



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clark announces presidential run

Gen. Wesley Clark, the 10th candidate to enter the Democratic race for president, is the grandson of a Russian Jewish emigre.

Clark, who was raised as a Southern Baptist, learned in his 20s that he descends on his father's side from "generations of rabbis" from Minsk. [Page 3]

Prisoner-release deal proceeding

Israel reportedly has agreed to release some top Hezbollah prisoners in exchange for four Israelis being held in Lebanon.

But the deal would not include getting new information on missing airman Ron Arad, Israeli television reports said.

The deal would entail releasing two top Hezbollah prisoners, among others, in an exchange for the remains of Israeli soldiers Benny Avraham, Omar Souad and Adi Avitan, who are believed dead, and Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum, who is reportedly alive.

The two top Lebanese prisoners, Hezbollah leader Sheik Abdul Karim Obeid and Shi'ite activist Mustafa Dirani, were originally kidnapped by Israel in part for use as bargaining chips to learn information about Arad, who went missing in 1986 after he ejected from his plane over Lebanon.

Officials said the deal could be finalized within weeks.

W. Bank fence decision delayed

Israel postponed approval of a new section of its West Bank security fence.

The delay came after Washington hinted the construction would hold up U.S. loan guarantees. Israeli government spokesmen blamed government bureaucracy for the hold-up on the fence.

The Bush administration is opposed to the expropriation of Palestinian land for the project, saying it endangers any chances for peace.

Settlers convicted in bomb plot

Three Israelis were convicted for plotting to bomb a Palestinian girls school in eastern Jerusalem.

Shlomo Dvir, Yarden Morag and Ofer Gamliel, all residents of the West Bank, were found guilty Wednesday of attempted murder and illegal possession of firearms.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Pressure mounts to complete Israeli barrier in wake of new round of terror and retaliation

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With Israel and the Palestinians seemingly on the brink of a new round of terrorism and response, calls for the speedy completion of the barrier between Israel and the West Bank are growing.

Recent Palestinian attacks in Jerusalem and central Israel, along with Israel's targeted killings of Hamas leaders and its threat to expel Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, have created a sense of renewed urgency on the security fence.

To protect Israeli citizens against future bombers, politicians and pundits are clamoring for completion of the fence's final and longest sector: from central Israel, through Jerusalem and around the southern part of the West Bank.

Under pressure, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon says he intends to get the Cabinet to authorize plans for construction of a "large sector" of the fence soon.

But skeptics charge that Sharon is still using a controversy over whether or not the fence should go around the West Bank city of Ariel to delay work on a project he really has no intention of finishing.

Some in Sharon's Likud Party object to the fence because they fear it will establish a de facto border between a future Palestinian state and Israel, and it will not incorporate many Jewish settlements.

Sharon aides respond to charges that Sharon doesn't want the fence completed by saying that though the prime minister may have had reservations in the past about the barrier — a combination of fencing, barbed wire and concrete wall — now he is determined to complete it as quickly as possible.

If so, analysts say, a completed barrier will do more than just provide security.

It will accelerate a process of separation between Israelis and Palestinians, leading inevitably to the two-state solution the parties so far have failed to reach through negotiation.

The first section of the fence, a 77-mile stretch from the Arab village of Salem in the north to Elkana in central Israel, was completed in late July.

Work is proceeding apace on the second northern section, from Salem toward the Jordan River. But no decision has yet been taken on the route, the funding or the work on the remaining 150-mile southern section.

For months, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz has been pressing strongly for the inclusion of Ariel, a Jewish city of 13,000 about 12 miles inside the West Bank.

But the American administration remains firmly opposed, arguing that the Ariel route would take in too much West Bank territory.

This week Sharon finally decided to leave Ariel out. But to prevent the impression that he is ready to cede the city, the prime minister suggested leaving a gap in the fence opposite Ariel so it won't appear to be on the "wrong side."

As for the city's security, he proposes surrounding it with large no-entry zones.

Still, a formal decision on this last sector of the fence's route is still pending, and many in Israel are losing patience.

Even President Moshe Katsav, in a rare comment on a political issue, called for acceleration of work on the fence. He called it "essential for saving Israeli lives."

Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Sharon to declare work on the fence a "national project" and complete it within six months.

And despite this week's across-the-board budget cuts, Netanyahu says he will see

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians: We will offer truce

Incoming Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Karia said he will offer Israel a comprehensive truce. P.A. officials also said Hamas has signaled it might agree to halt attacks on Israelis, the Jerusalem Post reported Wednesday.

