

IN THE NEWS

9/11 Report: Sites in Israel targeted

Al-Qaida considered attacking Israeli and U.S. Jewish sites, according to the commission report on the Sept. 11 attacks.

The report, released Thursday, says U.S. intelligence agencies had gotten signals that Al-Qaida sought to attack Israel in the months before Sept. 11, 2001.

The report also says that the hijackers and Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden were motivated by anger at Israel and U.S. support for it. Jewish targets in New York City also were scouted as possible targets.

Plot thickens in New Zealand plot

New Zealand said a suspected Mossad agent who is being sought by police is a former Israeli diplomat.

William Zev Barkan, the "third man" in a New Zealand passport-fraud ring with alleged links to Mossad, has served in Israel's embassies in Austria and Belgium, the Foreign Ministry in New Zealand said Thursday.

New Zealand authorities believe Barkan fled the country after trying to obtain an Australian passport. Two Israelis believed to be his accomplices, Eli Cara and Uriel Kelman, were arrested while trying to pick up the passport and have been sentenced to jail.

Jerusalem has declined to comment on the case.

Three-way summit may be in the works

Israel, Egypt and the United States reportedly are planning a high-level peace summit.

The Jerusalem Post reported that an Egyptian official said his country wanted to host a Mid-east summit that would include the three countries' presidents.

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JTA World Report will not be published Wednesday, July 28, because of Tisha B'Av.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG



Sharon Farmer/John Kerry for President, Inc.

Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and John Edwards (D-N.C.) greet supporters in Dayton, Ohio.

Kerry echoes President Bush as he courts the Jewish vote

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) has learned in the last year to walk the walk on Israel and Jewish issues.

The nagging worry for Israel's government is that he might break into a run.

Political insiders say the single substantive difference between the Middle East policies of President Bush and the presumptive Democratic nominee is not in their content, but in their pace.

On his official Web site, Kerry says peace

will "only be viable if U.S. engagement in this process is active, constant, and at the highest levels."

That's a clear shot at Bush: Except for a short period in the summer of 2003, the Bush administration has largely left the pace of Middle East peace to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Kerry's champing at the bit worries Israel's leaders. No matter how pro-Israel he is, they say, an American president who takes an active, involved role in Middle East peacemaking inevitably veers into confrontations. Still, it is a measure of

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**AMERICA
DECIDES
2004**

■ *The Massachusetts senator is emphasizing his personal visits to Israel*

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how far Kerry has come with Jewish voters that his stated difference with Bush over the depth of U.S. involvement in peace-brokering is the single issue raising questions about Jewish support for his campaign.

Many believe Kerry has caught up with Bush on pro-Israel statements, reinforced the natural advantage any Democrat has on domestic issues and opened a new front — with his brother's emotion-laden visit to Israel last week — to combat a perceived empathy problem.

"You'll see Kerry doing extraordinarily well among Jewish voters on election day," said Steve Grossman, a former president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who during the primaries switched allegiances to Kerry from former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean.

"John Kerry has as good a record on Israel as anyone has ever had; his public statements and his commitment to American values and Jewish values are unequivocal," said Grossman, who also served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Kerry has striven to address perceived missteps early in his campaign, when he said of Israel's West Bank security barrier, "we don't need another barrier to peace" and named as possible peace brokers President Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker — figures many Jews view as anti-Israel.

"Kerry has matched the rhetoric of Bush on all the issues," said Abraham

Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League and one of a group of Jewish organizational leaders who met with Kerry in January to address concerns that rose during the primaries. "Now it's a question of trust. What Bush has going for him is that he has acted on these things; Kerry still needs an opportunity."

Kerry says he, like Bush, would leave the lead to Israel, but Israeli officials say — when the microphones are off and the pens and pads are put away — that his repeated commitment to accelerating the peace process worries them.

Sharon, for his part, has not made much of a secret of his preferences.

"In all these years, I have never met a leader as committed as you are, Mr. President, to the struggle for freedom and the need to confront terrorism wherever it exists," Sharon told Bush when they met in April.

He snubbed Kerry during that visit, as did his foreign minister, Silvan Shalom, last month. Israeli leaders usually make a point of meeting with both candidates when visiting during an election year. Sharon, did, however, meet Kerry's brother, Cameron, in Israel last week.

The snubs rankle the Kerry camp.

"Sharon will find the same support in a Kerry White House," said one senior adviser who asked not to be identified.

Grossman said that greater presidential involvement should not worry Jewish voters, as long as the president has Israel's best interests at heart — which, he says, Kerry does.

