



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Closure on West Bank and Gaza

Israel imposed a closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip after Tuesday's suicide bombing, which killed 20 people and wounded more than 100.

After the bombing, Israel froze security talks and the planned withdrawal of Israeli troops from West Bank cities.

Meanwhile, P.A. Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas suspended contacts with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, both of which claimed responsibility for the bombing. He also reportedly ordered P.A. security services to arrest those responsible for the bombing.

Bush seeks Palestinian action

The White House pressed the Palestinian Authority to crack down on terrorist groups.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the "only way we can continue to move forward is for all parties to take the responsibility of dismantling terrorist organizations seriously and acting on it."

President Bush spoke Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, telling Sharon that there could be "no compromise on terror," according to the Prime Minister's Office. Secretary of State Colin Powell was scheduled to speak Wednesday with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas.

Crown Heights case closed

The man convicted of violating a Jewish scholar's civil rights during the 1991 riots in Crown Heights, N.Y. was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Lemrick Nelson, 28, has faced three trials in the case and already has served nearly a decade in prison.

In May, a jury found him guilty of stabbing Australian yeshiva scholar Yankel Rosenbaum during the riots but not of causing his death.

Nelson likely will be freed in less than one year due to time served.

Jews, Christians at Temple Mount

Jerusalem's Temple Mount was opened to non-Muslim visitors.

Several hundred Christian and Jewish visitors toured Judaism's holiest site Wednesday. The move to open the site, which has been closed to non-Muslims since the intifada began in September 2000, was apparently made without the approval of the Wakf, the Islamic trust responsible for the site.

NEWS ANALYSIS

In West Bank, Israel puts P.A. to crucial — and final? — test

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — This week's massive suicide bombing on a Jerusalem bus has pushed the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to the breaking point.

Over the next few weeks, Israeli officials predict the cease-fire that Palestinian terrorist groups declared in late June — which the terrorists say allows for occasional bombings such as Tuesday's — will either stabilize or collapse.

In addition, the planned hand over of more West Bank cities to Palestinian control will be a crucial — and perhaps final — test for Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas' government, Israeli officials say.

Israel reacted to Tuesday's bombing, which killed 20 people and wounded more than 100, by freezing the land transfer. However, assuming there are no more attacks in coming days, senior Israeli officials still believe the transfer should proceed.

First, though, Abbas must show that he genuinely intends to crack down on the fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad militias responsible for a number of recent attacks, the officials said. Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the carnage in Jerusalem.

In agreeing late last week to hand over Jericho, Kalkilya, Ramallah and Tulkarm, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon hoped the Palestinian Authority would seize the opportunity to show that it can prevent terrorism from areas it controls, Sharon aides say.

But, they make clear, if the experiment fails, Israel will retake the cities — a move that could topple the Palestinian Authority and spell the end of the "road map" peace plan.

The key struggle during the first phase of the road map has been over the terrorist weapon: Israel wants it defused; the Palestinians want to keep it in reserve.

In this context, the hand over of the cities is part of a subtle diplomatic tango between the sides.

Israel hopes the move will lead to pressure on the Palestinians to crack down on terrorists. The Palestinians hope they will be able to prevent terrorist attacks without having to actually dismantle the terrorist groups or give up the option of renewing violence if negotiations fail.

Tuesday's bombing showed the dangers to Israel of the Palestinian strategy. The Palestinians say that as long as the groups aren't actually carrying out terror attacks, there's no reason to crack down on them.

But Israel has warned that as long as the groups are allowed to exist and rearm, they can quickly switch from passive to active mode — with devastating results.

Israel initially withheld the cities' transfer as a means of pressuring the Palestinians to crack down on terrorists. But it didn't work: Since they didn't control the cities, the Palestinians argued, they couldn't be expected to stop terrorism emanating from them.

Moreover, holding on to the cities opened Israel to accusations that it wasn't giving enough to induce the Palestinians to fulfill their road map obligations.

