

IN THE NEWS

Deadly Gaza blast kills 5 in Gaza Strip

Five Palestinians died in a Gaza Strip blast that Hamas blamed on Israel.

Wednesday's explosion ripped through the home of a senior Hamas member in the Sajayiah district, wounding him and killing five other Palestinians.

Israeli security sources said most of the fatalities were members of Islamic terrorist groups and would not comment on the cause of the blast. Some in Hamas said it was a bomb Israeli agents detonated remotely. Others blamed a missile launched by an Israeli drone plane.

Bush's view on settlements clarified

President Bush's recognition in April of the permanent nature of some Jewish settlements in the West Bank applies only to a final settlement and not to steps Israel takes before then, the State Department said.

Spokesman Adam Ereli said Wednesday that the United States was discussing with Israel its announcement this week that it would build more than 1,000 new housing units in West Bank settlements.

Israel says the new units would not violate agreements with the United States, partly because Bush's April 14 letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon recognized some Israeli claims to the West Bank.

Pinkas appointment to AJCongress on hold

The American Jewish Congress froze its appointment of Israeli diplomat Alon Pinkas as CEO.

Last week's appointment of the former consul general in New York stirred controversy due to an Israeli Foreign Ministry contract that bars diplomats from working in the country of their posting, and for any group with which they had contact, for two years after their time of service. [Story, Pg. 3]



WORLD REPORT

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

Contradictions abound for Israeli at center of McGreevey brouhaha

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Golan Cipel is the petty officer who said he fought terrorists while in the Israeli army, the Israeli consulate information officer who called himself a counterterrorism specialist, the homeland security honcho who couldn't get security clearance.

Now that people close to New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey have identified the Israeli as the gay lover who brought the governor down, Cipel is saying he is neither gay nor a lover of McGreevey.

The Democratic governor's relationship with Cipel, who served for a time as McGreevey's liaison to the Jewish community, led to the governor's admission last week that he is gay — and to his resignation from the governor's seat he has held since 2002.

McGreevey admitted to a relationship with a man, but did not go into details; staff members have named Cipel.

"I realize the fact of this affair and my own sexuality, if kept secret, leaves me, and most importantly the governor's office, vulnerable to rumors, false allegations and threats of disclosure," McGreevey said at a televised news conference announcing his resignation on Aug. 12. "So I am removing these threats by telling you directly about my sexuality."

In an interview this weekend with the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, Cipel, 35, vigorously denied a consensual affair with the 47-year-old governor.

"It doesn't bother me that it is said I am gay, but I really am not, I'm straight," Cipel

said. "He hit on me over and over. It got to a point where I was afraid to stay with him alone."

It's not the first time in his career that Cipel has been at the center of contradictory accounts, nor is it the first time that such accounts rocked McGreevey's administration.

Much of the murkiness had to do with Cipel's experience with the Israeli military and later with its foreign service.

Cipel was dogged by controversy within weeks of his appointment in January 2002 as homeland security adviser by the just-installed McGreevey administration.

For one thing, federal homeland security officials would not grant the Israeli national the clearance necessary to read the material that was critical to carrying out the job.

The substantial experience in public security the McGreevey administration attributed to Cipel appeared on closer look to be at best inflated, according to investigative reporting in 2002 for Gannett's New Jersey newspapers by Sandy McClure in New Jersey and Yossi Melman, a veteran investigative reporter with the daily Ha'aretz in Israel.

There were several presumed qualifications cited by McClure in a letter from McGreevey's chief counsel to the immigration service.

The letter cited Cipel's experience as chief information officer at the New York Consulate General, which the letter said "involved responsibility for developing and maintaining the country's terrorism portfolio, keeping government authorities abreast of terrorist activities and threats, maintaining a database

Continued on page 2

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

■ Golan Cipel: A man of contradictions

Continued from page 1

of such activities.”

In fact, Cipel was employed as a local hire by the New York consulate in the mid-1990s and lacked the clearance to read security-sensitive material that someone hired in Jerusalem would have had.

He dealt with the media and was never involved in anything related to terrorism, then-consul general Colette Avital said, according to the newspaper investigations.

The letter also said, “As a Naval officer in the Israel Defense Force, Mr. Cipel functioned as a special operations officer and was appointed as media adviser, disseminating data on military operations and anti-terrorism measures to the media while insuring that sensitive information was not disclosed.”

