

## IN THE NEWS

**Panel: Al-Qaida sought attack on Sharon in D.C.**

Al-Qaida considered attacking the White House in 2001 during a visit by Ariel Sharon, the Sept. 11 commission said.

Osama bin Laden's terrorist group planned the attack in Washington during a visit by the Israeli prime minister in order to draw a connection between U.S. policy and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the panel investigating the Sept. 11 attacks said in its final session Wednesday.

**Bush withholds moving embassy**

President Bush suspended moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel for six more months.

The White House released a statement Tuesday announcing that the embassy would not move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem for the next half year because of national security concerns.

Presidents have suspended the embassy move twice a year since the Jerusalem Embassy Act passed in 1995.

As a candidate in 2000, Bush told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that he would move the embassy in the first days of his presidency.

Tuesday, he said in the statement: "My administration remains committed to beginning the process of moving our embassy to Jerusalem."

**Sharansky presses panel on anti-Semitism**

Natan Sharansky urged the top U.S. human rights monitoring group to link improvements in trade relations with efforts against anti-Semitism.

Sharansky, an Israeli Cabinet minister and former Soviet dissident, told the Helsinki Commission on Wednesday that such linkages will marginalize extremists and discourage those who support anti-Semitism.

The idea of linking trade with free emigration from Soviet bloc countries was behind the 1975 formation of the Helsinki group.

# WORLD REPORT

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## U.N. to discuss anti-Semitism, but Jews want to see real action plan

By RACHEL POMERANCE

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — The first United Nations conference on anti-Semitism is a serious step forward, but the real test will be its outcome, Jewish groups say.

The daylong conference for non-governmental organizations, set for June 21, came at the behest of Shashi Tharoor, the U.N.'s undersecretary general for communications and public information.

Hundreds are expected to attend the seminar, in which addresses by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and officials from major Jewish organizations will give anti-Semitism its highest profile ever at a U.N. forum.

For that reason alone, the event has caught Jews' attention.

"The very fact that they are having an all-day conference to address this subject at a time when the institution was not willing or able to condemn it is an important message," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, who will address the conference.

Throughout its history, the United Nations has been loathe to address anti-Semitism in its own right, instead condemning it together with other forms of bigotry.

Last fall, Ireland drafted the first stand-alone resolution to explicitly condemn anti-Semitism, but, to the chagrin of Jewish officials, withdrew it due to fierce opposition from Arab and Muslim states.

The U.N.'s one-sided resolutions and discussions against Israel not only delegitimize the Jewish state, but let "anti-Zionism become a legitimate mask for anti-Semitism,"

said Felice Gaer, director of the American Jewish Committee's Jacob Blaustein Institute for Human Rights. "In a way, Annan is trying to restore the credibility of the United Nations as a body that has a universal concern to prevent the promotion of hate bigotry, discrimination for everybody."

Both Annan and Tharoor are "saying they believe the U.N. should stand up for what's right, not cower with fear at the bigotry of others who would silence the U.N.," Gaer said.

While praising the effort, Jewish officials said they hope the seminar results in an action plan.

"We hope that the secretary-general will use this platform to announce concrete steps that the U.N. is ready to take in order to fight anti-Semitism," said Arye Mekel, Israel's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations.

Others say it's up to Jewish groups to plant those seeds.

Jewish officials are discussing the possibility of securing a U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning anti-Semitism or the appointment of an official to monitor anti-Semitism.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations recently called on the General Assembly to adopt a resolution condemning anti-Semitism, similar to one passed at a conference on anti-Semitism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Berlin in April.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference, will reiterate that plea and call for internal monitoring.

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### BEHIND THE HEADLINES

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toring of U.N. agencies that occasionally fall prey to anti-Semitism. He cites, for example, statements involving Holocaust denial by members of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

At the June 21 seminar, the World Jewish Congress will plug consensus points worked out at a meeting of dozens of Jewish NGOs last week.

In his statement, World Jewish Congress president Edgar Bronfman is to call for a General Assembly resolution condemning anti-Semitism; an annual U.N. report listing anti-Semitic incidents and plans to combat them; and the appointment by Annan of an assistant to deal with the question of anti-Semitism, said the congress' executive vice president, Elan Steinberg.

