



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### U.S. to press Israel

The United States reportedly will press Israel on the issues of settlement outposts and Palestinian prisoners.

U.S. officials feel such moves would bolster Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. In talks with Israeli Cabinet ministers this week, U.S. officials were expected to urge Israel to speed up the dismantling of illegal settlement outposts and to release more than the several hundred Palestinian prisoners who meet criteria set by the Shin Bet security service, the daily Ha'aretz reported.

The report came as a senior delegation of the PLO's Fatah movement was holding contacts with Abbas to resolve a crisis over Fatah criticism of Abbas' negotiating strategy with Israel.

### U.S. aids Palestinian Authority

The Bush administration signed off on a \$20 million payment to the Palestinian Authority, to be used for humanitarian projects.

The money approved Tuesday is the first direct aid the United States has given to the Palestinian leadership, and sources close to the White House describe it as an acknowledgment of recent P.A. efforts to crack down on terrorism.

It also is an attempt to shore up the P.A. prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas. [Page 3]

### Palestinian killed in West Bank

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian gunman in the West Bank.

The man was killed Tuesday night after he opened fire on Israeli soldiers near Jenin.

The soldiers, who were conducting an anti-terror operation, arrested a member of the Fatah movement's militia during the sweep.

### Sharon welcomes immigrants

Israeli officials welcomed a planeload of new immigrants from North America.

"We need you, and we need many more like you," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told the 330 immigrants at Wednesday's welcoming ceremony in Ben-Gurion Airport.

The flight was the first of two chartered El Al planes that are expected to bring almost 1,000 North American immigrants to Israel this summer. [Page 4]

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Cautiously, Israelis begin to hope as cease-fire brings on fragile calm

By Matthew Gutman

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The sandbags stacked outside Tel Aviv's Ta'am Cafe about a year ago — part macabre joke and part security precaution — have been removed, as has the café's guard.

Asked about the changes, Lahav, one of the café's many bare-midriff waitresses, shrugged. "We feel safer now," she said.

Since Palestinian terrorist groups declared a temporary cease-fire late last month, many Israelis claim to see a sliver of light at the end of the tunnel.

Israeli consumers seem to agree.

Recent weeks have seen a rise in consumer activity in Israel, an uptick in travel both in Israel and abroad, an increase in employment demand and a small spike in real estate transactions, according to a report in the Yediot Achronot daily newspaper.

"People are eager to get the conflict behind them, they are clamoring to get Israel's economy back on track," Dori Shadmon, chairman of Israel's leading polling group, Teleseker, told JTA.

But the rise is not only related to the cease-fire, he said.

"Consumer confidence — generally the best indication of how the nation feels and thinks — has been climbing steadily since April," Shadmon said.

Why? The U.S.-led war in Iraq removed a major threat from Israel, the government was able to pass a new economic austerity program and one of the most stable governments in years has pushed forward the "road map" peace plan with American backing, he noted.

These factors combine to make a potent psychological pill, a Prozac to lift the Israeli consumer out of his three-year depression, Shadmon said.

Though the malls and airports are packed, with consumers and travelers once again scuffling over places in line, "it should be noted that these same people don't have anymore money in the bank than they did before," Shadmon added.

But that may not be important: "The psychological influence is what lifts an economy from the doldrums," he said.

Not everyone agrees.

"I don't buy it," said Rachel Elkins, sitting on the Ta'am Cafe's bougainvillea-draped patio.

Elkins, who until about a year ago worked for several Israeli-Palestinian peace organizations, believes that the apparent progress toward peace in recent weeks "is nothing but a political ploy by the U.S. to get President Bush re-elected."

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas is being propped up by Israel and the United States but has little chance of success, she said.

Like many other Israelis, Elkins said she has stopped following the news because it is "too depressing."

"Of course there will be more bombings. This hudna feels false, it feels like it has no base," she said, using the Arabic word for cease-fire. "I just don't see it holding for very long."

Had she listened to the news, which Israeli radio stations faithfully broadcast every half hour, Elkins would have known that Islamic Jihad struck again this week: A suicide bomber detonated himself Monday in a moshav in central Israel, killing Mazal Afari, a 65-year-old grandmother. Muhammad Al Hindi, a spokesman for the group, said

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Hamis: Patience running out

The founder of Hamas told Egyptian officials that the organization is committed to a cease-fire, but that "patience has its limits."

Sheik Ahmed Yassin met with Egyptian officials who arrived in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday for talks with Palestinian factions to strengthen the temporary halt on attacks against Israel.

Palestinian groups have threatened to abandon their cease-fire unless Israel releases all Palestinian prisoners. Israel is not obligated to release prisoners under the "road map" peace plan.

### Islamic Jihad cell arrested

Israel recently arrested four members of an Islamic Jihad cell who carried out terrorist attacks.

