



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 233

Wednesday, December 17, 2003

86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Saddam in the sights

Israel confirmed that it planned to assassinate Saddam Hussein in 1992. Commandos were to have infiltrated Iraq and killed Saddam using missiles as the Iraqi leader attended his father-in-law's funeral.

But the plan went awry on Nov. 5, 1992, during a botched test run that claimed the lives of five soldiers and harmed the reputation of Israel's army chief of staff at the time, Ehud Barak. A decade-old gag order on the Tze'elim affair, named for the military training base where the accident took place, was lifted Tuesday following Saddam's capture in Iraq. [Page 3]

Reps don't want Saudis in Iraq

Two lawmakers are asking the U.S. Defense Department to bar Saudi Arabia from competing for Iraq contracts. In a letter to Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz released Monday, Reps. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) said Saudi Arabia should not be eligible to participate in Iraq reconstruction because the kingdom is at the epicenter of terrorist financing.

November intifada stats lowest

Four Israelis were wounded in intifada-related attacks in November, the lowest number since the intifada began. Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom attributed the low figure to the security barrier Israel is erecting in the West Bank, Israel's targeting of terrorist leaders and a recent European crackdown on terrorists' money sources.

Powell: Bush promotes peace

Colin Powell says Bush administration efforts have "brought peace closer" between Israelis and Palestinians. In an article in the Foreign Affairs Journal, the U.S. secretary of state reacts to critics who say the president didn't try hard enough to resolve the conflict during his first two years in office.

"To many, 'more active' meant spending presidential and secretarial capital on state visits and photo opportunities, as if nearly a decade of such activity had not already been tried without managing to resolve the conflict," Powell wrote. "But diplomacy can take other, more appropriate forms."

He made note of the "road map" peace plan and the emergence of new Palestinian leadership under American pressure.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

NJPS findings on Jewish students drive debate about interfaith future

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — College-age Jews today are almost evenly divided between those with two Jewish parents and those with only one.

That was among the major findings of the latest National Jewish Population Survey, presented Sunday to officials of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life at the organization's annual professional staff conference in Princeton, N.J.

Billed as the most comprehensive demographic portrait ever of American Jewry, the NJPS 2000-01 found that 48 percent of students aged 18-29 have two Jewish parents, 45 percent have only one Jewish parent and 7 percent said neither parent was Jewish, though they identified themselves as Jews.

Furthermore, the study found that children with only one Jewish parent socialize with Jews far less frequently, participate in fewer Jewish activities and don't feel as connected to the Jewish people as those with two Jewish parents.

While many studies, including the NJPS, have shown intermarriage rates nearing 50 percent, the survey of college-age Jews offers a rare comparison of the children of Jewish and interfaith households and suggests a wide impact beyond the college campus.

"It points to the creation of the intermarriage momentum," said Sylvia Barack Fishman, a Brandeis University professor and author of an upcoming book about interfaith couples called "Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage."

"The large proportion of kids from interfaith homes generally reinforces the American norm of cross-cultural relationships," she said. College-age Jews "are living in an America where it's not cool to say you'll date only Jews."

The study comes about a year after Hillel funded its own landmark study by the University of California at Los Angeles surveying incoming Jewish college freshmen. That study found that Jewish identification dropped dramatically among children of interfaith homes. While 93 percent of those with two Jewish parents identified as Jews in the UCLA study, only 38 percent of those with just a Jewish mother and 15 percent of those with just a Jewish father called themselves Jewish.

But Linda Sax, who conducted the study for UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, said the two surveys were not directly comparable because she looked only at incoming freshmen, not all college-age Jews.

It's no accident that Hillel led the previous study and asked NJPS officials to present the latest data. In recent years, Hillel has sought to reshape itself from a largely religious group to one offering cultural programs that capture young Jews' imaginations.

Avram Infeld, Hillel's interim executive director, called the findings "pretty astounding" and said they underscore how far the organization still has to go.