So, in a reversal of policy, Sharon hoped to put the burden of proof back on the Palestinians: They would have to prevent terror or risk being blamed for the failure of the "hudna," an Arabic term for cease-fire that has connotations of rearming for future confrontation.

"Once they are given control, they will be formally responsible for what happens

MIDEAST FOCUS

Bombing victims' names released

The names of some victims of Tuesday's bus bombing in Jerusalem were released. Eighteen of the 20 dead had been identified by Wednesday.

Names released included Mordechai Reinitz, 49, and his son Issachar, 9, of Jerusalem; Goldie Taubenfeld, 43, and her son Shmuel, 3 months, from New Square, N.Y.; Ya'akov Binder, 50, from Jerusalem; Rabbi Eliezer Weisfish, 42, from Jerusalem; Menachem Liebel, 24, from Jerusalem; Shmuel Zargari, 11 months, from Jerusalem; Lilach Kardi, 22, who was nine months pregnant, from Jerusalem; and Tehilla Nathanson, 3, from Monsey, N.Y.

Reps cancel Abbas meeting

A U.S. congressional delegation canceled a meeting with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas after Tuesday's deadly bus bombing in Jerusalem.

"We have concluded it is pointless to meet with Abu Mazen, as he is either impotent to stop terror or unwilling to act," Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) said in a statement, using Abbas' *nom de guerre*.

Netanyahu: Read my lips

Israel's finance minister is promising no new taxes.

Benjamin Netanyahu promised Sunday that the government would not levy new taxes next year, denying press reports that Israel's treasury would introduce new taxes to cut the state's deficit.

Israel's marginal income tax reaches 55 percent. The rate of value added tax is 18 percent.

Riot in Israeli jail

Israeli guards, police and soldiers put down a riot by Palestinian prisoners on Wednesday.

An estimated 250 Palestinian inmates at the Megiddo jail in northern Israel started the riot.



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in the cities and be in a position to do something about it," explained Gideon Ezra, a government minister close to Sharon. "There will be no more excuses."

Using a strategy it perfected during the Oslo years, the Palestinian Authority's tactic has been to claim weakness and then demand Israeli concessions, such as prisoner releases and the hand over of cities.

Ostensibly, such concessions will win the Palestinian Authority support among Palestinians, strengthening the government for a confrontation with terrorist groups.

In reality, however, once the Israeli concessions are obtained, the Palestinian Authority invariably maintains that they have been insufficient to merit a crackdown on terror and urges the Americans to press Israel for more, Israeli officials complain.

Israel also has been engaged in a battle of wits with terrorist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are trying to create a "balance of fear" by retaliating quickly for Israeli counter-terrorist operations in a one-for-one exchange that grants a veneer of legitimacy to the terror attacks.

For example, Islamic Jihad said the Jerusalem attack was retaliation for the killing of its local leader in Hebron last week. Hamas, which also sought to claim the attack, said it was retaliation for the killing of one of its activists months ago.

Israeli analysts say the terror groups hope to create a situation similar to the standoff between Israel and Hezbollah along the northern border, where any Israeli attack on Hezbollah militiamen is met with the shelling of Israeli civilians.

In other words, the analysts say, the terror groups are exploiting the cease-fire to rearm, while deterring Israeli countermeasures by effectively holding Israeli civilians hostage.

"Hamas is not interested in blowing up the cease-fire just now," a senior Israel Defense Forces source told the Ha'aretz newspaper. "But they want to create a mechanism that enables them to hit us whenever it's convenient for them — to protest the killing or arrest of wanted men or the failure to release additional prisoners. And Islamic Jihad, of course, is starting to imitate them."

The handover of the Palestinian cities is widely seen in Israel as a last-ditch attempt to save the cease-fire, which has been crumbling under Palestinian suicide bombings and Israeli counter-terrorism actions.

Still, Ezra, a former deputy director of the Shin Bet security service, said before Tuesday's bombing in Jerusalem that the Israeli defense establishment is reasonably confident the Palestinian Authority will pass the test and stabilize the situation.