■
Cipel indeed served in the Navy, Melman told JTA, but the “media adviser” description apparently referred to his reserve duty on the homeland, which, according to Melman, is “basically considered one of the lowest commands in the Israeli general staff.”

When the investigation came to light, Republicans and some Democrats were soon on the warpath.

“He wasn’t going to be able to pass the simplest of four-way background checks to be a state trooper,” Guy Gregg, a Republican state assemblyman, said at the time.

Cipel resigned his position with the McGreevey government in August 2002.

McGreevey’s friend and campaign donor Charles Kushner — himself now the target of a federal investigation involving alleged blackmail — helped find Cipel work.

He went through a quick round of highly paid P.R. jobs. He lost them, reportedly, because he kept failing to turn up for work.

The contradictory accounts of Cipel’s career continue to pile up. McGreevey’s staff accuse Cipel of trying to extort as much as \$50 million from the governor, according to news reports.

Cipel’s lawyers say the figure they wanted to settle what they said was a sexual harassment suit was much lower.

Now they are saying they have not decided yet whether or not to go ahead with the suit.

A deal was in the offing when McGreevey suddenly resigned, Cipel’s lawyers say; No such thing, say McGreevey’s staff.

One thing is clear and acknowledged by all sides: Cipel and McGreevey met on a trip McGreevey took to Israel in 2000 that was sponsored by New Jersey federations, when McGreevey was the mayor of Woodbridge, N.J., with an eye on the state house.

The two men instantly clicked, say those who witnessed the encounter at a wedding hall in Rishon le-Zion, the Tel Aviv suburb where Cipel worked as a municipal spokesman.

■
Cipel insisted his first encounters with McGreevey were not at all romantic.

“McGreevey seemed very impressed with my knowledge of the American political scene,” he said in another interview over the weekend with Ha’aretz.

McGreevey offered Cipel a campaign job almost immediately, and soon Cipel was on his way to New Jersey to help out with the gubernatorial campaign.

The sudden move caught his boss, Rishon Mayor Meir Nitzan, a little off-guard.

“He was a good worker, organized but not outstanding,” Nitzan told JTA. “The whole story surprises me. I guess it shows you work with people but do not really

know them.”

Campaign staffers found Cipel an apartment close to McGreevey’s condominium when he arrived in the United States.

Later, McGreevey himself reportedly viewed a townhouse Cipel was to buy before the purchase was completed.

Even after he left the administration, Cipel maintained his role as an unofficial liaison between McGreevey and the Jewish community.

David Mallach, former director of the MetroWest, N.J. Jewish Community Relations Committee, said his group encountered no problems working with Cipel.

“For a guy like Jim McGreevey, who already had a lot of good Jewish relationships, Cipel’s role wasn’t a key one,” Mallach said.

Others who know both men say Cipel’s claim of a non-consensual relationship will be a hard sell.

David Twersky, who was then the editor of the New Jersey Jewish News, was friends with both men.

Twersky said he warned both Cipel and McGreevey that their relationship was obvious and eventually would cost them dearly.

Cipel denied a relationship, and McGreevey dismissed Twersky’s concerns without outright denying it, Twersky recalled.

“He would have had to leave Israel and come to New Jersey, work for the campaign, all the while resisting McGreevey’s advances, nevertheless getting this plum job, leaving it only to get a series of high-paying lobbyist jobs on the recommendation of a man who was frustrated,” said Twersky, now the international affairs director for the American Jewish Congress.

“It is absolutely preposterous, it makes no sense, it is ridiculous on the face of it.”

Cipel could not be reached for comment.

(Washington correspondent Matthew E. Berger and Jerusalem correspondent Dina Kraft contributed to this report.)

‘The whole story surprises me. I guess it shows you work with people but do not really know them.’

Meir Nitzan

Mayor of Rishon le-Zion

JTA WORLD REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Paula Simmonds
Marketing and Development Director

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.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

AJCongress appointment in question

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — The controversial appointment of a former Israeli diplomat to head the American Jewish Congress is in serious question.

Less than a week after announcing the appointment of Alon Pinkas, the ex-consul general of Israel in New York, as CEO of the AJCongress, the group stated Wednesday that its contract with Pinkas was on hold.

That follows an indication by Shmuel Hollander, Israel's civil service commissioner, that Pinkas had acted illegally in accepting the position and could face indictment for an offense punishable by prison.

Israeli foreign envoys agree to a two year cooling-off period once their appointments end in which they are barred from working in the countries of their postings.

Pinkas left for Israel midweek, apparently to try to resolve the matter, and was unavailable for comment.