"That presents for us a very, very serious challenge," he said. "How do we begin to work with those with only one Jewish parent in a more intensive manner?"

To observers of intermarriage, the answer is to approach all college-age Jewish students with a single strategy.

"The more we can create environments where they can forge connections to the Jewish calendar, to Jewish intellectual tradition, to Jewish behaviors, to the Jewish community and to Jewish friendship groups, that will help kids with two Jewish parents and one Jewish parent draw closer to Judaism," Barack Fishman said.

Others said the survey of college-age Jews offers more than just cause for concern. Stephen Cohen, a Hebrew University sociologist and senior consultant to the NJPS,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hillary Clinton: Israeli model bad

Israeli military tactics haven't worked against the Palestinians and shouldn't be used in Iraq, Sen. Hillary Clinton said.

The U.S. military has blockaded troublesome villages with barbed wire fence and has demolished buildings suspected to be sniper nests. Reports have said that Israeli advisers were involved in training U.S. troops in such tactics, though the Pentagon will not confirm that.

"Many of us were taken aback when we saw that article and we saw the barbed wire and the fence," the New York Democrat told the Council on Foreign Relations last week. "It is very hard to build any fence that's going to keep a terrorist out. That is certainly the tragic lesson of Israel's efforts against terrorism over all these years."

Israel warned on Saddam trial

Israel should not get too involved in the trial of Saddam Hussein, a former top Israeli official said.

Speaking Tuesday on Israeli television, Israel's former national security adviser, Ephraim Halevy, said he thinks such a move could backfire and be bad for Israel.

Halevy also said he thinks the capture of Saddam could spur the overthrow of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Chief: Israelis not secure enough

Israel's top security official said Israelis have not been provided with enough security.

In a rare public appearance Tuesday, Avi Dichter, the chief of Israel's Shin Bet, also said the security barrier Israel is building in the West Bank is critical to the country's safety.

Dichter also warned of the threat posed by Jewish extremists who seek to eliminate the mosque on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

said he was surprised not only by how many students have only one Jewish parent, but also by how many call themselves Jewish.

"There's a mixed message there: more intermarriage, but possibly more Jewish identification," he said.

Based on the answers of 216 college-age Jews among 4,550 total NJPS respondents, the survey estimated that there are 270,954 undergraduate Jews between the ages of 18-29; 88,620 graduate students; and 454,135 in that age group who are not in college.

Other major findings include:

- Fifty-four percent of all Jewish college students said they currently are dating, but only 36 percent of those with two Jewish parents date other Jews exclusively, and 55 percent date both Jews and non-Jews.

- Among students with one Jewish parent, only 1 percent date Jews exclusively.

- Among students with two Jewish parents, 12 percent said all their friends are Jews; 30 percent said most of their friends are Jews; 14 percent said about half are Jews; 39 percent said some are Jews; and 5 percent said none are Jews.

- None of those with one Jewish parent said all their friends are Jews; 3 percent said most are Jews; 48 percent said some are Jews and 35 percent said none are Jews.

- Forty-four percent of those with two Jewish parents said having a Jewish spouse in the future is "very important;" 29 percent called it "somewhat important;" 9 percent said it's "not very important;" and 18 percent said it is "not important at all."

- Of those with one Jewish parent, 59 percent said marrying a Jew is "not important at all;" 26 percent said it is "somewhat important;" 14 percent said it's "not very important;" and 2 percent called it "very important."

Those with two Jewish parents also indicated that Judaism plays a more important role in their spiritual lives.

- Twenty-six percent of those with two Jewish parents attend religious services at least once a month; 31 percent attend less frequently and 22 percent do not attend Jewish religious services at all.

- By contrast, 61 percent of those with one Jewish parent do not attend Jewish religious services; 52 percent attend less than once a month and 8 percent attend at least once monthly.

