

IN THE NEWS

Kerry backs Israel's fence

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) reassured U.S. Jewish leaders that he supports Israel's right to build a security barrier.

In a meeting Sunday in New York with about 40 Jewish organizational officials, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination went out of his way to clarify his position on the fence, which he had described as a "barrier to peace" last year in a speech to Arab Americans.

Kerry said he sees the West Bank barrier, which Israel is building to prevent terrorist attacks, as a matter of self-defense, according to Hannah Rosenthal, executive director for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Russia likely to get a Jewish prime minister

Russian President Vladimir Putin named a little-known Jewish politician as prime minister.

Putin's pick is Mikhail Fradkov, currently Russia's envoy to the European Union and an unknown figure in Russian politics. Putin dismissed his entire Cabinet last week, just weeks before the country's March 14 vote.

Russian Jews said Fradkov has had no interaction with the organized Jewish community.

Supreme Court turns away Holy Land

The U.S. Supreme Court kept frozen the assets of a charity the Treasury Department says is linked to Hamas.

The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, headquartered in Richardson, Texas, had its assets frozen on Dec. 4, 2001. The Treasury Dept. said the group had funneled millions of dollars to Hamas, which the U.S. government designates as a terrorist group.

Lower courts had ruled that the charity's due process rights hadn't been violated. The Supreme Court rejected the group's appeal Monday without comment.

WORLD REPORT

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Kerry reaches out to Jews as campaign gains momentum

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Now that he's proven he's electable, John Kerry is ready to tell Americans why he should be elected.

Only in recent days has the Massachusetts senator started to outline detailed policy positions. Some of them having to do with foreign policy and terrorism have been of particular interest to Jewish voters.

One measure of his new seriousness was a New York meeting Sunday with about 40 Jewish organizational leaders, where Kerry elaborated at great length on his Middle East policies.

All participants interviewed by JTA described the closed-door meeting as successful.

"It would be impossible for anyone to leave that meeting not impressed," said Hannah Rosenthal, the executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Until now, Kerry's campaign says, the candidate has had little breathing room for such explanatory encounters because of the grueling primary schedule and because his energies were devoted to his come-from-behind triumphs.

"We had one path to win, and that path went through Iowa," Cameron Kerry, the candidate's brother and one of his closest advisers, told JTA last week when asked why it took so long for the campaign to engage Jews and other constituencies. "We pulled down most of the campaign in the rest of the country to follow that path."

That effort gave Kerry a late start in other states, including those with major Jewish populations, like New York and California,

which are among the 10 states voting in Super Tuesday.

"It's been a whirlwind five weeks in which we've been trying to stay a half-step ahead of the next stage," Cameron Kerry said. "It's hard in the context of 10 states in two weeks to run as intensive and localized a campaign as we'd like to."

The campaign has hired a Jewish coordinator for New York, Lisa Gertsman. But Cameron Kerry, who converted to Judaism 20 years ago when he married a Jewish woman, is key to the campaign's Jewish outreach effort.

The candidate spent the days leading up to Super Tuesday in New York, attending Friday-evening services at Ramath Orah, an Orthodox synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Cameron Kerry says he also has reached out to friends in Boston's Jewish community for campaign support.

The Kerry brothers' own Jewish background — their paternal grandparents were born Jewish in the former Austro-Hungarian empire — gained a further wrinkle over the weekend when an Austrian genealogist revealed that two Kerry relatives died in Nazi concentration camps.

Participants at the New York meeting said they were surprised by how long Kerry had taken to reach out to Jews. But they accepted his explanation, noting that recent changes to the primary schedule — front-loading contests to the first three months of the year — had created a "crushing" campaign.

A come-from-behind victory on Jan. 19 in

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AMERICA
DECIDES
2004

■ Kerry reaches out to the Jews ahead of Super Tuesday

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Iowa propelled Kerry — who as late as November was subject to “when will he drop out” speculation — to 18 of 20 victories.

“It was the first time we’ve had to test these issues and it was an important exchange,” said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Confident that he would sweep the primaries this week — including New York and California, the states with the country’s largest Jewish communities — Kerry is more confident about speaking out against President Bush’s views.

Last week, he forcefully defended Israel’s right to build its West Bank security barrier after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed eight people in Jerusalem.

“Israel’s security fence is a legitimate act of self defense,” Kerry said, a salve to Jews who had been concerned after Kerry described the fence to an Arab American audience in the fall as a “barrier to peace.”