But Israeli officials say they first want to see significant P.A. action against Hamas and other terrorist groups before considering a cease-fire.

U.S., Israel concerned with Iran

U.S. and Israeli legislators met in Washington to focus on the threat Iran poses.

Knesset members joined congressional leaders Wednesday to discuss Iran, and they said the Islamic republic was only "weeks away" from achieving nuclear-weapon capabilities.

"If not efficiently tackled, in one year from now we may face a new world, a very dangerous Middle East and a very dangerous world," said Yuval Steinitz, who co-chaired the event with Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.).

Palestinian killed in Nablus

Israeli soldiers shot and killed a member of the Al-Aksa Brigade in the West Bank.

The man was killed early Wednesday morning in Nablus after he shot at Israeli soldiers, according to an Israeli army spokeswoman.

Report: Hamas gets Saudi money

At least 50 percent of Hamas' operating budget comes from Saudi Arabia, The New York Times reported.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, Saudi support for Hamas increased as donations from elsewhere in the world dried up, according to American analysts cited in the report. The donations, roughly \$5 million a year, were allegedly made in cash and therefore are difficult to trace.

to it that whatever money is needed for completing the fence will be made available.

For their part, opposition politicians and pundits have been scathing over the slow progress.

Former Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna argues that if the government intends to target Hamas leaders, it should first finish building the fence to protect Israelis against the inevitable terrorist responses.

He reproaches the government for not building it faster and charges that many Israelis have died unnecessarily as a result.

In an angry column in Israel's daily Ma'ariv newspaper, veteran pundit Dan Margalit took this argument further, calling for a commission of inquiry into the postponement.

The government, he suggested, was guilty of criminal negligence, "because it knew its incompetence would lead to many Israeli deaths."

Despite Sharon's latest commitment to complete the fence, Uzi Dayan, Chairman of the Public Council for a Security Fence for Israel, is skeptical.

He maintains that Sharon doesn't really intend to finish the job, because he recognizes the likely result: Israel withdrawing unilaterally from the West Bank, which he thinks will be perceived as weakness and invite more terrorism from Palestinians inspired by the concession.

But for Dayan and many leading Israeli politicians, unilateral separation from the Palestinians is Israel's only real political and security option, because, they say, it is now clear that there is no peace partner on the Palestinian side.

Based on that premise, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak says Israel should adopt a three-pronged policy: Fight terror, withdraw behind a completed fence and come out with a peace plan of its own to show that the fence is not a final border and that Israel is open to negotiations whenever the Palestinians are ready.

Some analysts go further, contending that with the building of the fence a process has been set in motion that will lead inevitably to separation between Israelis and Palestinians in two adjacent states.

Dan Schueftan, author of the book, "Disengagement: Israel and the Palestinian Entity," is widely regarded as the intellectual father of the separation fence.

He is convinced Sharon will eventually realize that unilateral separation is the only option.

"Just as I knew Sharon would go for division of the land of Israel before he said the words 'Palestinian state' because of the inner logic, I know today he will go for unilateral disengagement," he told JTA, "because it's clear there won't be any agreement with the Palestinians."

He said, "We don't want to take responsibility for the Palestinians' everyday life and welfare. I am worried about the pace, but not about the direction."

Close Sharon aides acknowledge that the prime minister may be moving more toward this kind of unilateral approach.

"He was always very skeptical about fences," a senior adviser said. "But I think slowly but surely he's seeing that this may be the best shot Israel has right now of stabilizing the situation and revisiting negotiations at a later date." □

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

Reporters condemn Palestinians

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A media watchdog group condemned a raid by Palestinian gunmen on the Ramallah studios of a satellite TV channel.

Reporters Without Borders condemned the Saturday night raid on the studios of Al-Arabiya and asked Palestinian police to investigate.

Police said five masked gunmen identifying themselves as members of the Al-Aksa Brigade stormed the offices and held staff at gunpoint while they smashed equipment, according to a report by The Associated Press.

An employee speculated that the channel's reports on rifts within the Palestinian Authority may have angered senior P.A. officials.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, an offshoot of P.A. President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, denied any connection with the raid. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Holocaust claims costs soar

A panel seeking to recover Holocaust-era insurance money racked up 60 percent more bills than claims.

Lawrence Eagleburger, chairman of the International Commission on Holocaust-Era Insurance Claims, told the House Committee on Government Reform on Tuesday that the panel spent \$56 million and obtained \$35 million in insurance payment pledges. It also received 54,000 valid claims, but only 2,600 were approved by insurers, The New York Times reported.

