

IN THE NEWS

Kerry: sanctions for financiers of terrorism

Nations that allow financing for terrorism may face sanctions in a Kerry administration.

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) singled out what he said was President Bush's "kid-glove approach to the supply and laundering of terrorist money" in Saudi Arabia. "If I am president, we will impose tough financial sanctions against nations or banks that engage in money laundering or fail to act against it," Kerry said in a major policy speech on terrorism, delivered last Friday at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Kerry, the Democratic front-runner, said Bush administration neglect of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process contributed to the threat. "The administration has done nothing or been too little and too late," he said.

Terrorists targeted

Israeli helicopter gunships killed three Islamic Jihad fugitives in Gaza.

Two missiles that slammed into the terrorists' car in Gaza City on Saturday night also wounded 15 bystanders, Palestinian witnesses said.

The army said one of the three men had planned several deadly attacks on Israeli targets in Gaza. Islamic Jihad vowed revenge, prompting Israel to step up security throughout the country Sunday.

Drive-by shooting kills Israeli couple

An Israeli couple was killed in a drive-by shooting on the West Bank boundary.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, an armed wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for last Friday night's attack, which killed Eitan Kukoi, 30, and his wife Rima Novikov, 25, on a road from Hebron to Beersheba.

The couple, who lived in the West Bank, is survived by a 2-year-old daughter.

WORLD REPORT

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U.S. Jewish delegation leaves Israel with more questions than answers

By MICHAEL S. ARNOLD

JERUSALEM (JTA) — They came, they saw — perhaps more than they had bargained for — and they left, many of them with more questions than when they arrived.

If the 100 participants on the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations' annual Israel mission expected to leave last week with clear answers to Israel's most pressing problems, they may have been disappointed.

But in large part the confusion reflected the uncertainty Israel itself is experiencing as it prepares for what many Israeli officials believe will be among the most critical months in its history.

"I thought that the Israeli officials would be able to give us a few more answers," said Betty Ehrenberg, international affairs director of the Orthodox Union, as the five-day mission was winding down.

"Whenever we come, we confront Israel as she is at that moment — and I think we leave with the sense that Israel is really at a very difficult point, a most uneasy and unsure point in its history."

Despite the lack of details, conference officials — who represent a group of more than 50 Jewish organizations from across the religious and political spectrum — said they would continue to lobby for Israel's political plans.

Virtually all of the top-level political and security officials who met with the U.S. delegation addressed the two most pressing issues on Israel's agenda: the unilateral

withdrawal from Gaza that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is planning, and the controversial security barrier Israel is building to keep Palestinian terrorists from infiltrating Israel from the West Bank.

On the barrier, at least, Israeli officials from left to right presented a united front — that the Jewish state not only is within its rights to build the fence but that it desperately needs it to keep out terrorists.

During the delegation's visit to Israel, one such terrorist, a 23-year-old man from a village near Bethlehem, blew up a commuter bus barely 100 yards from the hotel where the delegation was listening to a briefing from Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, the Israel Defense Forces chief of staff.

The bombing shocked members of the Conference of Presidents group, most of whom had never seen a terrorist attack up close, and intensified the debate over whether a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza will deter terrorists or merely whet their appetites.

Many in the group argued that the withdrawal would embolden Palestinians to intensify their attacks in hope of prompting further Israeli concessions and troop withdrawals.

Opinions were divided over whether Sharon is serious about carrying out the Gaza pullout or whether he announced the plan merely to divert attention from corruption investigations surrounding him and his two sons.

Yet nearly all members of the mission appeared disconcerted that Israeli officials were able to offer so few specifics of the

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ANALYSIS

■ Questions remain after Conference of Presidents mission leaves Israel

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Gaza withdrawal plan: how and when the withdrawal would take place, where displaced settlers would be relocated, what would happen with the empty settlements and who would fill the resulting power vacuum in the Gaza Strip.

"Not one of the Israeli officials that we met with — and we met with the highest — could clarify what the withdrawal would mean," Ehrenberg said.

"It seems that the plan is new and is still being formulated. I'm just surprised that something as drastic as this plan would be announced to the world before it's fleshed out."

Joshua Katzen, chairman of the board of CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, agreed.

"I think the confusion we feel reflects the confusion in the government," he said.

Not everyone was surprised by the lack of clarity.

"I wasn't expecting answers, so therefore I wasn't disappointed," said Larry Hochberg, national chairman of the Friends of the IDF.

