



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Suspected bomber arrested

Israeli troops arrested a Palestinian woman suspected of planning to carry out a suicide attack.

The woman and another wanted Palestinian were arrested Sunday night in a refugee camp near Nablus. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip fired two mortar shells into Israel overnight and also fired two mortar shells at Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip.

There were no reported injuries. Senior Israeli security officials, including Public Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, were due to visit Sderot on Monday in a sign of solidarity with the Negev town that has been the target of Palestinian rocket attacks.

Fake bomb found near shul

A fake bomb was discovered next to a Moscow synagogue.

The device, found Sunday, was located next to a car in the Polyakov Synagogue in central Moscow. Russian police believe the device, which lacked a detonator, was intended to frighten a businessman who owned the car.

Jewish leaders called the incident an attempt to intimidate both Russia and its Jewish community.

Mofaz: Arafat not up for peace

Yasser Arafat is not interested in advancing the peace process, Israel's defense minister said.

Speaking Sunday during a tour of army outposts on the Golan Heights, Shaul Mofaz said the obstacles the Palestinian Authority president is placing in the way of a new Palestinian Authority Cabinet prove that he is not interested in improving the situation in the region.

Mofaz said he hopes American and European pressure on Arafat will lead to the appointment of a new Palestinian leadership that will choose a path toward peace, Army Radio reported.

Departure order lifted

Nonemergency U.S. employees may return to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

The State Department had ordered all such employees and their families to leave U.S. facilities in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem when military action against Iraq commenced, fearing Iraqi attacks against Israel.

A warning to Americans to avoid travel to Israel, West Bank and Gaza remains in effect.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Iraqis may be tried for war crimes: The question is how and by whom?

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Proposals for the type of court that should try alleged Iraqi war criminals are pouring in from across the spectrum, including the Simon Wiesenthal Center's recent call for a Nuremberg-style tribunal to be held in Iraq.

But observers say every proposal has certain drawbacks: None is free of potential politicization and may suffer from a lack of credibility if trials are carried out by Americans or Iraqis alone.

Crimes to be considered are broken into at least two categories — those allegedly committed by Saddam Hussein's regime against its own citizens or Iran during the past 25 years and those allegedly perpetrated against invading U.S. forces over the past month.

The Bush administration appears to be pushing for an Iraqi-led court in Iraq for the former type of crimes and a U.S.-run military tribunal for the latter.

Alleged Iraqi crimes during the 1991 Persian Gulf War also may be considered by the latter court, while the British may want to conduct their own trial for crimes against their troops.

"For past abuses, past atrocities, it's our view that there should be accountability," Pierre-Richard Prosper, the U.S. ambassador for war crimes, said recently. "We will work with Iraqi people to create an Iraqi-led process that will bring justice for the years of abuses that have occurred."

Iraqi judges, though, were so enmeshed in — and tainted by — Saddam's regime that many question if verdicts they present against former comrades would be viewed as credible. Likewise, the knock against Iraqi exiles, many observers say, is the perception that they are so consumed with hatred for Saddam's regime that they can't be impartial.

International legal experts and non-governmental organizations seem to prefer an ad-hoc, U.N.-affiliated court along the lines of ongoing war-crimes tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, or a "mixed" model like those recently established in Sierra Leone and currently under creation in Cambodia. Those in-country courts combine foreign and local legal experts and synthesize international and national laws.

The new International Criminal Court is virtually ruled out: Its jurisdiction begins only with acts committed after July 1, 2002 — meaning that many of the regime's alleged crimes could not be considered — and neither the United States nor Iraq is a signatory. The ICC could launch an investigation at the behest of the U.N. Security Council, but Washington presumably would veto any such effort.

Then there's the Nuremberg proposal.

In Nuremberg, a military tribunal that started six months after the end of World War II invited the participation of the Allied countries that fought on the front lines — the Americans, British, French and Soviets, says Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of the Wiesenthal Center.

