



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 141

Wednesday, July 30, 2003

86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bush: P.A. must do more

President Bush said the Palestinian Authority must do more to prevent terrorism, including dismantling terrorist groups.

Speaking Tuesday at the White House Rose Garden with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Bush said the Palestinian Authority "must undertake sustained, targeted and effective operations to confront those engaged in terror and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure."

Bush said he is "encouraged by the positive steps that Israel has taken," but also urged Israel to keep in mind how its anti-terror actions can affect the nascent peace process.

Sharon said Israel would continue building a security fence along the border with the West Bank, but would work to minimize the disruption it causes to Palestinians' daily lives. He also said Israel would continue dismantling illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank. [Page 1]

Sharon praises Bush's war efforts

Ariel Sharon praised President Bush for winning the war against Iraq.

While the Israeli government stayed largely silent during the recent war to oust Saddam Hussein, the Israeli prime minister, speaking at the White House on Tuesday, said Bush had "shown the courage, determination and leadership needed to spearhead the successful campaign to oust this ruthless, merciless despot, his dynasty and evil regime."

Israel considered Saddam's regime a threat to its security, but Israel did not publicly endorse the U.S. war to avoid accusations that the United States was fighting on Israel's behalf. Bush has come under criticism for using erroneous intelligence information in his State of the Union address to make the case for war, and for the rising American death toll in Iraq.

Israel makes up with Austria

Israel is re-establishing full diplomatic ties with Austria. Israel pulled its ambassador from Vienna in 2000 after the Freedom Party of far-right politician Jorg Haider joined the Austrian government.

Haider no longer leads the party, and Israeli officials say they are pleased with the steps Austria has taken in recent years to compensate Holocaust survivors and their families.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sharon makes point on terror groups, but now must compete for Bush's ear

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After President Bush's late July meetings with the Israeli and Palestinian prime ministers, one thing is clear: Ariel Sharon no longer will have things all his own way in Washington.

Bush pointedly expressed admiration and respect for Mahmoud Abbas, the new Palestinian Authority prime minister, whom he called "a leader of vision and courage and determination."

Still, Sharon was able to deflect American pressure on Israel over the security fence it is building along the border with the West Bank, and to underline Israel's insistence that the Palestinians must crack down on terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

The fact that Bush was effusive in his praise of Abbas — despite Abbas' refusal to dismantle terrorist groups — worries the Israelis.

In his meetings with Bush and the White House national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, Sharon made it clear that unless the Palestinians dismantle terrorist groups — as they are obliged to do in the first phase of the "road map" peace plan — Israel will not move on to the second phase.

And, Sharon added, he doubts that the Palestinians will act without considerable American pressure.

So far, such pressure has not been forthcoming. Israeli analysts believe Bush went easy on Abbas because, having invested so much in Middle East peacemaking, he wants to show the Palestinians that America is an "honest broker" that can deliver a fair deal.

Bush also hopes his overt show of support will shore up Abbas' shaky status among the Palestinian public, analysts say.

Ironically, Abbas' weakness on the Palestinian street is proving to be his strength: Against the backdrop of that weakness, he has been able to press for American support and Israeli gestures of compromise.

Nowhere has the new American "even-handedness" been more apparent than on the issue of the security fence.

After his meeting with Abbas, Bush even adopted Palestinian terminology, calling the fence a "wall" and saying he would speak to Sharon about the route, urging changes wherever it causes hardship for Palestinians or cuts too deeply into the West Bank.

Sharon came to his meeting with Bush armed with aerial photographs showing that only 10 percent of the security barrier actually is a wall, in areas where snipers in Palestinian cities along the West Bank border could fire at drivers on a major Israeli highway.

The rest of the barrier consists of an electronic fence, barbed wire obstacles and patrol roads, like the security fences along Israel's borders with Lebanon and Jordan.