Bronfman wants to ensure the seminar is not a "one-shot event," Steinberg said.

Eve Epstein, an adviser to the U.N.'s Department of Public Information, which is coordinating the event, said she thinks the seminar "signals the U.N.'s willingness to influence the world's NGO's, which have in large measure been so unwilling to confront the issue of anti-Semitism, and indeed have sometimes contributed to its resurgence."

Epstein stressed that she was expressing her personal opinion, not that of the public information department.

"This conference is an answer to Durban," she said, referring to the U.N.'s 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, which erupted

in a frenzy of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric and activism.

Since assuming his post a few years ago, Tharoor has considered ways to combat rising anti-Semitism, Epstein said. Pointed editorials last winter in the Wall Street Journal and Commentary magazine, and conversations with Jewish leaders, served as further impetus for action.

Anne Bayefsky, an adjunct professor at Columbia University Law School, wrote in the Wall Street Journal, "U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan — who has occasionally paid lip-service to the problem of anti-Semitism — ignored the requests of both NGOs and the state sponsors of the anti-Semitism resolution to weigh in on the importance of the issue with U.N. members, or to press the point with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, just as he has never convened a conference or written a report dedicated to anti-Semitism."

"The U.N. is an organization founded on the ashes of the Jewish people, and whose

core human rights principles were drafted from the lessons of the Holocaust," she wrote. "The inability of the organization to address seriously one of the very evils it was intended to prevent is a scandal of global proportions."

The United Nations held a meeting last fall in which mental health experts discussed anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and religious intolerance. But most Jewish officials found the meeting, which lasted only a couple of hours, wholly unsatisfactory.

The June 21 meeting is a serious attempt to address the

problem, they say.

"It's the first time ever the U.N. has done anything like this," Mekel said, adding that Annan's participation lends moral weight to the topic.

But the real measure of success will be whether the conference results in a concrete follow-up plan, Mekel said.

"If it's just a matter of a talk-fest, then it's not as effective as it could be," he said.

**'The U.N. is an organization founded on the ashes of the Jewish people.'**

**Anne Bayefsky**

Columbia University Law School

## Diplomat who saved Jews is honored

By ALANA B. ELIAS KORNFIELD

NEW YORK (JTA) — A late-night visit from a refugee rabbi during World War II convinced a Portuguese official to save Jews from Hitler.

Rabbi Haim Kruger, a refugee in France, and Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Portugal's consul general in Bordeaux, "spoke all through the night about the problems of the war," Sebastiao de Sousa Mendes, the consul's son, told JTA recently. "In the morning, my father decided that it was time to save rather than ignore the refugees."

So Aristides de Sousa Mendes issued visas to endangered Jews against the orders of the Portuguese dictator, Antonio Salazar. He took the risk because he would "rather be with God against men than with men against God," Sousa Mendes is reported to have said.

That risk saved 30,000 Jewish lives, but it cost Sousa Mendes his job. He died in

1954 in a Lisbon poorhouse.

To mark 50 years since his death, Sousa Mendes' legacy is being honored for a week starting Thursday, 64 years to the day since he started his rescue mission on June 17, 1940. The special interfaith initiative is being led by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

"We Jewish people have to have a balance between complaining about what we suffered and celebrating the people who helped us," said Baruch Tenenbaum, of the Wallenberg Foundation in New York.

Organizers of the interfaith initiative contacted churches and synagogues around the world to request that special services be held beginning June 17. Rabbis in Jerusalem, New York, Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, Montreal, Poland and France will hold synagogue services honoring Sousa Mendes.

Recipients of the International Sousa Mendes Righteous Award will be announced at events in Rome and New York.

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# Jewish groups 'scan' for terrorist threats

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A plan to alert Jewish officials and facilities about imminent terrorist threats is now operational and is being coordinated with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Proponents say the Secure Community Alert Network, or SCAN, has been put together and tested. In case of a terrorist threat, the system can alert leaders of major Jewish organizations simultaneously.

Created earlier this year by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, the program is a step toward preparing the Jewish community for threats it faces as a possible target of terrorism.

The program is designed to provide specific instructions for what synagogues, Jewish offices and other sites should do when a threat occurs.