"Take Bethlehem," he says. "Since we handed it over in early July, there has not been a single terror attack from that city."

Handing over more cities is a calculated risk, he said, but one worth taking.

Right-wingers in Sharon's government have denounced the move as a relinquishment of the principle of reciprocity. They argue that the cities are being handed over to the Palestinians even though they have done nothing to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, as they are obligated to do under the road map.

Ezra counters that right-wing critics "do not want the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to succeed," but prefer "to return to the old situation in which Israel has to deal with the terrorists itself."

True, he said, Israel had spectacular successes fighting terrorism, but at the cost of soldiers' lives.

"In the war against terror you do what's best for you and what's most effective," he said. "Handing over the cities is not bowing to terror or giving up on the eradication of terror by the Palestinian Authority. But we reached the conclusion that it's best for us not be in Jericho, Kalkilya, Tulkarm and Ramallah. I think we'd be better off not to be in Jenin, either."

An Israeli pullout also should improve conditions for the Palestinian population, showing them that the peace process is preferable to terrorism, Ezra said.

"It would be much better if Palestinians manned the roadblocks or took other preventive measures against terror themselves," he said.

But Ezra agrees that if the Palestinian Authority fails the test, Israel will have no option but to move back into the main West Bank cities. If that happens, Israeli officials say, it would be the end not only of the hudna, but possibly also of the Abbas government and the road map. □

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish group talks tough

The umbrella organization for U.S. Jewish groups says the "road map" peace plan should be declared dead if the Palestinians don't wage war on terrorist groups.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said in a statement Wednesday that Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas knows who is behind attacks like Tuesday's Jerusalem bus bombing, but he just won't confront them.

"Continuing to allow Mr. Abbas to profess weakness, whether of will or authority, must end," conference leaders said in the statement.

The statement was subtitled, "No more excuses, no more lies, no more obfuscation." It also calls on Saudi Arabia, Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran to cut their ties to terrorism.

Jews mourn Brazilian diplomat

Brazilian Jews mourned the death of Brazilian diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello, a high U.N. official killed in Tuesday's bombing in Baghdad.

"Sergio was an ambassador for peace. Terrorism started to develop against the Israelis and now it somehow hit Brazil," said Edda Bergmann, president of B'nai B'rith Brazil.

Vieira de Mello, the United Nations' high commissioner for human rights, had played key roles in U.N. missions in Africa, Bosnia, East Timor and Iraq. Vieira de Mello also was considered a future candidate for U.N. secretary-general.

Brazil's president, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, declared a three-day mourning period for Vieira de Mello's death.

Court rejects judge's appeal

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal to block the removal of a Ten Commandments monument from an Alabama courthouse.

Alabama Chief Judge Roy Moore has until the end of Wednesday to remove the display, which a federal judge ruled violated the Constitution's ban on government promotion of religion.

Japanese exhibit 'bolsters terror'

Japan should not allow a Palestinian exhibit to tour the country, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said.

"Shaheed 100" is a collection of artifacts, photos and recollections memorializing the first 100 "martyrs" — as Palestinians call those killed fighting Israel — of the current intifada. The exhibit opened Aug. 1 in Tokyo and is slated to travel around the country.

Japan should not display an exhibit that "indirectly bolsters terrorism," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center.

Israel's struggle against terror: A chronology of deadly attacks

By JTA Staff

NEW YORK (JTA) — The following is a timeline of the more notable terrorist attacks since the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000:

Feb. 14, 2001 — In the deadliest attack until that point of the intifada, a Palestinian bus driver mows down a group of Israelis at a bus stop near Tel Aviv, killing eight soldiers and civilians.

June 1, 2001 — A suicide bomber kills 21 Israelis and wounds more than 100, mostly teenage immigrants from the former Soviet Union, at a Tel Aviv beachside disco. The bombing comes days after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced a unilateral Israeli cease-fire.

