

IN THE NEWS

Mossad helps Madrid investigators

Israel's Mossad reportedly is helping the investigation of last week's terrorist attacks in Madrid.

Spanish media said Sunday that Israel's intelligence agency — as well as those of the United States, Britain, France and Germany — hope to help shed light on whether Islamists or Basque separatists are to blame for the blasts.

Israeli analysts have been working around the clock to try to authenticate an Al-Qaida claim of responsibility issued for the March 10 bombings, in which some 200 people were killed.

Egypt, Israel consider amendments

Israel and Egypt are discussing amendments to the Camp David peace treaty.

The plan, discussed March 11 between Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and Egyptian officials, would help Egypt secure the border if Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip.

The Camp David accord does not allow Egypt to use heavily armed forces on the border, but Israeli officials have indicated an interest in having Egypt prevent chaos in the Gaza region following a planned Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Hamas cell intercepted

Israeli troops killed three Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip. The army said the three were shot dead Sunday as they tried to lay mines on a road used by Jewish settlers and Israeli troops.

On Saturday, Israeli forces killed two terrorists trying to sneak into Israel from Gaza.

The two members of the Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, were spotted on Saturday trying to crawl under the Gaza boundary fence and reach Nahal Oz, a kibbutz on the other side.

WORLD REPORT

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In possible try at chemical attack, Arab bombers strike at Israeli port

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — With this week's terrorist bombings, Hamas may have hoped to see a toxic cloud hanging over the Israeli city of Ashdod — the embodiment of a new, higher level of terrorism for the anti-Israel group.

Although luck and security spared Israel a chemical cataclysm, Sunday's double suicide bombing at Israel's second-largest port devastated scores of families, killing at least 10 people. The attack also wounded at least 16 people and raised alarm in the Israeli government.

The two teenage bombers came from the Gaza Strip, and their attack marked the first successful terrorist strike launched by Palestinian infiltrators from the fenced-in strip during the current intifada. The bombers broke through tight Israeli security.

"This comes to show that resistance will continue until the enemy leaves all of occupied Palestinian land," said Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin, whose group is sworn to the destruction of the Jewish state.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed joint responsibility for the attacks along with Hamas.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority — whose prime minister, Ahmed Qurei, was slated to meet this week for the first time with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — issued its customary condemnation of the attack.

Despite the condemnation, Israel called off the planned summit, which was to occur Tuesday.

"We are not looking for a photo opportunity," said Sharon's spokesman, Ra'anan Gissin. "We want a real undertaking from the Palestinians to crack down on terrorism."

Israeli security sources said the bombers, carrying sophisticated plastic explosives, were headed for the port's tankers of ammonium and bromine. If ignited, the chemicals would have thrown up a lethal cloud over Ashdod one mile in radius.

As it happened, the first bomber, who had worked nearby as a construction worker, apparently got cold feet.

"He stopped to ask for a glass of water, and one of the guys recognized him as a local laborer. As he was led away, he blew up," a stevedore told reporters.

Seconds after the first explosion, which tore apart a warehouse for heavy machinery, the bomber's partner hit his detonator outside the port gate.

The bombs the terrorists used were considered to be more powerful than those used in previous suicide bombings, said Israel's Southern region police chief, Moshe Karadi.

The double blast, which threw body parts and mangled metal in the air, sent shock waves through a coastal town that has been largely untouched by more than three years of intifada, despite its proximity to the Gaza Strip.

Indeed, authorities assumed the blasts were work accidents until discovering two distinct bomb sites and quickly assessing the situation.

The bombers, both of whom died in their attacks, were identified as 18-year-olds from

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**TERROR
IN
ISRAEL**

■ *Palestinian suicide bombers attack in Ashdod, eyeing maximal destruction*

Continued from page 1

the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza.

The only other terrorist attack within Israel to have emanated from Gaza during the current intifada was a suicide bombing by two Britons of Pakistani descent at Mike's Place, a Tel Aviv nightclub, in April 2003. Three people were killed in that attack.

Those terrorists, posing as tourists who had traveled through Gaza, used the same plastic explosives as Sunday's bombers, Israeli security sources said.

Hezbollah is the main suspect in supplying the rare explosives, probably through tunnels linking the southern Gaza city of Rafah to nearby Egypt.

"This was meant to be a strategic, mega-terror strike. Now we have to review

our own strategy," a Jerusalem official said, referring to efforts to discover how the two Palestinians got through the Gaza security fence.

Israel Defense Forces officials believe that the terrorists got to Ashdod from Gaza.