■
Cameron Kerry said his brother’s positions were consistent, and that in the remarks to Arab Americans, Kerry was referring to doubts at the time about the route of the fence.

Israel’s recent negotiations with the United States about the route of the fence have alleviated those concerns, the campaign said.

Another important policy statement was Kerry’s speech on terrorism, delivered last Friday at the University of Cali-

fornia at Los Angeles. He emphasized the need to reinforce alliances he says Bush has neglected in order to track down terrorists and cut off their funding.

Participants at Sunday’s meeting said the candidate went into unprecedented detail on how a Kerry presidency would deal with the Middle East.

“He was able to talk to the complexity,” said Judith Stern Peck, president of the Israel Policy Forum, which promotes greater U.S. engagement in the region. “He knows Israel; he’s been going there for years.”

Kerry displayed a wide-ranging command of the issues, participants said, addressing the failure of the Oslo Accords, the collapse of accountable authority in the Palestinian Authority, the role of neighboring Arab regimes and demographic threats to Israel’s future as a Jewish state.

Peck said Kerry managed to reach everyone in the room, which represented the spectrum of American Jewish opinion.

One feature of Kerry’s outlook was using U.S. leverage with Arab allies to end incitement and pressure the Palestinians into making peace.

“He painted a picture that a Kerry presidency would be more engaged” on Israeli-Palestinian peace, “and build on the relationships he has and would hold others accountable,” Rosenthal said.

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Abraham Foxman, the Anti-Defamation League’s national director, said the meeting helped lay to rest a nagging concern — that relentless Democratic criticism of Bush’s foreign policy implied criticism of Bush’s closeness to Israel.

“He tried to exempt Israel from the critique of Bush’s foreign policy,” Foxman said, saying Kerry agreed with administration policy on isolating Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, supporting Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s plan for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and on the security fence.

“Politically, it’s very smart,” Foxman said of the strategy.

Kerry also implicitly backed away from earlier remarks touting former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker as potential envoys to the region.

This time, he named figures regarded as much more favorable to U.S. Jews, including former top Middle East envoy Dennis Ross and Sandy Berger, President Clinton’s national security adviser.

Kerry said he would more aggressively pursue disarming Iran of its nuclear capability, saying the Bush administration has not done enough.

Some participants said they wanted to hear more. Jack Rosen, presi-

dent of the American Jewish Congress, said an hour wasn’t long enough to get the whole story.

“President Bush’s support for Israel has been exceptional,” Rosen said. “That doesn’t mean that Sen. Kerry’s can’t be as exceptional,” but “it’s fair to hear out all the details, and that couldn’t be done in just a one hour session.”

Rosen, a longtime Democrat who has been very supportive of Bush, wanted to know more about the multilateralism Kerry advocates in the Middle East, noting that Israel has not favored bringing outsiders into the process.

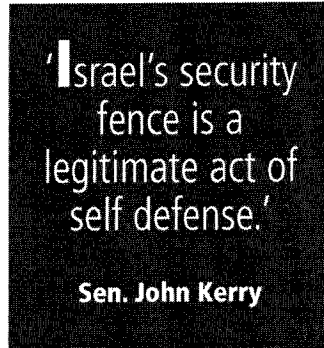
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Republican strategists suggested that Kerry’s vulnerabilities in the Jewish community would have more to do with terrorism than with Israel.

“He hasn’t been strong in the defense functions of this country,” former Montana Gov. Marc Racicot, the chairman of Bush’s re-election campaign, said. “He certainly has not addressed the issues with the bright-line devotion and clarity that the president has. We feel there is an opportunity to secure a larger share of the Jewish vote because of the president’s positions on these issues.”

Cameron Kerry said that the Kerry campaign would emphasize his brother’s leadership record as far back as his heroism as a Vietnam War lieutenant and his central role in protesting the war after his return.

“In a fight situation, there’s no one I’d want more on my side than John,” he said during an interview at JTA’s headquarters.

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(JTA staff writers Rachel Pomerance in New York and Matthew E. Berger in Washington contributed to this report.)



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Federation system is sexist, new report says

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — Sexism pervades the North American Jewish federation system, a new report says.

An “old-boys’ network” and an attitude that rejects women’s leadership skills have kept women from reaching the top echelons of the federation system, according to research released recently by the United Jewish Communities and a group called Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community.

The study, based on interviews with a cross-section of North American federation leaders from January to September 2003, sought to understand why women have not reached top executive spots in the largest 20 Jewish communities in North America.

Some of those quoted in the report seem to reflect sexist attitudes.

