.

The slow but steady bloodletting ultimately forced Israel to withdraw in 2000. A similar situation would teach the United States not to meddle in Arab affairs, Syrian officials reportedly believe.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials were in Washington for talks with administration officials on modifying the road map. But they faced resistance from a White House committed to the plan it drafted with its partners in the diplomatic "Quartet" — the United Nations, European Union and Russia.

A day after meeting with Sharon's chief of staff, Dov Weisglass, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday that the "finalized" road map would be released to the parties after the Cabinet of new Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas is confirmed. Powell said he expects to receive "comments" from both parties.

"These are comments that will come in, they'll be considered by the Quartet,"

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Jenin battle moves to screens

A film showing the Israeli perspective on last year's battle in the Jenin refugee camp aired on Israeli television Monday.

"On the Way to Jenin," shown Monday, was produced by a French Jewish filmmaker who goes by the pseudonym Pierre Rehov.

Fifty-two Palestinians, most of them armed, and 23 Israeli troops were killed in fighting in Jenin that erupted as part of the widespread Israeli army operation against the terrorist infrastructure last April.

Some Arab officials and international groups accused Israel of carrying out a massacre in the camp, but the allegations were later disproved.

Mohammed Bakri, an Israeli Arab filmmaker whose film "Jenin, Jenin" was banned by the censor for its wild distortions, had petitioned the High Court to try to block the showing of "On the Way to Jenin." The court rejected Bakri's petition.

### Israel: We've crippled Hamas

Israel says it has crippled Hamas' terrorist infrastructure in the northern West Bank over the past year.

Since the Passover suicide bombing in Netanya last year that killed 29 Israelis, Israel has cracked down on Hamas in the cities of Tulkarm, Nablus, Kalkilya and Jenin. Of the 63 Hamas agents that made up the group's leadership last year, 37 were captured, 22 were killed and four remain at large, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

### Seder survivors will return

Some 34 Israelis wounded in a suicide bombing in a Netanya hotel on Passover eve last year will celebrate a seder there on Wednesday night.

The Israelis were invited by the hotel management, which raised money to host them for four days.

Twenty-nine people were killed in the attack inside the hotel dining room last year.



## Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).

Powell said in a briefing at the Washington Foreign Press Center. "But, really, these are comments that both sides have to begin to discuss with each other and share with each other."

The current confluence of events likely will mean increased Israeli engagement with the United States. Israel will try to echo Washington's warnings to Syria, while pressing the White House not to push the road map faster than Israel is willing to go.

Israel has much to gain from increased pressure on Damascus. Syria essentially controls Israel's northern neighbor, Lebanon, and harbors and supports terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah.

U.S.-led pressure on Syria is likely to be more productive than anything Israel could bring to bear on its own.

Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Syrian government is a mix of ideologues and realists — and that opportunities for change exist.

"The question ultimately becomes, 'Can you build a coalition inside Syria for Syria to reorient the way it deals with the world?'" he said.

Among the possible carrots the United States can use is the drafting of a road map for Syria to get off the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism; the creation of new economic opportunities for Syria; giving Syria a role in regional discussions; and inviting Syria to participate in rebuilding Iraq.

"You need to make sure there is not a reward for Syria for being the non-U.S. ally in the Arab world," Alterman said. "To the extent that most Arab states have friendly relations with Washington, Syria may be casting for support by playing itself as the non-U.S. ally in the Arab world."

With Syria on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, there are few sanctions the United States can impose that aren't already in place; however, Congress is moving forward a bill that has been on the back burner for more than a year that would penalize Syria for its behavior.

The Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act would ban sales of items to Syria that have potential military use in addition to other uses, freeze Syrian assets in the United States and call on the president to implement other sanctions, such as restricting Syrian diplomats' travel in the United States or prohibiting U.S. businesses from operating in Syria.