The four also are suspected of helping other terrorists avoid arrest, recruiting volunteers to drive car bombs into Israel, planting bombs on West Bank roads, carrying out shooting attacks and gathering intelligence information, the daily Ha'aretz reported.

The four confessed to the allegations, the report said.

### No parole for murderer

An Israeli parole board rejected an early release request from a man who killed a Peace Now activist in 1983. Yona Avrushmi threw a grenade at a Peace Now demonstration, killing Emil Grunzweig and wounding nine others.

His original life sentence later was commuted to 27 years.

Avrushmi filed for early release after serving two-thirds of his sentence. Two earlier decisions by the parole board to grant Avrushmi early release were blocked by the courts. In its decision to reject his request, the board cited recent drug use by Avrushmi, Israel Radio reported. Avrushmi will be eligible to appeal again in a year, the report said.



## Daily News Bulletin

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Islamic Jihad still is adhering to the cease-fire, blaming the bombing on a renegade local cell. Oddly, the declaration last week by the Israel Defense Forces' chief of staff, Lt.-Gen. Moshe Ya'alon — who said Israel has "won" the intifada — affected mostly hawks here.

In Tel Aviv's Carmel Market, a bastion of right-wing politics, vendors were cautiously optimistic.

"What does either side have to lose at this point?" asked Pini Pitzhadze, rearranging the nylon underwear and bras for sale in his stall Tuesday morning.

He reckons that Israel's policy of assassinating terrorist leaders "broke" the groups.

"Everything changed after we almost took out Rantissi," he said, referring to an assassination attempt last month on Abdel Aziz Rantissi, a top Hamas official. "They came running to the negotiating table hungry to make a deal."

Pitzhadze, who faithfully does reserve duty once a year with his infantry unit, doubted that much will change for soldiers, despite Israel's recent withdrawal from Bethlehem and most of the Gaza Strip.

"So what? We are out of a corner of Gaza and Bethlehem. What about Jenin and Nablus and Tulkarm?" he asked, mentioning West Bank cities. "I have no illusions about not returning to those places anytime soon."

For vendors like Pitzhadze, consumer confidence is critical. Israelis afraid of terrorism stay as far away as possible from densely packed open-air markets like Carmel and Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda. "That is why this has to work this time," he added plaintively. "We really need shoppers."

Among Israel's Arab population — which strongly identifies with the Palestinian cause — sentiment is slightly different. Slumped heavily in his chair in the Al Salam (Peace) restaurant in Nazareth, Manour Fahoum has few kind words for terrorist groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad, which he believes ruined his life.

"To hell with all those groups," he said. "This city depends on tourism, and now those murderers have destroyed everything."

Fahoum had been a tour bus driver, chauffeuring pilgrims around Israel. Now he does little but sip weak tea at his friend Mahmoud's restaurant.

Chatting and joking among themselves, Mahmoud, Fahoum and their friend Bader said neither Israelis nor Palestinians are "going anywhere," so the time has come to take a big step and end the conflict once and for all.

"This hudna business is a good start," Fahoum said, "but what is necessary is a sulha," or traditional Muslim reconciliation, "a real peace, not a cease-fire."

Israel needs to do more to help the Palestinians, he said, chiefly by releasing Islamic Jihad and Hamas prisoners.

This is something most Israeli Jews reject, some vociferously. At a boisterous conference in Jerusalem recently, some 500 right-wing rabbis railed against the government for allegedly providing Israelis with false hope and described the road map as a mortal danger.

"Have we been dazzled? Have we been taken over by blindness?" Rabbi Haim Druckman asked at the conference. "The road map is worse than Oslo, and now after more than 1,000 dead and thousands of wounded and disabled, the eyes of the government have ceased to see."

Maybe, in fact, desperation offers new vision.

"I want to be optimistic," Pitzhadze says. "You cannot trust the Arabs, never could, but maybe both sides are ready to change themselves." □

### Ship documents surface

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Newly released U.S. documents prove that Israel attacked the U.S.S. Liberty in 1967 by mistake, a researcher said.

Florida Judge Jay Cristol, who wrote a book last year on the attack, was given previously classified documents from the U.S. National Security Agency that include transcripts of conversations held by Israeli Air Force helicopter pilots circling above the Liberty after it was hit. The tapes confirm that the attack was an error, Cristol said.

The attack, which took place during the Six-Day War, killed 34 Americans and wounded 171 others. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Online fund raising heats up

The Jewish National Fund topped Jewish online fund-raising in 2002.

The JNF launched a Web site last year that raised \$663,000, a 104 percent jump over the previous year's Web intake.

Ken Markus, an AOL executive and Internet chairman of the JNF's marketing committee, said the site has been attracting an average of 56,000 daily hits since getting a facelift in February.

Through May of this year, it has raised \$450,000.

