

IN THE NEWS

Poll: Jewish voters back Kerry over Bush

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), the Democratic nominee, would receive 75 percent if the U.S. presidential election were held today. But President Bush would earn a slightly larger percentage of votes from U.S. Jews than he did in 2000.

Bush would win 22 percent of the Jewish vote. The poll, carried out in late July by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for the National Jewish Democratic Council, has a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points. In 2000, Al Gore won 79 percent of the Jewish vote to Bush's 19 percent.

Bush has earned strong approval from the Jewish community leadership for his support of Israel, but many U.S. Jewish voters oppose his policies on domestic issues. Kerry's campaign has worked in recent weeks to portray their candidate as strong on Israel as well.

Voucher program ruled unconstitutional

Florida's voucher program was found to be unconstitutional. An appeals court in Florida on Monday upheld an August 2002 ruling that found the statewide voucher program unconstitutional, holding that it violated the Constitution's doctrine against government-established religion and the Florida Constitution's ban on direct state aid to religious schools.

The state is expected to appeal to the Florida Supreme Court.

Israel kills 2 in Gaza Strip

Israeli helicopter gunships hit a Gaza Strip rocket crew, killing two Palestinians.

The airstrike was ordered on Monday after men believed to be a squad of terrorists were spotted in the Palestinian town of Beit Hanoun, preparing to launch a rocket over the nearby boundary with Israel.

Two men were killed.

WORLD REPORT

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Like Bush, CIA nominee thinks hands-off policy best in Mideast

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Rep. Porter Goss' distance from Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking was likely a plus in securing the nomination to lead the CIA.

In fact, Goss (R-Fla.), President Bush's choice to succeed George Tenet as intelligence director, is about as far from the CIA's peacemaking efforts in the Middle East as Tenet was close to it.

Tenet's intimacy with the foundering Israeli-Palestinian peace process in 2001 made him critical to President Bush's belief at the time that he should keep a line open to the process.

These days, though, Bush believes the parties are better left working things out themselves — a view Goss shares.

"Porter Goss probably comes to this with a sense that the CIA doesn't have much of a role" in Middle East peace negotiations, said Dennis Ross, President Clinton's top Middle East peace negotiator, who has briefed Goss on occasion.

"I would suspect he would prefer not to have the agency involved as it was. He's more of a traditionalist in terms of what he thinks the CIA's role ought to be."

Otherwise, Bush's decision in 2001 to keep Tenet in place and his nomination this year of Goss to succeed him are remarkably consistent.

In fact, Goss had this advice for Bush in 2001 when he was asked about Tenet: Keep him; he's a "company" man and he'll take orders.

The same qualifications led Bush to nom-

inate Goss on Aug. 10 to be the replacement for Tenet.

Announcing the nomination, Bush emphasized Goss' own "company" roots, first as a CIA case officer four decades ago, then as chairman of the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee since 1997 and, until recently, as one of the agency's champions in Congress.

"He knows the CIA inside and out," Bush said. "He's the right man to lead this important agency at this critical moment in our nation's history."

The qualities Bush perceived in Tenet in 2001 led him to forgo a tradition launched in 1977 when President Carter sacked Bush's father from the post and selected his own spy boss upon assuming the presidency. The younger Bush kept Tenet on precisely because the CIA director

was an apolitical insider who knew the ropes.

The Middle East connection was particularly important to Bush at the time.

Tenet had established a good working relationship with the Palestinian security establishment and, although Bush believed that the United States should draw back from Clinton-level involvement in the process, he wanted to maintain at least one reliable inside track.

Tenet's first task was to set out parameters for getting the peace back on track, but Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat was either unwilling or unable to implement the Tenet plan's provisions for containing Palestinian terrorism.

That was a major factor in Bush's deci-

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sion ultimately to isolate Arafat — and to pull the CIA out of the process.

Hence the nomination of Goss, a man whose experience in the Middle East is so limited, he even joked about it in an interview this year with film-maker Michael Moore.

In a segment of the interview that did not make the final cut of Moore's controversial documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11," Goss jokes, "I don't have the language skills. I, you know, my language skills were Romance languages and stuff. We're looking for Arabists today. I don't have the cultural background probably."

Goss' spy experience was as a Spanish-speaking Cold Warrior in Latin America and Europe.

As a legislator, he did not favorably view orders Clinton gave the CIA in 1998 to cultivate a reliable Palestinian security network.

That sits well with Bush's current belief that the Palestinians need to get their security act together before they get back to the table and it will also make him welcome at an agency that was never comfortable with nurturing Palestinian cops to self-sufficiency.