"It's a strong personal and philosophical commitment to involvement and engagement to try to do whatever he can to enhance Israel's capacity to live in peace," Grossman said. "To the extent that the president is deeply engaged in that, it will be good for Israel and good for the United States."

Concerns about the depth of U.S. involvement, it should be noted, are typical of Israeli governments led by the Likud Party; Labor Party prime ministers often have welcomed more intense U.S. involvement.

If, in the next few weeks, Sharon is forced to bring the Labor Party in to bolster his minority government, Israel might reduce its resistance to the greater involvement Kerry envisions. In that case, the prospect of conflicts between Israel and a Kerry administration would be less of an issue.

Such calculations seem arcane but may prove critical: Jews could make the dif-

ference in 10 of the 18 states that analysts say could swing either way in the U.S. election in November.

And Jews, who voted against Bush four to one in 2000, could be swayed by Bush's pro-Israel policies to an extent that could decide the election.

"People are still formulating their opinions," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "Three months is a long time in politics."

Kerry has all but abandoned his earlier efforts to court Arab Americans on Israel-Palestinian issues, probably because their support is virtually guaranteed. The community, which leaned to Bush in 2000, has turned on the president because of post-Sept. 11 policies they say limit civil liberties and institute ethnic profiling.

More than half of Arab Americans polled in swing states say they will vote for Kerry, according to polling by the Arab American Institute, and more than half of that support comes "because Kerry is not George W. Bush," said James Zogby, the group's president.

U.S. Jewish voters see the issue of the level of U.S. involvement both ways, Foxman said.

"To some in the Jewish community, to be more active is to put pressure on Israel," he said. Others, he noted, favor greater involvement.

Still, the prospect of U.S.-Israel tensions could sway some Jewish voters, and the campaign — which has 27 teams on foreign policy alone — is leaving no stone unturned in working to reassure Jews of its commitment. Kerry's campaign is

After the International Court of Justice condemned Israel's security barrier, Kerry's campaign condemned the move the same day.

JTA
WORLD
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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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planning a major blitz after the Labor Day holiday, sending Jewish advocates out to large Jewish communities across the country to make the case for the candidate.

In the past few months, Kerry has marched in lock-step, at least in words, with every one of the White House pro-Israel strides: He immediately matched Bush's historic recognition of some Israeli claims to West Bank land and rejection of any right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel.

When the International Court of Justice at The Hague decided that Israel's security fence was illegal, Kerry's campaign issued its condemnation the same day.

"Israel's fence is a legitimate response to terror that only exists in response to the wave of terror attacks against Israel," Kerry said in a statement. "The fence is an important tool in Israel's fight against terrorism. It is not a matter for the ICJ."

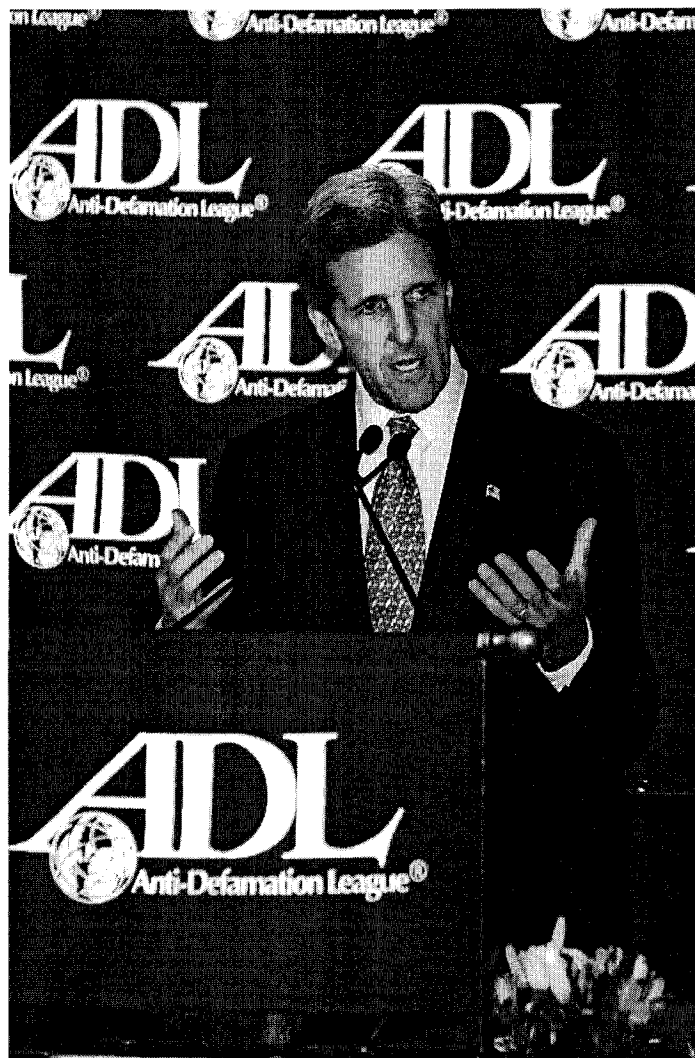
Modifying his positions on Israel issues poses its own political perils, leaving an opening for the Bush-Cheney campaign to accuse him of flip-flopping.