This time around, the Americans and British — and perhaps the Australians, who contributed a handful of troops to the Iraq war — should reserve the right to mete out justice in Iraq, Hier suggested in a recent letter to U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

"The only reason we have a German democracy today is that the real seeds were planted at Nuremberg," Hier told JTA. "It was at Nuremberg that Germans themselves

MIDEAST FOCUS

Dahlan: Ready to give up post

Mohammad Dahlan offered to give up a Cabinet appointment in the Palestinian Authority if it would enable Mahmoud Abbas to assemble his government loyalists.

Meanwhile, mediators reportedly are working with Abbas and P.A. President Yasser Arafat to find a compromise that would allow Abbas to take the post.

Israel considers SARS bars

Israeli health officials are considering barring entry to foreign workers from countries with many cases of the SARS virus.

Health Minister Dan Naveh met with health officials Monday to hear reports on the latest cases of Israelis who have returned from Asia with suspicious symptoms.

There have not been any confirmed case of SARS in Israel.

More arrests in Hebron death

Four more border police have been arrested on suspicion of assaulting Palestinians in Hebron.

Four other officers already have been detained for alleged involvement in the death of a Palestinian in the West Bank city four months ago.

Israel's Justice Ministry is investigating allegations of widespread abuse of Palestinians and Palestinian property by border police in Hebron, Israel Radio reported.

Next stop for tour guides: Iraq

An Israeli tour guide instructor is organizing a course for leading trips to Iraq.

Shmuel Ben-Naftali said 12 people already have signed up for the June course, which will cost some \$395, the daily Ma'ariv reported.

The planned highlight is an eight-day trip to Iraq in October.

could see how evil the system was," he said. "The people in Iraq are not going to follow the proceedings as closely if it's in London, Washington or The Hague. We need to re-educate them, and the best way to do that is if the trial is in their own backyard."

Anything in the hands of the United Nations will be subject to bureaucratic delays and overt politicization, Hier said.

For example, the 18 trials conducted so far in the U.N. tribunal for the former Yugoslavia have averaged 18 months apiece and cost more than \$1 billion in all, analysts say.

Moreover, it is the role of the 15-member Security Council to recommend which judges ought to serve on a U.N. tribunal. They must be approved by the 191-member General Assembly, where there is enormous hostility toward the United States and sympathy for Iraq.

The most common criticism of Nuremberg, and of the Wiesenthal Center's proposal, is what became known as "victors' justice" — the credibility issue that arises when winners render verdicts against the losers.

"If you have fair and impartial tribunals in the country concerned, then that's the ideal," said Felice Gaer, a human-rights expert with the American Jewish Committee.

"But the Wiesenthal Center is departing from 60 years of analysis and jurisprudence since Nuremberg that have called for an impartial, independent international tribunal that can offer credibility when ad-hoc tribunals sometimes don't," she said. "The aim here is to avoid the accusation of 'victors' justice.'"

Hearings on as crucial a topic as genocide and crimes against humanity must rise above the taint of partiality, critics say.

"The U.S. is already fighting against international opinion," said Charles Forrest, chief executive officer of Indict, a London-based Iraqi exile group that for years has been compiling evidence of war crimes by Saddam's regime. "To go ahead and try to form a Nuremberg-style trial may cause total hysteria among international legal experts."

Even more important, critics say, a trial must be credible in the eyes of a skeptical world, especially among Iraqis and the general Arab and Muslim worlds.

"If you don't care about the international credibility of this court, then you can use the Nuremberg model," said John Washburn, a leading U.S. advocate of the ICC who prefers a U.N. tribunal for Iraq.

"My assumption is if you're going to have a satisfactory trial, you'd want the world to say, 'Yeah, they tried them and arrived at a fair verdict, and the punishment imposed was arrived at by a fair process,'" he said.

Aside from politicization and cost, Washington may have other reasons for wanting to avoid the U.N. route: Officials may not want the court to probe the extent of U.S. support for Saddam over the years, or the extent that the United States helped arm his regime. Others dismissed the concern.

