

## IN THE NEWS

## Specter to Ashcroft: Crack down on leaks

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) asked the U.S. attorney general to crack down on leaks such as one about the FBI investigation into the alleged leak of a classified document to AIPAC.

"I know AIPAC. I know its integrity," Specter said of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group. "It's a smear."

Specter made the comments Wednesday to JTA at the Republican convention in New York, after attending a session with AIPAC leaders.

## Israel blames Syria for bombing

Israel implicated Syria in Tuesday's double suicide bombing in Beersheba.

Syria has continued to offer logistical and financial backing to terrorist organizations operating out of Damascus, a senior military official told Ha'aretz.

At least 16 people died in the bombings, the first time Palestinians have succeeded in carrying out such an attack in six months, despite repeated attempts.

Thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip celebrated the attacks, The Associated Press reported.

## Posters condemn anti-Semitism in Paris

More than 1,000 posters denouncing anti-Semitism were plastered across Paris.

The posters are part of a campaign organized by Mayor Bertrand Delanoë to sensitize the city's residents to the problems of anti-Semitism and intolerance.

They will run on all municipal billboards during the first week of the new school year.

Last week, Delanoë wrote to school directors in the city, asking them to initiate projects around the same theme. Later this month, the City Council is set to debate a proposal by the mayor to increase security around Jewish institutions.

# WORLD REPORT

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

## Used to working behind the scenes, AIPAC suddenly thrust into limelight

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — In its outreach to potential supporters and to the media, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee touts its access to the highest levels of government.

Now it's that very access that has thrust the pro-Israel lobby, accustomed to working behind the scenes, into the limelight.

Accusations that AIPAC officials received classified information from a Pentagon staffer and forwarded it on to Israel broke on the eve of this week's Republican National Convention in New York, where AIPAC is hosting several policy forums for Republican contributors.

According to media accounts, a non-Jewish officer on the Iranian desk at the Pentagon, Larry Franklin, is being investigated for passing at least one classified document to AIPAC officials, which may then have been forwarded to Israeli officials in Washington.

Reports have suggested that Franklin could face charges ranging from espionage to the mishandling of classified information.

Media reports said that the AIPAC officials involved were Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, and that they have spoken to federal investigators.

Rosen is AIPAC's director of research and considered one of the most influential people in the organization. He has been with AIPAC since 1982, and mentored both Howard Kohr, AIPAC's current executive director, and Martin Indyk, the former U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Weissman is deputy director of foreign policy issues and specializes in relations

with Iran, Syria and Turkey.

AIPAC would not confirm or deny the reports.

News reports also suggested that Naor Gilon, minister of political affairs of the Israeli embassy in Washington, was the subject of an FBI investigation on suspicion of espionage for Israel when Franklin came to the investigators' attention more than a year ago.

Both Israel and AIPAC deny any impropriety in the case. Many U.S. Jews believe, or hope, that no charges will be filed and that the issue will fade from the headlines in the coming days.

But the charges, and their prominent play in the media, have reopened questions about the way AIPAC does business with the U.S. and Israeli governments.

AIPAC's grass-roots advocacy and political lobbying departments get most of the attention, but the organization also has a thriving think tank that works to influence Middle East policy at the highest levels of government.

To those who work with AIPAC in Washington, or have worked for the organization itself, the idea of information being passed from government officials to AIPAC staffers to Israelis seems almost commonplace.

After all, these people see each other on almost a daily basis, at think-tank lunches and policy meetings throughout the capital. Information is exchanged and each participant tries to show his importance by touting what he knows and whom he has access to.

"The easiest thing to learn in Washington is that no one likes to be surprised," said Jon Alterman, a former State Department

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ AIPAC moves into the public eye

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official. "AIPAC doesn't like to be surprised and nobody wants to surprise AIPAC."

In that sense, AIPAC is like any other policy organization in Washington.

"Information is the currency in Washington," said Morris Amitay, AIPAC's executive director from 1974 to 1980. "AIPAC meets regularly with officials at the State Department and Defense Department, trying to find out what's going on."

It's unclear how much of the information AIPAC receives is forwarded to Israeli officials, but the coordination between the Jewish state and its advocates in Washington is considerable.

Most Israeli officials who travel to Washington meet with AIPAC and exchange information. But Israeli officials also have strong ties to the Bush administration, and receive much information directly from American governmental sources, without need of intermediaries.