Aug. 9, 2001 — A lunchtime attack at the Sbarro pizzeria in downtown Jerusalem kills 15 and wounds 130. Several children are killed in the suicide blast, along with nearly an entire family.

Oct. 17, 2001 — Palestinian gunmen assassinate Israel's tourism minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, in a Jerusalem hotel.

Dec. 2, 2001 — Three attacks within 24 hours kill 25 people and injure more than 200. The bombs go off at a pedestrian mall in downtown Jerusalem, in a car nearby and on a Haifa bus.

March 3, 2002 — A series of weekend attacks, including a bombing in Jerusalem and an ambush in the West Bank, kill 21 Israelis. The bombing comes amid talk of a new Saudi Arabian peace initiative.

March 9, 2002 — Terrorists bomb Jerusalem's popular Cafe Moment, around the corner from the prime minister's residence, killing 11.

March 27, 2002 — In an attack that serves as the impetus for Operation Defensive Shield, a suicide bomber strikes a Netanya hotel during a Passover seder, killing 29 mostly elderly Israelis. The attack is the deadliest of the intifada.

March 31, 2002 — Fifteen die when a suicide bomber strikes a restaurant in Haifa frequented by both Arabs and Jews. The Haifa bombing follows suicide bombing attacks on each of the previous two days, one at a Jerusalem supermarket and one at a cafe in Tel Aviv.

May 8, 2002 — A bomber sets his sights on Israel's young, blasting a pool hall in the Tel Aviv suburb of Rishon le-Zion, killing 15.

June 18, 2002 — A suicide bombing on a rush-hour bus kills 19 in Jerusalem. The next day, another suicide bomber strikes in Israel's capital, killing seven at a hitchhiking post in the French Hill neighborhood.

July 31, 2002 — Nine people are killed — including five Americans — and more than 80 wounded in a bombing at a Hebrew University cafeteria.

Oct. 22, 2002 — A car pulls alongside a bus in northern Israel and detonates, killing 14.

Nov. 21, 2002 — 11 people are killed in a suicide bombing aboard a crowded Jerusalem bus. Many of the passengers are schoolchildren.

Jan. 5, 2003 — A pair of suicide bombings in Tel Aviv kill 22 people, many of them foreign workers. The bombing is the deadliest since the March 2002 Passover massacre in Netanya.

March 5, 2003 — A bomber strikes a bus in Haifa, killing 15, most of them teenagers.

June 11, 2003 — A Palestinian bomber dressed as a fervently Orthodox Jew blows himself up on a bus, killing 17. The attack comes a week after the "road map" peace process is launched at a summit in Aqaba, Jordan, with the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States.

Aug. 19, 2003 — A bombing on a Jerusalem bus kills at least 20, including several children on their way home from a Bar Mitzvah celebration. More than 100 are wounded. The bombing takes place on the eve of a planned transfer of several West Bank cities to Palestinian Authority control, and in the midst of a "cease-fire" declared by Palestinian terror groups. □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

For AIPAC, congressional trips are effective way to boost Israel

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The next time Rep. Jim Langevin goes into the U.S. House of Representatives to vote on a matter concerning Israel, no background briefing will be as valuable as what he experienced earlier this month.

Visiting Israeli towns that border the West Bank, the second-term Democrat from Rhode Island said he saw for himself how the controversial security fence Israel is building will prevent suicide bombers and other terrorists from entering Israel.

The trip gave him a new appreciation of Israel's commitment to putting security first and foremost, he said.

"It gave me a better understanding of why things like the fence are necessary — and a rational response to the terrorist threats Israel faces," Langevin told JTA.

Even without the visit, he probably would have voted for pro-Israel measures, Langevin said, but now he is more sympathetic to Israel's plight.

"I will forever feel a closeness to Israel, having been there and seen the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis," he said.

That's just what the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the main pro-Israel lobby in Washington, likes to hear.