A certain amount of confusion among the membership is inevitable, given the complexity of the challenges the Jewish state is facing, said Malcolm Hoenlein, the conference's executive vice chairman.

"The purpose of the mission is to raise questions, not just to get answers," Hoenlein said.

"It gives the leadership a context to examine the issues. In that sense it's incredibly helpful," he said. "People go home with a much better understanding of the issues. The Gaza withdrawal is still something of a question mark, but at least the leadership now has a framework for an informed discussion."

Indeed, the delegation heard from virtually all of Israel's top leadership.

Among those who met with delegates or addressed the conference were Sharon, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, Ya'alon, Shin Bet security service chief Avi Dichter and an array of journalists, academics and security analysts.

Many of the sessions were off the record.

Among the most explosive sessions was a panel with political views ranging from Elie Rekhess, a specialist in Israeli Arab affairs who is affiliated with the left-leaning Abraham Fund, to Eve Harrow, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Efrat.

One audience member asked Harrow why young Israelis should risk their lives to protect Jews living in settlements in disputed territories.

Other members of the group blasted Rekhess when he suggested that he had no answers for his children — who are leaving Israel — when they ask why the government hasn't managed to bring peace.

Seymour Reich, a past chairman of the conference, said the presentations likely did not change delegation members' minds.

The mission "probably reinforced the views that people already had," Reich said. "If you favor some progress, then you walked away feeling that what you heard supports it. If you're against the withdrawal, you might have walked away feeling confused or unsettled."

So, too, with the bombing, which came just as the delegation was preparing to visit the security fence being erected in

the Jerusalem area.

The conference's top leadership was taken to the scene of the bus bombing, where they saw body bags lined up on a blood-stained sidewalk, while the rest of the participants continued with the scheduled tour.

"While it was a tragic event, I don't think it will have a long-term impact on the members," Reich said. After all, he noted, "the streets were cleared within two hours and the mission resumed."

Hoenlein predicted that the mission would inform conference discussions for months to come.

"The decisions being made right now will have far greater consequences" than the issues such delegations usually encounter, he said. "A lot of missions try to give simple answers. We don't want to do that. But members will be prepared for whatever issues they may confront in coming months."

Sharon's apparent determination to pursue the Gaza withdrawal, and his ability to rally key Cabinet members around him, could make it easier for supporters of Israel to lobby for the plan in the United States.

"There was one line from Sharon, Olmert, Shalom, Mofaz — each said the same thing," Reich said. "Notwithstanding the lack of detail, there's a consistency in approach."

In the wake of the mission, Reich said, groups such as the Presidents Conference and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee likely will do all they can to gain the Bush administration's backing for Sharon's plan.

"The conference will invariably follow the lead of the Israeli government," Reich said.

This week, the Conference of Presidents is scheduled to hold a conference call with Israeli legal experts to review the pro-Israel demonstrations at last week's hearings at The Hague on Israel's security barrier.

Conference members also are expected to discuss future plans for demonstrating support for the plans of the Israeli government.

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Seymour Reich
Conference of Presidents

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THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ Top Israeli officials arrive in Washington to present details of an Israeli plan to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. Dov Weisglass, Ariel Sharon's chief of staff, and Giora Eiland, his national security adviser, will meet with their White House counterparts. President Bush's aides reportedly were frustrated by the sparse details of the plan when they visited Israel two weeks ago.

■ Federation executives hold their annual meetings in Florida, through Wednesday. At the meeting of large-city federations, United Jewish Communities CEO Stephen Hoffman is expected to talk about his tenure as head of the federation system. At the meeting of intermediate-size cities, federations will consider responses to community trends illuminated by the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey.

■ The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations holds a conference call with Israeli legal experts to review pro-Israel demonstrations at last week's hearings on Israel's security barrier. Callers also will discuss future plans. Insiders say the non-binding advisory opinion resulting from the hearings at the International Court of Justice, which ended last Wednesday, is not expected for at least several weeks.

TUESDAY

■ Ten states hold presidential primary elections, including California and New York, which have the nation's largest Jewish communities. Democratic front-runner Sen. John Kerry's New York campaign held a strategy meeting last week on reaching out to the state's Jews. Sen. John Edwards launched his first serious efforts last week to win Jewish endorsements.

■ Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom meets British Prime Minister Tony Blair in London. Shalom also is expected to meet with Foreign Minister Jack Straw. Shalom's visit will be the first of several top-level Israeli visits to Britain, with Cabinet ministers Effi Eitam and Ehud Olmert following a week later. Observers say the diplomatic activity marks a warming of relations between Israel and Britain after 18 months of tension.