"Support for Israel's fight against terrorism needs to be above politics, and Kerry's comments are another reminder of why voters can't trust him," Bush-Cheney campaign spokesman Steve Schmidt said last week after Kerry condemned the world court ruling.

Kerry spokesmen counter by pointing to Bush's own evolution — from opposition to support — on the barrier over the last year.

One sign of the seriousness with which Kerry takes the Jewish community is his distribution last month of a series of "talking points" to thousands of Jewish supporters for redistribution in their communities.

The three-page document reiterated familiar positions — on the fence, isolating Arafat and bolstering Israel's security — and even highlighted areas it sees as vulnerabilities in the president's reputation as Israel's staunchest ally.



Carl Cox/ADL

Sen. John Kerry speaks at the Anti-Defamation League's National Leadership Conference, in Washington in May.

The document promised tougher talk with Saudi Arabia over that country's support for terrorists, an allusion to the Bush family's closeness to the Saudi royal family; it supported moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a congressional mandate that Bush, like President Clinton before him, also promised to follow but has resisted; and it expressed support for Israel's policy of targeting terrorist leaders for assassination, a practice Bush administration spokesmen have said is unhelpful.

Kerry has not neglected domestic issues, even though he easily trumps Bush in that arena among the majority of Jews who express concern about post-Sept. 11 infringements on civil liberties and who support abortion rights and oppose a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage.

His campaign emphasizes his role in initiating the Workplace Religious

Freedom Act, a bill that would make it easier for the faithful to observe religious holidays and dress codes and that has strong Jewish support across all streams. Orthodox Jews are pleased that Kerry has pledged to support federal money for faith-based initiatives, even if he would place greater restrictions than proposed by Bush.

Some Jewish organizational officials have complained that Kerry lacks the visceral affection for Israel that Bush has displayed, reflecting Kerry's general problem of a perception of aloofness.

In response, Kerry stresses his personal impressions of his visits to Israel, recalling his fly-over in an Israeli fighter jet and ascending Masada.

Another tactic has been to emphasize the involvement in the campaign of his brother, Cameron Kerry, who converted to Judaism 20 years ago and who Grossman said would be the "Bobby Kennedy" in a Kerry administration.

Cameron visited Israel for the first time last week, and he made a point of emphasizing his own visceral responses to the country — and relating

them to his brother.

John Kerry has "a deep emotional bond with Israel," Cameron Kerry told JTA after touring Jerusalem and the security fence last week. "One of the reasons I came here is because of his bonds with Israel and I wanted to see that for myself."

Another avenue for emphasizing both Kerrys' identification with Jewish issues is the recent discovery that their father was born to Jewish parents and that they had relatives who died in the Holocaust.

Cameron Kerry toured Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, and obtained photocopies of documents related to his family that he said he would share with his brother.

"There's no question that he's very proud of his ancestry," said Mark Mellman, Kerry's pollster and one of two Jews among Kerry's top four advisers. "There's no question that he's learned a lot more about it."

Vote for Bush and against the terrorists

By EDWARD I. KOCH

NEW YORK (JTA) — I support the re-election of President George W. Bush.

Why? Because I believe one issue overwhelms all others: the president's strong commitment to fight the forces of international terrorism, **FOR BUSH** regardless of how much it costs or how long it takes to achieve victory.

I do not agree with President Bush on a single major domestic issue, but in my view those pale in comparison with the threat of international terrorism.

Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the evil poster boys of mass murder, are revered and supported by millions of Muslims throughout the world. The stated goal of Al-Qaida and its supporters is to kill or convert every infidel — and that means Jews, Christians, Buddhists and anyone else who will not accept Islam's supremacy.

These terrorists are convinced that non-Islamic nations don't have the will or courage to persevere in this struggle, which could last decades. They believe democracies are weak-willed and will yield to whatever demands are made on them.