“Just because a man might look at a woman as a sexual object doesn’t mean that he’s not taking her seriously professionally,” said one male lay leader interviewed in the report. “I mean, does every woman have to be Golda Meir? My advice to women is to be presentable and play to your femininity,” he said. “Men want to preen, and they will respond favorably to the right package.”

In its recommendations, the report advised the system to groom a significant number of low- and mid-level female staff members for senior positions, create flexible work environments that make it easier to balance career and family, and make gender balance a criterion of executive search processes.

The report recommends experimenting with new models to promote gender equity, monitoring progress through data collection and integrating women’s initiatives into federations’ executive development programs.

The UJC, the umbrella group for North American Jewish federations, paid for and commissioned the report at the request of Stephen Hoffman, the group’s president and CEO.

Hoffman said one impetus for the project was a conversation he had with a female Jewish student who was hesitant to enter Jewish communal work because of the dearth of female role models in top jobs. The situation reflects the gender imbalance in the corporate world, with

which many federation volunteers are associated, Hoffman said.

While he doesn’t yet have a precise plan to address the issue, “the first thing you do is you throw light on the issue,” Hoffman said, and then “keep the light focused on this.”

Hoffman said he plans to track and publish figures on the numbers of male and female candidates considered in systemwide searches.

“We provide the backbone of personnel service in the field, and we’re going to use that vantage point to push this concern and this issue deeper into the consciousness of our member federations,” he said.

Hoffman also wants to recruit women into the system’s new Mandel Executive Development program and work with women on maternity leave to smooth their returns to work.

The report comes as the UJC is seeking a successor to Hoffman, who is stepping down in June. The search committee’s top choices are said to come from the pool of large-city federation executives, all of whom are men and some of whom have been considered for the job in the past. UJC has not hired an external search firm, which some say would be more likely to consider a wider field of candidates.

Hoffman said issues of gender bias were addressed with the search committee, and that “the consultant assisting the search did not limit the consultations only to men.”

Federation leaders and observers applauded the report, which they called the federation system’s most comprehensive attempt yet to investigate and rectify sex discrimination. They also believe the system’s leaders will carry out the report’s recommendations.

“The first sign of a readiness to change is a willingness to take an honest look at yourself, and I think the decision by UJC to even engage in this study is a very healthy sign for the future based on a very unhealthy present,” said Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Foundation and a former executive of the UJA-Federation of New York.

Shifra Bronznick, president of Ad-

vancing Women Professionals, called the report a “breakthrough.”

“It puts the issues squarely on the table about how bias affects women and

how male networks affect women and how the different perceptions about leadership style affect women,” she said.

Bronznick added that women’s success is a benchmark for the system’s health.

“When you identify the best ways to advance women, you identify the best ways to create workplaces to advance

everybody and allow our professionals to fulfill their real potential for excellence,” she said.

Among the report’s findings:

- Female professionals face a “leaky pipeline” in the federation system, with sizable numbers in lower ranks but few at the top. The representation of females increases as job prestige declines.

No women hold chief executive positions in federations in the largest U.S. cities — though some have held the top lay positions — and women hold just 28 percent of sub-executive positions in those cities.

In large-intermediate cities, women hold 16 percent of the chief executive positions and 47 percent of sub-executive positions.

- Women are held to a different standard than men. For example, the report claims, aggressive leadership is valued in men but is disdained in women and can cost them top jobs.

- Despite advances in women’s philanthropy, federation leaders question women’s ability to raise funds, a key requirement for top executive positions.

- The network that refers and recruits executive-level candidates is male-dominated and likely to recommend other men.

According to Bronznick, UJC must apply the recommendations quickly but shouldn’t regard the report as a recipe to which federations can simply “add water and stir.”

“It has to be about people really understanding what all the elements of change are and grappling with them themselves,” she said. “Otherwise things are going to be very superficial.”

My advice to women is to be presentable and play to your femininity.

Male federation lay leader

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Kerry kin died in Holocaust

Some of Sen. John Kerry's relatives were killed in the Holocaust. The Jewish-born grandfather of the Democratic front-runner for president lost a sister in Treblinka and a brother in the Czech ghetto of Terezin, *Newsday* reported.

Last year, the Democrat from Massachusetts learned that his paternal grandfather, Frederick Kerry, who immigrated to the United States from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was born Fritz Kohn and later converted to Catholicism. An Austrian genealogist found the connection.

The news that family members died in the Holocaust "gives an even greater personal sense of connection" to the Holocaust "that is very real and very touching," Kerry told *Newsday*.

