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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Senate to Malaysia: Shape up

The U.S. Senate made military aid to Malaysia conditional on religious freedom, including greater tolerance of Jews.

On Monday, the Senate passed an amendment to its foreign aid spending bill that would require a State Department determination of religious freedom and tolerance in Malaysia before the country could receive a planned \$1.2 million military aid package.

The move came after Malaysia's prime minister, Mahathir Mohammad, told the leaders of Islamic countries at a conference earlier this month that Jews "rule the world by proxy" and that the Muslim world must unite to defeat them.

After the Senate's action, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar complained Tuesday that the Senate vote was an example of the United States trying to "discipline the world in their own mold."

He said, "So, now it is another Muslim country that is being zeroed in for their so-called disciplining," The Associated Press reported.

Karia to take over

Ahmed Karia is poised to form a new Palestinian government.

Karia, who has been heading an emergency Cabinet, this week was asked by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to form a permanent government.

Karia has been squabbling with Arafat over security powers, but Karia accepted the appointment.

Cartoon rocks Florida campus

A cartoon on Israel and the Palestinians published in a University of Florida newspaper is roiling the Sunshine State.

The cartoon shows pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian activists in two different boxes.

In one, a pro-Palestinian activist says, "We hate you;" the pro-Israel activist responds, "Ehh, so did Hitler." In the other, the pro-Israel activist says, "We hate you;" the pro-Palestinian activist responds, "Same way you hated Jesus?"

The editor of the Alligator newspaper defended his decision to print the cartoon, but said the author "opened up a debate about the myths Jews have had to face and opened wounds that never should have been opened."

NEWS ANALYSIS

U.S. frustrated by Sharon actions, but even more by Palestinian terror

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration is frustrated with what it sees as increasingly bold Israeli actions to assert sovereignty in the West Bank, administration and Jewish officials say — but it will not take action until the Palestinians rein in terrorism.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon confirmed last week that Israel is considering building a security fence in the Jordan Valley, though he emphasized that the plan has not yet been approved.

Administration officials clearly were irked by the announcement. President Bush has been moved by Palestinian presentations that suggest a Jordan Valley fence will be the basis for a permanent border that would cut off a future Palestinian state from Jordan and leave it wholly surrounded by Israel.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said the Jordan Valley plan made the problem worse, not better.

"As the fence goes deeply into Palestinian areas and starts to put more and more Palestinians outside of their normal traffic patterns and being able to get to their fields and farms and workplaces, and as it seems to prejudice what a future Palestinian state might look like, then that's troublesome to us," Powell told CNN on Sunday.

Over the weekend, two senior Washington Post columnists also weighed in, with Jim Hoagland advising Bush to tell Sharon, "Enough."

U.S. officials have suggested that one way of dealing with their dissatisfaction with the fence would be to transfer administration of the "road map" peace plan to the U.N. Security Council, something Israel vehemently opposes because of what it considers the United Nation's pro-Palestinian bias. The United States currently takes the lead on the road map, but a Russian initiative announced this week — to have the Security Council formally sanction the plan — could open the door to a leading U.N. role.

Israeli officials are closely watching the Russian effort but say they're not overly worried that the United States will cede control to a body Bush profoundly distrusts.

In any case, Israel says the fence is not necessarily permanent and accuses the Palestinians of overreacting to it.

"We tore down more cement in Sinai than will ever go up with this fence," said Mark Regev, the Israeli Embassy spokesman in Washington, referring to Israel's 1982 withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula as part of its peace agreement with Egypt.

Such assurances have done little to assuage Bush administration officials, who know that Sharon — like most Israeli leaders — long has regarded the Jordan Valley as a vital strategic asset. President Bush was especially blunt when asked about the barrier Tuesday at one of his rare news conferences, the 10th of his administration.

"I have said the fence is a problem to the extent that the fence is an opportunity to make it difficult for a Palestinian state to emerge," he said. "There is a difference between security and land acquisition. And we have made our views clear on that issue."

U.S.-Israel tensions have been exacerbated by major appropriations for the settlements this week in the Knesset — as well as reports of plans to build new apartments in some Jewish West Bank cities and to hook eight illegal settlement outposts to Israel's national electric grid. "Israel needs to live up to the commitments it made to President Bush as referred to in the road map," a Bush administration official

MIDEAST FOCUS

Fatah fugitive killed

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian fugitive in the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

An undercover unit shot the Al-Aksa Brigade member when he and a second terrorist resisted arrest, the army said. The man is believed to have been involved in several car bombings.

Israel, U.S. creating laser cannon

Congress has approved \$57 million for a joint U.S.-Israeli laser cannon project.