"It wasn't the choice of the CIA to be involved," said Vincent Cannistraro, a former agent.

"The agency had always been reluctant to involve itself. It became a role outlined at the Wye Plantation talks. It wasn't something the agency took on quite voluntarily."

Tenet himself was never comfortable with the role — he spoke with some revulsion at his retirement party earlier this year of having to kiss Arafat when they met — but it was, former agents said, the role of the CIA director to follow presidential orders.

"I don't know that Goss would have much choice if the policy was the same now," Cannistraro said.

In fact, Ross suggested, Goss might face an inevitable return to the process, albeit not at Clinton-era levels, once Israel starts withdrawing from the Gaza Strip next year.

"If the administration says, 'We want to play a role in monitoring security

arrangements,' if we need that as part of understanding how Palestinians are fulfilling obligations once Israel pulls out — not many other agencies can do it on a discreet basis," Ross said.

In any case, Goss — who is likely to face tough questions during his confirmation hearings, but who is unlikely to face serious congressional opposition — has other things to think about.

"I wouldn't expect that Goss would be very involved" in Middle East peace, said Maj. Gen. Ed Atkeson, a former army man assigned three times to the CIA. "He's going to have a full bucket there just dealing with the conclusions of the 9/11 committee."

Should the CIA return to a more active role in the process, Goss' record in Congress is something of a blank slate as far as interest in the Middle East goes.

Goss — whose Florida constituency does not boast a significant Jewish population — has kept a low profile on issues dear to the pro-Israel community, save for his reluctance to completely shut down lines of communication with Iran, a holdover from Cold War thinking that the other side should never completely be isolated.

What Goss brings to the job from his congressional career is a conviction that the emphasis in intelligence work must be in countering terrorism, Cannistraro said.

"He says they can't neglect basic intel-

ligence, like weapons proliferation — he says the agency needs to get better at that," he said.

Goss' own political views may not be the point, as Bush chose Goss in large part for his proven loyalty.

Goss has been one of Bush's most adept allies in Congress since the Sept.

11 2001 attacks. He was instrumental in cajoling civil libertarians in the House of Representatives into holding their noses and passing aspects of the USA Patriot Act they wanted removed, including broadened phone tapping and search powers.

He even turned on his beloved CIA for Bush, making

a 180-degree turn on his assessment of Tenet this year when Bush's campaign needed to distance the president from the intelligence failures of Sept. 11 and the lead-up to the Iraq war.

The agency, Goss said, was "dysfunctional" and could soon become "a stilted bureaucracy incapable of even the slightest bit of success."

That loyalty likely would extend to Bush's pro-Israel policies, Atkeson said. "He's going to be supportive of the president and the president's views, and the president is very devoted to support of Israel," he said.

Goss 'is going to have a full bucket there just dealing with the conclusions of the 9/11 committee.'

Maj. Gen. Ed Atkeson

Former CIA employee

Raising the steaks

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel plans to "smoke out" hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners with barbecues. Meat will be grilled outside the cells of fasting inmates as part of "psychological tactics" to break the strike, the Prisons Service said.

The protest was launched Sunday by 1,500 security prisoners, who are demanding improved conditions such as public telephones. Israel accuses them of trying to win concessions that would give them easier access to terrorist groups on the outside.

"Seventy percent of the security prisoners have blood on their hands," Maqbe Tafesh, the warden of one of the affected prisons, told Army Radio.

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Appointment of Israeli envoy raises questions

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — The appointment of a former Israeli diplomat to head the American Jewish Congress signals a major shift in Israel-Diaspora relations.

It also shows the extent to which a struggling Jewish group will go to revive itself.

That's the goal behind last week's controversial appointment of Alon Pinkas, the ex-consul general of Israel in New York, as CEO of the AJCongress, a group that once served as a major force in American Jewish life but has become a less-prominent player in recent years.

Reaction to the appointment, which is believed to be the first time a prominent Israeli diplomat has been tapped to head an American Jewish organization, was swift in both Israel and America.

Pinkas, who ended his term in July, raised the ire of fellow Israeli diplomats in accepting the two-year position: Israeli foreign envoys agree to a two-year period once their appointments end during which they are barred from working in the countries of their postings and for any groups with which they had contact.

Pinkas is coordinating a new visa status for the job, according to the AJCongress. But senior officials in the Israeli Foreign Ministry are demanding he get clearance from Israel's public service commissioner before assuming the position, Israel army radio reported.

