



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bush to meet Abbas, Sharon

Israeli and Palestinian leaders will meet separately with President Bush in the White House late this month.

The White House announced Thursday that Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas will meet with the president on July 25 — their first meeting in Washington — and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will meet Bush on July 29. Both meetings are expected to focus on ongoing efforts to implement the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan.

Blair: Bush doing right thing

Tony Blair told Congress that President Bush's course in the Middle East "is tough, but right."

Speaking Thursday to a rare joint session of Congress, the British prime minister said that the Arab world should recognize Israel and that "vile propaganda used to indoctrinate children, not just against Israel but against Jews, must cease."

Blair also said that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq could be the "starting point of a new dispensation for the Middle East."

AMIA bombing to be marked

Ceremonies in Toronto and Winnipeg on Friday will commemorate the ninth anniversary of the bombing of a Jewish center in Buenos Aires.

The events, organized by B'nai Brith Canada, will mark the July 18, 1994 bombing of the AMIA center, which killed 85 people and injured 300.

Army engineer wins clearance

A U.S. Army engineer falsely accused of spying for Israel had his security clearance reinstated.

The U.S. Army recently restored the top-secret security clearance of David Tenenbaum, an Orthodox Jew who is a civil engineer for the Tank Automotive Armaments Command in Warren, Mich., the Detroit Jewish News reported.

In 1997, Tenenbaum became the focus of an FBI probe — and the subject of national headlines — amid allegations of spying for Israel when he applied for top-secret access. Tenenbaum's lawyer, Mayer Morganroth, called the recent decision "unbelievably gratifying," but Tenenbaum said he remained "deeply troubled and hurt that my entire ordeal was a direct product of anti-Semitism."

FOCUS ON ISSUES

With presidential race so crowded, Jewish donors pulled different ways

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA)—Howard Dean, the former Vermont governor and 2004 presidential hopeful, recently spent the night at the Philadelphia home of Peter Buttenwieser.

That's surprising, considering that Buttenwieser has given \$2,000 to the presidential campaign of Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) — and to Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.).

A retired educator and fund-raiser for Democratic Senate candidates, Buttenwieser says he has given political contributions to six major Democratic contenders for the White House this year, including \$2,000 to Dean. Personal relationships fostered over the years with the candidates and their supporters have led him to spread his wealth among the candidates and refrain from endorsing any one person, Buttenwieser said.

"It's a little hard when someone says, 'Will you be with me?'" Buttenwieser said. "But I honestly feel that with this group of people, all of them are good people."

He's not alone.

Faced with a plethora of candidates and a complex set of political issues, many Jewish Democratic political contributors have chosen to support more than one candidate in the 2004 presidential primaries.

While it's impossible to know exactly how much of each candidate's war chest comes from Jews, Jewish donors traditionally have been active political givers to Democratic candidates.

Fund-raisers in the Jewish community for several Democratic candidates report that some donors are offering small donations but are reluctant to give the maximum \$2,000 individual donation to a single candidate, while others are giving the maximum to two or more candidates.

Among the famous names giving large amounts to multiple candidates are entertainment magnate Haim Saban and Daniel Abraham, founder of the Slim Fast Foods Company and an activist for Middle East peace.

Donors say that they support the policy positions of more than one Democrat hopeful, and have formed relationships with people on different campaigns over the years, creating a sense of obligation to several candidates.

"A litmus test for me is a candidate has to be good on Israel," said Buttenwieser, who is Jewish. "But all of these candidates are good on Israel."

The nine Democratic presidential hopefuls, as well as President Bush, each released fund-raising details for the second quarter of this year on July 15.

Dean raised the most money among Democrats in the last quarter, \$7.5 million, thanks largely to small donations raised over the Internet. But Bush raised more than all nine Democrats combined, garnering more than \$34 million.

Lieberman's campaign, which raised \$5.1 million in the last quarter, the second highest, announced a shake-up in its fund-raising staff, reportedly because of the campaign's poor showing in the first quarter and differences of opinion over how to move forward.

Under new campaign finance laws, donors can give up to \$2,000 to a single candidate, and up to \$37,500 total for candidates for president, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Campaign fund-raisers say several factors have led to an increase in the "double

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians talk to Congress

Three members of the Palestinian Authority's Cabinet met with congressional leaders to discuss the "road map" peace plan.

Nabil Kassis, Ghassan Al-Khatib and Ziad Abu Amr met with several tough critics of the Palestinians in Washington on Wednesday, including Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), ranking minority member of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee. The ministers are seeking assurances that the United States will still back the formation of a Palestinian state even if Israel does not keep its commitments under the road map.

Hamas, Jihad blast Abbas

Hamas and Islamic Jihad assailed Mahmoud Abbas for going to Washington while Yasser Arafat remains confined to Ramallah.

