

IN THE NEWS

Rafah raid begins

Israeli forces killed at least 15 Palestinians in counterterrorist operations in a Gaza Strip refugee camp.

The raid, which began before dawn Tuesday with helicopter missile strikes against terrorist targets in Rafah, was launched despite international appeals for Israel to back down.

Israeli security sources said the raid could last days, and was aimed at Rafah militants who smuggle weapons through tunnels from nearby Egypt.

Bush touts Iraq to AIPAC

The United States will stay the course in Iraq, President Bush told pro-Israel lobbyists.

The bulk of Bush's speech Tuesday morning to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington emphasized his commitment to defeating insurgents in Iraq and transferring power to a U.S.-friendly government. "We will not be intimidated by thugs and assassins," Bush said to a standing ovation. "We will win this essential, important victory in the war on terror."

Bush said the war in Iraq and the effort to achieve Israeli-Arab peace were key to bringing freedom and stability to the region.

Palestinians blast Israeli raids at U.N.

The U.N. Security Council will discuss a resolution blasting Israel's incursions into the Gaza Strip.

At the behest of the Palestinians, Algeria was slated to submit a resolution to the council Tuesday "condemning the recent large-scale demolition of homes committed by Israel, the occupying power, in the Rafah refugee camp, where approximately 1,100 Rafah refugees are now homeless."

Israel says the incursion — intended to find tunnels the Palestinians use to smuggle weapons from Egypt — is justified by self-defense.

WORLD REPORT

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At AIPAC parley, pro-Israel policy of Bush trumps domestic agenda

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Don Shein disagrees with President Bush on the environment. He disagrees with Bush on stem-cell research. And he disagrees with Bush on abortion.

But he's voting for Bush anyway.

For Shein, a financial adviser from Baltimore, the 2004 presidential election is about only one thing: Israel.

The loyal Democrat said he has been impressed by Bush's support for the Jewish state and even donated \$500 to Bush's re-election campaign, despite his opposition to the president on many domestic issues.

"My sense is that Bush would stand up for Israel when no Democrat would," Shein said Sunday at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee annual policy conference.

Bush is something of a messiah to those attending the conference in Washington, many of whom traditionally vote Democratic. They are willing to overlook what they don't like about the president because of what they do like.

Bush's address to the conference on Tuesday turned into a Bush rally.

Outgoing AIPAC President Amy Friedkin likened the president to Ruth, the non-Jewish biblical figure who told Naomi, "Your people is my people."

She commended Bush for his "moral authority" in isolating Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

"You have walked the walk with our friend and ally Israel," Friedkin said.

"Thank you Mr. President."

The crowd of about 5,000 crowding the cavernous Washington Convention Center launched into the first of what would be 23 standing ovations.

A smattering of conference-goers shouted "Four more years!" and raised four fingers in the air.

Bush clearly understood the relationship between his support for Israel and the adulation he was earning in a week that his approval ratings were dipping dangerously.

"It's good to be with so many friends — friends of mine and friends of Israel," he said.

Even before Bush's appearance, the very mention of his name or the sight of his image on video screens prompted thunderous applause and standing ovations.

Bush's unprecedented support for Israeli claims in the West Bank and his rejection of any "right of return" to Israel for Palestinian refugees has made him a darling of many AIPAC members.

When Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), the Republican leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, called Bush "the greatest friend of Israel the world has ever had," he got a standing ovation.

Because of the threat Saddam Hussein's regime posed to Israel, many here also supported the administration's invasion of Iraq.

But the AIPAC crowd isn't necessarily representative of the American Jewish community at large. Many here consider themselves single-issue voters — choosing a chief executive solely on the basis of

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support for Israel — while most Jews consider a wider range of issues.

And loud applause for a pro-Israel president at a pro-Israel conference is no guarantee of a vote on Nov. 2. Among those standing up for ovations were top Democratic donors and organizers; one enthusiastic applauder for Bush even sported a "Throw Bush out of the White House" button.

Alex Freedman, a senior at Washington University in St. Louis, was buoyed by the enthusiasm for Bush.

"This is the first time I'm going to hear a president speak," he said.

But that didn't mean the president had his vote.

"I have yet to decide," Freedman said.

Freedman's dilemma was reflective of the larger debate facing many American Jewish voters: how to balance Bush's support for Israel with his domestic record, which they view as troubling.

Some said they would vote for Bush despite strong opposition to his positions on the economy, abortion and other domestic policy issues, because international policy was their main concern.