The move also raised questions about whether the appointment will give the appearance of dual loyalties, a notion that American Jewish organizations have long sought to dispel.

For its part, AJCongress is "of the understanding that everything we did was on the up and up," said spokesman Juda Engelmayer, who said Pinkas won unanimous approval for the posting on Aug. 11.

Prior to becoming consul general of Israel in New York, Pinkas served in senior positions in several Labor governments. He was a foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak and a political adviser to Shimon Peres when the latter was foreign minister.

Before joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pinkas was a journalist, writing for the Jerusalem Post on military and defense issues. He was also chief diplomatic correspondent and commentator for the Israeli daily Ma'ariv. He received his bach-

elor's degree in political science at Hebrew University and got a master's in American government and politics from Georgetown University.

Among the Jewish defense agencies, the historically progressive AJCongress has been overshadowed by the more moneyed and higher-profile American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League.

The group found its niche in the civil rights movement, aiming to vouchsafe Jewish rights by taking up the cause of all minorities. In that liberal tradition, the group argued for land-for-peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict long before the days of Oslo.

But its hallmark has been and continues to be its pre-eminence in arguing for the separation of church and state.

Its \$5.5 million budget marks an increase after years of decline, said the AJCongress' chief operating officer, Mark Seal. Membership has hovered around 50,000 for years, he said.

Recently, the group has shifted rightward when it comes to Israeli policy — firing liberal directors and hiring conservative ones, causing mutinies by local chapters in Boston and Los Angeles that regrouped under different names.

Now, the appointment of the dovish and debonair Pinkas comes on the heels of other recent appointments by the AJCongress. These include Seal, who was executive vice president of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation and a former board member of Americans for Peace Now, and David Twersky, a former editor of the New Jersey Jewish News, who now directs international affairs.

Pinkas will rank higher than the current executive director, Neil Goldstein, creating a potentially sticky management situation, some observers say.

"People try to corral us into a corner by defining us as left, right, center," said the AJCongress' chairman, Jack Rosen.

"The organization has become much more centrist, much more pragmatic," he said, adding that "Alon is a centrist."

Additionally, Rosen said the work cut out for American Jewry today is international in scope, including battling growing anti-Semitism and advocating for Israel.

"Him being an Israeli or an American citizen doesn't really relate to that, and he certainly is well-versed and has skills in all these international affairs."

Ultimately, he said, "we need to tap into the skills of an experienced leader here who understands the issues at an important time for the community."

Some American Jewish officials are skeptical about the appointment.

It will "fudge the image" of the AJCongress and perhaps compromise its credibility when lobbying world or domestic

governments, said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL.

Another, who asked not to be identified, posed this question: "Can one go to bed as an Israeli ambassador and wake up in the morning as an American Jewish leader, with everything that entails — values, structure, orientation, you name it?"

The move is ironic, some say, noting that Pinkas has derided American Jewish organizations — calling one a stopping point for Israeli speakers to have bagel and lox.

Pinkas was unavailable for comment.

Others call the maneuver a boon for AJCongress. "Alon Pinkas will be a breath of fresh air for AJCongress," which has been seeking a higher public profile and to restore its prominence in the Jewish world, said Matthew Dorf, a media strategist who formerly worked for AJCongress.

"Anyone who has been watching for the demise of AJCongress is going to be saddened by these developments because the group is surely on the rise."

But others aren't so sure.

"The community may not be able to support all of the organizations that it has," said historian Jonathan Sarna, professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University.

"Some of these organizations that have been in trouble are desperately searching for a miracle that will turn them around and give them not just a new lease on life but a new raison d'être and a new way of bringing in clients."

At the same time, he said this appointment is the latest example of a growing trend of "global Jews," including academics, who can function equally well in both communities.

Pinkas has derided U.S. Jewish groups, calling one a place to eat bagels.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Poll: Israelis favor Bush

Israelis overwhelmingly prefer President Bush to his challenger, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), a new poll shows.

A Tel Aviv University survey last week showed 49 percent of Israelis preferred Bush to 18 percent for Kerry. The poll had a margin of error of 4.5 percentage points.

The poll conducted by the Teleseker organization also broke preferences down according to Israeli party affiliation. Likud voters preferred Bush to Kerry by 69 percent to 18 percent; Labor voters preferred Kerry 44-36 percent.

The U.S. candidates were in a statistical dead heat among Shinui voters. An earlier Teleseker poll showed Bush defeating Kerry 48-29.

UJC accepts money for Charley aid

The United Jewish Communities is accepting donations to aid members of the Jewish and general communities effected by Hurricane Charley in Florida.