"If you're concerned about the issue of U.S. complicity being raised, that's going to happen regardless of what court system handles this," Washburn said. "If you've got a fair court where a defense counsel is allowed to operate as they should and have the right to make their case fairly, then they're going to get into that, whether it's a Nuremberg-style or ad-hoc tribunal."

Another reason may be the fact that the United Nations prohibits the death penalty, while both U.S. officials and Iraqi exiles have indicated that they want to have it as an option, Forrest said.

Iraqi figures would like to handle the prosecution on their own.

Forrest said he would endorse a combined prosecution led by some Iraqi exiles, some Iraqis from within the country and justices from elsewhere in the Arab world.

For those who rule out Iraqi participation — or suspect that the United States will handpick which Iraqis can participate — some compromise is necessary, he said.

"The Iraqis have to see that justice is being done, and the best way for that to happen is if it's done in Iraq, by Iraqis, under Iraqi law," he said. "At the same time, this will create a foundation for the rule of law in Iraq."

Regardless of the format, court proceedings should start soon, said the Wiesenthal Center's Hier.

If the trial is delayed too long or drags on, "it's out of sight, out of mind," he said. "By the time they render the verdict, the world will have forgotten who Saddam is. The great lesson of Nuremberg was that it was swift justice." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Court taking up Holocaust case

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments this week on a California case regarding Holocaust-era insurance records. The American Insurance Association is challenging a California law requiring insurance companies to open their Holocaust-era records in order to do business in the state.

Women's group speaks out

Mainstream Jewish groups are stifling criticism of Israel and pushing pro-Israel propaganda, a Jewish women's activist group said in a mock newsletter.

Jewishwomenwatching.com issued JewishSpeak, which carries the motto, "All the news that's fit for Jews to read." A headline in the newsletter reads, "Dissent: Is it good for the Jews? Major Jewish organizations say 'no.'"

In one typically tongue-in-cheek piece, the group says David Ben-Gurion and other historical figures who advocated a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are "not really Jews at all" but instead are "terrorist propagandists."

The Brooklyn-based group, whose members will not reveal their identities, has staged controversial campaigns in the past.

Singer grandson backs campaign

Isaac Bashevis Singer would have supported an animal rights group's campaign that uses the Holocaust to make its point, the writer's grandson said. Writing in the Los Angeles Times on Monday, Stephen Dujack said his grandfather would have backed PETA's campaign that compares the Holocaust and the meat industry.

Singer "realized that the systems of oppression and murder that had been used in the Holocaust were the systems being used to confine, oppress and slaughter animals," Dujack wrote.

Protesters burn Israeli flag

Far-right Russian protesters burned an Israeli flag. The protest occurred Sunday outside the Israeli Embassy in Moscow. Jewish leaders believe the National Great Power Party, or NDPR, is trying to attract public attention to itself ahead of parliamentary elections later this year.

Hungarian exhibit shut down

A controversial museum exhibit depicting a wartime Hungarian leader was closed down. The criticism of "Soldiers of Horthy — Arrow Cross People of Szalasi," which depicts fascist wartime leader Ferenc Szalasi and his followers as heroes, closed April 19 after private collectors withdrew items on loan for the exhibit. Szalasi unleashed terror on the Jews after coming to power in 1944.

President speaks out for Jews in Moldova, site of famous pogrom

By Lev Krichevsky

KISHINEV, Moldova (JTA) — In Jewish memory, the city of Kishinev is closely linked to a terrible pogrom.

But the pogrom, whose 100th anniversary was marked earlier this month, is only a part of the city's Jewish past and present.

Forty-nine Jews were killed and more than 500 injured on April 6-7, 1903 — the first day of Easter — when angry mobs ran through some of the city's poorest quarters.

The violence was prompted by false rumors of a Christian child allegedly killed by Jews for ritual purposes.

It took authorities two days to order the military to stop the violence, creating the impression that the pogrom was organized by the Russian regime that ran the area at the time.