By withdrawing their troops from Iraq in response to terrorist attacks or the threat of violence, Spain and the Philippines already have shown that, tragically, terror tactics — including suicide attacks, car bombings and the beheading of innocent civilians — do work.

Al-Qaida also intends to destroy moderate Muslim governments that want to live in peace with countries that are not Islamic. Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Bush announced his commitment to the struggle against Islamic fanatics who believe they can destroy the values of Western civilization and democratic governments everywhere.

On entering this war against terrorism, Bush said, "We shall go after the terrorists and the countries that harbor them."

This Bush Doctrine rivals in importance the Monroe Doctrine, which limited the colonization efforts of foreign powers in the Western hemisphere, and the Truman Doctrine, which contained the spread of communism. Bush has proven that he is prepared to keep to his commitment

to fight terrorism. If Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) were to win this presidential election, would he stand up to terrorism to the same extent as George Bush? I don't think so.

Regrettably, my party, the Democratic Party, now has a strong radical left wing whose members often dominate the party primaries. Those same left-wing radicals have an anti-Israel philosophy.

Kerry is a patriot who performed heroically in Vietnam. Regrettably, he surrendered his philosophical independence to the left wing in the recent Democratic primaries to prevail over the original darling of the radicals, Howard Dean.

Kerry owes his nomination in large part to those Dean supporters and to the support of Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.).

Kennedy sadly demonstrated his loss of any sense of decency with crude attacks on Bush using unacceptable, abusive language.

The hatred deliberately stirred by Kennedy against Bush is contemptible and dangerous; it encourages the terrorists with whom we are at war and it incites the crazies in our own country.

On July 9, a Kerry/Edwards fund-raising concert was held at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. During the concert, comedian Whoopi Goldberg engaged in unprintable, despicable sexual references to Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, playing on the anatomical symbolism of their names.

Even worse was Kerry's "thank you" from the stage to all of the performers, saying that they conveyed "the heart and soul of our country." Shameful.

Now a comment about the war in Iraq. Most Americans understand that few, if any, wars go smoothly.

Cast your mind back to the Revolutionary War, during which New York City was occupied by enemy forces for seven years, or the Civil War, in which Confederate armies won victory after victory on the battlefield, or even World War II, in which the Nazi menace was defeated at an enormous cost in human lives.

Should we have gone to war with Iraq?

I believe the answer is yes.

During a daily briefing after Sept. 11, then-CIA Director George Tenet told the president that Iraq had the ability to wage chemical and biological war on the United States. He called the case for Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction a "slam dunk."

Had the president not launched a pre-emptive war against Saddam, and if this madman subsequently had released biological agents in the United States or used poison gas, as he did against the Kurds and Iran, does anyone doubt Bush would have been impeached?

The security agencies of nearly every democratic nation provided their president or prime minister with the same description of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capability. The U.S. Congress had the same information and concurred with the president's decision, and the U.N. Security Council unanimously concurred, passing Resolution 1441.

But it was Bush who had the courage to take up arms in defense of the United States and our allies. That's what leadership is all about.

A poll released recently by The Washington Post showed that 55 percent of Americans "approve of the way Bush is handling the campaign against terrorism," and 51 percent said they "trust Bush more than Kerry to deal with terrorism, while 42 percent prefer the Democrat."

We also should not forget that Bush has been the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House. At the U.N.'s Security Council and General Assembly, allies of the United States and others who are indifferent or hostile to our country have conveyed the view that if we end our alliance with Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, they would welcome the United States back into their circle.

But Bush refused to abandon Israel.

This November, we U.S. Jews should remember our friends. We should thank Bush for his courage in the war against terrorism and for his strong and consistent support for Israel and democracy.

(Edward I. Koch is a former mayor of New York City and a partner in the law firm of Bryan Cave, LLP.)



Edward Koch

OPINION

Why America and Israel need Kerry

By MENACHEM Z. ROSENSAFT

NEW YORK (JTA) — With President Bush's approval ratings in free-fall, Republicans are reverting once again to negative campaigning.

Among their tactics is a deliberate effort to disparage and distort the unambiguously pro-Israel record of Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.).

According to one prominent Republican apparatchik, "Throughout his political career, Sen. Kerry has never been a leader in support of Israel."

Nothing could be further from the truth.

As an American Jew and lifelong Zionist, I enthusiastically support Kerry in this year's presidential election.

To be sure, the American Jewish community is not and should never be a single-issue constituency. We care deeply about social issues. We are dismayed by the appointment of federal judges who believe the United States is a Christian nation, or who would abrogate a woman's right to an abortion even if her life were in danger.