They also are considering the possibility that the pair burrowed into Egypt by way of underground tunnels from Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, then snuck into Israel's Negev Desert in a border area that is not secured by a fence.

"They found a weak point and they exploited it," Israeli Cabinet minister Yosef Paritzky said of Sunday's assailants.

"A port, by nature, is a very busy place," he said. "There are many people coming and going. It is impossible to seal the entire country hermetically."

The investigation into this bombing could have ramifications for the security barrier Israel is building in the West Bank to keep out terrorist infiltrators. Palestinians, who say the fence is a land grab, say such an

effort is futile.

Amid the investigation after Sunday's bombings, a Jerusalem official said, "What we learn from this incident will have to be implemented everywhere in the territories — and fast." ■

**At least 10
Israelis are
dead; 16 are
wounded.**

In Germany, Reform Jews may sue government over aid

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — The German branch of Reform Judaism is threatening to sue the federal government for equal treatment, saying it's illegal for the government to offer financial support only to the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

According to an expert's analysis released last week in advance of a lawsuit, the federal government is required to support all branches of Judaism without prejudice.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder signed a historic contract with the

Central Council in January 2003 that pledged the government to provide the Central Council with \$3 million annually. The money is supposed to be used for all streams of Judaism that define Jewish identity according to matrilineal descent.

The Union for Progressive Jews in Germany, or UPJ — as the Reform movement is known here — accepts this definition, but repeatedly has been snubbed by the Central Council, according to UPJ President Jan Muhlstein.

Though the Central Council is not legally required to fund the UPJ and thus can't be sued, the federal government is required to give equal treatment under the constitution, Muhlstein told JTA.

The analysis, delivered Thursday to Interior Minister Otto Schily, was prepared for the UPJ by attorney Axel von Campenhausen, an expert in church-state law in Germany. A letter also was delivered to the president of the German Parliament, Wolfgang Thierse.

There has been no official reaction yet from German government leaders.

Nathan Kalmanowicz, a Central Council board member responsible for religious matters, said the UPJ can't claim that it gets no federal funding via the council.

"We do give," Kalmanowicz said — though perhaps not as much as the UPJ wants. "They are about 1,500 people, and we have about 100,000 Jews in Germany."

In the past, a point of contention for

the Central Council has been the policy on conversion in some Reform communities. That has become a major issue since the immigration to Germany of tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union, who often come with spouses and children who are not Jewish.

Reform conversions generally are not accepted by Orthodox communities, and the Central Council adheres to Orthodox rules in determining who is a Jew.

In a telephone interview, Muhlstein said the German Reform movement had waited years for a concrete positive sign from the Central Council, and that recent signs of warming never brought more than meager benefits.

Meanwhile, he said, there currently are 13 Reform, or Progressive, congregations in Germany, with two more expected to join the movement.

For its part, the Central Council has 83 Jewish communities under its umbrella. Some of the Progressive communities have applied for membership, but there has been no action on this, Muhlstein said. He said the World Union for Progressive Judaism is fully supportive of the decision by the German branch to take action.

On the World Union's support, Kalmanowicz said, "We are not interested in international organizations threatening the Central Council. We are interested in Jewish groups in Germany." ■

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THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ Academics and public officials discuss "The Global Dimensions of Contemporary Anti-Semitism" through Tuesday at a conference sponsored by Montreal's Quebec Israel Committee. Speakers include Natan Sharansky, Shmuel Trigano, Robert Wistrich, Anne Bayefsky and Phyllis Chesler.

■ A group of Texas Hillel students arrives in Argentina to do volunteer work, meet Argentine Hillel students and study Judaism. Other Hillel contingents from Delaware, Illinois and northern California will follow. In total, 86 Hillel students from around the United States are spending their spring breaks in Argentina.

■ The United Nations Commission on Human Rights begins a six-week session in Geneva. The commission traditionally devotes an agenda item to Israel and considers a host of resolutions accusing Israel of human rights violations. Representatives of Israel and Jewish groups will attend the commission to monitor proceedings and make presentations.

■ The Jerusalem Conference, which meets through Wednesday, addresses Israel's economic and security agenda. Conference speakers include Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom; Former Israeli U.N. Ambassador Dore Gold and Middle East expert Daniel Pipes.

TUESDAY

■ Pro-Palestinian groups meet in Washington to commemorate the death of Rachel Corrie, an American activist killed protesting the Israeli army's bulldozing of Palestinian homes in Gaza last year. The Tuesday night vigil in downtown Washington is part of a week of discussion about Palestinian nonviolent resistance.