The pogrom shocked the international community and caused American Jews to rally in support of their brethren in Russia. It also sparked increased Jewish immigration to the United States and Palestine.

Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin spoke on April 7 to dozens of Moldovan Jews and foreign guests who came to the Skulyanka Park in Kishinev to commemorate the pogrom's victims, many of whom were buried in the old Jewish cemetery that once existed here.

"To us this is a very important lesson," Voronin said at the memorial meeting, which included the unveiling of a monument to the victims.

"Although it happened during a different regime, still it happened on our soil, and it is crucial to come to an understanding of why this became possible," he said.

Semyon Shoikhet, a local architect and president of the association, designed the modest monument — a granite cube and a wall next to it with inscriptions in Romanian, Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew.

The 1903 pogrom wasn't the only tragedy local Jews faced in the last century. Another wave of pogroms in Kishinev and other towns of Bessarabia, as Moldova was known throughout much of its history, took hundreds of Jewish lives during the Russian Revolution of 1905.

During the Holocaust, close to 100,000 Jews in Moldova — a Romanian province between the two world wars that was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939 — were killed in ghettos and concentration camps by the Nazis and their Romanian allies, often aided by local collaborators.

But the 1903 pogrom still symbolizes Jewish suffering in Moldova.

Local Jews can show guests a section in the old Kishinev Jewish cemetery where some victims were buried.

Next to the human victims, there is a grave containing dozens of Torah scrolls that were desecrated. Jewish custom requires that ruined Torah scrolls be buried.

Some local Jews believe non-Jewish citizens know little about the pogrom.

"When you ask people if they know what the Kishinev pogrom is, chances are they know nothing," says Lyubov Shurmanova, a librarian at the Manger Jewish Library run by the community. "Perhaps now that our president has spoken about it, more people will know."

In fact, Moldova's leadership has never been more outspoken in its support of the Jewish community than earlier this month, when Voronin delivered two speeches in front of Jewish audiences, unconditionally condemning anti-Semitism and promising his support in the fight against xenophobia.

The nation of 4.5 million people has lurched from crisis to crisis since it became independent in 1991. Recently rated the poorest European nation by some international institutions, the country has seen violence and a short civil war in 1992-1993 that led to the de facto separation of its eastern part, known as Transnistria.

The Jewish community numbers about 20,000, down from more than 80,000 a decade ago, due to massive immigration to Israel and other countries.

The community operates an array of educational, religious, cultural and welfare institutions. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Push-ups? And rap music? It's an army-led seder in Korea

By Adam B. Ellick

SEOUL, South Korea (JTA) — The seder is only 10 minutes — and there's already been a mistake.

Rabbi Ira Ehrenpreis forgot to inform his 150 congregants to wash their hands in the three plastic tubs at the entrance.

The 43-year-old Ehrenpreis, who doubles as a U.S. Army captain, hits the floor in his kittel, a traditional white robe, and pays for his error in the form of 10 push-ups.

For the second consecutive year here, Ehrenpreis is conducting one of the most remote and eccentric Passover celebrations worldwide.

It is believed to be the only rabbi-led seder on the Korean Peninsula, a region about the size of Virginia and home to 70 million inhabitants.

The 150 congregants include American soldiers, Israeli diplomats, businessmen, English-language teachers and of course, Koreans. Together they fill the entire dining hall at the U.S. Army's Religious Retreat Center — a former Buddhist temple.

Ehrenpreis, the lone rabbi in Korea, is one of the 37,000 American troops stationed in Seoul, only 40 miles, or "within artillery range," from Communist North Korea.

His quirky sense of humor is easily detectable when he introduces himself as a "Southern Orthodox" rabbi because of his stints in both South Korea and America's south.

He spent the past two weeks exempt from his daily Army duties so he could prepare for Passover — "when all the Jews come out of the woods."

His main task was to inform the 150 Jewish soldiers dispersed across the Peninsula about an event that isn't recognized by the official Army calendar.