We care deeply about civil and human rights, at home and abroad. And we believe that our society bears the responsibility to help rather than jettison the less fortunate among us.

On all of these issues, Kerry's views are in harmony with those held by the overwhelming majority of American Jews.

Nevertheless, the issue that is and should be of greatest concern to American Jews is the safety and security of the State of Israel.

Having followed Kerry's career for the past two decades, I know that Israel does not have and could not have a stronger or more reliable ally.

All too frequently, American political figures begin to utter pro-Israel sentiments only as they embark on a national campaign for public office. Not so Kerry.

As he told the Anti-Defamation League's national leadership conference earlier this year, "For the entire 20 years that I have been in the United States Senate, I'm proud that my commitment to a secure Jewish state has been unwavering; not even by one vote or one letter

or one resolution has it wavered. And as president, I can guarantee you that that support and that effort for our ally, a vibrant democracy, will continue."

Kerry expressed the same resolute support for Israel when he addressed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference more than seven years ago, on April 7, 1997.

"As Americans," he said, "we owe it to our Israeli partners to stand with them so that they can negotiate from great-

er strength, to be an ally beside them, not an ally that undermines them."

Moreover, Kerry not only understood the dire threat of terrorism long before the Sept. 11 attacks made it an American priority, but he steadfastly has rejected any justification for murderous Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians.

"Terrorism," he declared in his AIPAC speech, "is an incontrovertible evil and an unjustified response, and the idea that every bitter dispute between Israel and the Palestinians can somehow justify Palestinian violence or justify" Palestinian Authority President Yasser "Arafat's winking at it or should warrant the release of yet more Hamas leaders or could excuse the PLO's failure to rewrite its covenant — all of this reflects a moral blindness, a failure of courage that only encourages the cowards, the haters and the killers."

One clear difference between the Bush administration and Kerry is their reactions to Saudi Arabian anti-Semitism.

After terrorists went on a deadly rampage in the Saudi city of Yanbu on May 1, Crown Prince Abdullah announced on Saudi TV that "Zionism is behind terrorist actions in the Kingdom ... I am 95 percent sure of that."

At the same time, Prince Naif, the Saudi interior minister, blamed Al-Qaida for the attack. Asked about this apparent inconsistency, Prince Naif explained, "I don't see any contradiction in the two statements, because Al-Qaida is backed by Israel and Zionism."

The Saudi government, one of the Bush administration's closest allies in the Middle East, regularly blames Israel and Zionism for all the world's evils, including terrorism.

The same Prince Naif also has declared that he believes Zionists to be behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington, and the Saudi press prints the most vicious anti-Semitic diatribes as a matter of course.

One looks in vain for a public condemnation

of Abdullah's offensive remarks by President Bush or his senior officials, a reticence that may well be the result of the Bush family's long and intimate relationship with the Saudi royal family.

To be sure, the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia politely discussed the crown prince's comments with the Saudi foreign minister, but that was about it.

In contrast, Kerry unequivocally denounced Abdullah's "outrageous anti-Semitic comments" and correctly pointed out that they raise "serious questions about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to combating terrorism."

Kerry understands that Israel is more than just another country.

"I think it is fair to say," he said in his 1997 AIPAC speech, "that the ashes of the Holocaust victims were scattered on the wind, but that wind also carries on it their prayers and purpose — above mountains and sea, across thousands of miles, so that the pain of history is redeemed in the Land of Israel. It is a sacred place — for them, for their people who live there and for all the world."

Both the United States and Israel need an American president of vision, moral courage and intellectual depth who thoroughly understands the imperatives of history.

Kerry is that man, and for the sake of both nations, we must elect him this coming November.

(Menachem Z. Rosensaft, an attorney, is founding chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and a former national president of the Labor Zionist Alliance.)



Menachem Rosensaft

OPINION

Kerry's take on Jewish community's issues

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) has published a number of talking points on issues of concern to Jewish voters in recent weeks. Here are some of his stated positions, compiled from a variety of sources.

