

IN THE NEWS

Terrorist mastermind Abu Abbas dies at 55

Mohammed "Abu" Abbas, the mastermind behind the hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship, has died at 55.

U.S. officials on Tuesday confirmed the death from natural causes of Abbas, whose Palestine Liberation Front engineered the 1985 hijacking during which terrorists shot Leon Klinghoffer, a 69-year-old Jewish man in a wheelchair, then dumped him into the ocean as his wife watched.

Abbas was captured by U.S. forces in April 2003.

U.S.: Syria's not changing its stripes

The United States has yet to decide on sanctions against Syria, but Syrian behavior has not improved ahead of a May deadline, the State Department said.

"When we have something to announce, we'll announce it," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday when asked about the Syria Accountability Act.

Signed by President Bush in December, the act gives Syria six months to end support for Palestinian terrorists, secure its border with Iraq and end its weapons programs before sanctions are imposed.

Powell may attend Berlin conference

Colin Powell said he would try to attend an anti-Semitism conference in Berlin next month.

On Monday, the U.S. secretary of state told a delegation from the World Jewish Congress that the April 28-29 conference, sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is on his calendar, and that he would like to attend, according to Elan Steinberg, the WJC's executive vice president.

Powell also expressed U.S. support for a possible United Nations resolution condemning anti-Semitism.

WORLD REPORT

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With tight race expected in Florida, GOP campaigns for Jewish support

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush's first salvos against presumptive Democratic nominee Sen. John Kerry include shots carefully aimed at Jewish voters — a sign of the community's importance in key states, especially Florida.

The race in Florida looks so close — the latest polls show Kerry and Bush neck-and-neck — that Republicans are focusing on Jewish votes and financial support.

"If we can get a message of President Bush's leadership to the Jewish community clearly conveyed, we can make a significant difference," said Adam Hasner, a Florida state representative who is chairing Bush's Jewish outreach effort in the state.

Bush surrogates have emphasized what they say are inconsistencies in Kerry's support for Israel, especially regarding Israel's West Bank security barrier.

In a conference call with reporters last week, Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) cited a speech Kerry gave in October to the Arab American Institute, where he called the fence a "barrier to peace." He contrasted that with recent comments Kerry has made to Jewish audiences praising the fence.

"Americans really want strong leadership," said Coleman, who is Jewish. "They don't want leadership that goes and back and forth based on the group he's speaking in front of."

Democrats have said Bush is just as vulnerable in this area, pressing Israel hard on the fence in 2003 but backing away in 2004, once the election campaign got under way.

"John Kerry has been clear and consistent: He supports Israel's right to defend itself and views the fence as a legitimate security interest," said Mark Kornblau, a Kerry spokesman. "The Bush administration and John Kerry have both questioned the path of the fence, but never Israel's right to construct the fence or to defend itself."

Coleman acknowledged Bush administration concerns about the fence, but said Kerry's contrasting comments to Arab and Jewish audiences was a case of pandering.

The Bush-Cheney campaign also is highlighting Kerry's 1997 book, "The New War," in which he referred to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat as a "statesman."

While acknowledging that times were different then — in 1997, Arafat was involved in a peace process with Israel and was welcome at the Clinton White House — Coleman suggested that pro-Israel voters could take heart in Bush's isolation of Arafat. He called Kerry's characterization of Arafat an error in judgment.

"Arafat has been a terrorist from the beginning to the middle to the end," Coleman said. "It was a grave mistake then to call him a statesman."

In the book, Kerry calls Arafat's "transformation from outlaw to statesman" the exception, rather than the rule, in the terrorist trajectory. A number of Republican leaders at the time also met with and praised Arafat.

Bush campaign officials believe that hitting Kerry on security issues will sit well with a Jewish community they believe is inclined to support Bush for his pro-Israel sentiments and is skeptical of Democrats'

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■ *With tight race expected in Florida, GOP campaigns for Jewish support*

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positions on the Middle East.

But Kornblau said it wouldn't work.

"This is an effort by the Bush administration and Republicans to distort John Kerry's record, and they're not going to be successful," he said. "He has been a friend of Israel for close to 20 years in the U.S. Senate, and he will be a staunch friend of Israel as president."

Kornblau was accompanying Kerry on the hustings in Florida, where the Massachusetts senator was ostensibly campaigning for last week's primary in the state, but looking ahead to November voting.

Few have forgotten the pivotal role Florida and its Jewish community — particularly in Palm Beach County — played in the election debacle of 2000. Shoring up the state is seen as a key to winning the White House.