"I think international stuff is more prominent right now," said Yifat Hassiel, a lawyer from Los Angeles. "The domestic stuff can be changed with the local leadership."

Lana Krebs, a computer technical support project manager from Atlanta, said the economy is important to her, but Israel issues have to be her No. 1 priority.

She said she feels almost guilty backing a politician who opposes abortion and stricter gun controls.

"It does bother me, but I don't see a better option," she said.

Those who are voting for Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), the presumptive Democratic nominee, hastened to add reasons for their support.

"Kerry's record is still really pro-Israel, and I consider other issues," said Stephanie Bloom, a pediatrician from Boston. "The Jewish community has influence over whoever is in office, and we would do fine with Kerry."

Many people say they have not heard enough from Kerry about Israel and international terrorism, or don't trust what he has said.

"What he says doesn't seem to change what I feel his position would be," Krebs said. "I don't think he would be tough enough."

Some have suggested that Kerry did not properly articulate his pro-Israel credentials in his recent speech to the Anti-Defamation League and needs to do more to show that a Kerry administration would back Israel to the same extent that Bush's has.

AIPAC has touted this election as a "win-win" proposition, noting Bush's strong support for Israel and Kerry's 100 percent pro-Israel voting record in the Senate.

AIPAC officials also recently met with the Democratic candidate. Democratic surrogates with strong pro-Israel credentials made the case for Kerry at the conference.

"Whatever the outcome of the elections in November, on January 20 of next year Israel will have a friend in the Oval Office of the White House," Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) told the AIPAC conference Sunday.

Republicans, targeting Jewish votes and money in battleground states, want to add nuance to that perception: Kerry may be a friend, the Republican subtext

suggests, but Bush is the better friend.

Vice President Dick Cheney appealed directly to Jewish voters last Friday, speaking to the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach, Fla.

In addition to the regular pro-Israel sentiments, Cheney tried to connect support for Israel and the Iraq war.

"We believe that the removal of Saddam Hussein and the rise of a free Iraq will, in time, help create the conditions in which a lasting peace between Israelis and their Palestinian neighbors is more likely," he said.

Bush's speech to AIPAC was only his second to a Jewish organization since he became president.

Kerry was not invited to address the conference because of a tradition that limits invitations to incumbent presidential candidates.

Democrats — like Lieberman and Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) — received warm welcomes. AIPAC prides itself on good relations with both parties in Congress, and the Democrats have no intention of ceding the pro-Israel vote to Bush, especially in critical states like Florida.

"There will be a concerted effort to make sure Jewish voters know the real record of the Bush administration on Israeli security matters," Rep. Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.) told JTA. "Democrats will match the Bush administration's campaign rhetoric with the hard facts."

But some attendees say there's almost nothing Kerry could say that would outweigh Bush's actions over the past three years.

Danny Kohn, a Chicago native who also is a senior at Washington University in St. Louis, says it has been hard for him to convince other AIPAC students to support Kerry.

"Everybody's made up their minds that Bush is pro-Israel, and even if John Kerry is pro-Israel, it's not good enough," Kohn said.

(JTA Washington bureau chief Ron Kampeas contributed to this story.)

Among those standing up to applaud Bush were top Democratic donors and organizers; one enthusiastic applauder for Bush even sported a 'Throw Bush out of the White House' button.

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Jerusalem struggles 37 years after Six-Day War

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — No one stopped as Yossi Cohen stood at the door of his gift shop, arms folded behind his back, waiting for customers.

The veteran shopkeeper at the Rasco passage in downtown Jerusalem had low expectations. Waiting for the next customer has become his natural state of mind. Waiting — for lack of anything else to do.

This week marks the 37th Jerusalem Day, the anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War, when the eastern part of the city fell into Israeli hands after Jordanian fighters failed to hold onto the Old City.

But three and a half years after the start of the Palestinian intifada, Jerusalem still is somewhat separated from the rest of the country — and Yossi Cohen was in no mood for festivities.

"Business is bad," Cohen said. "Real bad."

Though shoppers have returned to Jerusalem's city center since the peak of Palestinian terrorism, going to downtown Jerusalem is no longer considered a leisurely outing. People come, take care of their business and hurry home.

"Obviously, if there is peace, there will be tourists, and if there are tourists, things will change," Cohen said.

Then he smiled sadly.

"Perhaps things will change, but it will take a few more years. In the meantime Jerusalem is dead," he said.

Dead sounds rather merciless; seriously ill would be more accurate.