SUNDAY

■ Greek Jews likely will back the ruling Socialist Party in Greece's national elections. The expected support for PASOK would come after the party's leader, George Papandreou, greatly improved relations with Israel during his tenure as foreign minister. PASOK also was influential in getting Jan. 27 established as a national Holocaust Memorial Day in Greece.

Bias crimes scare Swiss Jews

By FREDY ROM

GENEVA (JTA) — Anti-Semitic incidents are causing fear among some Jews in Switzerland — and prompting the government to call for a conference on the issue.

A Jewish researcher who often wears a Star of David says she recently was attacked in a campus elevator by Arab students. In another incident, the researcher said, an Arab student refused to answer her questions in the classroom; instead, he brandished a small Palestinian flag.

The researcher, Veronique Elefant-Yanni of the University of Geneva, is one of several Swiss Jews who recently have found themselves victims of bias acts.

Frank Luebke, director of the Center against Racism and Anti-Semitism in Zurich, says the situation is alarming. "We have two notifications of anti-Semitic incidents a week. We do not have the same circumstances like in France. But if you realize that in France there are 600,000 Jews, and in Switzerland only 18,000, the situation here is even worse," he said.

Elefant-Yanni has worked at the university for 10 years. When she reported the incidents to her supervisor, he allegedly told her not to wear her Star of David in public.

The incidents followed a stepped-up campaign on campus of Palestinian propaganda. Pictures of tortured bodies accompanied by text saying the wounds were inflicted by Israeli soldiers were exhibited in a large hall in the university's main building.

In addition, the movie "Jenin, Jenin" — a largely discredited documentary that alleged widespread massacres during Israel's April 2002 invasion of the Jenin refugee camp — was shown on campus.

A spokeswoman for the university promised to launch an investigation.

Meanwhile, in the French-speaking city of Lausanne, Ilan Levy, a local Jewish student leader, says he was attacked and has decided not to wear his yarmulke in public.

An official with a Swiss government-appointed commission on racism said anti-Semitic incidents have been increasing, particularly in the French part of Swit-

zerland, because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As a result, the Swiss government is organizing a forum on anti-Semitism in June, said Doris Angst Yilmaz, the secretary-general of the Swiss Agency against Racism and Discrimination. The commission was established in 1995 to monitor racism and anti-Semitism.

Recent research has shown that Swiss schools do little to educate students about Judaism, the Holocaust or tolerance of minorities. Jewish leaders have raised the issue with authorities, but with few results.

The last time Switzerland showed a notable increase in anti-Semitism was in 1997, when Swiss reacted to pressure from U.S. Jewish groups about Switzerland's role vis-a-vis Jews during World War II.

A second wave started a few years later when the government said it would allow ritual slaughter, or shechitah, to be permitted in Switzerland. Animal protection groups launched a battle to fight the move, often employing anti-Semitic

slogans.

The third wave began with the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada in the fall of 2000.

As in other parts of Europe, Islamists are taking advantage of the overheated atmosphere to spread vicious propaganda against Israel and, often, against Jews.

In Swiss towns with Orthodox communities, where community members are visibly Jewish, these problems are not new.

"As a standing rule, we only go out in groups," said a woman who would identify himself only as Devorah. She noted that the murder of an Israeli rabbi in Zurich two years ago was never solved — and that police have closed the case.

Another Jewish researcher and journalist who has asked to remain anonymous recently wrote the authorities about her fears of anti-Semitism.

The situation "makes me think if the upcoming generation of our family can possibly attend Geneva's University or walk safely in Geneva's streets, since it is obvious we would be pursued with racism for being Jewish as a Swiss citizen. This is very disturbing to me," she wrote. ■

The murder of an Israeli rabbi in Zurich two years ago was never solved.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Fence work suspended

Israel halted work on its West Bank security barrier in a village that saw deadly riots.

On Sunday, Israel's High Court of Justice gave the army a week to consider rerouting the fence planned for Bilu, a normally quiet village northwest of Jerusalem.

A protest there against the fence project last week turned violent, with hundreds of Bilu residents and area Palestinians throwing rocks at Israeli security forces. Israeli forces responding to the rioters killed two Palestinians and wounded dozens.

Police disperse stone-throwers

Israeli police raided a holy site in Jerusalem to disperse hundreds of Palestinian stone-throwers.