■ The Christians' Israel Public Action Campaign honors Reps. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) and Todd Tiahrt (R-Kan.). Pro-Israel Christian groups are stepping up their efforts on Capitol Hill to garner support for Israel and sanctions against Syria.

WEDNESDAY

■ Argentines commemorate the 12th anniversary of the Israeli Embassy bombing in Buenos Aires, which killed 29 people. In the afternoon, a remembrance celebration will be held at the site of the former embassy, which was completely destroyed by the bombing. The case is still unsolved.

■ The head of the State Department's counterterrorism office, Cofer Black, testifies before Congress about Saudi financing of terrorism. He and former CIA intelligence officer Robert Baer are expected to discuss the issue before the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee.

Doubling your Jewish money

By JOE BERKOFSKY

NEW YORK (JTA) — A new philanthropic venture is borrowing fund-raising tactics from the world of public broadcasting in the hope of spurring support for Jewish education.

The Avi Chai Foundation of New York and the Jewish Funders Network are hoping to attract philanthropists who have never given to Jewish causes by using a new \$1 million fund to match new gifts to Jewish educational projects — thereby doubling each contribution.

Rare if not unprecedented in its approach, the plan not only uses fund-raising tactics that have won wide success in the public broadcasting world, but also

defines Jewish education in broad terms and avoids restricting philanthropy to specific causes.

"The idea is really to encourage philanthropists who haven't viewed Jewish education as a priority, or haven't expressed that priority in terms of their giving, to do so," said Mark Charendoff, the JFN's president.

"Everyone wants to leverage their money, to get \$2 of value out of \$1 given."

The plan also draws upon the wealth of Avi Chai, one of the Jewish foundation world's biggest charities, with assets of nearly \$1.5 billion, and the resources of JFN, an association of more than 800 Jewish family and private foundations and funders, including Avi Chai.

Founded by the late Zalman Bernstein in 1984, Avi Chai supports 75 projects in the United States and Israel, many of them focused on Jewish education. JFN is 14 years old and includes many of the top charities among 8,000 Jewish foundations in North America.

With studies showing that most donations from Jewish philanthropists go to non-Jewish causes, there have been other attempts recently to launch innovative initiatives to boost Jewish education.

Mega-donor Michael Steinhardt, already a longtime supporter of Jewish educational causes, proposed a \$100 million Fund for Our Jewish Future at the annual General Assembly of the United Jewish

Communities federation umbrella group last November.

Steinhardt vowed to give \$10 million if others would make up the rest.

Such efforts come the year after the Institute for Jewish & Community Research in San Francisco released a study tracking 188 mega-gifts of \$10 million or more from the 123 wealthiest Jews in the United States between 1995 and 2000. Of a total of \$5.3 billion given, only \$318 million — or 6 percent — went to Jewish institutions, the study showed.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy and the online magazine Slate have found that 14 of the 36 donations of \$25 million or more in 2003 came from Jews — but none went to strictly Jewish causes.

But Avi Chai and JFN say they're targeting philanthropy on the opposite end of the charity pool.

Under the plan, Avi Chai and JFN will match any gift between \$25,000 and \$50,000 aimed at a Jewish educational enterprise that includes Jewish education as part of its mission or that

enhances Jewish commitment generally or American Jewish ties to Israel. They will match gifts until the \$1 million fund is exhausted.

"This is a serious commitment, but hopefully at a level people feel comfortable getting involved with for the first time," said Lauren Merkin, an Avi Chai trustee.

Any project targeted primarily at a Jewish audience and committed to enriching Jewish life and the centrality of Israel would qualify as a recipient, officials said.

Merkin said this plan is aimed at "new ideas, new people," rather than the same mega-donors that already support Jewish causes.

Those behind the plan say they'll measure its success by the rate of response from JFN's membership. A panel of members will judge funding proposals and determine whether they qualify.

The groups were to launch the idea Sunday at the first annual JFN Institute in Cambridge, Mass., when 135 philanthropists were due to discuss "re-imagining citizenship in the Jewish people." ■

'The idea is really to encourage philanthropists who haven't viewed Jewish education as a priority.'

Mark Charendoff

Jewish Funders Network

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Fence supporters top 90 in House

A U.S. House of Representatives bill supporting Israel's West Bank security barrier has 94 co-sponsors.

Launched by Reps. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) and Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.) in late February, the bill topped 90 signatures this week. It has the backing of Jewish and Christian pro-Israel groups. The bill is currently under consideration in the House International Relations Committee. The bill also blasts the International Court of Justice in the Hague for hearing arguments on the fence last month. The court is due to issue an advisory opinion on the fence's legality.