Through its affiliate organization, the American Israel Education Foundation, AIPAC sent Langevin and 28 other congressional Democrats on a trip to Israel earlier this month, the largest congressional contingent ever to visit the Jewish state.

Next week it plans to send 19 Republicans on a similar tour, though it's unclear how Tuesday's massive suicide bombing in Jerusalem will affect the agenda, including attempts to schedule meetings with Palestinian leaders.

AIPAC officials say optimism over the "road map" peace plan, coupled with a somewhat reduced threat of violence, has made Israel a top destination for lawmakers this summer.

The trips also give representatives an opportunity to show their support for Israel — which can be critical to winning political backing from Jews and conservative Christians — ahead of elections.

Critics argue that the AIPAC trips present a monolithic view and don't show all sides of the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

First-term Rep. Ed Case (D-Hawaii), part of the Democratic delegation, said he was disappointed that no time was scheduled for meetings with regular Palestinians, but he said he was not put off by the "uniform" position speakers took on hot-button issues such as the fence.

"AIPAC is sophisticated enough to know that I am sophisticated enough to know there is more than one side to every story," he said, pointing out that he was free to ask probing questions.

AIPAC spokeswoman Rebecca Dinar said the organization tries to show all sides of the issues, noting that the Democratic group met not only with officials of the Israeli government, but also with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and Labor Party leader Shimon Peres.

In addition to the AIPAC trips, several congressional delegations have gone on taxpayer-funded travel, including a contingent led by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), which is in the region this

week, and a visit last month by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas), who made headlines for a strongly pro-Israel speech he gave to the Knesset.

Most visiting lawmakers meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Abbas. They tour hospitals, kibbutzim and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. They also learn the latest tools and tactics Israel is using for homeland security.

AIPAC's goal is to give lawmakers a first-hand understanding that support for Israel should be the cornerstone of U.S. policy in the Middle East, and that Israel needs American economic and military support.

Most agree that the strategy has worked: Over the years, lawmakers and their staffers have returned from such trips more interested in the Middle East, more likely to vote for aid to Israel and more likely to back AIPAC on other Israel-related matters.

Lawmakers get more than an expense-paid week in the Middle East: They get to vocalize their support for Israel, helping them tap into the wealth of pro-Israel Jewish money that AIPAC has access to, even though AIPAC doesn't endorse specific candidates.

That's especially important for Democrats this year, as pro-Israel sentiments from President Bush and Republican leaders like DeLay appear to have led to increased Jewish contributions to Republican candidates.

Doug Bloomfield, a former legislative director for AIPAC, says he has seen lawmakers who previously had shown little interest in the Middle East become real leaders on Middle East policy after visiting Israel.

The trips are "consistently valuable," he said. "I can't think of a single instance in which someone came back with a less favorable impression of Israel."

The impact of such trips can be almost immediate: When the Bush administration suggested earlier this month that money used for Israel's security fence should be deducted from the \$8 billion in loan guarantees Israel is to receive from the United States, the Democrat delegation visiting Israel fired back.

The trip's leader, House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), told reporters that Democrats on the trip understood the need for the fence and felt its cost should not be deducted from the loan-guarantee money.

Case, whose Hawaii district does not include many Jews, said the most valuable aspect of the trip was that it gave lawmakers a week to focus on a single issue.

"When we go to Israel, we sit there and we're absorbed," he said in an interview. "We're not thinking about whether we should protect a dam in the Northwest or whether we should have prescription drug coverage in Medicare. We're thinking about Israel."

Some say they don't think the pro-Israel statements lawmakers generally make on such trips necessarily reflect their true feelings on AIPAC's key issues.

One official for a dovish Jewish group said lawmakers say what AIPAC wants to hear if they think it will attract Jewish donors.

"This is a totally cynical effort to get over there a year before the election, and despite what they think in their hearts say what American Jewish contributors want to hear," the official said.

Dinar did not address these charges, saying, "Members of Congress go on AIEF trips to Israel because they want to see for themselves why the U.S.-Israel relationship is the cornerstone of the Middle East." □