New bill would cut aid to Saudis

A new bill in Congress would cut aid to Saudi Arabia. Legislation proposed Wednesday by Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) would add Saudi Arabia to a list of states that are barred from receiving U.S. aid because of ties to terrorism.

"Every day brings more troubling news about the Saudis and their ties to terrorists," Weiner said. "We need to be sure that as we fight the war on terror we are not inadvertently funding our enemies."

U.K. remembers kinder

Britain unveiled a monument to commemorate the arrival of 10,000 Jewish refugee children in the United Kingdom on the eve of World War II.

Speaking Tuesday at the dedication ceremony at London's Liverpool Street station, Orthodox chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks thanked Britain for welcoming the children in the days when refuge "meant a difference between life and death."

Remember Pollard?

An Israeli Knesset member says American Jewish leaders are not doing enough to help Jonathan Pollard.

Likud member Michael Eitan, who is visiting the United States this week, said he believes the lack of involvement by American Jews in the case is hurting the convicted spy's chances of securing a pardon. Eitan will meet with Pollard next week at his North Carolina prison.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said his organization is working for Pollard's release and that Pollard's chances for a pardon right now are slim.

Ten Commandments in Georgia

The American Civil Liberties Union sued to have a text of the Ten Commandments removed from a Georgia courthouse.

According to The New York Times, the lawsuit was filed on behalf of a man who is keeping his identity secret because he is afraid of reprisals.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Latest contender for president comes from long line of rabbis

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Raised a Southern Baptist and later a convert to Roman Catholicism, Gen. Wesley Clark knew just what to say when he strode into a Brooklyn yeshiva in 1999, ostensibly to discuss his leadership of NATO's victory in Yugoslavia.

"I feel a tremendous amount in common with you," the uniformed four-star general told the stunned roomful of students. "I am the oldest son, of the oldest son, of the oldest son — at least five generations, and they were all rabbis."

The incident could be a signal of how Clark, who became the 10th contender in the Democratic run for the presidency on Wednesday, relates to the Jews and the issues dear to them.

Apparently Clark, 58, revels in his Jewish roots. He told The Jewish Week in New York, which first reported the yeshiva comment in 1999, that his ancestors were not just Jews, but members of the priestly caste of Kohens.

Clark's Jewish father, Benjamin Kanne, died when he was 4, but he has kept in touch with his father's family since his 20s, when he rediscovered his Jewish roots. He is close to a first cousin, Barry Kanne, who heads a pager company in Georgia.

Clark shares more than sentimental memories with Jews. He couples liberal domestic views that appeal to much of the Jewish electorate with a soldier's sympathy for Israel's struggle against terror.

Appearing in June on "Meet the Press" on CBS, Clarke said he agreed with President Bush's assessment that Israel should show more restraint, a reference to the policy of targeting terrorist leaders for assassination.

"But the problem is," Clark continued, "when you have hard intelligence that you're about to be struck, it's the responsibility of a government to take action against that intelligence and prevent the loss of lives. It's what any society would expect of its leadership. So there's a limit to how much restraint can be shown."

Speaking to the New Democrat Network this year, Clark said that dismantling Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Ramallah headquarters was "a legitimate military objective from their perspective."

"For the Israelis, this is a struggle really for the existence of Israel," Clark said in remarks quoted on a support group's Web site.

Clark is also tough on neighboring Arab states, expecting more from them in nudging the Palestinians toward peace.

He has said he would like to see Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in a "contact group" similar to the alliance that Serb-friendly Russia joined to force the Serbs to back down in Kosovo. He blames Saudi Arabia for allowing extremist strains of Islam to spread.

The former NATO leader also opposes any active international role in policing the West Bank until the political situation is settled, a view that Israelis — nervous at relinquishing control to foreign troops on their borders — would appreciate.

Domestically, Clark favors many of the liberal views popular with many Jews. He is pro-choice, and is strongly in favor of separating church from state.

"In order to have freedom of religion, you've got to protect the state from the church," he is quoted saying on his supporters' Web site.

One of the leaders of the Draft Clark campaign said Clark's strength on foreign policy would neutralize an advantage President Bush now has with Jews, and would bring the debate back to domestic issues, where the Bush administration is weaker with Jews.

"It makes him credible and allows him to focus on domestic policy," Brent Blackaby said in a telephone interview from Clark's campaign headquarters in Little Rock, Ark.

Two of Clark's top advisers are Jews who had prominent roles in the Clinton and Gore campaigns. Eli Segal was a top adviser to President Clinton in his first term; Ron Klain helped run Vice President Al Gore's 2000 campaign. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Spotlight thrown on past, future as S. African group marks 100th*By Moira Schneider*

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — South Africa's main Jewish group is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and concerns about the community's future — as well as its past — are dominating the organization's efforts.