The criticism followed word that the Palestinian Authority prime minister would have his first official White House meeting with President Bush on July 25.

Gaza deportees to return?

Israel might not oppose the return of 28 Palestinians who were deported to the Gaza Strip after a lengthy standoff in 2002.

The Palestinians, deported following a June 2002 siege at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, are mostly members of the Palestinian Authority security services.

Another 13 Palestinians who took over the church were expelled to Europe following a deal that ended the siege.

Baghdadis: Israel reason for war

Forty-one percent of Baghdad residents believe that the war in Iraq was mainly launched to help Israel, according to a new poll. In the poll of 800 Baghdadis conducted by British media, half of the residents said the U.S.-led war was right

dipping" phenomenon, especially in the Jewish community.

One of the most significant is the candidate roster: Many veteran political donors have long relationships with several of the lawmakers vying for the Democratic nomination, and have heard appeals from multiple candidates.

"To me, political fund raising is all about relationships," said Lonnie Kaplan, a former president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who is on Lieberman's finance committee. "When I ask my friends for help, I am guessing that other people have asked them for help as well."

Many candidates are seeking support from the same regions: Both Lieberman and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) are vying for Jewish support in Massachusetts, and Lieberman is seeking to take Jewish support from Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) in Graham's home state.

One donor who spoke on condition of anonymity said he was invited by good friends to Dean and Lieberman fund-raisers in New York, and gave to both candidates.

"I don't feel funny about it at all," he said. "If I had been convinced from the get-go that one was my choice, I would have supported him."

Campaign officials say they don't ask donors whether they are supporting other candidates, but they hear about multiple support anecdotally. Despite the obvious competition, however, fund-raisers for several campaigns — including those of Kerry, Dean and Lieberman — say they are doing very well in the Jewish community.

One Jewish donor said she had expected to support Lieberman, but gave a donation to Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) when he made a personal plea for support.

"He called me early in the game, when he had just presented his healthcare proposal," said the contributor, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "He's been very careful to keep me apprised of what's going on."

When Lieberman called several months later, the contributor said she gave, but not as much as Lieberman wanted.

Lieberman's candidacy has made the choice for Jewish donors more difficult. Many longtime donors have solid relationships with the former vice presidential candidate, and support the idea of a Jewish candidate.

Yet Lieberman's positions on domestic policy — his support of faith-based initiatives and school vouchers — are out of step with those of many liberal Jewish donors.

Lieberman's camp says the Jewish community comprises a large part of his fund-raising base. Other campaigns say Lieberman fund-raisers have been "playing the Jewish card," appealing to the shared heritage of the donors and asking donors to preserve the viability of a Jewish candidate.

"A lot of them felt an obligation to give some amount to Lieberman," one political fund-raiser said.

The Lieberman campaign denies that it is using the candidate's religion as a fund-raising tool.

"The pitch has never been one of entitlement," a source close to the Lieberman campaign said. "If anyone expected the American Jewish community to flop behind the Jewish guy, it's ridiculous."

Spokesman Jano Cabrera said the Lieberman campaign is asking for the support of the Jewish community and other communities as well.

"It's always easy for anonymous sources to make wild accusations," he said. "We are pleased with our Jewish support, but we recognize we can do better."

Sources close to the campaign acknowledge that they face trepidation on the part of some older Jews — mostly born before World War II — who are concerned that having a Jewish president might spark anti-Semitism.

But that sentiment is counterbalanced by a sense of pride and energy among younger Jews, the campaign says. Complicating the fund-raising efforts of several candidates is the strong support in the Jewish community for President Bush's actions against terrorism and on behalf of Israel.

Kaplan, the Lieberman fund-raiser, said raising money for Democratic contenders among pro-Israel Jews has been tougher than normal.

"There's a segment of the community that would be a natural for Joe that is either sitting and watching right now or supporting the president," he said. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Canada may examine UNRWA

A Canadian legislator is expected to introduce a bill calling for increased accountability from the U.N. agency that serves Palestinian refugees.

As part of a Canadian delegation to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly last month, Jason Kenney gave a speech that was highly critical of UNRWA, the recipient of \$7 million from Canada last year.

"Too many of the camps have become breeding grounds for anti-Semitic propaganda and terrorist activity that has resulted in the murder of hundreds of innocent civilians," he said.

Papon appeals sentence

Maurice Papon is trying to appeal his 10-year sentence for his role in deporting 1,500 Jews to Auschwitz during World War II. Should the appeal of his 1998 conviction be allowed to proceed, Papon, 92, will legally be regarded as innocent of all charges, pending a new decision. Papon was released from a Paris jail in September 2002 on health grounds, though technically he could be returned to prison if his health improves.