Kerry said he was setting up a legal team to review every contested vote this November, a reminder of the bitterly contested 2000 Florida vote count. Many Democrats, including many Jews, believe the Republicans stole the 2000 election.

The potentially pivotal Jewish role in Florida is not lost on the Republicans.

Republican activists say their emphasis in courting the Jewish community has changed. Instead of focusing on raising money in the community while leav-

ing most of the votes to the Democrats, Republican Jewish leaders now believe Bush's Middle East policies could win Jewish votes.

Republican Jewish leaders now believe Bush's Middle East policies could win Jewish votes.

Coleman's conference call was the third Bush campaign media call in nine days to discuss the fence issue. Marc Racicot, chairman of the Bush/Cheney campaign, talked to Jewish journalists after meeting with Republican Jews in Florida Feb. 29, and two Florida GOP lawmakers — Reps. Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Mark Foley — spoke out on Kerry's Middle East record March 3.

Racicot said he believes Bush can get 30 percent to 35 percent of the American

Jewish vote in 2004, compared to the 22 percent he won in 2000.

The Florida contest is seen as so close that a chance to pick up any Jewish support is considered crucial.

"We understand they have been inclined to support Democrats, but we feel the president's policies and his values in regards to the Middle East lead to the possibility to be much more successful in the Jewish community — not just in Florida, but around the country," Racicot said.

When asked whether he saw Kerry as weak on Israel, Racicot tried to paint the Democratic candidate as lacking leadership on foreign policy issues.

"He hasn't been strong on the defense functions of this country," Racicot said. "He certainly has not addressed the issues with the bright-line devotion and clarity that the president has." ■

Margaret Tishman dies at 84

By STEVE LIPMAN
NEW YORK JEWISH WEEK

NEW YORK (JTA) — Margaret Tishman, a longtime Jewish community lay leader and philanthropist who helped guide the merger of the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, died last Friday.

She was 84.

Tishman, better known as Peggy, served as the first president of the merged UJA-Federation 20 years ago. She was one of the first women to lead a major Jewish federation in the United States.

She died two months after her husband of 62 years, Alan.

"In losing Peggy, we lose one of the most graceful, dignified and devoted leaders of our community," said John Ruskay, executive vice president of UJA-Federation. "Peggy Tishman's legacy to Jewish life is unparalleled, embracing the entire agenda of UJA-Federation."

Tishman, twice a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging, was a founder of the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged, a UJA-Federation beneficiary.

She was president of the Jewish Community Relations Council. She also was a director of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

As president in 1986 of the Federation

of Jewish Philanthropies, which focused on the Jewish community's local needs, Tishman was among a group that helped steer the long-wanted merger with New York UJA, which supported Israel and other communities abroad.

Tishman was elected president of the united organization.

"Everyone by then was so enthusiastic about her performance that nobody cared to recall which side she had come from," Stephen Solender, former executive vice president of UJA-Federation, said Monday during his eulogy for Tishman at Temple Shaaray Tefila in New York. "In 18 months she had charmed everyone."

"She saw it as her responsibility to bring together two disparate constituencies, two very different kinds of leaders," Solender said. "And she did. She made it clear to everyone on every occasion that her personal focus was to help Jews in need wherever they were."

Tishman graduated from Wellesley College and received a master's degree in psychology and education from Fairfield University. She received honorary doctorates from Hunter College and Marymount Manhattan College.

Tishman lost two children during her lifetime, David Henry Tishman and Virginia Alexander. She is survived by a daughter, Peggy T. Hall, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. ■

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Czech official brings Kerry news of Holocaust dead

By MAGNUS BENNETT

PRAGUE (JTA) — It hasn't been long since Sen. John Kerry learned that he had relatives who were killed in the Holocaust.

Now Kerry (D-Mass.), the presumptive Democratic nominee for president, is getting documents about the last days of his paternal grandmother's brother and sister.

During a visit to New York on Sunday, the chairman of Prague's Jewish community, Tomas Jelinek, presented the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research with copies of the original transport lists for Otto and Jenny Loewe — Kerry's paternal grandmother's brother and sister, who were sent to their deaths on Nazi transports.

Jelinek said he had decided to track down the records in Prague after learning from American media reports about Kerry's Jewish roots.

"I presented copies of the records to YIVO as a gift and asked them to pass them on to Sen. Kerry," Jelinek told JTA. "We know how touching this kind of information is for Jewish communities in

Europe and thought it would be of interest to Sen. Kerry's family."