For weeks, Israeli officials at all levels have been trying to convince their American counterparts of the need for a barrier to stop terrorists from infiltrating Israeli cities. In almost three years of the terrorist intifada, they note, not a single suicide bomber has successfully infiltrated Israel from the Gaza Strip — which is fenced off — while more than 250 have entered Israel from the West Bank.

In their meetings with Sharon, Bush and Rice raised two concerns: that the fence creates political facts on the ground in advance of a territorial settlement with the Palestinians, and that it encompasses too much Palestinian land.

Sharon has said that the fence is not meant to have any political significance, and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel has new deportation plan

The Israeli government has a new plan to encourage illegal foreign workers to leave the country.

The plan was announced in the wake of growing unemployment among Israelis.

Those who will report to police next month will be given two months to leave, without facing possible arrest and forced deportation.

A month later, the grace period will be limited to two weeks.

Come October, police plan tougher measures against illegal foreign workers.

The Central Bureau of Statistics this week estimated the number of foreign workers in Israel at 200,000.

Murdered soldier buried

Murdered Israeli soldier Oleg Sheichat, who had been missing for several days before his body was found, was buried in a military cemetery. Sheichat was murdered July 21 near Arab villages just a few miles from his home in Upper Nazareth.

Israeli officials said they have no information that links any terrorist organization to the murder, but they said they suspect the motive for the killing was terrorist in nature.

Superman in Israel

Israel should accelerate its research to aid those with disabling injuries, paralyzed actor Christopher Reeve said.

Visiting Israel on a five-day trip, the former "Superman" actor told Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom on Monday that "it is important that scientists realize the sense of urgency, that every day counts for patients."

Reeve has been paralyzed from the neck down since a 1995 horseback-riding accident. Israel is a leader in the treatment of spinal injuries.



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.

in the future it could be moved depending on where the final borders are drawn.

Moreover, he said, the most controversial segment — a bulge into the West Bank to include Ariel, one of Israel's largest cities in the West Bank — is not scheduled for construction until early next year, leaving time for disagreements to be resolved.

Bush did not pressure Sharon to stop construction of the fence or move it back to the Green Line — the pre-1967 border between Israel and Jordan's West Bank — but the two sides agreed to hold further consultations on the route with the aim of minimizing hardships to Palestinians.

American intervention on the fence may not have stopped its construction, but it certainly ended any notion Sharon might have entertained of building a second fence along the Jordan Valley to protect Jewish settlements there.

The fear of being left with a minuscule Palestine, enclosed by fences on all sides, was one reason Abbas sought an American-led peace process.

Pre-empting a two-fence plan is the first major achievement of the new Abbas strategy — though Sharon also can claim that the fence galvanized the Palestinians into choosing diplomacy over war.

For Sharon, though, it's not the fence or its route that is likely to undermine the peace process.

It is the Palestinians' failure to disband terrorist groups.

Getting that point across was the main objective of Sharon's Washington visit. He told President Bush that he believed the peace process would collapse in a matter of months if Abbas failed to act against the terrorist groups.

"We are concerned that this welcome quiet will be shattered any minute as a result of the continued existence of terror organizations, which the Palestinian Authority is doing nothing to eliminate or dismantle," Sharon said at the news conference after his meeting with Bush.

In the meeting, he showed Bush Israeli intelligence assessments that Hamas and Islamic Jihad intend to launch a new wave of terror attacks when their cease-fire expires in late September.

In the meantime, he said, the terrorists are using the lull to rearm and to test-fire longer range, more accurate Kassam rockets into the sea off the Gaza coast.

Far from disarming the terror groups, Abbas is doing nothing to stop their rearming, Sharon argued.

The cease-fire, he warned, could prove to be the trap Israel feared, simply giving the terrorists a breather to regroup.

Bush, he said, should press Abbas to take action before it is too late.

In the news conference, Bush demanded that the Palestinian Authority undertake "sustained, targeted and effective operations to confront those engaged in terror, and to dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure."

But Israeli analysts point out that, in his meeting with Abbas, Bush did not lay down a timetable for such action, nor did he specify how the terrorists should be confronted.