The Nautilus, or THIEL, system, which is capable of shooting down short-range missiles, is in its testing phase, an Israeli official in Washington said.

Israel plans to use the system to protect its northern border from the threat posed by Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets.

Rights groups want probes

Israeli human rights groups asked the Supreme Court to force the military to investigate all incidents resulting in Palestinians civilian deaths. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel and B'Tselem say that charges almost never are brought after Palestinian civilians are killed by the military.

The army has said at least 200 Palestinian civilians have been killed in the three years of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Rabbis say pigs OK

Orthodox rabbis reportedly approved the use of pigs to guard Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

The move supersedes the prohibition on raising pigs in the Holy Land, Israel's daily Yediot Achronot reported.

Pigs have a finely tuned sense of smell that can detect weapons and intruders, and they also may deter would-be Muslim attackers, since pigs are considered unclean in Islam as well.



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said. "That means an end to all settlement activity, including natural growth."

Bush mentioned the settlements as well.

"The reason that we have expressed concern about settlement activities is because we want the conditions for a Palestinian state on the ground to be positive," Bush said.

The president made clear, however, that combating terrorism was the prerequisite for progress on the road map.

"In order to achieve a two-state solution, there needs to be a focused effort by all concerned parties to fight off terror," Bush said. The Palestinian "Old Guard" lacks that commitment, he said, referring to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's successful efforts to marginalize more moderate leaders.

Bush's emphasis on ending terrorism is key to understanding why, despite his frustrations with Sharon's recent policy, the administration won't press Israel hard, according to Jewish officials who have discussed the issue with the administration.

Bush may oppose building the fence beyond the "Green Line," Israel's pre-1967 border with the West Bank, but he understands that the need to stop terrorists from entering Israel is driving Israeli public support for the fence.

"It's hard for the United States to argue the issue of the fence as long as the Palestinians are not dealing with terrorism," said Martin Raffel, associate director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, who met with administration officials this week.

Edward Abington, once the top U.S. diplomat in Jerusalem and now a senior adviser to the Palestinian Authority, agreed.

"The suicide bombers certainly give a rationale for building the fence and lessen the willingness of Bush" to speak out against it, Abington said. Abington said he believes Sharon wants the barrier to mark a permanent border for a Palestinian state, which Abington says is potentially catastrophic for Israel.

"In 10 years you're going to have a hotbed of radicalism" if the border makes it difficult for the Palestinians to have an economically viable state, he said.

Israel has destroyed much of the P.A.'s terror-fighting capability in the three years of the intifada, but the Palestinian Authority has undermined its own case by not making a credible effort to stop the terrorists, Abington said.

"What the administration has requested the Palestinian Authority to do is to start building up a capacity to stop the suicide bombers," he said. "When you don't even make the effort, it's hard to come and argue against the fence."

Israeli officials insist they will proceed slowly with the fence, consulting with the United States every step of the way.

Some think a leisurely pace may help Israel extract concessions from a U.S. administration eager to get the fence issue out of the way, but peace advocates believe it could eventually backfire on the Sharon government.

Lewis Roth, assistant executive director of Americans for Peace Now, said the fence might already have been finished had Sharon hewed to the Green Line. Further delays might increase popular pressure on Israel's government to back off plans to run the barrier into the West Bank, in favor of building it quickly along the Green Line.

"It puts his government in a dangerous position vis-a-vis its own security interests," Roth said. "When you have a project that could have been completed years ago cheaper and more efficiently, it's a clear dereliction of duty."

Embassy spokesman Regev responded that there is "broad national consensus" in Israel for the fence as currently plotted. □

Aliyah for slain doctor

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Jewish groups will sponsor the aliyah of 10 North American doctors in memory of a doctor killed by a Palestinian terrorist.

Nefesh B'Nefesh, a group that subsidizes North American aliyah, and the Friends of Dr. David Applebaum on Monday announced the Applebaum Fellowship for physicians. Applebaum was the American-born doctor who was killed last month with his daughter Nava in a Jerusalem terrorist attack the day before her wedding.

Applebaum was director of emergency services at the Shaare Zedek hospital in Jerusalem and the founder of Terem, an emergency medical-care system that Applebaum deployed throughout Israel. □

JEWISH WORLD

Embattled commission to meet

Jewish representatives to the commission on Holocaust-era insurance claims met to deal with recent controversy.

Jewish officials of the board of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims discussed proposals in Tuesday's meeting to deal with criticism and lawsuits against the commission, but would not disclose details before meeting Wednesday with ICHEIC's chairman, former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger.

The board's meeting will be its first annual gathering since the commission was sued in California for allegedly delaying payments to Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

FBI: Hate crimes down

Hate crimes declined across the United States in 2002, the FBI said.