The records show that Otto, who was born in Budapest, was transported from Vienna to Terezin transit camp — Theresienstadt — in August 1942. He died at Theresienstadt on June 29, 1943.

His sister, Jenny, was transported from Vienna to Theresienstadt later. On Sept. 26, 1942, she was sent from Theresienstadt to the Maly Trostinec concentration camp in Belarus, where she subsequently was killed.

Jelinek presented the records at the launch of an exhibition of the works of the late Czech artist Alfred Kantor, who depicted scenes of everyday Nazi brutality during the Holocaust.

Kantor, who survived Theresienstadt, produced 127 drawings and sketches from memory after the originals had been lost.

Kantor emigrated to the United States after the war and died last year in Maine.

Jelinek also was in New York to launch a fund-raising drive for a new \$6 million senior home for Holocaust survivors in Prague, called Project Hagibor. The

planned 60-bed facility aims to provide round-the-clock care for some of Prague's estimated 1,500 Holocaust survivors.

Former Czech President Vaclav Havel is behind the project.

"In the history of our country, the biggest killing of Czech citizens in one day happened in Auschwitz-Birkenau on March 8, 60 years ago," Havel wrote in a letter of support for the project. "Entire families, including children, were killed. The only thing that made them guilty was being Jewish."

Havel said he is afraid that there remains a lot of indifference in Czech society to the Holocaust.

"I am afraid — something only a very few people admit — that our present indifference towards this and other tragedies of the past and present makes us accomplices," he wrote.

"I am very happy that you are meeting today to honor the memory of those who are deceased and at the same time to support a project that should help to lessen the life hardships of those who used to be prisoners in the concentration camps and ghettos, at least in their twilight years," he wrote.

Holocaust joke rankles builders of Berlin Shoah memorial

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — Sometimes, a bad joke can elicit worse things than a painful groan from listeners.

Especially when the joke is about the poison gas the Nazis used to kill Jews during the Holocaust.

Peter Eisenman, the architect of Berlin's Holocaust memorial, caused a stir recently when he told a meeting of the memorial's board of trustees that his New York dentist, after putting a gold filling in his teeth, "said he had just put a Degussa product in my tooth, and asked if he should take it out again."

The Degussa company produced the Zyklon B gas used to kill Jews at Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps. Degussa also is the firm charged with graffiti-proofing Berlin's new Holocaust memorial.

The firm was nearly dropped from the project after sponsors learned of its history.

Eisenman, who is Jewish, said he told the story to lighten up the meeting, and didn't mention Holocaust victims.

But his listeners were incensed.

Alexander Brenner, former president of Berlin's Jewish community and one of the few members of his family to survive the Holocaust, stormed out of the meeting and later accused Eisenman of disparaging the memory of Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. He asked the memorial board's chairman, Wolf-

gang Thierse, president of the Bundestag, to take a position on the issue.

Meanwhile, Albert Meyer, the new head of Berlin's Jewish community, used the occasion to criticize the memorial itself, saying it would have been better to spend the money to reopen Berlin's pre-war Academy for the Science of Judaism — where Rabbi Leo Baeck, among others, was a teacher.

Thierse said it was too late to criticize the project, which was approved by the Bundestag in 1999 after more than a decade of debate.

The memorial is still under construction and is expected to be completed in 2005.

Eisenman offered a verbal apology this week. He also told the Berliner Morgenpost newspaper, "If necessary, I will ask personally for forgiveness again. I did not want to hurt anyone's feelings or snub them. I am sorry. I did not intend that."

Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, is demanding an apology in writing.

Wolfgang Benz, spokesman for the memorial's advisory board and head of the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the Technical University of Berlin, said Eisenman used American-style humor and had not taken into consideration the effect it might have.

In America, Benz said, "people are much looser with themselves and with history, including Jewish history."

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

JNF umbrella cuts jobs

The Israel-based umbrella group for the Jewish National Fund, Keren Kayemet, will cut 300 jobs. The cuts represent a quarter of the umbrella group's jobs in Israel but will not affect JNF America, according to Sarina Roffe, communications director for JNF America. The move is part of an effort to reduce expenses by about \$33 million, Ha'aretz reported.

Sunday's decision was a response to decreased land-lease revenues, which comprise 75 percent of Keren Kayemet's budget, Roffe said.

JNF America, the largest fund-raising arm of the worldwide organization, increased its fund raising in 2003 by 15 percent to \$35 million, all of which goes toward projects in Israel, Roffe said.