Palestinian worshippers at two mosques on the Temple Mount began throwing stones after prayers last Friday, in protest of Israel's security fence along the West Bank.

Four Palestinians were injured, none seriously, police said. The mosques, considered the third holiest site in Islam, overlook the Western Wall, and stone-throwers have targeted Jewish worshippers at the wall in the past.

Bush sends \$20 million to UNRWA

President Bush is sending \$20 million to Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza.

The new allocation, authorized Feb. 26, is from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund, and will be distributed through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The request is a response to an appeal for \$193 million for humanitarian needs for the Palestinian people, the State Department said.

Fatah debate

Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement ended a reform debate with a call for a cease-fire with Israel.

Some officials had wanted Fatah to discuss dismantling its Al-Aksa Brigade terrorist group, but Arafat's security adviser told reporters that the issue never reached the agenda in the four-day meeting in Ramallah, which ended Saturday.

Also over the weekend, Nablus Mayor Ghassan Shaqa announced he was resigning in protest against the Palestinian Authority's failure to bring order to his increasingly lawless West Bank city.

NORTH AMERICA

Bush campaign hopeful on Jewish vote

The chairman of President Bush's re-election campaign believes the president can get 30 to 35 percent of the Jewish vote in November. Marc Racicot met Sunday morning with a coalition of Jewish supporters for Bush in Broward County, Florida.

Racicot told JTA he believes Bush's support for Israel makes him more attractive to Jewish voters, and that the campaign plans increased outreach to them. Bush received 19 percent of the Jewish vote in 2000.

Group collects money for Haitians

A Jewish group is collecting money for humanitarian aid in Haiti. Donations can be sent to the American Jewish World Service at: AJWS, Haiti Relief, 45 W. 36th St., 10th Fl., New York, NY, 10018, or online at www.ajws.org. Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide re-

signed Sunday after weeks of political unrest in the Caribbean nation and criticism of Aristide by the White House.

Tolerance center opens in N.Y.

A center for teaching tolerance sponsored by the Simon Wiesenthal Center opened in New York City. The center's New York Tolerance Center is a professional development and training facility modeled after the Tools for Tolerance Program at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles.

WORLD

Report: Anne Frank twisted in N. Korea

Anne Frank's diary is being used to promote hate in North Korea. On Sunday, CBS' "60 Minutes" was slated to air a report featuring a Dutch journalist who went to North Korea who says the famous diary is being used to tell students that the Nazis have a current counterpart in the Americans and that President Bush is akin to Hitler.

Also, children are taught that war with the United States is inevitable and that Anne Frank is not a hero because she was weak.

'Passion' all over the globe

Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" is making waves around the world. In Argentina, a legislator in the city of Rosario is proposing that the film on the crucifixion of Jesus not be taxed in the city to keep prices down and to increase the film's audience.

Distribution companies so far have refused to bring the film to France. Questions about the film's economic viability and its violence are being given for the lack of a French distributor, but articles in the French media have suggested that fears of Jewish pressure and the film's effects on anti-Semitism might also play a role.

In Britain, British Jewry's central organization said, "It would have been better if this film had never been made."

France presses Europe on anti-Semitism

France wants its European partners to adopt stricter measures to combat anti-Semitism. Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin told a delegation from the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews last Friday that France would be calling on other states in the European Union to create interministerial committees to fight anti-Semitism, following models recently established by France and Italy.

De Villepin also told CRIF leaders that he had raised the issue of the distribution of anti-Semitic satellite broadcasts in Europe with Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, CRIF's executive director, Haim Musicant, told JTA following the meeting.

Black blocked on Jerusalem Post

A U.S. court blocked media baron Conrad Black from selling the Jerusalem Post and other newspapers his company controls. Black's own company, Hollinger International, had brought a lawsuit against him, arguing that he had not acted in the company's best interests in trying to sell his stake to Britain's Barclay brothers.

Last Friday's court ruling means that a separate auction of newspapers will proceed. At stake are the Chicago Sun-Times, the London Daily Telegraph and more than 100 smaller newspapers.

First Auschwitz inmate dies

Stanislaw Ryniak, the first person to be imprisoned in Auschwitz, died last week at 88. Ryniak was a non-Jewish Pole. He arrived in Auschwitz in June 1940, and, after some German criminals who served as camp guards, received No. 31, the lowest numbered tattoo for an inmate. Ryniak survived the war in Auschwitz before being transferred to a Czech work camp.