ISRAEL

• *West Bank security barrier*

"John Kerry supports the construction of Israel's security fence to stop terrorists from entering Israel. The security fence is a legitimate act of self defense erected in response to the wave of terror attacks against Israeli citizens. He believes the security fence is not a matter for the International Court of Justice." (Talking points)

• *Gaza Strip withdrawal*

"John Kerry expressed support for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's unprecedented plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. He recognizes that in any final settlement for Israel to remain a Jewish state, Palestinians must settle in a future Palestinian state rather than in Israel, and that in light of demographic realities, a number of settlement blocs will likely become a part of Israel." (Talking points)

• *Israel's borders*

"The creation of a Palestinian state should resolve the issue of Palestinian refugees by allowing them to settle there, rather than in Israel. Furthermore, all understand that it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." (Democratic Party platform)

• *Yasser Arafat*

"John Kerry believes that Yasser Arafat is a failed leader and unfit partner for peace and therefore has supported his total isolation. He has demanded a new, responsible Palestinian leadership, committed to ending the violence and fighting terror — in word and in deed — and will work tirelessly to ensure that this new leadership emerges." (Talking points)

THE U.S. ROLE

"Energetic American leadership is essential to helping them achieve that peace because the United States is the one country with the ability to work with all the parties to facilitate a necessary and meaningful dialogue. John Kerry sees the Bush Administration's road map — albeit

long overdue — as an acceptable approach for reinvigorating the peace process.

"But it will only be viable if U.S. engagement in this process is active, constant and at the highest levels.

"The United States cannot walk away or lessen its commitment to this process when violence erupts and the going gets rough. Failure to remain actively engaged will lead to further difficulties down the road and set the prospects for peace farther back.

John Kerry believes we must work actively to encourage an end to the violence and to help the parties take the steps outlined by the road map — which both Israelis and Palestinians find difficult." And we must be realistic about what they can and cannot accomplish." (JohnKerry.com)

JERUSALEM

"John Kerry has long advocated moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, Israel's indisputable capital. In 1999, he signed a letter taking President Clinton to task for not moving the embassy." (Talking points)

THE MIDDLE EAST

• *Iran*

"John Kerry understands that a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable. He believes the failure of the Bush administration to thwart Iran's efforts to amass nuclear weapons poses a real threat to the safety and security of Israel, the U.S. and the rest of the free world." (Talking points)

• *Syria*

"Kerry co-sponsored the Syria Accountability Act, which includes a ban on the export of military and dual-use items to Syria. He believes that 'we must ensure that Syria does not acquire and distribute additional weapons, thereby exasperating tensions in the Middle East, raising potential threats to Israel, and undermining arms control.'" (Talking points)

• *Egypt*

"When I sat with President Mubarak, I pulled out newspaper articles and showed him what was being said in his own papers, I mean as if he didn't know, but I wanted him to know, and I wanted him to answer to me with accountability for what was being said about Israel and for what was being said about Jewish responsibility

for 9/11, and the conspiracy theories that were allowed to be printed publicly, and how completely compromising that was to any suggestion that they were interested in peace and so forth...

If I were president, I believe that I could hold accountability where it hasn't been. If I were president, I would change the relationship in the Middle East with those countries." (Speech at June

B'nai B'rith international conference)

DOMESTIC ISSUES

• *Abortion*

"John Kerry believes that women have the right to control their own bodies, their own lives and their own destinies. He believes that the Constitution protects their right to choose and to make their own decisions in consultation with their doctor, their conscience and their God.

"He will defend this right as president. He recently announced he will support only pro-choice judges to the Supreme Court." (JohnKerry.com)

• *Religious freedom*

"The Workplace Religious Freedom Act will restore the weight to the religious accommodation provision that Congress originally intended and help assure that employers have a meaningful obligation to reasonably accommodate their employees' religious practices.

"The restoration of this protection is no small matter. For many religiously observant Americans, the greatest peril to their ability to carry out their religious faiths on a day-to-day basis may come from employers." (Senate speech, April 11 2003, introducing bill he co-authored with Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.))

• *Faith-based initiatives*

"John Kerry believes that the federal government must find ways to use the enormous energy and skill of faith-based organizations. But he also knows there are important boundaries between the realm of churches, mosques and synagogues and the realm of the state, and that our Constitution prohibits any government role in the establishment of religion. Government money should not support religious proselytizing or other religious activity and should not finance discrimination." (Campaign fact sheet)

'Yasser Arafat is a failed leader and unfit partner for peace.'

John Kerry talking points

HOLIDAY FEATURE

We must confront the darkness of Tisha B'Av to find meaning

By JANE ULMAN

ENCINO, Calif. (JTA) — In the blazing heat of mid-summer, with its long, light-filled days and leisurely pace, we confront the darkest day on the Jewish calendar, Tisha B'Av.

This holiday, which begins this year at sundown on Monday, July 26, marks the destruction of both Holy Temples in Jerusalem, the fall of the Betar fortress to the Romans, the expulsion of Jews from Spain and other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people throughout history.

In many ways, Tisha B'Av is the inverse of Chanukah, a holiday of lights that occurs during the darkest days of winter.

