

IN THE NEWS

16 killed in Israel

At least 16 people were killed in twin suicide bus bombings in Beersheba. Nearly 100 people were wounded Tuesday when explosions ripped apart two buses in the Israeli city. [Story, Pg. 3]

Giuliani cites Israel in championing Bush

Rudy Giuliani twice cited Israel in making the case for President Bush at the Republican Party convention.

In a major speech Monday night, the former New York City mayor said terrorists were strengthened by the release of Palestinian terrorists involved in two major murderous incidents.

"Terrorist acts became like a ticket to the negotiating table," Giuliani said in his keynote speech. "How else to explain Yasser Arafat winning the Nobel Peace Prize while he was supporting a plague of terrorism in the Middle East?"

Pentagon probe of leak broadens

An FBI probe into the alleged leaking of classified Pentagon material to pro-Israel lobbyists focuses on more than one man, media reports said.

Larry Franklin, an Iran analyst at the U.S. Defense Department, was the original focus of the probe, allegedly for handing classified material on Iran to two officials with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The Washington Post reported Tuesday that the FBI has interviewed senior officials at the Pentagon to determine whether Franklin's alleged leaking was authorized by superiors.

The FBI has also interviewed two senior AIPAC analysts, Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman, the Los Angeles Times reported. AIPAC and the Israeli government have denied any wrongdoing.

Because of Labor Day, the JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, Sept. 6.

WORLD REPORT

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

Convention shows Jewish strides in GOP, but social issue gap persists

By RON KAMPEAS

NEW YORK (JTA) — Call it the tale of two Mellmans.

Mark Mellman, one of John Kerry's top four advisers, launched a talk with Jewish Democrats in Boston last month with a drasha, or short sermon, on the meaning of Tisha B'Av, the Jewish fast day that happened to fall during the party convention.

Then, with nary a comment from the crowd, Mellman glided into the case for the Massachusetts senator.

Contrast that with the introduction this Sunday for Bush-Cheney campaign manager Ken Mehlman at a similar Jewish event.

"One of us, Ken Mehlman — let me repeat that, one of us, Ken Mehlman — is running the Bush-Cheney campaign," said Morris Offit, a Republican and the president of the New York federation, barely containing his grin as he emphasized Mehlman's Jewishness.

The contrast could not be starker between the run-of-the-mill references to Yiddishkeit in Boston and the frissons of glee in New York at the mere mention of a Jewish name.

It illustrates how far Jews have come in the Republican party since the 1970s — yet how far they have to go to equal Jewish Democrats in number and influence.

For every gratified reference to the packed rooms Jews have filled at the Republican convention, there has been an acknowledgment that the status of Republican Jews in the party and the Jewish community is nowhere near that of Jewish Democrats.

The elephant in every Jewish ballroom at the convention is last month's survey showing

that Jewish preferences for Democrats have hardly budged since 2000, when George Bush scored less than 20 percent in exit polls.

The poll was commissioned by Democrats, and no one here was buying into it entirely.

But they still were setting expectations lower than a few months ago, when they proclaimed that Bush's unprecedented closeness to Israel and his efforts against terrorism would win the Republicans levels of Jewish support seen only at the start of the Reagan era.

"Getting 30 percent of the Jewish vote would be an accomplishment," Republican pollster Frank Luntz said at an American Jewish Committee panel Monday. Reagan won close to 40 percent of the Jewish vote in the 1980 election.

The stakes are high this year in an election so close that it could come down to a few thousand votes in swing states — particularly in states like Florida, Pennsylvania and Ohio, where the Jewish vote could make the difference.

Speaking of coastal Florida towns with large Jewish populations, William Daroff of the Republican Jewish Coalition said, "If we turn one half of one percent of that vote, that's enough."

The problem, Republicans say, is the gulf between the GOP and the Jewish community on social issues.

"On issue after issue, on the economy and foreign policy, you are seeing more and more alignment between the Jewish community and the Republican Party — with the huge caveat of a social agenda," Luntz said.

The gap was in strong evidence Sunday

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**AMERICA
DECIDES
2004**

■ *Jews still do not see eye to eye with the Republicans on social issues*

Continued from page 1

evening at the Jewish event that traditionally launches conventions.

At that event, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee reviews the candidate's and party's record on Israel and the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella organization reviews the domestic record.

AIPAC President Bernice Manocherian was unstinting in her praise of Bush's record, but UJC chairman Robert Goldberg had to reach hard for praise.

He lauded two Jewish Republicans, Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) and Norm Coleman (R-Minn.), for casting "pivotal" votes to block Medicaid cuts that would have undercut assistance to the Jewish elderly — essentially thanking them for crossing party lines and defying their president.