Regarding affiliation with the major denominations, those with two Jewish parents are divided almost evenly among "just Jewish," Conservative and Reform, while the children of one Jewish parent overwhelmingly said they are Reform.

- Twenty-seven percent of those with two Jewish parents said they are Reform, 26 percent Conservative, 22 percent "just Jewish," 16 percent Orthodox; 4 percent secular, and 5 percent "other."

- Forty-six percent of single-Jewish-parent homes said they were Reform, 28 percent "just Jewish," 19 percent secular, 4 percent Conservative, 1 percent Orthodox and 1 percent "other."

Infeld said the NJPS findings would make Hillel "take a close look" at how to encourage Jewish identity, starting simply with getting Jewish students together.

"There is far less of a chance of dating a Jew if you don't meet them," he said.

Others found little surprise in the study's portrait of a population split between more Jewishly identified students with two Jewish parents and those with one Jewish parent who are less tied to the community.

The study "underscores what we've been saying all along," said Paul Golin, spokesman for the Jewish Outreach Institute, which urges efforts to promote Jewish ties among less active Jews.

In a 2002 report called "The Coming Majority," the Jewish Outreach Institute predicted that current intermarriage rates mean there are more intermarried households than households with only Jews.

The NJPS found 47 percent of Jews who married in the past five years wed non-Jews, up from the previous study — recalculated at 43 percent — a decade ago. That means there are at least four interfaith households for every three all-Jewish households, Golin said.

Many college students have not yet fully formed their identities, however, and even those with tenuous Jewish ties would benefit from Jewish programs, he said.

NJPS also showed more college-age Jews participating in Hillel than ever: Of those currently aged 18-29, 28 percent took part in Hillel activities. □



Daily News Bulletin

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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.
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JEWISH WORLD

Western Wall prayer controversy

The Conservative movement is calling for a halt to the expansion of the prayer area at the Western Wall. The movement's Israeli branch is calling on Israel's Religious Affairs Ministry to halt the expansion, which it says would enlarge separate-sex prayer areas and turn the Western Wall Plaza into an Orthodox synagogue.

The Western Wall's rabbi, Shmuel Rabinovitch, said the change is necessary because the existing prayer area is too small.

WJC spat resolved

World Jewish Congress officials reached a compromise in a dispute over the group's Israeli branch.

The WJC executive committee agreed "by consensus" to name Matti Drobles, who chairs the group's Israel bureau, as acting director of the Jerusalem office until the Israelis nominate a permanent replacement on Jan. 27, said Elan Steinberg, the WJC's executive vice president.

Yehiel Leket, who co-chairs the Israel office, had opposed the nomination of Bobby Brown, a former aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to head the Israel bureau. The conflict follows an earlier spat between WJC President Edgar Bronfman and Senior Vice President Isi Leibler, which led to the creation of a task force to overhaul the group. The executives approved the task force's first draft report.

Tolerance exhibit destroyed

A display sponsored by the Florida Holocaust Commission was defaced. All but one of 39 billboard-sized panels were slashed or defaced with racist graffiti in a St. Petersburg, Fla., park over the weekend, *The New York Times* reported. The display, part of an art exhibit promoting international brotherhood, is expected to travel around the United States.

An anti-poverty miracle?

The Reform movement launched an anti-poverty initiative for Chanukah. The movement, along with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, is asking people to devote the sixth night of Chanukah, Dec. 24, to discussing and planning action to fight poverty, and is asking that gifts and money from that night be donated to the needy. More information on the project can be found at www.rac.org/pubs/poverty.html.

JTS library gets \$1 million

The Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary received a \$1 million grant for its library.

The New York-based rabbinical seminary will use funds from the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation to renovate its stack area and process rare books.

SADDAM SUCCUMBS

Israel says 1992 accident came as team prepared to kill Saddam

By Dan Baron

TEL AVIV (JTA) — With the capture of Saddam Hussein, one of Israel's urban legends finally can be confirmed.