The question is whether, in the wake of the meetings, Bush will find ways to persuade both sides to do what is needed to advance the diplomatic process and rebuild mutual trust. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)

Bronfman: Fence 'problematic'

NEW YORK (JTA) — The president of the World Jewish Congress criticized Israel's security fence in a letter to President Bush.

The fence, which Israel says is necessary against terrorist infiltration, is "complicated and potentially problematic," Edgar Bronfman wrote to Bush on Monday.

The letter is co-signed by Lawrence Eagleburger, a former secretary of state who chairs the International Commission on Holocaust-Era Insurance Claims.

The pair urged Bush to continue demanding Palestinian action against terrorism and incitement to violence, but added that Israeli officials "must be ready to build confidence, particularly with regard to the difficult issue of settlement activity, which at the appropriate time must be frozen under the terms" of the "road map" peace plan. □

JEWISH WORLD

Lieberman outflanks Bush

Presidential hopeful Joseph Lieberman said Israel should continue building its security fence until Palestinian terrorism abates.

His comments came after President Bush criticized the fence following a meeting last week with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. "I think we should be hesitant to interrupt the Israelis' building of a security wall until there is the clear action by the Palestinian leadership" to "stop terrorism from the Palestinian areas," Lieberman told the New York Sun newspaper.

One Democratic rival, Al Sharpton, has said the fence is "not helpful," the Sun reported, while spokespersons for other candidates said they did not know their candidates' positions.

E.U. pressed on Hezbollah

A U.S. congressman is asking the European Union to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group. Rep. Jim Saxton (R-N.J.) introduced a bill Tuesday that would ask the European Union to declare the Lebanese organization a terrorist group so that individuals and groups affiliated with it cannot receive E.U. funding.

Israel wants Argentines

Israel is asking for the extradition of former Argentine military officials allegedly involved in the kidnaping of Argentine Jews during the country's 1976-1983 dictatorship.

This week's decision also demands the opening of "common graves" to allow Jewish victims to have a Jewish burial.

Along with the parliamentary debate, a special report about missing Jews during Argentina's "dirty war" — in which the government agents were behind the disappearance of thousands of people — was made public.

Argentine President Nestor Kirchner has said that people accused of violating human rights during the military government should be extradited.

Man jailed for visiting Israel

A Canadian man has been imprisoned in Lebanon for visiting Israel. Lebanon has held Bruce Balfour since July 10.

Anti-Semitic Web site shut down

An anti-Semitic Web site that posed as a "Who's Who for Jews" was taken down. Hoozajew.org was "little more than a cyber-den for anti-Semites," the Anti-Defamation League said last week after the site was disabled. The site included lists of Jews in different professions, with each section concluding that Jews are overrepresented in that field.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Brought together by tragedy, terror victims tour United States

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Under an outdoor canopy peppered by nighttime rain at a kosher steakhouse, Danny Turgman strokes his left arm when the conversation turns intimate, appearing achingly self-conscious: He has no feeling in the arm.

It has been more than a year since a suicide bomber shattered Turgman's body in an attack at Jerusalem's Moment Café. Though the thin, wide-eyed 28-year-old largely has healed, save for a scarred neck and a flattened arm — fastened to his body with hefty straps that crisscross his back — he is enveloped in emotional wounds.

Gazing at his broken arm, which he cradles with his healthy one, Turgman holds back tears as he asks in halting English: Who will date him in his current condition?

Struggling to cut his hamburger or to open his fanny pack with his teeth, Turgman is only just beginning to adjust to life post-Moment. Too frightened to frequent his favorite cafes, his days consist of work, home and hospital. He had to be persuaded to travel to New York, where he feared being caught in another attack.

Turgman has spent a week here with more than 20 other young victims of Palestinian terrorism and bereaved family members of victims. They were brought by One Family, a group that seeks to highlight the human cost of terrorism.