The sudden twist came after reaction to the appointment — believed to be the first time an Israeli diplomat was tapped to head an American Jewish organization — was swift here and in Israel.

Along with raising the ire of fellow Israeli diplomats, the move raised questions about whether the appointment would give the appearance of dual loyalties, a notion that American Jewish organizations

have long sought to dispel.

Sources said that concerns about issues of appearance and propriety had been raised within AJCongress.

The group apparently was led to believe Pinkas would not encounter trouble in getting clearance for the job.

"Recognizing the work he would be doing was going to be for the Jewish people and for Israel, there was no indication of difficulty in obtaining the necessary Israeli clearances," AJCongress stated in a new release on Wednesday.

"We know that there is a 'cooling off' period under Israeli law that he will have to observe and we are unsure of how long this period will actually be."

According to Neil Goldstein, the group's current executive director, "If it takes an impossibly long time, he and the American Jewish Congress can decide if they wish to go forward with this."

In taking the title of CEO, Pinkas would have ranked higher than Goldstein. If the appointment falls through, Goldstein said he was "absolutely certain" the group would not seek another candidate.

It was simply a "unique opportunity to bring in a rising star," Goldstein said.

AJCongress, a group that once served as a major force in American Jewish life, has become a less prominent player in recent years.

At the same time, the appointment came as the group reached its best shape

in years, attracting new staff and lay leaders. After selling off its Manhattan building, it has managed to reverse a declining financial situation, with a budget that now stands at \$5.5 million.

When the appointment of Pinkas was announced, AJCongress leaders pitched him as a good fit to help lead the organization.

Pinkas served as consul general in New York for three years, after serving 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.

"We need to tap into the skills of an experienced leader here who understands the issues at an important time for the community," said AJCongress' chairman, Jack Rosen.

Some American Jewish officials were skeptical about the appointment, saying it could compromise the group's credibility when lobbying world or domestic governments and wondering whether a person can so easily transition from Israeli diplomat to American Jewish leader.

Still others called the maneuver a boon for AJCongress, with Matthew Dorf, a media strategist who formerly worked for AJCongress, calling Pinkas "a breath of fresh air for AJCongress" shortly after the appointment was announced. ■

Nobel-winner Milosz, who wrote of Holocaust, dies at 93

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

ROME (JTA) — Nobel prize-winning Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, who died Aug. 14 at age 93, was close to Jews and Jewish causes from an early age and some of his most eloquent and disturbing works dealt with the Holocaust, Holocaust memory and the complex relations between Jews and Catholic Poles.

Milosz grappled powerfully with the physical and intellectual effects of the brutality, oppression and mass destruction that marked the 20th century in Europe.

Though the Poles themselves did not devise or mastermind the Holocaust, Milosz felt the destruction on Polish soil of 3 million Polish Jews in the Holocaust left his native land "sullied, blood-stained, desecrated." Poles, he believed, had to recognize this.

One of his most famous poems, "Campo dei Fiori," written in 1943, described how Poles outside the Warsaw Ghetto were oblivious to the fate of the Jews as the Nazis destroyed the ghetto.

In the poem, he evoked the unforgettable image of a merry-

go-round outside the ghetto walls happily spinning as the ghetto itself went up in flames.

That and another Milosz poem about Polish indifference to the destruction of the ghetto sparked one of Poland's first important public debates on the issue of Holocaust guilt and memory, which was carried out in a series of essays and articles in the late 1980s.

Milosz was born in 1911 in what is now Lithuania. In Vilnius in the 1930s he was part of a literary circle called Zagary, which had close relations with the "Young Vilna" group of Jewish writers.

Milosz moved to Warsaw in 1937 after being fired from the radio station where he worked for associating with Jews.

After World War II he served as a diplomat for communist Poland, but in 1951 broke with the regime and defected to the West, eventually settling in the United States, where he taught at the University of California at Berkeley.

Much of Milosz's work also dealt with the plight of living in exile. He moved back to his native country after the ouster of the communists in 1989. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Arafat: Mistakes were made

Yasser Arafat admitted members of the Palestinian leadership had "misused" their positions.

In a rare admission, the Palestinian Authority president told Palestinian lawmakers Wednesday that "nobody is immune from mistakes, starting from me on down."

But Arafat did not say what specific action would be taken. It's widely acknowledged that many Palestinian officials, including Arafat, profited financially from their positions atop the Palestinian Authority.