The bill — sponsored by Reps. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) in the House of Representatives and Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) in the Senate — went nowhere last term, despite the efforts of pro-Israel lobbyists. Though it no longer tops the agenda of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the newfound scrutiny of Syria may give the bill new life this term.

It's unclear how vocal U.S. Jewish organizations will be about Syria. They worked hard over the past year to mute their support for war against Iraq, fearing that a prominent stance would lead to accusations that the war was being fought on Israel's behalf — accusations that were leveled anyway.

Jewish leaders may be hesitant to speak out on the Syrian track for the same reasons — but also because their voices may not be needed.

"There may be a feeling that if this is going to be debated and perceived as a U.S. issue, why engage it from a parochial perspective of a pro-Israel group pushing its agenda?" one Jewish leader said. "Why pile on?"

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said Jewish groups have had little time to discuss Syria strategy because the issue has moved so fast.

"I do think we have to be concerned about visibility of the Jewish community on these issues," Hoenlein said.

An Israeli official in Washington said Israel is more willing to speak out about Syria than it was about the Iraq war, because "nobody is talking about military conflict."

Jewish voices will be needed, however, to combat expected rhetorical attacks on Israel's nuclear arsenal.

When the United States criticized Syria, Assad replied by saying he hoped for a nuclear-free Middle East. Powell then was pressed on whether the United States would push Israel to disarm. "We would like to see a region that is free of all the weapons of mass destruction," Powell said. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### U.N. commission blasts Israel

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights passed three resolutions condemning Israel. America stood alone in vetoing all of the resolutions, which passed Tuesday.

Among them was a resolution sponsored by the African and Arab nations, which passed 33-5, criticizing Israel's "gross violation of human rights and international humanitarian law" and "acts of mass killing perpetrated by the Israeli occupying authorities against the Palestinian people" and legitimized struggle against foreign occupation "by all available means, including armed struggle."

European countries sponsored a resolution, which passed 51-1, expressing "grave concern" at Israeli settlement activities.

Another, sponsored mostly by Arab countries and passed by 31-1, called Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights illegal. The commission regularly passes five resolutions at its annual six-week session.

The commission passed a resolution backing Palestinians' right to self-determination Monday and is expected to pass another resolution seen as anti-Israel Wednesday.

### Doctors: Papon too sick for jail

Maurice Papon is still too sick to return to prison, three independent medical experts said.

The former senior official in Vichy France was convicted for crimes against humanity and released last year because of poor health. The medical experts were appointed by a court after Papon refused to attend a legal hearing in January.

As the senior official in southwest France for the Vichy regime, Papon ordered the deportation of more than 1,500 French Jews to Auschwitz.

### Activists 'tax' Israel

Anti-Israel activists used tax day, April 15, to call for an end to U.S. aid to Israel.

Circulating mock tax forms that itemize American financial support for Israel, members of the grass-roots group SUSTAIN — Stop U.S. Tax-funded Aid to Israel Now — converged on post offices in San Francisco, New York, Boston and Memphis on Tuesday.

"Israel is just a conduit" through which America promotes destruction, activist Zaid Khalil told JTA near New York's central post office.

### French Jews mark ghetto uprising

Hundreds of French Jews gathered Monday at a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The ceremony was held near Paris' Jewish quarter. Those attending included many Holocaust survivors and the Israeli and Polish ambassadors, as well as leading French politicians.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Dot-com learns from first Passover, as harried British shoppers eye site

By Andrew Morris

LONDON (JTA) — For many, the last few days before Passover are not synonymous with relaxation.

By the time the festival finally comes around, the annual scramble for kosher-for-Passover food and products leaves many an exhausted shopper. But in Britain, at least, two entrepreneurial students have vowed to make life a little easier by introducing a one-stop online Passover service.

Named Passovershop.com, the service offers rabbinically certified kosher products and promises the weary shopper "Passover — the easy way."