Protests up against campus meet

Protests against a pro-Palestinian conference at a New Jersey state university intensified.

Americans For a Safe Israel launched an e-mail campaign Thursday against "terrorists" on the Rutgers University campus, where the International Solidarity Movement is holding a summit in October. Groups such as Amcha-The Coalition for Jewish Concerns also have urged Gov. James McGreevey to block the state-funded school from hosting the group.

California tries to help survivors

California's state treasurer has joined a call on financial institutions to waive wire fees for money transferred to Holocaust survivors and families.

Phil Angelides on Wednesday joined with Bet Tzedek Legal Services to stop more than 170 of California's largest banks, credit unions, savings and loan associations and broker/dealers from charging fees on compensation and restitution transfers.

Kosher passengers to go hungry

US Airways is no longer serving kosher meals to its coach passengers on domestic flights.

Because of budget cuts, the airline will no longer serve kosher, vegetarian, halal, diabetic or vegan meals, according to the Washington Jewish Week. "All special meals are being eliminated" in coach class, said Amy Kudwa, manager of media relations for the airline. First-class passengers can still order such meals.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Red Cross/Magen David Adom issue simmers, even as U.S. releases funds

By Lisa Scherzer

NEW YORK (JTA) — The decision to release \$11 million in U.S. aid to the Red Cross is putting the spotlight on ongoing tensions between the international organization and Israel's emergency relief agency.

In announcing the decision last week, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Magen David Adom is "not being denied participation in the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement" — despite the fact that Magen David Adom has been barred from full membership because it uses the Star of David emblem.

U.S. Jewish leaders reacted with dismay to Powell's announcement.

"We will be satisfied when Israel is a full member," Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said. "We shouldn't give up our leverage until Israel is admitted."

The Red Cross' official reason for barring the Star of David is that allowing Israel's national symbol might encourage other countries to press for the inclusion of their emblems.

But the exclusion generally is attributed to intense lobbying against Israel by Muslim and Arab members of the International Red Cross.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), a senior member of the U.S. House of Representatives' International Relations Committee, also expressed disappointment at Powell's decision.

"The United States should stand by the Israeli humanitarian organization to ensure this injustice does not go unresolved," he said. "The best leverage Congress has over the" International Committee of the Red Cross "is not to release any money to pay for the ICRC headquarters."

The release of funds appears to be the State Department's way to praise the Red Cross for its efforts to reach a compromise with Magen David Adom.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said in a statement that Powell's move allows the government to make a contribution to ICRC headquarters.

Even though Magen David Adom has not achieved full membership, he added, it long has participated in the movement's activities, and the United States "continues to strongly support the efforts that will lead to full membership of the Magen David Adom."

With Powell's decision, the United States is free to contribute about \$11 million to the budget of the ICRC headquarters in Geneva.

The United States has an option each year to withhold the funds if the secretary of state determines that progress is not being made in integrating Magen David Adom into the Red Cross movement, said Amanda Williamson, a spokeswoman for the ICRC.

In 2000, a solution to the Star of David dilemma appeared to be close at hand, Williamson said.

The ICRC spearheaded the effort to create a new emblem in the shape of a diamond that could be used in wartime by any nation within the Red Cross movement. But efforts to resolve the impasse were stymied with the start of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000.

"We hope the new climate in the Middle East could provide us with a window of opportunity to raise the issue again," Williamson said, referring to the "road map" peace plan. "We're committed to pursuing this."

Last month, Magen David Adom and the ICRC signed their first cooperation agreement, which included support for the Israeli agency's activities in emergency medical service, disaster management and tracing of missing persons.

The emblem dispute apparently was a critical factor in the 2001 resignation of Bernadine Healy, former president of the American Red Cross.

The American Red Cross has been withholding \$20 million in administrative payments to the Red Cross movement for the last four years as a way to put pressure on the ICRC and the federation to include Magen David Adom as a full member, said Deborah Goldberg, a spokeswoman for the American Red Cross.

Powell's decision doesn't affect the American Red Cross position. □

ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

**Russian Jew may be in jail,
but he's funding community life**

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — For the past 28 months, Mikhail Mirilashvili has been locked in the Kresty prison, a gloomy red-brick penitentiary built during the czarist era.

One of St. Petersburg's most influential businessmen, he was detained on suspicion of involvement in contract murders and kidnappings, charges he fiercely denies.

Despite his forced absence from normal life, the 43-year-old magnate known for his support of Jewish causes is still widely regarded as one of the most prominent members — and the primary local donor — of St. Petersburg Jewry, Russia's second largest Jewish community.

Like many other members of the Russian business elite, Mirilashvili, a native of the former Soviet republic of Georgia, took little time to amass a fortune following the fall of communism in 1991.