There were some 7,462 crimes last year, a 23 percent decrease from 2001. Of the 1,400 crimes that were religion-related, more than 65 percent were directed against Jews and Jewish institutions. The Anti-Defamation League cautiously welcomed the report.

O.U. backs charity legislation

The Orthodox Union is urging congressional representatives to go forward with legislation that offers tax incentives for charitable contributions.

The Orthodox Union joined Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) on Tuesday in appealing to a small group of Senate Democrats to allow the Charity Assistance Recovery and Empowerment legislation to go to a Senate-House conference committee.

The law would allow charitable-donation deductions for those who do not use itemized deductions in their tax filings and make it easier to donate IRA funds to charity. The senators blocking the next legislative step want assurances that the committee will preserve social service funds that are included in the Senate version but not in the House version.

Christians pray for Israel

Millions of Christians prayed for Israel on Sunday. Churches around the world participated in Sunday's second "Day of Prayer and Solidarity With Israel," sponsored by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Evangelical Christians have been among the strongest supporters of Israel in recent years.

German extremists raided

German police raided 50 locations believed to be bases of operation for an armed, far-right organization. Police officers on Tuesday arrested several members of the Combat 18 group.

At. L.A. synagogue, congregants struggle with effects of wildfires

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA)—By phone, e-mail and word-of-mouth, the bad news kept piling up at Congregation Emanu El in San Bernardino, Calif.

The homes of six member families had been burned to the ground in the devastating wildfires sweeping across Southern California. Another 30-40 families from the congregation had been forced to evacuate their homes, and no one knew the whereabouts of eight other families.

Rabbi Douglas Kohn, spiritual leader at the Reform congregation, was at the point of utter exhaustion.

"I haven't slept more than 10 hours since Shabbat," he said Monday evening.

"I can see the tall flames from my study," he said. "Embers, soot and ashes are falling on the synagogue and we can't use the air conditioning. We have evacuated our Torah scrolls and original Marc Chagall paintings. One of our members, an officer in the fire department, is on the fire line, and our Jewish police chief is also in action."

"Every one of our 420 families is out helping others. Everyone is concerned about everyone else," Kohn said.

Emanu El is the only synagogue in San Bernardino, a city of 185,000 people some 60 miles east of Los Angeles.

The shul also is believed to be the oldest in California, in continuous operation since 1851.

As of Tuesday, at least 17 people had been killed by the region's 10 major wildfires. So far, San Bernardino and its surroundings have been hardest hit, accounting for almost half of the 1,100 homes destroyed early in the week.

But it seemed that losses and suffering were almost everywhere in Southern California.

To the south, in San Diego County, the 20 classroom trailers of the Chabad Hebrew Academy of San Diego were totally destroyed by the fire. An adjacent, brand-new \$25 million building, almost completed and surrounded by flames, was spared, according to Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein.

Also in San Diego, another synagogue called Temple Emanu El closed its pre-school and transferred its Torah scrolls, Rabbi Martin Lawson said. Tifereth Israel Synagogue also took its Torah scrolls to safety after nearby residents were ordered to evacuate their homes.

In Simi Valley, the Mount Sinai Memorial Park cemetery reported minor damage to buildings and more extensive burning of trees and park areas.

The Brandeis-Bardin Institute, a Jewish retreat center also in Simi Valley, was untouched by the fire.

In the San Gabriel Valley, four employees of the local Jewish federation reported that their homes had been entirely or partially destroyed.

Meanwhile, Jewish communities across the southern part of the state rallied to aid the homeless and other victims of the fires.

Some 11 Chabad centers in Southern California turned themselves into relief and counseling centers, providing clothing, furniture and food.

The Board of Rabbis of Southern California called on all member congregations to provide assistance, the board's executive vice president, Rabbi Mark Diamond, said.

There are several ways to contribute to fire relief assistance.

Hard-hit Congregation Emanu El in San Bernardino has established a Fire Tzedakah Fund. Checks can be made out to Emanu El and sent to 3512 North E St., San Bernardino, Calif., 92405.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles has set up a Fire Emergency Relief Fund. For information and contributions, phone 323-761-8200, or mail checks to Jewish Federation, 6505 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., 90048, and write "Fire Relief Fund" on the memo line. □

(Rachel Brand of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles contributed to this story.)

AMERICA DECIDES 2004

**On Israel and domestic issues,
Orthodox going to Republicans***By Matthew E. Berger*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Aliza Bloom has changed since her days working for Charles Schumer, one of New York's top Democrats.

Her hair is longer, she has traded in the long hours for stay-at-home motherhood, she's more religious — and she's voting Republican. She's not alone. Increasing numbers of young Orthodox men and women are reaching out to the Republican Party, which is enthusiastically grasping their hands for support and fund-raising dollars.