The site, developed and run by a pair of 20-year-old business students, Mordechai Calvert and Daniel Wosner, offers a full range of kosher products delivered to any address in Britain. "People in outlying communities have great difficulty obtaining their Passover food," notes Calvert, "and there is also a market for those who don't like the trouble of shops."

The two students, who developed the idea after they returned from yeshiva in Israel last year, are entering a lucrative market for Passover goods here; however, the founders say Passovershop.com was established for reasons other than financial gain.

"The aim was to ensure no one has an excuse for not making Passover," Wosner says.

In fact, the online service, which closed its cyber-doors to new orders April 13, has been something of a grueling business experience for the two Londoners.

Adds Calvert: "I think it's one thing talking about doing something like this, but it's quite another actually getting up and achieving it."

But after spending nearly a year developing the concept — and many a late night finding suppliers and delivery systems between their studies — Calvert and Wosner are content that their commitment and hard work on the Web site has come to fruition.

For Jewish families in places as isolated as the Isle of Mann, where there are very few Jews, the opportunity for a kosher Passover delivered to their door makes Passovershop.com a unique service in Britain. Even in those areas where there are sizeable communities, such as Manchester, the dot-com shop has won orders — thanks, say the pair, to the large selection of food and Judaica products that often outstrips what is available in the offline kosher world.

Judging by the reaction of one bedraggled shopper at one of North London's foremost, and somewhat manic, kosher-for-Passover supermarkets, the venture is one to be applauded. "I wish I had known about it; this place is killing me," says Sharon Shuman, a mother of three who acknowledges always leaving her Passover shopping to the last minute, despite the horrendous lines and parking mayhem.

The Web site's novelty and limited exposure have meant market share has been limited — a spokesman for the kosher division of the London Beit Din, or Jewish religious court, said he had not heard of the service.

Though the owners expect to take a loss this year, with Britain's e-retail industry already 6 percent of the total retail market, and growing three times faster than in the United States, the omens for next Passover are good as long as they can deliver the right products and on time.

For the e-kosher entrepreneurs, the hope must be: Next year in profitability. □

### Israeli chief rabbis elected

JERUSALEM (JTA) — One of Israel's new chief rabbis pledged to work for a "progressive, open rabbinate."

The new Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Rabbi Yona Metzger, made the comments Monday after being elected along with Shlomo Amar, who was elected Sephardi chief rabbi.

The two were chosen by a 150-member electoral body, made up of 80 rabbis and 70 politicians. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Fearing final battle of his career,  
Arafat digs in on new P.A. Cabinet***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority's new prime minister, is interested in starting down President Bush's "road map" toward peace and a Palestinian state, but first he must overcome a substantial road block: Yasser Arafat.

The Central Committee of Fatah, Arafat's political party and the main force in Palestinian politics, convened on Sunday in Ramallah, but the session was interrupted after only 15 minutes by a major conflict between Arafat and his prime minister.

Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, presented the Palestinian Authority president with a list of 23 candidates for his new Cabinet. Arafat didn't like what he saw.

The list contained Arafat rivals such as Nabil Amr — one of the first Palestinian politicians to dare criticize Arafat in public — and Mohammad Dahlan, former security chief in the Gaza Strip.

Arafat stalwarts such as Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo were demoted to ministers without portfolios. Saeb Erekat, an influential member of Palestinian negotiating teams with Israel and perhaps the Palestinians' most recognized international spokesman, was dropped from the list altogether.

Arafat reportedly saw the list as the final blow to his reign and quoted a verse from Islamic scripture: "Have mercy on a great leader who has fallen."

It remains to be seen how much political mercy prevails in Ramallah nowadays, but the list has become subject to negotiations between Abbas and Arafat. With President Bush promising to present the road map as soon as Abbas' Cabinet is sworn in, the debate for now is delaying diplomatic progress.

Some Palestinian analysts fear that Arafat, realizing that this may be the last showdown of his political career, would put up a fight that could split Palestinian political circles. If things deteriorate, Arafat might resort to firing Abbas — or Abbas could resign, as he has threatened in the past.