The group is meeting politicians in New York and Washington, soothing themselves with visits to tourist attractions and by sharing their experiences.

On Monday night, they joined former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani and family members of victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"Have hope and be optimistic!" Giuliani told the group at a packed press conference at the B'nai Zion house in New York City. "People that live in freedom will always prevail over people who live in oppression."

The group then burst into song, first singing "God bless America" and then a Hebrew hymn — "Hinei Mah Tov U'mah Na'im" — linking their arms and swaying.

James Riches links his sinewy arm with the wounded one of an Israeli whose burned skin is held together by a bandage. Riches' sturdy, square frame belies his own fragile emotional state.

Riches, a Brooklyn-born fireman, lost his oldest son, of the same name and profession, on Sept. 11. The "same people that killed my son maimed and killed most of these people," Riches said, describing a bond he feels for Israeli terror victims.

Attached to the underside of Riches' formal white fireman's cap is a tiny photo of his son, with a caption reading, "In loving memory of James C. Riches, Sept. 11, 2001."

Riches admits that he feels rage at times. "I'd like to go kill a few myself," he said, referring to the terrorists behind his son's murder. Instead, he said, he tries to channel his energy toward good, "not for evil, like these other idiots."

Yariv Shabo, 18, also tries to draw lessons from the death of his mother and three brothers, killed when Palestinian snipers shot them in their home in the West Bank Israeli town of Itamar, then set the house ablaze.

Shabo was with friends on his street when he heard the shooting and took cover at a neighbor's house. In an instant, his family shrank from nine members to five, says Shabo, who covers his head with a large, colorful knit kipah.

"No mother food, no little brother to play with," he says in broken English.

Shabo, who has moved to Kedumim, another West Bank Israeli town, says, "You have to keep going." Otherwise the Arabs will win, explains Shabo, a gentle spirit who will leave yeshiva to join the Israeli army in March.

The attack has only heightened Shabo's attachment to Israel.

"We're supposed to hold on very hard," he says, demonstrating with a fist what he can't fully express in words.

The experience also has heightened his sense of Jewish peoplehood.

"All of the Jews are one big family," he says. "I meet Jews. I see the love they give us, everything. They want to hug us. They want to help as they can."

Ultimately, Shabo believes there is a divine reason for his survival: Maybe, he says, it is "to help Am Yisrael," the People of Israel. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Iraqi immigrants to Israel enjoy their new lives — but miss home

By Loolwa Khazzoom

TEL AVIV (JTA) — “I sacrificed my life for my parents,” says Salima Moshe, 72. “I gave everything to them. I didn’t think about myself.”

As a 20-year-old in 1951, Moshe watched her family and friends flee to Israel in an exodus that grew to include some 90 percent of the Iraqi Jewish community, or about 120,000 people.

Though she wanted to join them, she says she felt an obligation to stay in Basra.

“My mother and father were elderly,” she explains. “I needed to stay and take care of them.”

Moshe is one of the six Iraqi Jews brought to Israel last Friday in Operation Ezra Mitzion, or Help From Zion.

On June 11, Jeff Kaye, an official of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which handles immigration and absorption in the Jewish state, went on a fact-finding mission to Iraq.

At the same time, Rachel Zelon, vice president for operations at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, was in Iraq to identify the remaining Jews and check on their condition and needs.

“All the Jews were distressed,” Kaye says, noting that the period since the U.S.-led war to unseat Saddam Hussein has been “a very unsettling time” in Iraq.

“Paradoxically,” he says, “though Saddam’s regime is no longer there, and coalition forces are, the situation is more volatile than ever before, because nobody is in charge.”

Kaye reported back to Yossi Shraga, director of Middle East immigration at the Jewish Agency, that the remaining Jews were mostly elderly and frail, lacked proper medical attention and lived in poverty.

Meanwhile, Shraga was acting to bring to Israel all the Jews who wanted to come. He contacted Shlomo Garafe, a Jewish Agency liaison from Israel with an American passport, who was born in Yemen and was fluent in Arabic. Garafe agreed to lead a mission to Iraq.