But unlike Chanukah, one of the most celebrated Jewish holidays in the United States, Tisha B'Av is commemorated primarily by observant Jews and kids at Jewish summer camps.

Are the rest of us missing an important opportunity? Does the demise of the Temple and, for some, the desire for its return have meaning for us almost 2,000 years later?

"There is a movement in religion today toward greater consciousness and symbolic understanding," says J. Marvin Spiegelman, an author and Jungian analyst in private practice in the Los Angeles area. "I think when we say we want to rebuild the Temple, we mean that we want to make it real psychologically."

But before the Temple can be rebuilt, psychologically or otherwise, we need to come to terms with the forces that caused the devastation.

Unlike Yom Kippur, in which we concentrate on individual sins, Tisha B'Av focuses on the collective evil, the darkness or shadow that dwells within a whole community or nation, and the wreckage it can engender.

The message Tisha B'Av can teach all of us is to take responsibility. And not only for the Jewish community. ■

Jewish Democrats seek debate

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A political debate with an all-Jewish cast may be coming soon to a city near you.

The National Jewish Democratic Council has challenged Republicans to a series of debates across the country on Jewish issues, and has enlisted 20 Jewish members of Congress to represent the presumptive Democratic nominee for president, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.).

The NJDC is also asking Jewish federations and community relations councils in battleground states to sponsor the forums.

The NJDC addressed its offer to the Bush-Cheney campaign, and has yet to get a formal response — but Republican Jews said they welcomed the challenge and were in any case planning to send surrogates across the country for debates.

Jews in both political parties say the fight for American Jewish votes has never been fiercer, especially in several states — Florida and Ohio — that are seen as too close to call and also have large Jewish populations.

Both sides believe debates on the issues tailored to the Jewish electorate will help them win votes in November.

NJDC officials and other leading Jewish Democrats have participated in forums with Republican Jewish Coalition leaders before, but this year they want to formalize the program.

"The Jewish community deserves a full examination of the Kerry record and the Bush record on all the issues," said Ira Forman, NJDC's executive director.

Bring it on, said the Republican Jewish Coalition.

"When folks see the candidates on the issues side-by-side, I think it only helps reinforce support for the president," said Matt Brooks, the RJC's executive director.

The NJDC proposes two-on-two debates, with a congressional representative joining a NJDC official to represent the Democrats, taking on a Republican Jewish elected official and professional.

To that end, NJDC has brought 20 sitting lawmakers into the mix, all of them ready to tout Kerry.

The list includes Sen. Frank Lautenberg

(D-N.Y.) and several well-known members of the House of Representatives, such as Reps. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.).

"We're going to get some serious people out there," Forman said.

The invitation formally went to the Bush/Cheney campaign Monday.

Republican Jews are already busy touting the Bush administration's Middle East policy in an effort to garner more Jewish voters.

They have relied heavily on the few Jewish Republicans in Congress, including Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) and Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.). Former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer has spoken to the Jewish community for Bush as well, and Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle expressed an interest in serving as a surrogate for the Bush campaign last month.

In trying to woo the Jewish vote, the Bush campaign focuses almost exclusively on Israel and Middle East policy. Republican Jews believe Bush's support for Israel and his tough stance against Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat will be embraced by Jews and that in the post-Sept. 11 era Jews will be looking for a strong leader on foreign policy and terrorism.

The Democrats' strategy touts Kerry's record on a wide range of issues. They emphasize support for the Jewish state, but also underscore traditional Jewish support for the party on domestic issues. Additionally, they believe many Jewish voters are frustrated with the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

President Bush received 19 percent of the Jewish vote in 2000. His father received 35 percent of the vote in 1988 and Ronald Reagan garnered 39 percent in 1980.

Jewish community leaders said they are always happy to hear both sides of the issues.

"We are certainly encouraging as much discussion as possible, within the legal guidelines, in communities before the election," said Reva Price, Washington director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, which represents Jewish community relations councils. ■

Bring it on, says the Republican Jewish Coalition.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Gaza terror infrastructure hit

Israeli forces struck a munitions factory and two arms-smuggling tunnels in the Gaza Strip.

Helicopter gunships destroyed a metal factory in the Gaza town of Khan Yunis before dawn Thursday. The factory was believed to have been used by Hamas to make its Kassam rockets. In Rafah, on Gaza's southern border, Israeli troops uncovered two tunnels used to smuggle arms from nearby Egypt.

Rep. mad at Arafat

A leading congressman blasted Yasser Arafat for blocking an investigation into the deaths last year of U.S. officials in the Gaza Strip. Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) said the Palestinian Authority president is actively blocking the investigation into the killing of security officials escorting U.S. diplomats who were in Gaza to interview candidates for Fulbright Scholarships in the United States.