One congressional staffer said it was understood in Washington that AIPAC had access to the highest sources in both the U.S. and Israeli governments, and could get most information it wanted.

"They are very astute at knowing who will know what they would like to find out," said the staffer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the FBI investigation is ongoing. "It's simply understood, based on the success they've had."

But because of the issues AIPAC deals with, policy discussions can easily cross

into areas of national security, increasing the chances that classified information will be passed.

"There's always a real possibility that in giving a briefing, certain information that is classified could come out by the government briefers," said Neal Sher, who served as AIPAC's executive director from 1994 to 1996 and formerly worked in the U.S. Justice Department. "The lines are real blurry."

But Sher said the briefer would be the one committing the illegal act, not the one who gets the information.

"Anyone with half a brain, if someone is giving you a classified document, would say, 'I don't want to look at it,'" Amitay said. "Because it could be a sting."

According to Newsweek, that's what occurred in the current case. Franklin reportedly tried to give documents to an AIPAC staffer, who wouldn't take them but asked for the information to be summarized orally.

When it comes to documents, federal officials with security clearances are given little leniency. Most desks have two

computers: one for classified material and one for unclassified. The e-mail systems are separate and diskettes are not allowed to be inserted into the classified system.

But there's a lot more leeway when government officials brief outsiders.

"How far you go in telling people what's going on in a classified environment is a decision you have to make every day," Alterman said. "There is a perception that you can

trust the people you're talking to."

The anonymous congressional staffer added that much of what is classified already has been reported by the media.

The recent focus on AIPAC's business practices is counter to the way the organization likes to work. AIPAC likes to shift focus away from its own professionals and onto the lay leaders and lawmakers publicly expressing support for the Jewish state.

But that hasn't always been easy. Because Israel is such a heated topic in Washington and around the world, and because AIPAC has been successful in its mission, the group often is at the center of questions regarding U.S. support for Israel. ■

**When it comes to documents, federal officials with security clearances are given little leniency.**

## Shul opens in Buenos Aires

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

**BUENOS AIRES (JTA)** — After years during which closings and mergers outnumbered openings in Argentine organizations, the local Jewish community hopes it has reversed the trend with the inauguration of a new synagogue.

The modern architectural style of the Amijai synagogue, which opened Aug. 25, makes it one of the most imposing and beautiful in the region.

Over the past decade, the Argentine Jewish community has mainly opened social service centers to strengthen the welfare net.

About 35,000 Jews have been given food, medicine, clothing and cash assistance.

A few synagogues took up residence inside existing schools.

Also, a spiritual center called Mishkan opened that is not affiliated with any

of the major Jewish streams.

Amijai — the first synagogue built and opened in the past several years — doesn't indicate that the community has recovered from the country's economic crisis. Rather, it was made possible thanks to the donation of one family that sold a music company.

"The decision came almost seven years ago as a one-time strike," Natalio Garber, whose family funded the new synagogue, told JTA.

Some 150 families are active participants in the congregation.

"Their support and commitment was needed to develop this huge project," said Garber, who is Amijai's president.

The synagogue has room to seat 850 people. Garber told JTA that the synagogue is working to develop projects with other Jewish organizations so more Jews can take advantage of the center. ■

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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](http://www.jta.org).  
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# Israel begins burying bomb victims

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Avital Etash stares out from the front pages of Israel's newspapers, a 4-year-old boy in a striped shirt and dark blue kipah, his dark eyes wide and curious.

Etash was the youngest of 16 people killed in Tuesday's double suicide bombing in Beersheba. His mother lies in the hospital, still fighting for her life.

Again Israel turns to mourning the dead, but this time the list of those killed has been slow in coming. As the bombs used in suicide bombings have become more sophisticated, producing deadlier and deadlier blasts, it has taken more time to identify the remains of the dead.

But with every hourly news broadcast, the list of names grows longer.

Among the first to be buried Wednesday was a 23-year-old named Karin Malka who was on her way to her job with the Jewish Agency for Israel, working with Ethiopian immigrants at Beersheba's absorption center. Her friends remember her as always cheerful, always smiling. In photographs she is seen grinning, her almond-shaped eyes sparkling.

Malka's family recalls her eerie comments that seem now like a premonition:

She told them she would likely die in a terrorist attack, and at last week's Shabbat dinner she spoke at length about death and what might await in the next world.

Curious, her family had asked why she thought God so often lets young people die.