Donations can be made to local Jewish federations or can be mailed to UJC Inc., Hurricane Charley Disaster Relief, P.O. Box 20, Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y., 10013. Jewish communities across central Florida have been working together to provide support to those in need.

Sunday night, the Chabad of Sarasota welcomed 60 teenage girls and staff from an overnight camp held at the Chabad of Fort Myers, which lost power and water last Friday.

Families in the Sarasota Jewish community are lending their freezers to keep the kosher food from the Fort Myers camp so the girls can maintain a religious diet, according to Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz at the Chabad of Sarasota.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel budget passed

The Israeli Cabinet passed its 2005 budget.

On Monday, the Cabinet voted 17-3 in favor of the \$59 billion package, which includes widespread public-sector spending cuts. In response to some of the cuts, the Histadrut labor federation pledged to launch a strike on Sept. 1.

Angered at losing \$330 million from the military budget, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz opposed the budget.

Also voting against was Trade Minister Ehud Olmert, in what was seen as the latest in a series of personal challenges to Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. To pass the draft, Netanyahu gave up on several planned spending cuts, including those on state-run media and education.

The budget must now pass a Knesset vote.

The budget includes \$10 million for the birthright Israel program.

American expelled from Israel

An American member of a pro-Palestinian group is to be expelled from Israel.

On Monday, the Tel Aviv District Court ordered the deportation of New Orleans resident Adam Wilson. Wilson, 28, is affiliated with the International Solidarity Movement, which has protested Israel's West Bank security barrier and whose members have tried to block Israeli army actions by acting as human buffers between Israeli troops and Palestinians. Wilson said Israeli authorities detained him after he refused an order to leave the country.

"They interrogated me and I spent 10 hours at the airport," Wilson was quoted as saying in the Jerusalem Post. "They tried to put me on the plane and I refused to leave." When he couldn't come

up with roughly \$900 to cover court costs, a judge ordered that he be expelled.

Israel has deported other members of the group in the past.

Historic cave found in Israel

Archaeologists in Israel found a cave where they say John the Baptist anointed numerous disciples. The cave, located on Kibbutz Tzuba near Jerusalem, is replete with wall carvings, pottery shards and other historic artifacts that suggest its authenticity, The Associated Press reported Monday. But some academics are questioning whether the pictorial carvings, found without inscriptions, offer valid proof.

'Israeli Idol' named

A border police officer won Israel's version of "American Idol." Channel Two reported that more than 980,000 viewers tuned in on Sunday night for the final round of "A Star of Born," which was won by Harel Moyal, 23.

Moyal took most of the roughly 2 million votes cast during the live broadcast, Channel Two television said. On Monday, Israeli police reported that there had been no disturbances of the peace anywhere in the country during the two-hour broadcast.

WORLD

New Zealand Jews honor dead

Three hundred members of Wellington's Jewish community paid homage to those buried in the city's Makara Cemetery.

Sunday's ceremony came a week after 113 headstones were pushed over and the prayer hall was destroyed by fire in a nighttime attack on the cemetery.

Meanwhile, participants in an anti-racism meeting on Saturday faced extremist demonstrators handing out anti-Israel placards outside the hall where they gathered.

The extremist demonstrators are members of the National Front, whose Oct. 23 rally is being countered by the anti-racist activists. Inside the meeting, some of the activists spoke out against the participation of New Zealand Jewish leader David Zwartz, saying Israel is a racist state.

Berlin Jewish memorial defaced

A Jewish memorial in Berlin was defaced. A swastika was painted on the memorial at the city's Tiergarten Park on Sunday, shortly before a visit to the site by German Jews who had emigrated.

Sao Paulo and Tel Aviv are sisters

The mayor of Sao Paulo declared his city a sister city with Tel Aviv.

According to Marta Suplicy, who is running for re-election in the Brazilian city in October, the new status will strengthen ties between both Brazilians and Israelis. Suplicy, who recently married a Jew, added that the new status will be a kickoff for urban, cultural, scientific, tourist and economic programs.

Prague exhibit features angels of peace

Visitors to the Jewish Museum in Prague will be able to send a message of peace for the Middle East.

"Cyberangels" features an interactive gallery with several computer stations from which visitors can send their messages.

The exhibit is being run in association with Israel-based American Jewish artist, Mel Alexenberg. Alexenberg's work uses angels taken from a Rembrandt etching to "disseminate across the Internet a message that calls for a shift in the way the Middle East conflict is perceived," museum officials said.