Tom Ridge, the homeland security secretary, praised the program Monday in a briefing with Jewish officials. Ridge said SCAN could serve as a model for other communities, participants said.

"The secretary was very receptive to the system that they put in front of him," said Michelle Petrovich, spokeswoman for the department's division of information analysis and infrastructure protection. "We certainly look forward to having future discussions as to how we can use it as a model and integrate it into the systems we currently have."

The department is looking to cooperate with the Jewish efforts.

"Anything we can do to make it easier for them to communicate with our com-

munity is important," said Stephen Hoffman, UJC's president and CEO.

But questions remain as to how SCAN will work in an actual emergency, and whether the right information will get to the right people.

It's easy for law enforcement officials to identify people who must be notified when there is a threat against a specific institution. But SCAN can be most useful when the threat is vague and a lot of people need to know about it.

More than a year ago, federal officials informed some U.S. Jewish organizational officials on a Friday evening of intelligence suggesting that a hijacked oil tanker could be used to attack a synagogue. But it was unclear how the information should be forwarded to other Jews.

"We had to start calling individual synagogues," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the President Conference's executive vice chairman. "It was ridiculous."

Under SCAN guidelines, the information about a threat, and suggestions for an immediate response, will be forwarded to an outside firm, Dialogic Communication Corp.

Dialogic then will begin calling the leaders of American Jewish organizations such as the religious movements, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the Anti-Defamation League.

"We're going to be able to give that information with as much specificity, with

as much detail as we can possibly get," said Steve Pomerantz, a former FBI assistant director who now chairs SCAN's Law Enforcement Advisory Board.

Dialogic will try to contact the designated Jewish leaders by any means necessary and, if it can't, will move on to secondary officials in the organizations.

It then is up to each individual group to inform members and institutions such as

synagogues, community centers or federations. Many groups are being encouraged to provide Dialogic with a phone chain of their affiliates.

"It's vitally important," said Ethan Felson, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' assistant executive director. "Our challenge will be ensuring that every segment of our community takes this seriously."

The program has worked in tests, Hoenlein said.

Some Jewish officials have said they would like more time to be spent training synagogues and other Jewish sites on what they should do in an emergency and how to guard against terrorist threats. They are looking to Homeland Security officials to provide some answers in the working group meetings this week.

The goal is for SCAN to become an independent non-profit group, and to expand its mission to include educating the Jewish community on terrorism threats and preparedness, Hoenlein said. ■

**'Our challenge will be ensuring that every segment of our community takes this seriously.'**

**Ethan Felson**

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

## Library of Congress examines 350 years of U.S. Jewry

By JUSTIN BOSCH

WASHINGTON (JTA) — An extensive Library of Congress exhibit scheduled to open in September will launch a series of events celebrating 350 years of American Jewish life.

"From Haven to Home," the lead-in to a yearlong celebration of American Jewish life, will cover Jews' immigration and integration in this country. The Library of Congress, the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Jewish Archives and the National Archives sponsored a three-day conference last week, featuring lectures on an array of Jewish historical subjects.

The exhibit will include hundreds of Jewish artifacts, including books, manuscripts, films and newsreels.

The complete series of events for the celebrations will run all year and span the nation, said Larry Rubin, executive director of "Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America 1654-2004," a New York-based organization that is a clearinghouse for the celebrations. Throughout, parts of the Library of Congress exhibit will be ferried to Los Angeles, Cincinnati and New York for display.

The commemorations will trace the Jewish presence in America back to the settlement in New Amsterdam, now New York, of two dozen Jews seeking to escape persecution in Brazil. ■

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Sharansky presses forum on anti-Semitism

Natan Sharansky urged the top U.S. human rights monitoring group to link improvements in trade relations with efforts against anti-Semitism.

Sharansky, an Israeli Cabinet minister and former Soviet dissident, told the Helsinki Commission on Wednesday that such linkages will marginalize extremists and discourage those who support anti-Semitism. Linking trade with free emigration from Soviet bloc countries was the idea behind the 1975 formation of the Helsinki group. Several Jewish officials testified at the Washington hearing.

### OSCE meets on Internet hate

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe began a two-day conference on anti-Semitism.

The meeting in Paris is expected to focus on the relationship between hate crimes and racist and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet.