HIAS was prepared to co-sponsor the operation. The two organizations rented a Jordanian plane in Baghdad and made arrangements with the American army to extract the six Jews who wanted to make aliyah.

“This small Jewish community has lived under a repressive regime for decades,” HIAS’ Zelon said in a statement. “They have lived in a society where the vast majority of the population despises Jews and Israel. Most have lived trying to hide their Jewish identities except with close friends, colleagues or neighbors.

“This is clearly a community at great risk given the increasing tensions within Iraq, and the increase in open anti-Semitism. We are delighted to have played a part in helping these initial six immigrate to Israel.”

They weren’t the only ones excited about the operation.

“According to what was reported to me from Iraq, American soldiers were very happy with this,” Shraga says. “Among them were Jewish soldiers who celebrated this happening. They helped Garafe and Zelon to get the Jews on board.”

Exactly two weeks after launching the operation, six Iraqi

Jews landed safely in Israel on July 25.

“Emotions were very high,” Shraga recalls. “Here in Israel, family was waiting for them — family that had not seen them for 50 years.”

After the new immigrants appeared on television, 20 relatives called the station and showed up at the Avia Hotel within two hours for a family reunion. One young woman, who is to marry in coming weeks, handed an invitation to her grandmother from Iraq, whom she had never seen before.

New immigrant Ezra Salah Levy, 82, spoke at the Knesset on Monday and then visited the Kotel, where he put a note in one of the cracks in the wall.

He recited the Shehechyanu prayer thanking God for keeping him alive to have a wonderful new experience and then said Baruch m’chayeh ha’metim — Blessed be the One who breathes life into the dead.

Asked why he recited the latter prayer, Levy responded, “Because I am starting a new life in Israel, at 82 years old!”

But not all the immigrants are so at ease.

“Baghdad is my city; I was born there,” says Salah Sasson Abdul Nebeh, 90, who now is living in a geriatric home in central Israel. “Of course I stayed there. It’s my country.”

As little as a week ago, Abdul Nebeh didn’t want to come to Israel.

“I am a bachelor. I had my own house. I was quite comfortable. I didn’t think of coming to Israel,” he says. But “a couple of Americans” — Garafe and Zelon — “persuaded me to come here.”

Garafe and Zelon, he recalls, “were so good to me, so nice, kind, generous, they were very, very good with me, so I was ashamed to say no, to insist,” Abdul Nebeh says. “I gave up.”

One Israeli politician — Labor legislator Colette Avital, head of the Knesset’s Immigration and Absorption Committee — accused the Jewish Agency of caring more about the publicity it would reap from the operation than about the Iraqi Jews’ wishes.

A Jewish Agency spokesperson said it was the duty of the agency and the State of Israel to rescue Jews in distress whenever possible.

For his part, Abdul Nebeh says he misses his friends in Baghdad.

“I left people there, and they cried about me going away. I don’t want to break the hearts of people, especially women. I hope I’ll be happy here after another one or two months.”

Though he doesn’t regret the decision to come to Israel, he says that at 90 he feels too old for such drastic changes in his life.

Down the hall from Abdul Nebeh, Moshe — who for years dreamed of making aliyah — has tears in her eyes when she recalls her departure from Iraq.

“It was very hard to separate from my friends there,” she says.

Though she had many friends during her last years in Basra, Moshe notes that life was not always comfortable as a Jew.

“We lived in a lot of fear,” she says, mentioning pogroms and hangings that took place through the 1970s. For extended periods, she says, Jews stayed confined to rooms in their homes and offices.

In the past few decades, however, she felt safe to roam around as she wished — as long as she didn’t mention Israel.

Of her sudden immigration to the country whose name she could not utter, Moshe says: “It’s so amazing to be here in Israel, with my family and with the nation of Israel together. I am very, very happy that God granted me my wish to come.” □