The two seders cost a hefty \$5,000, due to the burden of shipping kosher foods to Asia. Ehrenpreis received 16 seders-in-a-box, a package of grape juice, matzah, complete seder plates and Haggadahs courtesy of the Aleph Institute, a Florida-based nonprofit that sent 6,000 packages to American troops worldwide.

Thanks to hounding from his wife, Miriam, Empire turkeys and other kosher ingredients came from the Army's commissary, which mistakenly omitted the kosher wine.

Ehrenpreis quickly shuttled around this sprawling, modern capital city until he located a liquor store selling one brand of kosher white wine. He shocked the storekeeper by purchasing 60 bottles.

Ehrenpreis made the Army kitchen kosher with the help of his wife and Moishe Greeneberg, an observant Jew among the U.S. troops in Korea.

The three of them took turns as Mashgiach, supervising the Korean kitchen staff as they cooked matzah ball soup, gefilte fish and Manischewitz baked desserts.

The Korean chief chef, Mr. Choe, boasts this is his 46th Passover.

But even Mr. Choe, a Passover veteran, needs supervision. Most of the previous 10 Army rabbis in Seoul weren't Orthodox and therefore didn't require a kosher kitchen.

There is one Korean who needs no guidance. Cha Joo Tae, or

Avraham as he prefers, says he's the only Korean to convert to Judaism.

The 54-year-old, who wears a long thin goatee, started studying Talmud in 1988 and officially converted in 1993 after circumcision.

He even divorced his Korean wife so he could lead a pure Jewish lifestyle. His son was recently a Bar Mitzvah.

When asked to explain his inspiration to take up Judaism from Christianity, Tae barks, "Read the Talmud and you will understand."

He has collected 180 Korean-language books on Judaism and proudly explains that Korean schools teach from a book on Jewish culture and traditions because this nation carries a deep respect for Jewish values like education and family.

Throughout the seder, the rabbi is vying for the attention of a mostly secular crowd. In military form, he deployed a group of 10 team leaders to explain the symbolisms of Passover at their respective tables.

But with constant chatter and a Korean wait staff that is hardly familiar with the order of Passover, the scene is wildly chaotic — and joyous.

After the meal, the group begins singing an impassioned rap version of "Who Knows One."

Greeneberg, 22, who hails from a modern Orthodox community in Bangor, Maine, is leading the tune and waving his fist into the air. For Passover, he was granted 10 days of free leave from his work as a flight medic at the demilitarized zone that borders North Korea. He is also exempt from military exercises during Shabbat.

"It is very difficult, and you probably won't find many other Jews in the Army like me," he says. "But by pushing aggressively with my religious needs and forcing them to give me the things I need, I was able to hone in and make sure my needs were met."

He says the Army is "a challenge that opened my eyes to the secular world." After four years of service, he's virtually immune to swear words and the "not so nice" clothes of female soldiers.

Ehrenpreis can sympathize with Greeneberg's outcast status. "It's very hard to be a Jewish soldier because the Army is a let's-blend-together organization. You don't want to stick out."

Raised in a New York suburb, Ehrenpreis studied at a yeshiva in Queens. He was teaching special education at a Jewish school in Brooklyn when he saw an advertisement that offered a chance to "see the world."

After stints in North Carolina and Washington, he was sent to Seoul in 2001 as the chaplain of the 41st Signal Battalion, the largest single battalion in the U.S. Army, which is responsible for maintaining communication across one-third of Korea.

He is the only Jewish spiritual leader among the Army's 200 chaplains in Korea.

After Passover, he will return to his daily duties of religious counseling, stress management support and personality testing. This summer he will leave for another post with his wife and five children, a location they hope will enable them to have their "first hot pastrami sandwich since 2001."

He conducts weekly Shabbat services at the U.S. base in Seoul, where a crowd of no more than 10 usually consists of more Koreans than U.S. soldiers.

"If I was a young guy on Friday night, am I going to schlep out at 7 p.m. to hang out with the rabbi and his family or go enjoy myself with buddies around town? Personally, I would hang out in town," he says grinning. □