Malka, who about a year ago became observant, told them, "He wants to see them in the next world," Israel's daily Yediot Achronot reported.

Malka also was studying engineering at a nearby college.

"She was an amazing young woman . . . she gave her all working with the kids here," Tali Ya'akovin, the absorption center manager, told Israel's daily Ma'ariv. "It will be hard to explain to the children that she won't be coming back."

Beersheba's absorption center suffered a second loss with the death of Troint Tekleh, a 33-year-old mother of six who was also killed in the attack. Tekleh and her family had immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia about a year ago. They had been living in the absorption center but planned to move soon to an apartment of their own.

Tekleh's youngest child was a baby boy who is 1 year old. Members of the Ethiopian community quickly gathered to help,

taking the family's children home to rest while their father went to the hospital to identify her body.

The hero of the day was hailed as Ya'akov Cohen, the driver of bus No. 12, the second bus to explode. He said he stopped his bus as soon as he heard the first explosion.

"I opened the doors, the people asked me to, and I did it immediately," he said. Several people were able to escape before the second suicide bomber, sitting somewhere on Cohen's bus, detonated his explosives belt.

On bus No. 6, the first to explode, a 65-year-old barber named Nissin Vakanin offered his seat to Tamara Batershuli, also 65.

A few minutes later the blast ripped through the bus. When Vakanin looked back, he saw the seat he had given up to the woman, saw that she was dead — and that the body of the man next to her was in shreds.

"I saw the body of the guy next to her and it was all ripped up. Then I realized he was the suicide bomber," Vakanin said, according to the Washington Post.

"My conscience is not quiet," Vakanin added. "I feel guilty that she died and not me."

## In Mideast visit, Gandhi grandson preaches nonviolence

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The silver-haired and soft-spoken Arun Gandhi says his grandfather Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence can be applied even in a conflict as bloody and bitter as the one in the Middle East.

"I think there is hope for a peaceful solution, but we need to act quickly," Gandhi said. "I believe in peace through nonviolence. I think it is the only peace that is worthwhile and long lasting."

Gandhi, whose five-day visit to the Palestinian-populated areas and Israel ended this week, made the comments to the founders of the "Geneva accord," a group of retired Israeli army officers and academics who, along with Palestinian counterparts, drafted a sample peace plan earlier this year.

In an interview with JTA, Gandhi expanded on his ideas, speaking of the stereotypes that keep Palestinians and Israelis wary of one another and of the possibility that a modern-day Gandhi might emerge to help lead the sides out of deadlock and violence.

Gandhi grew up in South Africa but spent several months living with his grandfather in India when he was 14 and when India was struggling to free itself from British colonial rule.

Mahatma Gandhi preached nonviolent resistance and helped

his people overthrow British rule before he was assassinated by an Indian zealot in 1948.

The younger Gandhi said he wishes he knew how his grandfather would tackle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"I agonize over that a lot. I wish I had his brains and his experience to find an amicable solution to this," he said.

But after being here, Gandhi noted, he saw how hard it is to bring the sides together, saying the gap "shows the division and the depth of the agony."

While here, Gandhi led a demonstration of Israelis and Palestinians in the neighborhood of Abu Dis in eastern Jerusalem near the security barrier that in that area is a concrete wall.

Gandhi said he questioned the intention behind the barrier, which Israel built to keep out terrorists. He asked why in so many areas its path cuts off Palestinian towns from one another.

Israeli officials argue that the fence is a temporary measure and that to build it entirely along the Green Line — as the pre-1967 boundary is known — would give de facto acceptance to armistice lines that never had international recognition.

During his visit, Gandhi also met with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Gandhi said he gave Arafat an outline of his grandfather's philosophy of nonviolence, and he said Arafat was receptive to the idea.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Deutsch loses primary

Longtime Rep. Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.) lost his bid for a U.S. Senate seat in Florida.

On Tuesday, Deutsch lost the Democratic primary to Betty Castor in the race to succeed Sen. Bob Graham. Deutsch, an observant Jew, focused his campaign against Castor in part on her actions as president of the University of South Florida from 1994 to 1999, and on charges that she allowed an Islamic Jihad ally to operate a front for the terrorist group on campus.

But Castor earned the endorsement of at least one Florida Jewish newspaper.

### Reform Jews: Defend Muslims in schools

The Reform movement praised the U.S. Justice Department for a letter outlining its actions to defend Arab, Muslim, Sikh and South Asian students.