Israeli media revealed Tuesday that the Tze'elim disaster, a 1992 military accident in which five Israeli soldiers were killed at a Negev training base, came as the army's top commando unit was rehearsing a complex plot to assassinate the Iraqi leader in retaliation for his Scud salvos during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Though that scenario had been rumored for years, it officially was kept under wraps by military censors and top military brass.

Israel's army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, called the release of the information this week "irresponsible."

"Some things should be kept to ourselves rather than shared with the world," he told reporters.

Media reports describe a bold and brutal plan. A team from Sayeret Matkal — Israel's version of the Delta Force or the SAS — would be airlifted quietly to Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, where he was expected to attend the funeral of his father-in-law, who was dying of diabetes-related ailments.

They would hit Saddam with guided missiles and in so doing restore to the Jewish state the deterrent power it had enjoyed in the region.

Many believed Israel had forfeited that power by not responding to Saddam's Scuds during the war.

"The mission was seen as a strategic necessity, not some macho stunt," Danny Yatom, a former Sayeret Matkal member and Mossad chief, told Channel 1 television.

The exact type of weapon that was to be used against Saddam still is a state secret. According to security sources, it was an Israeli-made missile that, using a miniature camera fitted into its nose, can be visually guided to its target and fitted with a variety of warheads suiting different needs.

Israel sometimes uses an adapted version today, fired from helicopter gunships, to target Palestinian terrorists, the sources said.

But it all went drastically awry on Nov. 5, 1992. During a rehearsal run at the Tze'elim military base, the missile misfired and slammed into the commando team, killing five.

The Israeli military chief of staff at the time, Ehud Barak, left the scene as medics moved in to help.

Though Barak was cleared of criminal culpability in the incident — he was needed in a command capacity overseeing the response to the incident, rather than administering first aid — charges that he fled the scene would haunt him throughout his political career.

Ironically, one of the few survivors of the botched test was Eyal Katvan, the soldier "playing" Saddam; he ended up hospitalized with serious injuries.

The mission was then called off and Saddam was spared.

Labor legislator Ephraim Sneh, who was a member of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in 1992, said then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had ordered the assassination operation.

"The credit should be given to the prime minister because it was his courage to approve this operation," Sneh told *The Associated Press*.

Israeli radio said the troops involved were volunteers and understood that they were to "fight to the death" or commit suicide in Iraq rather than allow themselves to be captured.

Though the Military Censor's Office lifted the gag order on the Tze'elim affair on Monday, the reports caught the top brass by surprise.

But Yatom was unfazed.

"I am confident that Sayeret Matkal has and continues to carry out missions which will never be known, and rightly so," he said. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Saddam capture opens window for Mideast peace, officials say*By Ron Kampeas*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Saddam Hussein's capture creates new opportunities for Israeli-Palestinian peace, Israeli and U.S. officials say — and the White House already is looking for results.

In recent meetings with top U.S. officials, Israeli officials said, the message was clear: Now is the time for Israel to return to the negotiating table with the Palestinians.

The United States wants Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his Palestinian Authority counterpart, Ahmed Qurei, to meet immediately "with no preconditions," a senior Israeli official said.

A senior adviser to Sharon said Saddam's capture would end speculation among Palestinians that the Bush administration had been cowed by Iraqi insurgents and was pulling back from involvement in the Middle East.

"In the last few weeks, Abu Ala and others have been biding time, not meeting with Sharon," Zalman Shoval said, using Qurei's nom de guerre. "They felt that time was on their side. Maybe they were thinking America would not stay in Iraq and would lose interest in the region. What happened with Saddam sends the opposite view."

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said he told U.S. officials that Israel was ready for a Sharon-Qurei summit and blamed Qurei for dithering by insisting that Israel first make good-faith concessions to the Palestinians.

Shalom was the first foreign official to visit the White House after the announcement of Saddam's capture. He also met with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell last Friday.