It won't help Republicans that this year's platform slams abortion repeatedly — referring to late-term procedures as "brutal," "inhumane" and "violent" — that it describes expanded stem cell research as "the destruction of human embryos," or that it supports a federal amendment banning gay marriage.

Instead, Republicans repeatedly stressed Bush's record on Israel and against terrorism, so much so that New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his predecessor, Rudy Giuliani — GOP stars and moderates who could have served as salves to the Jewish community on domestic issues — instead advised Jewish audiences to simply forget about

the social agenda for now.

"You're never going to find a candidate you agree with completely," Giuliani said Sunday at the event sponsored by AIPAC and the UJC. "You've got to figure out what's important."

In an extraordinary move for a mayor whose bread and butter is economic and social issues, Bloomberg advised Jews at the event to regard Israel as "the one issue that matters."

"No two people agree on everything, but when it comes to standing up for Israel, which I think is like standing up for America, George Bush has been there," Bloomberg said.

The few attempts to sell Bush's domestic policies ultimately underscored the social gap between the community and the administration.

Daroff, the RJC's deputy executive director, said at the same event that Bush's school voucher program could help Jewish day schools. But that means little to the overwhelming majority of Jews who send their children to public schools.

The GOP's difficulty in appealing to Jewish social sensibilities was especially evident at the RJC's keynote Monday night gala.

During a speech-fest by about 20 members of Congress, Coleman was the only one to mention domestic policy — and then only in a half sentence about Jews and Republicans sharing concerns about education and prosperity.

Instead, speaker after speaker focused on Israel and terrorism, lauding Bush's record in isolating Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and in rejecting a "right of return" for Palestinian refugees or a return to Israel's pre-1967 borders.

Moreover, the gloves were off in attacking Kerry's Israel record, despite assurances months ago from party leaders that the GOP would emphasize that while Kerry might be good on Israel, Bush was better.

"Our opponents in the coming election fail to grasp the importance of America's relationship with Israel," Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), the Senate majority leader, told the UJC-AIPAC event.

Mehlman, the campaign manager,

assailed Kerry for calling Arafat a "model statesman," though the quote was ripped from its context — in the very same sentence of his book, Kerry called Arafat a thug — and made in 1997, when Arafat's international reputation was considerably better than today.

Yet Mehlman's role as campaign manager was not the only sign of increased Jewish influence in the GOP.

The convention as a whole went out of its way to outdo Democrats in emphasizing the party's pro-Israel credentials, from two mentions in Giuliani's keynote speech Monday night to Vice President Dick Cheney's scheduled appearance at an RJC event Thursday, which the group called "indicative of this administration's commitment to reaching out and including the Jewish community."

Still, there was considerable anxiety at the failure to make greater strides, anxiety reflected at times in a hectoring tone from non-Jewish Republicans.

"Don't the Jewish people get where they stand with the U.N.? Do the Jewish American people take a lot of confidence in the support of Europe?" Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) asked the AJCommittee group, his voice tinged with impatience.

Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.) urged people at the RJC event to get out the vote for the Republicans.

"I will not be satisfied with 40 percent of the vote," he said. "George Bush deserves a majority of the Jewish American vote."

Such warnings had an effect.

"Show the Democratic party they do not own the Jewish vote," Michael David Epstein, vice chairman of the RJC's legislative unit, said Monday at the group's event. "If we do not, the next Republican president may not have in his heart what this president has in his heart."

All told, it may be a while before GOP leaders can comfortably discuss lesser Jewish holidays such as Tisha B'Av.

"We're not asking everyone to be a Republican," said the RJC's Daroff. "We're doing baby steps: Someone here will vote for the president this year, and in two years he'll see your roof won't fall down if you vote Republican in the House." ■

Show the Democratic party they do not own the Jewish vote.

Michael David Epstein
Republican Jewish Coalition



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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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Palestinian bombers strike in Beersheba

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The thick clouds of smoke billowing around two bombed buses in Beersheba symbolized how the sense of calm that had settled over Israel this spring and summer could end in a single jolt.

At least 16 people died and nearly 100 were injured in two near-simultaneous explosions Tuesday afternoon in the southern Israeli city.

Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

"I heard a blast and I started to run to the site. Within seconds there was another explosion," Gil Yehezkel, owner of a business close to the location of the attack, told Ha'aretz.

"When I got there, there were people on the floor; wounded people, limbs torn off," he said. "The police and ambulances arrived in seconds."

Security officials decided Tuesday night to increase military activity in the West Bank city of Hebron, home of the bombers.