One of the issues causing the concern is the widely held conviction among South African Jews that their government is pro-Palestinian — particularly rankling to a community that has always been strongly pro-Zionist — and that the Jewish community is being sidelined.

The Jewish community's perceived lack of support for the anti-apartheid cause is also under scrutiny.

These issues came to the fore at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' recent conference, held in honor of the group's centenary.

Russell Gaddin, newly elected president of the board, discussed his concern that the community is being pushed into a "smaller and smaller" role in national politics.

To secure a meeting with South African President Thabo Mbeki took the board "many, many months of urging. I feel that as representatives of South African Jewry, we should have been granted a meeting on request," he said.

"Perhaps we were a little bit spoiled by former President Mandela, who was defended by Jews" — in his trials by the apartheid government — "and had Jewish doctors and advisers," Gaddin said.

The Jewish community's small size — 75,000 — as compared with the roughly 1 million Muslims in South Africa, may account for some of the perceived neglect.

But ties between the ruling African National Congress and anti-Israel groups also could be to blame, some say.

"Why, when there are so many pressing issues in South Africa such as crime and the Zimbabwe situation, does Israel continually come up for debate in Parliament?" Gaddin asked, voicing the community's feelings of insecurity on the matter.

Fueling the concerns, the Jewish leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance, Tony Leon, talked about the meeting earlier this year between the country's deputy foreign minister, Aziz Pahad, and the anti-Israel Lebanese militia group Hezbollah.

After the May meeting, Pahad commended Hezbollah and pledged to continue contact between it and the South African government, Leon said.

But delivering the keynote address at the opening of the conference, Mbeki reassured the community that the government would not tolerate anti-Semitism.

He paid tribute to the "many patriots from the Jewish community who played a role to free our country from racist tyranny" and added that Jews were also among those prominent in rebuilding the country.

Mbeki addressed another issue: the viability of the community and its institutions after large-scale emigration that has seen it drop to around 75,000 today from 118,000 in the mid-1970s.

Since South Africa's transition to democracy, emigration has been fueled by rising violent crime as well as by affirmative action.

Many young people leave after finishing college for job opportunities abroad.

A resolution passed at the conference addressed the issue, calling on the board to "pay urgent attention to finding ways of reducing emigration."

Mbeki expressed his concern at a survey conducted by the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research in conjunction with the University of Cape Town's Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, which found that 60 percent of the community did not see a long-term future for Jews in this country and referred to their "pervading sense of unease" towards an increase in anti-Semitism.

"Let me say clearly and unequivocally," he said, "that our government would be pleased to spend as much time as may be required to address the concerns of our Jewish community with its representatives."

Mbeki said the government supported the "road map" for peace and would "continue to do everything in its power to facilitate this outcome with both the Israeli government and the Palestinians."

Commenting after the speech, the past president of the board, Mervyn Smith, said there is no doubt that there were "major issues concerning the lack of easy access to the South African government, which the Jewish community no longer enjoys," but said the president's speech was "remarkable for an open invitation he issued to the community to come and talk about issues that concerned it."

In honor of the centenary, the World Jewish Congress held its first-ever meeting in South Africa after the board's meeting.

The board also engaged in some soul-searching by highlighting an issue that attracted more criticism to it during the past than any other — its failure to speak out against the apartheid system.

Addressing the conference, Smith said the community's leaders had displayed a lack of moral leadership and that in his view, the Jewish community of South Africa had failed "the struggle" — as the fight against apartheid is sometimes called here.

In addition, the failure to speak out had its effects in present-day South Africa, he said. "Because we were not connected to the struggle, we failed to develop meaningful contact with future black leadership which would have stood us in good stead today."

While the South African media is also perceived by the community to be anti-Israel, leading Jewish journalist Jeremy Gordin warned against "shooting the messenger," saying that Israel was not always right.

But the board's media team gave examples of slanted reporting and steps taken to combat Islamic fundamentalist views. □

Controversial parties run in Russia

MOSCOW (JTA) — Two out of more than 40 parties registered for Russia's upcoming parliamentary elections are being described as anti-Semitic.

The U.S.-based Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union said this week that the Peoples Will Party of National Revival and the Unity Conceptual Party are both known as overtly anti-Semitic. Neither is expected to do well in December elections.

Another group that has employed anti-Semitism in the past, the Communist Party of ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, also has members running for the Duma, parliament's lower house. □