Outside of city residents and foreign visitors — more often than not religious pilgrims of some sort — Jerusalem has been shunned by many Israelis.

"When I ask my friends in Tel Aviv, 'Does anyone need a ride to Jerusalem?' they look at me pitifully," writer, satirist and playwright Ephraim Sidon said.

"For residents of Tel Aviv, going to Jerusalem is a rather risky business," he said, referring to the numerous terrorist attacks in the capital over the past three and a half years.

The number of residents leaving Jerusalem is greater than those moving in, according to the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. In 2002, the latest year for which data is available, 16,400 people

moved out of the city, while only 9,700 moved in.

At the end of last year, Jerusalem had 692,300 residents, 67 percent of them Jews. Some 30 percent of them are fervently Orthodox, or *haredi*.

Technically, Jerusalem remains Israel's largest city, but that's because of the expansion of the city's municipal boundaries and the fact that the country's largest metropolitan area, around Tel Aviv, is divided among several large cities.

Over the past 14 years, Jerusalem has lost some 100,000 residents, most of them young, secular Jews. But many of them also have been fervently Orthodox, who move out of Jerusalem to less expensive places such as Beitar Illit and the Orthodox neighborhoods of Beit Shemesh.

On the face of it, there is no reason why Jerusalem should not be one of the liveliest places in Israel, despite the drop in tourism. With 42,000 students, the plurality of them at Hebrew University, and 60 high-tech companies, predominantly in biotechnology, the city has the potential to attract young, educated Israelis.

But last week's Student Day events were a case study of why things aren't so easy.

The events, mostly rock concerts, took place in the highly protected and closed campuses of the Hebrew University at Mount Scopus and Givat Ram. Mount Scopus lies at the eastern rim of the Jewish part of the capital, far from the business center, behind closed fences and other high-alert security devices.

"Even a couple that wants to go for a romantic walk in the mountains cannot do so because of the immediate neighborhood of the campus is a hostile Arab village," said Sidon, who said he is considering leaving Jerusalem for Tel Aviv. "If you ask me, they should have closed down the campus and brought back all students to Givat Ram."

Givat Ram, within walking distance of downtown Jerusalem, was the main campus until the Mount Scopus campus was rebuilt following the Six-Day War, which enabled easy passage to the previously isolated hilltop.

Indeed, until the late 1970s, students dominated downtown Jerusalem. To a large extent, they provided the economic fuel for small businesses in the heart of the city, like Yossi Cohen's gift shop.

Now many Jerusalemites who visit the downtown leave quickly. They go to cash machines, shop quickly or grab a bite of falafel.

Here and there an elderly Russian immigrant, a musician turned mendicant, might break the monotony with the sound of a violin or an accordion. A young, visibly pregnant woman walks the streets

distributing booklets with the blessings of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav.

Border policemen have helped bring a sense of renewed security to the area, but there are no customers for Yossi Cohen.

Yakir Segev, 26, who attended the Student Day festivities at Mount Scopus, said he didn't see it as a moment for celebration.

"Look at those students," he said. "They should not be here. I would like to see them celebrating in downtown Jerusalem, injecting life into the city."

Segev, along with several hundred students, is now doing something about it by launching a volunteer group called New Spirit, which aims to bring students back to Jerusalem's streets.

The group is engaged in a number of projects.

An apprenticeship program connects students to economic and high-tech projects in Jerusalem.

Economics and business-administration students serve as guides for high-school students in "business" projects to create early ties between the younger generation of Jerusalem residents and Jerusalem's business community.

Subsidized student housing is provided in Jerusalem's poorer neighborhoods so students can help local youth with educational activities.

"I could have stayed at the student dormitories on Mount Scopus," said Osnat Berman, who coordinates youth activities in Jerusalem's Katamonim neighborhood. "But I chose to live here, and I don't regret it for a moment. By now I feel that I'm part of the neighborhood."

Nowadays, many Jerusalemites who go downtown leave quickly.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

State Dept. report slams Israel

Israel's human rights record in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is poor, according to a State Department report.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004 accuses Israel of using excessive force in a year in which Israeli troops killed 573 Palestinians and one foreigner — pro-Palestinian activist Rachel Corrie, an American.

"Israeli forces often impeded the provision of medical assistance to Palestinian civilians by strict enforcement of internal closures, harassed and abused Palestinian pedestrians and drivers at the approximately 430 Israeli-controlled checkpoints in the occupied territories and conducted mass, arbitrary arrests in the West Bank," said the report, which was published Monday.