Shortly after the attack, Israeli troops raided the bombers' homes.

Security forces decided to isolate Hebron, crack down on the terrorist infrastructure there and grant permission for assassinations and house demolitions in the West Bank city, according to the report.

Though suicide bombers constantly try to attack Israel, the West Bank security barrier and the efforts of Israeli security forces had foiled every attack in the past six months.

But that lull was only an illusion, Israeli officials and analysts say.

The strength of terrorist groups like Hamas may have been temporarily sapped by the Israeli assassinations of its leaders, Sheik Ahmed Yassin and Abdul Aziz Rantissi, but their motivation to carry out attacks continues to grow.

"The so-called lull was no lull before. The Palestinian terrorists even during the past six months continued to try every opportunity to strike at Israelis in the hearts of our cities, on our buses and in our cafes," said David Baker, an official in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office.

Sharon, meanwhile, said "the fight against terror will continue with full strength," and pledged to continue with

his plan for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four northern West Bank settlements next year.

On Tuesday, Sharon presented his Likud Party's Knesset faction with a timetable for the withdrawal and tried to quash suspicions that his plan would increase terrorist attacks inside Israel.

"There is no connection between" the bombings "and our plan for disengagement," a somber Sharon told journalists.

"We will fight the murderousness of Palestinian terrorists with all our might."

Baker credits Israel's security fence and army operations for thwarting most of the recent attempts at attacks.

But others question how effective the fence can be as long as the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians remains unresolved.

"The fence can actually increase motivation for attacks because there is motivation on two levels," said Yoram Meital, chairman of the Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy at Ben-Gurion University.

"One is ideological, by the militant groups like Hamas who do not want to live in peace with Israel. The second is that in the past four years especially, the effects of Israel's actions in its war against terror often hurt not just terrorists but the people who simply live there."

"The bottom line is that the motivation for attacks is one of the main things we need to pay attention to, and the fence does not decrease motivation," Meital said. "Israel is in a struggle against Hamas and Islamic Jihad but also against the Palestinian Authority," and its people "have little motivation to stop terrorists."

Meanwhile, there are indications that since Israel took out the Hamas leadership, the group's cells are working more secretly and independently of one another, increasing their ability to carry out attacks like the one that occurred Tuesday in the southern Israeli city.

There is still no security fence separating Israel from the West Bank near

Hebron. David Newman, an expert on political geography and borders at Ben-Gurion University, said this might lead some to conclude that a fence in the area would have prevented an attack.

Indeed, Public Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi told reporters after the attack, "Where a fence exists, there is no terror; where there is no fence, there is terror."

But Newman said that to "think the fence will hermetically seal off any fanatical terror bomber — that is a bit of a panacea."

According to Newman, despite Israel's expert intelligence network and apparent ability to stop most terrorists, there will always be those that are going to get through because of the reality of life in Palestinian areas.

"You have tens of thousands of people in the occupied territories whose economic situation is worse than in 1967 and they see this as a direct result of the political situation, and blame Israel," he said. "They have become more radicalized and have been taken with Hamas, and have less belief in the Palestinian Authority and" its president, Yasser Arafat, Newman said.

Some have suggested that with a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip looming, militant and mainstream Palestinian political elements are wary.

"There is joint interest by those in the Arafat camp of the Palestinian Authority who have a great interest in not having a unilateral withdrawal of Gaza by Israel," and Hamas, Lt. Col. Yohanan Soref, the former head of the Israeli army's civilian administration in Gaza, told Israel Television.

Gila Finkelstein, a legislator from the National Religious Party, said the disengagement plan is only providing Palestinians with greater motivation to carry out terror attacks.

"Today they are beginning to count the fatalities of disengagement," she said. "The Palestinians will use everything they can to prove to the entire world that disengagement is a direct product of the deadly terror attacks, and the Gaza Strip is only the beginning."

After a six-month lull in major attacks, Palestinian suicide bombers strike in an Israeli city.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

GOP platform backs Israeli security

The Republican Party platform dedicates more than 500 words to support for Israel.

The platform commits the party to maintaining Israel's "qualitative edge in defensive technology over any potential adversaries" and reiterates President Bush's rejection of a "right of return" for Palestinian refugees and his endorsement of some Israeli claims in the West Bank.

It also praises Bush's condemnations of anti-Semitism.

Elsewhere, the platform calls for bans on partial birth abortion and expanded stem cell research and supports a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

Bush defends Sharon

President Bush defended Ariel Sharon at a campaign rally in New Hampshire.