'Passion' rocks box office

Mel Gibson's "The Passion" took in \$117.5 million in box office sales through the weekend.

The amount made the controversial movie about Jesus' crucifixion the second highest five-day total for a film that opened on a Wednesday.

Brooklyn Bridge terror attack remembered

Elected officials gathered to remember Ari Halberstam, a yeshiva student killed 10 years ago in a Brooklyn Bridge terrorist attack.

New York Gov. George Pataki and Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) pledged to push for tougher anti-terrorism legislation at Monday's memorial for Halberstam, a Chasidic youth killed March 1, 1994, by a Lebanese man seeking vengeance against Jews for Middle East violence. For years, the FBI refused to recognize Halberstam's murder as a terrorist attack, treating it instead as a criminal act resulting from an episode of "road rage."

At the behest of public officials and the boy's mother, Devorah Halberstam, the FBI reopened its investigation several years later and reclassified the shooting as a terrorist act.

MIDDLE EAST

Sharon seeking Bush backing

Ariel Sharon will seek U.S. approval this month for his plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Israel's prime minister would like to complete the plan before "his meeting with President Bush at the end of March in Washington," Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told reporters Monday in London. "He has said he will not do it unless it will be agreed with the Americans first."

The Bush administration has responded positively to Sharon's proposal to dismantle 17 of the 21 Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip but cautioned against resettling residents in the West Bank.

Poll position

Israel may bring elections forward by a year to November 2006. The Central Elections Committee convened Monday to discuss Attorney General Meni Mazouz's recommendation that the election be rescheduled based on an interpretation of a little-known constitutional loophole involving the Jewish calendar. The Election Committee's ruling is due Wednesday.

Captain convicted

An Israeli army commander was found guilty in the killing of a Palestinian youth. The Israel Defense Forces said Sunday that the officer had been found guilty of negligent homicide for firing into the

wall of a Palestinian building to disperse rioters near the West Bank city of Nablus — a shot that killed a 16-year-old boy in the building.

Israeli media, noting how rare such convictions have been during the three-plus years of the Palestinian intifada, described the officer as an artillery corps captain. It was not immediately clear when he would be sentenced.

VAT down

Israel's Treasury cut value-added tax by one percent to counteract rising consumer costs.

The reduction to 17 percent VAT went into effect Monday, immediately lowering the price of bread in a public-relations boost for Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's austerity plan.

The Treasury further announced that the new VAT would apply to consumer appliance purchases already being processed.

Purim brouhaha

An Israeli lawmaker said an Interior Ministry proposal to naturalize the children of foreign workers was anti-Jewish. Interior Minister Avraham Poraz is "behaving as though he is consumed by some sort of disease," Eli Yishai, of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, told Ma'ariv online on Monday.

He likened Poraz to Haman, the villain of the Purim story.

A spokeswoman for Poraz pledged to file a complaint with the Knesset Ethics Committee.

WORLD

Pakistan rips Israel on arms sales

Pakistan criticized Israel's decision to approve the sale of early warning radar systems to India.

"The sales of sophisticated weapons to India will accentuate strategic and conventional imbalance in South Asia," Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan said Sunday. "Such transactions undermine the spirit of peace and stability being pushed by Pakistan, India and the international community in the region."

On Sunday, Israel's Security Cabinet approved the \$1.1 billion deal for the sale of the three Phalcon airborne systems.

Tale of two parties

The chairman of Britain's governing Labor Party was accused of using an anti-Semitic slur.

Ian McCartney called the finance spokesman of the opposition Conservative Party, Oliver Letwin, who is Jewish, "a Fagin." Rabbi Jonathan Romain said the reference to the Jewish thief in Dickens' "Oliver Twist" was "highly offensive," adding that "consciously or otherwise it is a reference to Mr. Letwin's faith rather than his politics." McCartney rejected the accusations of anti-Semitism, saying he had campaigned against racism "all his life."

'Passion' producers making play in France?

The inability to get "The Passion of the Christ" distributed in France is a marketing tactic by the film's producers, one of France's top distributors said.

Marin Karmitz, president of France's National Federation of Film Distributors, said it is unprecedented that French distributors had not been invited to see a full version of Mel Gibson's film.

"Certain sections of the press are accusing us of boycotting 'The Passion of the Christ' because of fear or constraints by some kind of Jewish lobby, but this is a deliberate tactic by Icon to appear as martyrs," he said.

Karmitz added that the film probably would be released in France once a distributor was found.