Nader eats into Arab Kerry support

Arab Americans in swing states substantively support Sen. John Kerry against President Bush, but support erodes once Ralph Nader is factored in.

The Arab American Institute is tracking Arab American voters in four states — Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida and Ohio — where they might make a difference in a presidential election, AAI President James Zogby said last Friday.

"We have seen an enormous flip" in the community since 2000, when it supported Bush for president, Zogby said. Bush lost support because of his pro-Israel stance, the war in Iraq and a perception that U.S. authorities profile Arab and Muslim Americans, Zogby said.

In a head-to-head race, the Democratic senator from Massachusetts would win 54 percent of Arab votes while Bush would get 30 percent. However, if Nader, a consumer activist who is an Arab American, also runs, Kerry's support drops to 43 percent and Bush's to 27 percent, while Nader gets 20 percent.

Orthodox group urges gay marriage ban

Agudath Israel of America, a fervently religious group, urged the Massachusetts legislature to oppose gay civil marriage.

The Agudah said its move came in response to an ad in the Boston Globe by some 100 Massachusetts rabbis from the liberal streams, supporting the state Supreme Court's ruling that civil marriage should not be limited to heterosexuals.

Jews, Christians split on 'Passion'

Christians and Jews hold widely divergent views of "The Passion of the Christ," a new survey says. In a U.S. survey of 462 Christians and Jews, 69 percent of Christians and 23 percent of Jews said they saw the movie, with 11 percent of Christians and 74 percent of Jews calling the film anti-Semitic.

ADL must pay millions

The U.S. Supreme Court will not hear an appeal of a ruling that the Anti-Defamation League must pay \$10.5 million to a couple denounced as anti-Semites.

The judgment stems from a 1994 case in which a Jewish couple contacted the ADL's Mountain States Region after taping their neighbors' phone conversations in which anti-Semitic slurs were uttered. Saul Rosenthal, the head of the ADL's Mountain States Region, had denounced the neighbors, the Quigleys, at a news conference. Charges of ethnic intimidation against the Quigleys were dropped, and the couple sued the ADL for defaming them as anti-Semites.

A prosecutor later told the Intermountain Jewish News that the Quigleys' remarks were an attempt at sick humor.

Nazi guard to be deported to Germany

A U.S. federal panel ordered a former Nazi guard deported to Germany. The Board of Immigration Appeals upheld the deportation last

Friday of Johann Leprich, 78, who federal officials claim served as an armed guard at the Mauthausen concentration camp in Germany during World War II.

Leprich is accused of entering the United States illegally last year, after fleeing to Canada in 1987 to avoid having his citizenship revoked.

Leprich was found last year hiding in the basement of his former home near Detroit.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel wants U.S. 'understanding'

Israel wants the United States to commit to "understandings" about Israeli claims in the West Bank as part of an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz made the case for such understandings in meetings last week with Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser.

Israeli officials would not detail the understandings, but reports in Israel have said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon needs to secure three West Bank settlement blocs in order to keep his government intact.

Mofaz also raised the need for formal Egyptian agreement to police its border with the Gaza Strip once Israel withdraws.

WORLD

France synagogue to honor terror victims

France's largest synagogue is to hold a memorial ceremony in honor of the victims of the Madrid bombings.

The Consistoire Central, France's principal Jewish religious organization, announced that a special memorial service would be held at Paris's La Victoire synagogue Tuesday.

The ceremony will be in memory of the Spanish victims "as well as all victims of terrorism throughout the world, from New York to Bali and Jerusalem to Casablanca."

Jewish woman for far right?

Members of Britain's Jewish community condemned a Jewish woman's decision to represent a far-right party in a local London election.

Pat Richardson, who will contest the seat in June for the British National Party, or BNP, denied that the party was anti-Semitic and promoted Holocaust denial. "I think that is way, way back in the past," Richardson told the London-based Jewish News.

But Jewish communal figures have lined up to denounce her candidacy.

"It's a matter of great regret that a member of the Jewish community has aligned herself with the BNP, which retains its anti-Semitic and Holocaust ideology, only just below the surface these days," said Mike Whine, defense director of the Board of Deputies, British Jewry's umbrella organization.

Hitler ad pulled

A Taiwanese opposition party withdrew a presidential campaign ad featuring a picture of Hitler after Jewish groups protested. The full-page newspaper ad likened incumbent President Chen Shui-bian to Hitler.

"We express our most sincere apology to anyone in the Jewish community who felt offended by this advertisement," Nationalist Party spokesman Justin Chou said, according to Reuters. "It will be withdrawn immediately."

Elections are March 20.