Bush was asked Monday by a woman at a campaign rally in Nashua how he could describe the Israeli prime minister as a man of peace "if he causes death and torture among innocent Palestinians." Bush answered, "First of all, Ariel Sharon is defending his country against terrorist attacks, just like we will."

That got applause in this battleground state.

Cipel drops lawsuit against governor

The former aide to New Jersey's governor said he would not file a sexual harassment lawsuit against the governor.

Golan Cipel, an Israeli who was briefly employed as New Jersey's top homeland security official, said he no longer sees a reason to sue his former boss since Gov. James McGreevey resigned after announcing he had a consensual relationship with a man government sources identified as Cipel.

Cipel has said he is not gay.

McGreevey aides, who say the governor had a consensual affair with Cipel, said Cipel has no case. McGreevey met Cipel while on a Jewish federation-sponsored trip to Israel in 2001.

MIDDLE EAST

Sharon presents timetable for leaving Gaza

Ariel Sharon presented Likud Party lawmakers with a timetable for the approval of his Gaza withdrawal plan.

The proposed timetable would begin Sept. 14 with members of the Security Cabinet being asked to approve a bill outlining how evacuated settlers would be compensated and explaining the principles of the evacuation.

By Nov. 3, a bill on disengagement would be presented on the Knesset floor for the first time.

'Jenin, Jenin' can be shown

An Israeli judge ruled that a controversial film about Israel's April 2002 military operation in the West Bank city of Jenin can be shown.

High Court Justice Eliahu Mazza ruled Monday that Mohammed Bakri's film, "Jenin, Jenin" may be shown, effectively canceling the temporary injunction issued 10 months ago that banned the movie, Ha'aretz reported.

The ruling comes after Mazza failed in efforts to have Bakri, an Israeli Arab, edit some offensive scenes to conform with demands of soldiers who fought in the Jenin battle, and superimpose a disclaimer on scenes that falsify what happened in the battle. The documentary hews to Palestinian versions of events in the refugee camp, which have been debunked by a U.N. investigation of the matter.

Hanegbi resigns, temporarily

Israel's minister of internal security quit his post until a criminal probe against him is over.

Tzachi Hanegbi's temporary resignation came Tuesday after Attorney General Menachem Mazuz elected to investigate allegations that Hanegbi made illegal political appointments while he was environment minister from 2001 to 2003.

Mazuz has also decided to investigate other senior civil servants in connection with the appointments.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon accepted the resignation of Hanegbi, who will serve as minister without portfolio during the investigation.

Israeli army foils suicide attack

Israeli soldiers prevented a suicide bombing after identifying a Palestinian man carrying an explosive device in his pants.

The man aroused suspicion Tuesday as he tried to pass through the Erez border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel with false identification papers.

When he was searched, soldiers found he was wearing an explosive belt that had been "sewn to resemble a pair of underpants," the army said.

In January, a female Palestinian suicide bomber killed four Israelis when she blew herself up at the same crossing.

Israeli troops kill Palestinian teen

Palestinian witnesses said Israeli army troops killed a 14-year-old Palestinian during a raid in Gaza. The raid, which took place early Tuesday in the Rafah refugee camp, was intended to demolish an abandoned structure used by Palestinian gunmen for cover when they fire on Israeli soldiers, army sources said.

WORLD

IBM wants to block Gypsies' lawsuit

IBM asked a Swiss court to block a lawsuit claiming the country's punch-card machine helped the Nazis murder Gypsies.

The lawsuit, filed by a Gypsy group, follows a 2001 book by Edwin Black arguing that the punch cards helped the Nazis make their killing operation more efficient. IBM says its German subsidiary was taken over by the Nazis before World War II and that it had no control over how IBM machines were used by the Nazis.

Rabbis beaten in Odessa

Two rabbis were assaulted in the middle of the day on one of the central streets in Odessa, Ukraine.

Fishel Chichelnitzky and David Feldman, who work at an Odessa yeshiva, and three yeshiva students were attacked by five middle-aged men on Aug. 20.

They fought back, helped by some passers-by. Local police arrested one of the attackers, who threatened at a police station to "find and shoot the kikes," according to witnesses.

Iranian athlete gets paid for boycott

Iranian officials reportedly awarded \$120,000 to an athlete who refused to compete against an Israeli in the Olympics.

The amount given over the weekend to Arash Miresmaeli was equal to what he would have received for winning a gold medal. "Miresmaeli's act was extremely valuable, and therefore we are awarding him the gold medalist award," Mohsen Mehrizadeh, an Iranian official, was quoted as saying in Iranian media.

Miresmaeli officially failed to make weight for his judo bout against Ehud Vaks at the Athens Games, but most observers believe that was just a cover.