It also accused the Palestinian Authority of committing abuses, and said many of its security officials had participated in terrorist acts.

Olmert to AIPAC: Gaza pullout a go

Israel is committed to withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, an Israeli Cabinet minister told pro-Israel lobbyists.

In his speech Monday at an American Israel Public Affairs Committee banquet in Washington, Ehud Olmert, Israel's trade minister, admitted that a Likud Party vote earlier this month rejecting Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's withdrawal plan was a political setback.

But, he added, "the prime minister is determined to implement the plan and fulfill his pledge to" President Bush.

Bush names Rosen to commission

President Bush appointed Jack Rosen to the Holocaust Memorial Council. The council oversees the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington. Rosen, outgoing president of the American Jewish Congress, was a longtime Democrat, but last year he contributed to the Bush-Cheney re-election campaign. Bush appointed nine members to the council last month.

Sheik may get to go to Canada

The Canadian government rejected an attempt to bar a Saudi cleric from entering the country.

Legislator Jason Kenney championed the parliamentary motion urging the government to block the entry of Sheik Abdal-Rahman Al-Sudais, imam of the grand mosque in Mecca, who has publicly called for destroying the Jews. In an April 2002 sermon, Al-Sudais called Jews "the scum of the human race, accursed by Allah, who turned them into apes and pigs." An official indicated that the government rejected the motion because it needed time to consult with officials in the departments of foreign affairs and immigration.

Tony Randall dead

Tony Randall, the fastidious half of "The Odd Couple," died Monday at age 84. Randall was born Leonard Rosenberg and was raised in Tulsa, Okla. An award-winning actor, he is best known as the neat-freak Felix in the TV version of the Neil Simon play, opposite Jack Klugman.

MIDDLE EAST

Olmert talks Gaza with Rice

An Israeli Cabinet minister explained Israel's plan to uncover arms-smuggling tunnels to Condoleezza Rice. Ehud Olmert, Israel's trade minister, met with President Bush's national security adviser Tuesday and told her that the goal of the current military operation

on the Egypt-Gaza border is not to destroy homes but to stop terrorists from smuggling weapons.

"Naturally, when you come to destroy the tunnels, some of the houses will be destroyed," Olmert said he told Rice.

Human rights groups have criticized Israel for making Palestinians homeless during the operation. Olmert also was slated to meet with Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Abdullah: Arafat may be the problem

Jordan's king hinted that Yasser Arafat should step down as leader of the Palestinian Authority.

King Abdullah II said one solution would be for the Palestinian Authority president to hand over power to P.A. Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and keep the presidency as a ceremonial post.

"I think Arafat needs to have a long look in the mirror to be able to see whether his position is helping the Palestinian cause or not," Abdullah told The New York Times in comments published Tuesday. "If this allows the Palestinians to get beyond the obstacle that they are facing now with the United States and Israel, then that's something the Palestinians need to sort out and sort out quickly."

Israeli Arab soccer team makes history

An Arab soccer team won the Israeli championship for the first time.

Bnei Sakhnin defeated Hapoel Haifa 4-1 Tuesday night. Although some of Bnei Sakhnin's players are Jewish, it is based in an Arab town and is identified with the Arab population, which has never had much athletic success.

The team will represent Israel in next season's European Cup.

WORLD

Bush meets with OSCE delegation

President Bush met with the U.S. delegation to a recent anti-Semitism conference in Berlin.

Delegation members on Tuesday thanked Bush for his support in convening the conference last month under the auspices of the 55-member Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said Jack Rosen, outgoing chairman of the American Jewish Congress. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser, also attended the meeting.

Kenya embassy plot

Three people are in Kenyan police custody on suspicion of planning an attack on the Israeli Embassy in Nairobi.

Police said Tuesday that a Kenyan, a Somali with an Australian passport and a Bosnian woman who also has Australian citizenship have been detained for suspicious behavior while trying to book a hotel near the embassy.

The three have not been formally charged. Kenya has been on high alert for such plots since Al-Qaida terrorists blew up an Israeli-owned hotel and tried to shoot down an Israeli airliner in Kenya in 2002.

Moscow's Jews celebrate

Some 7,000 Moscow Jews attended a street festival celebrating Israel's 56th anniversary. Sunday night's seven-hour event included music and dance performances and a video link between Moscow and Jerusalem projected on large outdoor screens. Hundreds of police provided security on streets near Moscow's Choral Synagogue — a few blocks from the Kremlin — that were closed to traffic. The festivities were organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Jewish Community of Moscow and the Russian Jewish Congress.