French mosques to be protected

French mosques will receive the same police protection as synagogues, the country's interior minister said.

Nicolas Sarkozy made his remarks Monday after two mosques were destroyed by arson last Friday. Muslim leaders accused the government of a late response and suggested that Jews were given better protection by the state than Muslims.

Jewish groups were among the first to condemn the attacks. The chief rabbi of Lyon, Richard Wertenschlag, expressed his shock in a letter to the head of the region's Muslim Council.

Victims of Nazism get payouts

The first of more than 13,000 Russian victims of Nazism eligible for compensation from Germany received payouts Tuesday.

Among the beneficiaries of the \$8 million German fund are an undisclosed number of Jews who will receive a one-time compensation ranging from \$9,444 for former ghetto and concentration camp inmates to \$1,888 for those who spent the Nazi occupation in hiding.

Most of the recipients are non-Jewish Russians who worked in Germany as slave laborers during the war.

NORTH AMERICA

Saudi student pleads innocent to terrorism

A former student at the University of Idaho pleaded not guilty to charges of aiding Hamas.

Sami Al-Hussayen of Saudi Arabia originally was arrested in February 2003 for student visa fraud and was accused in January of providing Hamas and other terrorist groups with financial support.

The federal indictment filed March 4 against Al-Hussayen alleges that the computer-science graduate student designed Web sites to raise money and recruit people for terrorist groups, and oversaw the publication of an online magazine that printed edicts from Muslim clerics encouraging suicide bombings.

Poll: Southerners like Jews

Few people in Alabama blame Jews for the death of Jesus, a new poll says.

A Mobile Register-University of South Alabama poll of state residents found 7 percent blamed Jews for the death of Jesus, while 10 percent held the Romans accountable and 64 percent pinned the blame on all of humanity.

The poll also showed that just 11 percent held a "somewhat" or "very unfavorable" opinion of Judaism; 61 percent said they would not be uneasy "at all" if a close relative converted to Judaism. There are 9,000 Jews in the state.

MIDDLE EAST

Jordan: We may support withdrawal

Jordan might help Israel in its planned pullout from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

"If this is done in the context of the 'road map,' if this is done in coordination with the Palestinians, then this might present an opportunity," Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher said after discussing the Israeli proposals Tuesday with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The third man

Israeli police are hunting for a third member of a suspected Jewish terrorist cell.

Eliran Golan, a Haifa man arrested last week on suspicion of planting bombs targeting Israeli Arabs, had his custody extended by six days on Tuesday while investigations continue. A second man, Yevgeny Grossman of Ashdod, is under arrest as Golan's alleged partner. Police sources said the two are believed to have had another accomplice, who is still at large. Golan is believed to have tried to kill an Israeli Arab member of Knesset last year.

Jenin raid

A Palestinian woman was killed when Israeli troops clashed with gunmen in Jenin. Israeli military officials said the army entered the West Bank city Tuesday in a hunt for terrorists.

Hamas P.R.

A Hamas fugitive claimed that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to pull out from Gaza is a victory for Hamas.

"The criminal Sharon was elected to smash our resistance in 100 days. But now the man who used to say Netzarim" — a Gaza settlement — "was just like Tel Aviv is planning to pull out of Gaza with nothing in return," Mohammed Deif said in a recorded statement released on a Hamas Web site on Monday.

Germany, Israel to cooperate

Germany and Israel signed up for a multimillion-dollar bio-tech research program.

The new "Bio-Disc" program was announced Wednesday during Israeli Cabinet minister Ehud Olmert's visit to Berlin. Olmert and Germany's minister for education and research, Edelgard Bulmahn, signed an agreement that joint bio-tech projects will receive about \$65 million over the next five years. The Bio-Disc program is designed to improve the transfer of basic research into application. Germany and Israel each will contribute to the fund; other funds will come from private companies.

Crime ring

Israeli police broke up a gang suspected of trying to kill a Knesset member's father. Ezra Gavrieli, a businessman with alleged underworld links — whose daughter Inbal is serving her first term as Likud lawmaker — survived a January attempt to bomb his car in Tel Aviv.

Police said Tuesday they had arrested 18 people in connection with the incident, including four suspected foreign assassins.

Inbal Gavrieli did not immediately comment.

Groundbreaking

Israel and Jordan laid the cornerstone for a joint scientific college straddling the border. The project, named Bridging the Rift, was initiated by a U.S. businessman and is due to be completed in 2009.

An audience gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony near the Israeli town of Ein Yahav, on the border with Jordan.