The general feeling in Ramallah this week, however, was that the two would overcome their differences, because in effect one can't function without the other. By law, Abbas needs only the parliament's approval for his government. But he wants the endorsement of Fatah's Central Committee, believing it will smooth the way for a vote in parliament, perhaps by the end of this week.

The truth is that Abbas himself has been one of Arafat's closest associates for decades. With Arafat's blessing, he was the top Palestinian representative in the Oslo peace negotiations.

He also joined forces in the mid-1990s with Israeli politician Yossi Beilin to formulate the famous Beilin-Abu Mazen plan, an informal blueprint that outlined mutual concessions toward a peace agreement — though Abbas later disavowed the document.

Abbas is hailed in Israel and abroad as a moderate, at least by the standards of Palestinian politics. He demands a Palestinian state in the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, with its capital in eastern Jerusalem and insists as well on the "right of return" for millions of Palestinians and their descendants to homes they lost in Israel more than half a century ago.

Those stances mirror Arafat's public pronouncements. Yet since the intifada began two-and-a-half years ago, a rift has been growing between the pair.

Seeing the devastation the intifada has brought the Palestinians, Abbas reportedly has grown disgusted by Arafat's refusal to renounce violence and terrorism. Abbas argues that the Palestinians stand to gain more from nonviolent resistance, which will win international support for their struggle against Israel.

Now that he has been appointed prime minister, the publicity-shy Abbas has been trying to create his own power base, independently of the boss.

Abbas appears likely to compromise on some of his candidates, but the real test is the candidacy of Dahlan. Abbas believes that only a strongman such as Dahlan can face down Hamas and other armed Palestinian opposition groups, which risks the prospect of civil war but is a precondition for any peace settlement.

As a compromise, Abbas suggested that he retain the all-important Interior Ministry — which oversees the Palestinian security forces — while appointing Dahlan to a lesser post from which he effectively would direct the security services.

In contrast, Arafat insists that Abbas keep the current interior minister, Hani Hassan, a longtime Arafat loyalist who has shown no inclination to root out terrorist elements in the security forces or confront the fundamentalist groups.

Abbas' list of candidates also reflects an attempt to strike an equilibrium among the various power bases in Palestinian society.

His candidates represent the various regions, predominantly Gaza, Hebron and Nablus; the younger generation, mostly those local activists who were the key players in the first intifada from 1987 to 1993; the older generation, Arafat's partners in Tunis who came back to the territories only in the mid-1990s; and other local power groups. In trying to please all of them, however, Abbas left most dissatisfied.

As negotiations in Ramallah continued, Israel waited for the Americans to present the road map. As long as the Palestinians have not resolved their own internal disputes, Abbas won't be able to introduce the internal reforms that Israel and the United States regard as preconditions for peace talks.

The Israelis ask whether Abbas really means business: Will he be able to meet at least part of the demands for real anti-terror moves to allow for renewed negotiations?

There was one positive sign this week: According to P.A. officials, Palestinian police in Jericho earlier this month turned over to Israel weapons and explosives seized from "Palestinian insurgency groups."

The Israeli army confirmed that Palestinians handed over 12 gas canisters filled with explosives, 50 pipe bombs, an illumination bomb and an anti-tank rocket.

Officials said Abbas sought the move to mark the start of his tenure — and that it had Arafat's approval as well.

Publicly, Israeli officials preferred to stay out of the Palestinian power struggle, waiting for the dust to settle.

"The question is whether there will be a real change or whether Arafat will continue to be a driving force in the Palestinian Authority," Education Minister Limor Livnat said.

But critics of the Israeli government, such as legislator Mohammad Barakeh of the far-left Hadash Party, charged this week that implementation of the road map depended more on Israel than on Abbas. Israel was exaggerating in its description of the differences between Abbas and Arafat, he said.

"They both regard each other as partners, and the attempt to turn them against each other does not lead anywhere," Barakeh said. □