Alexander Acosta, the assistant attorney general for civil rights, wrote state education departments last month citing reports of teacher attacks on such students and warning that such attacks violate federal law.

In one instance in Louisiana, a teacher allegedly ripped off a girl's headscarf and said, "I didn't know you had hair under there. I hope God punishes you. No, I'm sorry. I hope Allah punishes you."

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism praised Acosta in a statement issued Wednesday.

"As schools open across the nation, we urge the Justice Department to remain vigilant, and to broaden its admirable concern to include those — such as other religious minorities, as well as gay and lesbian students — who may face discrimination in their schools," the group said.

### Montreal Jews help out Beersheba

Montreal's Jewish federation sent a delegation to its sister city of Beersheba following Tuesday's double suicide bombing.

Montreal has been twinned with Beersheba since the late 1980s under Project Renewal, and has committed much funding and manpower toward improving the city's infrastructure and social programs.

"In 2003 we earmarked \$4 million for Beersheba, which included the purchase of emergency equipment. Unfortunately, this equipment is now being put to use," said Bram Freedman, Federation CJA's director of administration and strategic initiatives.

## WORLD

### Gadhafi offers compensation

Muammar Gadhafi promised to compensate Jews who were forced out of Libya.

"Any Jew whose home had been taken away has to be compensated or given his home back on the condition that he had not taken away the home of a Palestinian in Palestine," Reuters reported Gadhafi as saying.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced to leave their homes in Arab countries in the wake of Israel's War of Independence in 1948. Arab leaders have never responded to Jewish demands for compensation for lost property and assets.

Gadhafi did not specify how much compensation former Libyan Jews could expect.

His action seems to be part of recent attempts to consolidate diplomatic gains Gadhafi made since his announcement last December that Libya was abandoning its nuclear weapons programs.

### Jewish students in FSU start school

Thousands of Jewish students started their school year Wednesday in more than 100 Jewish day schools in the former Soviet Union.

Two new schools opened this year, one in Poltava, Ukraine, and one in Togliatti, Russia, according to Ohr Avner, a Chabad-Lubavitch foundation that runs about two-thirds of all Jewish schools in the region.

Fifteen new Chabad-affiliated kindergartens also opened their doors this week.

Security was beefed up at many of the Jewish schools in the wake of this week's suicide bombing near a Moscow metro station and a hostage crisis at a school near Chechnya, where armed attackers are holding over 200 pupils hostage.

### Soccer date to stay

An international soccer official said an Israeli match scheduled for Rosh Hashanah would not be changed.

"We cannot accept when everyone starts using national, religious or political holidays as an argument for rescheduling matches," a UEFA official was quoted as saying.

"So now the people in Israel have to decide between synagogue and football."

Earlier, Germany's foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, had said he would try to change the Sept. 15 date.

Maccabi Tel Aviv said it had asked UEFA to change the date, but UEFA said the club had missed a deadline for filing a change request. Maccabi denied that it had missed the deadline.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Hebron under siege

Israeli troops imposed a closure on the West Bank city of Hebron. The city was home to the two suicide bombers who carried out Tuesday's bus bombings in Beersheba.

The army destroyed the home of Ahmed Kawasma, one of the two bombers, and Israeli forces arrested 12 Palestinians in Hebron in connection with the attack, along with several others from the Nablus and Bethlehem areas.

The two bombers, both from prominent Hebron families, knew each other for years and reportedly planned the attacks together. Kawasma owned an aluminum products store and Nisim Jabri was a construction worker.

The army is likely to focus retaliatory action on Hebron and the Gaza Strip, officials told the Israeli media.

### Report: Security fence to be cut short

Plans to build the West Bank security barrier to the Dead Sea area appear to have been canceled.

Ha'aretz reported that there were no plans for building the fence between the Yatir forest north of Arad and the Dead Sea, despite assessments by defense officials that terrorism would move southward once the fence was completed in central and northern Israel.

Mayors and local council heads in the south have written defense officials pleading for the fence to be built in the area.

### Jewish-Arab school opens in Israel

A school for both Jewish and Arab children opened in Israel.

The school, which opened this week in an Arab town in Israel's Galilee region, has 106 students from kindergarten through third grade.

Each class in the school, which received funding from the Abraham Fund, has one Jewish and one Arab teacher.

The school is the fourth such school in Israel.