### Israel closer to E.U.?

Israel may soon improve its relations with the European Union.

The European Commission, the E.U.'s legislative body, announced Wednesday that Israel will be part of the "Wider Europe" initiative, which would give the Jewish state a status similar to that of E.U. states on commercial and economic issues.

### Massacre investigation closed

Poland closed a probe into a World War II massacre of Jews.

The state investigation agency was unable to identify any new suspects in the July 1941 massacre in the town of Jedwabne.

A book published a few years ago proved that local Poles were responsible for herding Jews into a barn and then setting it on fire.

### Children attacked at Paris school

Teens armed with iron bars and sticks attacked a Jewish school in Paris.

At least two pupils were injured in Tuesday's attack at the Jeunesse Beit Lubavich, Samy Gozlan, head of the Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism, told JTA.

Two youths were arrested later Tuesday but have since been released.

Police say charges may still be brought against them.

### Berlin memorial vandalized

A Jewish memorial in Berlin was vandalized. According to a police spokeswoman, the incident took place in broad daylight Tuesday, but the perpetrators escaped before they could be arrested.

The spokeswoman said the vandals apparently threw small paving stones, gouging the surface of a memorial dedicated to the former Levetzowstrasse synagogue, which was used by the Nazis as a detention center to deport Jews.

The synagogue later was damaged during allied bombings of Berlin and was torn down in 1955. The memorial was erected in 1988.

## Lawmakers, Israel backers support direct aid to Palestinian Authority

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA)—The Bush administration's decision to send aid directly to the Palestinian Authority is getting the thumbs-up from a diverse assortment of pro-Israel activists and lawmakers — the clearest sign of support yet for the White House's intensified engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The administration signed off Tuesday on a \$20 million payment to the Palestinian Authority, to be used for humanitarian projects.

It is the first time direct aid has been given to the Palestinian leadership, and sources close to the White House describe it as an acknowledgment of recent P.A. efforts to crack down on terrorism.

It also is an attempt to shore up the new P.A. prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas.

"It's a one-time deal and it's supposed to send a message," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip traditionally has been doled out through the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.N. Relief and Works Agency.

Numerous laws over the years have blocked direct U.S. aid to the Palestinians, but Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on Tuesday signed a waiver in the Foreign Assistance Act that allows for spending of up to \$25 million for "unanticipated contingencies."

In making the historic move, the White House has received support from Israel, a majority of the American Jewish community and a vast number of pro-Israel lawmakers.

Until now, many supporters of Israel had opposed direct aid to the Palestinian Authority, saying it was impossible to ensure that the money wouldn't be funneled to terrorist organizations.

Just last week, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee said it would reconsider its opposition if the Palestinian Authority dismantled terrorist groups.

Now supporters of the decision on direct aid, including AIPAC, say the shift is a result of events on the ground and confidence in the Bush administration's engagement.

"There is a clear understanding in this community that Palestinian prosperity is essential to Israeli security," said Rebecca Dinar, AIPAC's spokeswoman. "Our only concern is that the money is not used to foment terror."

Supporters say recent actions taken by Abbas and his security and financial chiefs to thwart terrorist groups and institute financial controls paved the way for the aid.

The final step was Abbas' resignation Tuesday from the central committee of Fatah, the PLO's main political party, though efforts were underway Wednesday in Palestinian circles to patch up the rift. The United States defines a wing of Fatah, the Al-Aksa Brigade, as a terrorist group.

Additionally, analysts believe that by directing funds to the Palestinian Authority, the administration will help Abbas to replicate some of the humanitarian programs currently offered by Hamas and other terrorist groups. Those programs bring the groups both popular support among Palestinians and financial backing from Europe and the Arab world. The Bush administration is expected to continue to push Europe and the Arabs to cut off aid to such groups and to shun P.A. President Yasser Arafat, whom the administration considers tainted by terrorism.

While the Bush administration is acting within its discretion in allocating the funds, the decision to give the money without direct congressional approval angered some on Capitol Hill, including many who support the initiative.

The White House did get the blessing of congressional leaders before moving forward, but rank-and-file legislators were not given the opportunity to weigh in.

"Everything they are doing is within their prerogative; the only question is whether they are doing it in a wise fashion," one Democratic congressional staffer said. "I think the sense is that with a policy decision of this magnitude, it would be worthwhile to have the required amount of debate in Congress to put these changes into law." □

## FIRST PERSON

## 'As long as deep within the heart:' A reflection on a modern aliyah

By Jonathan Udren

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Today we are 330 new olim who stand as one.

Clutching massive black binders from the Nefesh B'Nefesh organization, complete with cell phones and precise absorption instructions, all of us wearing small blue-and-white buttons that read "I'm making aliyah today," we are standing together as one.