"The United States chose to rely on a promise from Arafat to investigate the attack, but, as he has so many times before, he lied," Cantor said Wednesday in a statement.

"By hindering the investigation, Arafat is sending a message to terrorists that American citizens are now legitimate targets for their crimes," Cantor added that Arafat should be removed from power.

Settler population increases

The Israeli population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew by 5.3 percent over the past year.

Israel's Interior Ministry said Thursday that as of June 2004 there were slightly more than 243,000 Israelis in settlements, a 5.3 percent rise over the previous 12 months. Two-thirds of the growth was "natural" — new settler births — while the remainder were Israelis who chose to move to the West Bank and Gaza.

Knesset approves Herzl day

The Knesset passed a law approving a memorial day in honor of Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism. The Herzl Law makes the memorial day the second of Tammuz, the date of Herzl's death.

In addition, the law calls for an annual conference to address Zionist issues, and for funds for research grants. The Jewish National Fund initiated the legislation.

NORTH AMERICA

L.A. gets new Israeli envoy

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom's chief of staff was appointed Israeli consul general in Los Angeles, JTA has learned. Ehud Danoch will replace Ambassador Yuval Rotem when Rotem returns to Israel on Aug. 16.

Shalom used one of the political appointments available to him to name his long-time aide to the Los Angeles post. Danoch, a lawyer with an MBA, is said to speak English and Spanish fluently. Shalom also named Uri Palti, who previously served as deputy consul general in Los Angeles, as consul general in Philadelphia.

David Akov, who previously worked as a congressional liaison at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, was named to head the consulate in San Francisco.

Pro-Palestinian parley draws ire

More than 1,200 people have signed a petition opposing a pro-Palestinian student conference slated for Duke University this fall. The petition asks Duke University President Richard Brodhead to cancel the event. The Palestine Solidarity Movement, sponsor of the

Oct. 15-17 conference, calls on universities to divest their holdings in Israel. But the petition says "the avowed goal of the solidarity movement is the destruction of the State of Israel 'by any means necessary.'"

A spokesman for the movement called the charge a "complete fabrication." Duke officials said they had no knowledge of a reservation for the conference, the Herald-Sun newspaper reported.

Group urges Arafat to cooperate

Americans for Peace Now said Yasser Arafat should cooperate with Egypt in facilitating Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority president has resisted Egyptian demands that he relinquish control over Palestinian security services.

Conservatives publish Tisha B'Av siddur

The rabbinic arm of the Conservative movement published a Tisha B'Av prayer book.

The new book, published by the Rabbinical Assembly, includes the Book of Lamentations, introductory essays about the fast day, prayers, poetry and kinot, classical poems about the holiday penned over the centuries by rabbis and sages.

The holiday marks Jewish tragedies through the ages and the destruction of the biblical temples.

Longtime Atlanta editor dies

Vida Goldgar, longtime editor of the Atlanta Jewish Times, died Sunday at age 74. During a 40-year career in Jewish journalism, Goldgar reported from Beirut during the Lebanon War and met with several U.S. presidents and Israeli prime ministers. She also became the first female president of the American Jewish Press Association.

WORLD

Report: E.U. pressed on funding Arafat

German politicians called on the European Union to stop funding the Palestinian Authority.

The calls came this week after the German broadcaster ARD reported that the Palestinian Authority president had transferred \$5.1 million of government funds to a personal bank account in Europe.

The co-chairman of the E.U.'s parliamentary committee admitted that the group had made some errors in funding the Palestinian Authority, noting that there was poor accountability for the funds.

Holocaust denier plans New Zealand visit

New Zealand's Jewish community is taking steps to block a visit by Holocaust denier David Irving.

Irving said that in addition to giving speeches, he plans to spend time at the National Archives researching a book on Winston Churchill. David Zwart, president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, wrote to the country's ethnic affairs minister asking him to block the visit.

European Parliament leader welcomed

A leading pro-Israel lobby group welcomed the election of Josep Borrell as president of the European Parliament.

The Medbridge Strategy Center, which advocates for pro-Israel positions within the European Union, said Tuesday that Borrell long has had contact with the group and was an active participant in a recent trip to Israel that the group organized.

Borrell, a Spanish Socialist, was elected president Tuesday in first-round voting, beating off challenges from former Polish dissident Bronislaw Geremek and French Communist Francis Wurtz, one of the principal pro-Palestinian voices in the legislature.