More than 400 supporters, many of them under 40 and wearing yarmulkes, gave Vice President Dick Cheney a standing ovation when he spoke at a Bush/Cheney re-election fund-raiser in New York City on Friday. The \$2,000-a-plate lunch was geared toward devout Jews: "Dietary laws observed," the invitation noted.

The event points to an emerging convergence of a more active Orthodox Jewish community and a Republican presidential ticket they believe merits their vote.

President Bush's support for Israel and his war against terrorism help explain his support among those attending.

"What Bush is committed to is the safety and security of Israel, and he understands that Israel has a right to defend itself," said Mordy Rothberg, 29, who attended the dinner on behalf of his company, IDT Telecom.

Orthodox Jews generally are not as conflicted in their support as are many other Jews, some of whom support Bush because of his Middle East policies but worry about his domestic agenda.

"A lot of the domestic agenda that is important for Orthodox Jews is more aligned with the Republican Party," said Bloom, 33, of Passaic, N.J., who worked for Sen. Schumer when he was in the House of Representatives.

Most Orthodox views on gay rights and abortion are closer to the Christian beliefs that drive the GOP agenda, and Orthodox leaders embrace charitable choice and school vouchers, believing such Republican policies can aid Jewish education.

Still, the devout Jewish community has been quiet on national politics, at least compared with the activism of non-Orthodox Jews. Some say the new enthusiasm comes from young leaders.

Jeffrey Ballabon, a 40-year-old Orthodox man and business executive who sponsored several tables at the Cheney event, said young Orthodox Jews are more comfortable in politics than are their elders, and do not have the same fears about speaking out.

"We've been brought up feeling very comfortable in a philo-Semitic America," Ballabon said.

The Orthodox community has been growing in the United States and has become more affluent, increasing opportunities for political giving. But there have been obstacles.

"Orthodox lives are busy," said Bloom, who notes that the Orthodox pray more frequently than other Jews and are likely to have more children. "It's a luxury to be involved in politics."

The focus until now has been on local politics.

And Orthodox Jews traditionally have supported Democrats, who have been better at building alliances among immigrant groups based on shared interests in social action.

Younger religious Jews like Ballabon, who like Bloom is a former Capitol Hill staffer, say the Orthodox community now is likelier to find like-minded advocates among the Republicans.

"By dealing with Republicans, it doesn't seem like politics as the art of the deal," he said. "It feels more like politics are an extension of values."

David Luchins, a political science professor at Touro College and a former longtime adviser to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), said he believes Orthodox support for Bush derives almost entirely from his Israel policy and from a desire to support an incumbent who is favored to win re-election.

"We don't have to go out of our way to thank Democratic friends who stand up for Israel because it's part of the standard Democratic agenda," said Luchins, a member of the Orthodox Union board. "But the Republicans who do it require special appreciation from our community."

Other issues, such as the Republican social agenda, are not as important to Orthodox Jews, Luchins said.

"The very issues that Republicans need to hold their right-wing base are the issues that scare Jews out of the Republican Party," he said, listing abortion and prayer in public schools.

While Republican Jews may be raising money for Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), the House majority leader, to win re-election in Texas, Luchins questions whether New York Jews would support him to be their representative.

Nonetheless, he said, he's glad that some Jews are supporting Bush and other Republicans — it means Democrats will no longer take the Jewish vote for granted, and Republicans will consider the Jewish vote in making policy decisions, Luchins said.

Orthodox Jews have been making their voices heard in Washington since the years between the world wars, said Jonathan Sarna, a professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University. During World War II, Orthodox leaders marched on Washington to seek intervention against the Holocaust threat.

In later decades, the Orthodox chose to work behind the scenes rather than follow the example of Jewish organizations that established successful political action arms in Washington.

That has changed in recent years.

"With the success of Jewish action committees and pressure groups, the Orthodox community came to the conclusion that their voice was not being heard," and they didn't necessarily agree with what Jewish leaders were saying, Sarna said.

The Orthodox Union and Agudath Israel of America have opened Washington offices within the past decade. The groups have become known for breaking ranks with more liberal Jewish groups, backing the Republican administration on issues like faith-based initiatives, for example.

Their support has been noticed in the White House, and has prompted increased outreach to young Jewish leaders such as Ballabon, a member of the "Maverick" group of young fund-raisers for Bush's re-election campaign. Orthodox Republicans say the Republican stance on Israel has helped open the door for more people to take the party seriously.

"Many in the Jewish community who are traditionally Democrats are supporting him because of international affairs," said Michael Landau, 39, a real estate developer in Manhattan, who recently raised money for DeLay. "And more and more in the Jewish community are becoming Republican, regardless of the international issue." □