We have packed our lives in duffel bags big enough to transport ourselves inside — children and parents, singles and newlyweds — but we are not fleeing: We are not running away from America but rather running toward home, toward Israel.

So many people have asked a simple question about my aliyah, the answer to which still eludes me: why?

When Israel faces not only a serious security problem but challenging economic issues as well, why would I leave?

In America I speak the language, know the culture and can practice Judaism in any manner I please, so why is Israel the only answer that will satisfy? Surely among my 329 other new Israeli brothers and sisters we can forge an answer.

I anticipate a little more clarity when a five-cart train of animal cages rolls up to the Nefesh B'Nefesh greeting station. Above each of the five wheel-mounted dog cages sits a cat box.

"I had to custom-build this train to bring my five dogs and five cats," Dori Gould says. "So many people told me that I should find other homes for them, but they're my babies, and I'm not going to leave without them."

Surely a woman who would transport her circus-like entourage must hold the secret for what drives a Jew to move to Israel today. I ask why she went to such trouble.

"Well, I was with a solidarity mission with my congregation in November, and when I came back I just felt like I wanted to go back and I wanted to live there," says Gould, 36, who hails from upstate New York.

"Aren't they going to be hot in Israel?" I ask of the animals, trying to appeal to logic.

"Well, two of the cats I adopted in Egypt when I was working there as an archaeologist," Gould says, "so it's like they're coming home too."

I think to myself that her emotional connection to Israel goes beyond logic; it's clear something deep lives beneath the surface.

Of course, I also understand that tugging toward a land that feels more like a warm companion than sharp rocks and coarse desert sand. But what is that feeling? I want to capture it, articulate it, hold it in the palm of my hand.

I hope that the spiritual leader and co-founder of Nefesh B'Nefesh, Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, could help me. A man whose organization will, by summer's end, have sent approximately 1,500 North American Jews to Israel in a little over a year surely can answer the question.

Addressing the crowd at the send-off at New York's Kennedy Airport, Fass says: "The first question that reporters are asking today is why. There was one child who said something remarkable: 'I want to connect to that indescribable emotion and feeling of living in the land in which the history of our people is rooted, and

where the prayers and the thoughts and the hopes of every Jew is directed.'"

As if that answer hasn't left me perplexed enough, Israel's housing minister, Efraim Eitam, piques my curiosity even further.

"We've heard a lot about the 'road map' over the last few weeks," he says, referring to a U.S.-backed peace plan, "but I think you all represent the real road map. In the soul of every Jew there is a call to come back home. It is beyond the physical senses, but it is valid."

Not long afterward, the plane lifts off to applause and cheers throughout the cabin. I turn to my right and introduce myself, hoping to probe more deeply into the reasons behind aliyah.

Sitting next to me is Warren Blumberg, a 24-year-old from South Africa by way of Houston.

"Israel is the only destination where people clap when they're taking off," he says.

I ask him for a specific "Israel moment," hoping it will help me pin down this evasive attraction.

"One time I hitchhiked home in a garbage truck from north Tel Aviv to the center of the city," Warren says. "It was so great that the garbageman wore a kippah, and that we spoke Hebrew the whole way back."

I chuckle at his story.

As the wheels finally touch down on the tarmac, the cheering and singing momentarily drown out the questions in my head. I am bursting with pride for all of the Nefesh B'Nefesh olim, because today we are all brave.

Maybe tomorrow we will wake up in a cold sweat, questioning ourselves about this intangible emotion that has led us to Israel, but today we are heroes, for ourselves and for those back home who love us.

As the plane door opens we are greeted by cameras of all sizes. I smile and wave, hoping that my family and friends, and all my new Israeli brothers and sisters, will see the fire in my eyes, even if I can't explain it.

As my feet set down on the ground of my ancestors, I realize that the royal treatment has only begun. Looking toward the hangar I'm shocked at the crowd that has gathered, waving Israeli flags.

"Haveinu Shalom Aleichem" starts blasting over the speakers, and the applause and cheers grow as we approach the crowd.

"Welcome home," an older woman yells to me from the behind the gate. I don't answer her; I can only smile back.

We can see the tears welling in each other's eyes, and know that we are connecting on a level beyond words.

In that moment I think I finally get it: Words are too clumsy to capture something as deep as the nature of the Jewish soul. When that spark surfaces it becomes a magnet that pulls you, beyond the constraints of logic.

Soon Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon welcomes us to the Jewish homeland, "the place where Jews can live as Jews."

"I'm talking to you as Jew," Sharon says, "and for me to be a Jew is the most important thing."

I see that now it is not only the 330 new olim who are one, but that all of Israel, and every Jew across the world, are one.

We all have this intangible fire inside of us — and today 330 Nefesh B'Nefesh olim have returned to our homeland to express that flame at its source. □

(Jonathan Udren, 27, a freelance journalist and editor, is from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. He will be living in Jerusalem.)