Shalom said Israel appreciated the value of the cease-fire Qurei is trying to negotiate with Palestinian terrorist groups, but only if it is a step toward dismantling those groups, as required by the "road map" peace plan.

Shoval said the capture would nudge the Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward because it underscored U.S. determination to stay the course in the region.

"The military victory in Iraq and the capture of Saddam Hussein sends a strong message that America will not tolerate terror and is determined to go ahead with democratization," he said. "This will have an impact on the Palestinian leadership in terms of its determination to have peace talks with Israel and have an agreement based on compromise."

Judith Kipper, a Middle East expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, said U.S. success will lead to pressure being exerted on all parties in the region, including Israel.

"Bush is going to be emboldened. The capture of Saddam changes the atmosphere so he could do something incredibly bold," she said, referring to the president.

All eyes now are on Sharon, she said, citing a speech the prime minister was due to give at an Israeli national security conference Thursday in which he is expected to outline what Israel is ready to do for peace.

"Obviously, the Israelis are the powerful party, and they could change the atmosphere overnight and regain the moral authority they have lost," Kipper said. "It requires bold courageous leadership, of which Sharon is perfectly capable."

Some reports have suggested Sharon might use his speech to

outline unilateral steps Israel could take if the Palestinians don't make peace soon.

Such steps could include withdrawals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to defensible borders Israel sets for itself.

A U.S. official said Shalom was told that unilateral steps that adhered to the road map's first phase — such as a settlement freeze and dismantling of illegal outposts — would be welcome.

On the other hand, the official said, the United States opposes any unilateral action that prejudices the road map's second phase, which includes setting borders. Such steps should be taken only in consultation with the Palestinians and the international community, the official said.

Shalom said Israel could not rule out such actions if the Palestinians do not display real partnership. But he reassured Powell, Vice President Dick Cheney and Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser, that Israel would take such action only in coordination with the United States.

Bush said last week that the road map still is the preferred route, and he emphasized that the priority now is on ending Palestinian terrorism.

"Step one is for all parties to fight off terror, to stop the few from destroying the hopes of the many," Bush said Dec. 12. "Step two is for the Palestinians to find leadership that is willing to reject the tired old policy of the past and lead the Palestinian people to not only a democratic state, but a peaceful solution of differences."

But Bush and his aides also have made clear that Israel needs to take positive steps as well.

Israel "must be mindful that they don't make decisions that make it hard to create a Palestinian state," Bush said. "It's in Israel's interest there be a Palestinian state."

A senior U.S. envoy to the region last week blamed the Palestinians for the lack of progress toward peace but said Israel also was not doing enough to help Qurei succeed.

"The Israeli government has done too little for far too long to translate its repeatedly stated commitment to facilitate Palestinian reform into reality," said David Satterfield, a deputy assistant secretary of state.

It was clear that Israel got the message, and Shalom arrived in Washington armed with an outline of measures Israel intends to take to alleviate Palestinian suffering.

In the short term, Israel is easing freedom of movement and handing out more Israeli work permits to Palestinian laborers, Shalom said. In the last month, Israel also has removed 10 West Bank roadblocks, he said.

In the longer term, Israel is ready to discuss establishing new industrial zones and tourism projects, according to Shalom.

"The Israeli initiative was warmly welcomed by the United States," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Rhonda Shore said.

Bush administration officials also have been upset that Sharon has allowed illegal West Bank settlement outposts to remain in place, in violation of the road map. Shalom said he assured the Americans that Sharon has given instructions to remove the outposts.

On another area of contention, the security barrier Israel is building in the West Bank, Shalom said he insisted to U.S. officials that the fence is crucial to stopping terrorists from entering Israel.

He presented a map to the Americans showing how the fence recently forced a pair of would-be suicide bombers to take a longer route to their target in northern Israel.

The delay led to their capture. □