The event is a continuation of the 55-member group's work against anti-Semitism, which included a major conference in Berlin in April.

### Chirac: Punish anti-Semites

Jacques Chirac called on French judges to hand down tough sentences to those found guilty of anti-Semitic actions.

The French president said "justice should be pronounced with severity, punishment should be exemplary and it should be widely publicized," presidential spokeswoman Catherine Colonna told reporters at the Elysee Palace following talks Wednesday between Chirac and Jewish leaders.

### Russian Jews pleased over paper shutdown

Jews in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg are celebrating a court victory over a local newspaper with a history of anti-Semitic articles. Earlier this month, a Russian court shut down the Russian Community of Yekaterinburg newspaper, the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union reported.

The Jewish community started its legal battle against the newspaper in 1999 after a series of anti-Semitic articles that appeared in this small independent paper.

Despite repeated official warnings the newspaper received for propagating hate, in the fall of 2002 the Regional Prosecutor's Office closed a criminal case against the paper based on laws banning the incitement of ethnic hatred, according to Mikhail Oshtrakh, a Jewish leader in Yekaterinburg.

The court ruled recently that the newspaper violated media laws and laws that ban extremism.

### WWII cop helped Jews

New details emerged about the life of an Italian policeman who saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.

Giovanni Palatucci saved some 3,500 Jews by falsifying their Nazi deportation orders.

Palatucci saved the Jews from the town of Fiume, which was then under Italian control in the northern part of the country, and is today Rijeka, in Croatia, said Baruch Tenenbaum of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. Palatucci worked with his uncle, Bishop Giuseppe Maria Palatucci, to falsify documents and visas to help people escape deportation to death camps, including his Jewish fiancée, who eventually emigrated from Switzerland to Israel.

Palatucci ended up in Dachau, where he either starved to death or was shot weeks before its liberation.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Fence work halted

Construction of the Ariel security fence was halted after local Palestinians rioted.

Hundreds of Palestinians, along with foreign and Israeli supporters, confronted security forces on Wednesday outside the West Bank settlement where fence construction began this week. In the ensuing confrontation, bulldozers were damaged and police used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators. Work on the fence was halted until further notice. According to understandings between Israel and the United States, the project is meant to provide security to Ariel only. But Palestinians fear it will be linked to Israel's security barrier in the West Bank, meaning large-scale expropriation of lands they want for a state.

### Cell targeted Israel, U.S.

Jordan convicted 15 terrorists for plotting to attack Israeli and American interests in the Hashemite Kingdom.

The leader of the cell in custody was jailed for 7 ½ years in an Amman military court on Wednesday. His 14 accomplices, all at large, were sentenced in absentia.

Eight of the men got 15 years in jail, but charges were dropped against the other six after the court determined they were no longer alive.

The 15-man cell is believed to be linked to Al-Qaida, but no information was given as to its specific targets in Jordan, other than that they were linked to Israel and the United States.

### Islamic Jihad fugitive killed

Undercover Israeli commandos killed a Palestinian fugitive in the West Bank.

The Islamic Jihad terrorist was cornered and killed in a Jenin cafe, witnesses said. Military sources said a commando unit was on a raid to capture wanted terrorists, and used lethal force after being fired upon.

### Girl would-be bombers caught

Israel forces arrested two Palestinian girls suspected of planning suicide attacks. The girls, aged 14 and 15, were arrested in the West Bank city of Nablus on Wednesday.

### Jewish Agency aids new Israelis

The Jewish Agency for Israel has established a fund for needy young immigrants.

The fund, a partnership with Israel's Absorption Ministry, comes in response to government cuts in financial aid for new students, according to Jewish Agency spokesman Michael Jankelowitz.

The agency is requesting \$13 million from the United Jewish Communities and Keren Hayesod to launch the fund, which will directly transmit funds to students, with no overhead costs.

## NORTH AMERICA

### U.N. official warns on bulldozers to Israel

A U.N. official warned Caterpillar to stop selling bulldozers to the Israeli army.

Jean Ziegler, the U.N.'s special expert on the right to food, sent a letter warning the U.S.-based company that if it continues selling bulldozers to Israel, the company may be considered an accomplice in violating Palestinian human rights.

Israel says it uses the bulldozers to raze the homes of Palestinian terrorists.