Today, Mirilashvili is probably one of the wealthiest prisoners in Russia: From his prison cell, he controls large chunks of St. Petersburg's gambling, hotel and retail industries.

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) filed an inquiry about his case with Russian authorities after a request from a constituent, according to a spokeswoman for the senator. His fate also remains a cause of concern for the Jewish community.

Mirilashvili has been president of the St. Petersburg chapter of the Russian Jewish Congress since the group's inception in 1996 — and he retains his post despite his imprisonment.

Since Mirilashvili has been under arrest, "not a single program he supported was closed or downsized. His donation has even increased," said Eugenia Lvova, executive director of the local RJC chapter and president of the St. Petersburg Jewish Family Center known as Adain Lo.

One of the programs launched with Mirilashvili's funds — and which he still supports — is a soup kitchen run by the Jewish community that feeds 250 elderly and needy citizens, including 150 non-Jews.

"Yet any organization needs a functioning leader. His absence has created tremendous problems, as we have a leader who is inaccessible," Lvova said. "As a result, the organization does not develop, and no new members join it."

Criminal charges against a Jewish leader would cause deep embarrassment for most Jewish communities. But not in Russia, where people developed a deep distrust of the nation's police and judicial systems during the Soviet era in response to authorities' capricious behavior.

Russian Jewish leaders believe anti-Semitism plays no role in the Mirilashvili case, which is being tried in a local court.

"I'm convinced that the Jewish theme has nothing to do with" the trial, said Mark Grubarg, chairman of the Jewish community of St. Petersburg.

Jewish officials here never questioned Mirilashvili's innocence.

"This is an unfortunate situation that became possible in a country where the rule of law has not become the norm yet," Grubarg said. "And unfortunately it happened to a respected member of our community."

St. Petersburg has become known as the "criminal capital" of post-Soviet Russia, a city where organized crime has used violence and official connections to dominate the city's underworld before gradually moving into various legitimate businesses.

The media frequently called Mirilashvili the leader of a crime gang whose members originate from Kutaisi, the town in the western part of Georgia where Mirilashvili lived before moving to St. Petersburg in the late 1970s.

Jewish leaders call such reports nonsense. Some say Mirilashvili's business competitors paid for the negative reports. Similarly, many assumed the whole criminal case may have resulted from business competition.

"When he got arrested everyone thought it had to do with the competition in business," said Alexander Frenkel, director of the St. Petersburg Jewish Community Center. "But now, when his business operation seems to be more or less intact, it appears that there should have been another reason."

In August 2000, Mirilashvili's father, also a businessman, was kidnapped in St. Petersburg, but he was released within two days.

The identities of the abductors were not established. But when, months after the abductions, two ethnic Georgians were shot and killed in broad daylight outside the posh Astoria hotel, which is owned by Mirilashvili Jr., police quickly pointed at him.

The younger Mirilashvili, who holds joint Russian and Israeli citizenship and divided his time between Russia and Tel Aviv, was arrested in St. Petersburg in January 2001.

Mirilashvili's defense insists on his full innocence. They say the investigation has been at a standstill for the past six months, and the trial that opened last November brought little progress. Eight other defendants in the case — most of them Mirilashvili's former bodyguards — have been released on parole.

On a recent weekday morning, the courtroom of the Leningrad District Military Court was filled with several dozen of Mirilashvili's relatives, business partners and lawyers. Two policemen led Mirilashvili into the room and locked him inside a metal cage opposite the prosecutors. Other defendants sat on a bench outside the cage.

Dressed in a long-sleeved, light green polo shirt and black dress pants, Mirilashvili looked relaxed.

Inside the cage, he smiled and waved to his parents and his 18-year-old son, Slava.

While the prosecutor questioned his former chief bodyguard, Mirilashvili took notes on a thick notepad, using the breaks to speak with his lawyers through the metal bars.

"Objectivity requires that Mirilashvili is released and fully acquitted, but the trial has little to do with an attempt to establish the truth. The goal is to sentence Mirilashvili," said Dmitry Miropolsky, a spokesman for the businessman.

Following Mirilashvili's arrest, his associates launched a Web site, www.mirilashvili.ru, that publishes reports on the case in Russian and English.

"Had the investigation quickly and successfully substantiated its charges and had he been found guilty, then this would have possibly compromised the Jewish community," said Leonid Kolton, executive director of the St. Petersburg Jewish Welfare Center Hessed Avraham, who has a picture of himself with Mirilashvili hanging on the wall in his office. "But now, even if he is declared guilty, everyone would feel the verdict is baseless."

Mirilashvili Sr. told JTA that the trial would result in his son's release this summer. □