Gaza settlement shelled

Two Israelis were wounded in a Gaza Strip mortar attack.

One of the casualties in Wednesday's shelling of Neveh Dekalim was hospitalized in stable condition, and the other was treated for shock. Hamas claimed responsibility, saying it fired three mortars at the settlement.

Israeli soldiers probed

Israel has probed more than 600 allegations of misconduct by its troops against Palestinians.

"Clearly there are legal and ethical guidelines that apply even at times of war," Maj. Gen. Menachem Finkelstein, Israel's top military prosecutor, said in a Knesset briefing Wednesday.

According to Finkelstein, since the outbreak of fighting with the Palestinians in September 2000, 600 investigations of alleged abuse by soldiers have led to 90 indictments.

Of these, 56 soldiers have been convicted and some of them jailed. More than one in three cases involved Palestinian charges of physical abuse by soldiers.

Finkelstein noted that a large number of complaints pointed to a tendency by some troops manning checkpoints to violate the army's ethical code, given the immense pressure and friction with Palestinian civilians.

Barghouti breaks strike

Jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti was caught on camera eating despite a hunger strike by Palestinian security prisoners in Israel.

The Prisons Service released the footage of Barghouti wolfing down a meal in his cell on Wednesday, just as Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's government called on all Palestinians to fast in solidarity with the jail protest.

Some 1,500 prisoners went on a liquids-only fast Sunday, demanding that their conditions be improved.

The Prisons Service refuses to negotiate, accusing the inmates of trying to secure concessions that will allow them to communicate with terrorist groups on the outside.

Barghouti's family did not immediately comment on the footage, which apparently was caught by a surveillance camera in his cell.

Army eyes settlers

The Israeli army reportedly has prepared "special tactics" for evacuating violent settlers.

A special forces unit is training in anticipation that some settlers will resist evacuation under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's "disengagement" plan, Channel Two television reported Wednesday.

Citing military censorship, the report did not give details on the new tactics, but called them "audacious."

According to the station, the Defense Ministry is especially concerned that Palestinian terrorists could attack Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip during the evacuation of settlements, and therefore

ordered the army to come up with ways to speed up the process. Israeli military spokespeople did not immediately comment.

Tourism to Israel up

Tourism to Israel was up 58 percent in the first half of 2004 compared to the same time period in 2003.

Nearly 822,000 tourists visited Israel in the first six months of the year, according to statistics released by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics and the Tourism Ministry.

Syria bans ship

Syria banned a ship from entering its waters because it had stopped in Israeli ports.

Syrian officials said Wednesday that the Antiguan ship Petra-F had violated an Arab boycott of Israel.

After waning during the Oslo era, there have been increasing calls for a renewed Arab boycott of Israel in the past few years.

NORTH AMERICA

Lantos tells Syrians to do more

Rep Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) says Syria needs to make changes if it wants the United States to lift sanctions.

Lantos, who strongly favored last year's Syria Accountability Act, visited Damascus on Wednesday and said he would press for a repeal of sanctions imposed by the act once the country ends its association "finally and totally with terrorism and weapons of mass destruction."

Lantos, who met with Farouk Sharaa, the Syrian foreign minister, also said Syria could do more to keep foreigners from crossing its border with Iraq to join anti-American insurgents.

Earlier this week, Lantos visited Egypt and told government officials there they must do more to stop arms smuggling across the border to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

'Messianic Jew' wins case

The University of New Orleans will allow a "messianic Jew" to distribute literature on campus.

The school settled a lawsuit recently with a student who had taken the school to court after being blocked from distributing several pamphlets, including one that proclaimed, "Jews should believe in Jesus."

Religious literature previously had to be screened by the school.

WORLD

Poles complain about TV reference

The Polish government complained after a Canadian television network referred to a Nazi death camp as a "Polish camp."

The Polish ambassador has demanded a televised correction and apology, but officials at the CTV network have refused, asserting that the reference was only geographical because Treblinka was on Polish soil.

No insult was intended, they said, noting that the reports made clear Treblinka was operated by Germans in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Not satisfied, Poland has asked the Canadian government to "take appropriate actions to ensure that the dignity of the Republic of Poland, the ally of Canada in NATO, and the Polish nation is not affected by the untrue and detrimental information spread in Canada by the media."

In an Aug. 18 opinion piece in Toronto's National Post, Wlodzimirz Cimoszewicz, Poland's foreign affairs minister, referred to the televised statements as a "slander" that had shocked Poles.