

## IN THE NEWS

**Hamas camp hit**

Israeli forces killed 14 Palestinians at a Hamas training camp in Gaza. Tanks and helicopter gunships shelled a soccer field in the town of Sijaya before dawn Tuesday, also wounding at least two dozen terrorists who were undergoing training.

Israeli security sources described the strike as retaliation for a double suicide bombing by Hamas that killed 16 people in Beersheba last week.

"We will strike against Hamas wherever we can find it," said a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

**Sharon: Israel not spying on U.S.**

Ariel Sharon denied that Israel is spying on the United States. The Israeli prime minister's comments came after reports that the FBI is probing the alleged leak of classified Pentagon material to analysts with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, that may have ended up in Israeli hands.

"Israel is not conducting any espionage activity whatsoever in the United States," Sharon told the Jerusalem Post on Tuesday. AIPAC also has denied the allegations.

**U.S. Jews to new president: Peace now**

A group of U.S. Jews launched a petition urging the next president to take further steps to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Open Letter campaign, launched Tuesday, is supported by left-leaning American Jews and various U.S. Jewish groups, including actor Theodore Bikel, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg and Americans for Peace Now.

"We ask that within the first hundred days of your administration you appoint an internationally respected envoy at the highest level to signal your intentions to pursue full implementation of the disengagement plan and a renewal of negotiations leading to a final status accord," the petition states.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Watching AIPAC case, Jewish groups wonder if they're also being checked

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA)—New twists and turns in the case of alleged wrongdoing by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee have left many in the Jewish community baffled.

A week after allegations first broke suggesting that AIPAC was involved in the exchange of classified information from the Pentagon to Israeli officials, new reports suggest FBI investigators have been monitoring the pro-Israel lobby for more than two years.

The first question many in the Jewish community are asking is, "Why?"

"We're pitching in the dark," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of President of Major American Jewish Organizations. "We haven't seen a shred of evidence."

Much remains unknown about the origins of the investigation, hurting Jewish groups' ability to respond and defend one of the most prominent organizations in the community.

While they work to exonerate AIPAC in the public eye, Jewish officials say they also must make sure the issue won't affect the way they do business. Groups worry that they too could be targeted for investigation or left to deal with potentially changed perceptions of the organized American Jewish community.

Jewish organizational leaders said talks are ongoing as to new ways to defend AIPAC and the Jewish community in both public and private contexts.

Quietly, there is deep concern in Jewish circles about the effect the investigation will have, no matter how it plays out, on Jewish

groups' ability to function. With the summer ending and many people in Washington returning to work, the next few weeks will be an important test for how the organized Jewish community is perceived in the capital.

"It really has done a considerable amount of harm, no matter what the outcome is," said Barry Jacobs, director of strategic studies at the American Jewish Committee. "It's going to circumscribe our ability to do what any non-profit does, which is obtain information and exchange views."

Chief among the concerns is whether other Jewish entities might be under investigation without their knowledge, or are being monitored in relation to this case.

"If they are watching AIPAC, how many other Jewish organizations are they watching as well?" asked Tom Neumann, executive

director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

Confident they have nothing to hide, Jewish officials say they won't change the way they do business. But the case could serve as a guide to reinforce to Jewish officials the need to play by the rules on security matters.

"Are we too lax in our discussions, leaving the door open for misunderstandings?" one Jewish organizational leader wondered.

Beyond security concerns, officials at Jewish groups worry that now they may be seen differently when they walk into a room with governmental officials or people unfamiliar with different groups in the community.

"They don't necessarily know the difference between AIPAC and JCPA and the federations," said Hannah Rosenthal, executive

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**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

## ■ AIPAC case raises questions for other Jewish groups

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director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Congressional officials say they'll take a wait-and-see approach toward AIPAC, but they are skeptical about the investigation. One Democratic congressional aide said if the issue under scrutiny was a policy discussion about Iran, as has been reported, the line between legal and illegal dialogue is pretty thin.

Publicly, Jewish organizational leaders remain solidly behind AIPAC. Several Jewish organizations have released statements supporting the work AIPAC has done over the years, and most others have expressed similar thoughts when asked by reporters.

AIPAC is one of the best-known Jewish organizations in the country, respected for its strong ties to government officials, especially members of Congress.

While some Jewish groups resent AIPAC's ability to set the Jewish community's agenda on Middle East matters, or who don't always agree with their tactics, there is strong sentiment that any negative attention for AIPAC will hurt all Jewish groups' efforts.

Some Jewish officials say the initial feeling in the community was that it was better not to speak out — not because of a lack of support for AIPAC, but in hopes of minimizing media coverage of the story.

But now that more than 300 articles already have been written on the issue in American newspapers, that thinking has changed.

Jewish leaders now are minimizing the investigation, suggesting it can't be of real merit because it has been going on for two years without arrests.

They also note that high-ranking governmental officials with knowledge of the probe, such as President Bush and his national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, addressed AIPAC after the investigation reportedly was launched.

If the FBI is pursuing an intelligence investigation, as is believed, and not a criminal investigation, it's hard to know what launched it. The guidelines for that type of investigation are classified, a former senior FBI official said.

He said it would be normal for the investigation to go on for a long time without arrests, though it would have to be reviewed and adjudicated internally at the FBI or Justice Department.

"AIPAC is not a soft target," the official said. "To launch an investigation against AIPAC, you are going to have to have some credible information to go with it."

Once an investigation is launched, its direction can be tailored by people who may be out to prove — because of bias or in the interest of catching a big fish — that AIPAC acted illegally, Jewish organizational leaders said.

the government are propelling the investigation forward or leaking it to the media. Others suggest that opponents of the war in Iraq are trying to tie some of its key architects — so-called "neo-conservatives" in the Pentagon — to Israel and to possible dual loyalties.

"If that is the pretext, it's a problem," Neumann said. "Someone may be out to prove that thesis is true, and they can look as long as they want."

AIPAC is hoping to weather the storm by proving its strength as an

organization. In an appeal to contributors Tuesday, AIPAC leaders said decision-makers in Washington will look at AIPAC's financial strength to gauge its overall viability.

"We cannot abide any suggestion that American citizens should be perceived as being involved in illegal activities simply for seeking to participate in the decisions of their elected leaders, or the officials who work for them," read the letter, signed by AIPAC President Bernice Manocherian and Executive Director Howard Kohr. "That is our right as citizens of the greatest democracy in the history of mankind. That is a right we will proudly exercise. That is a right we will staunchly defend."

**Some suggest anti-Semitic or anti-Israel entities within the U.S. government are propelling the investigation forward and leaking it to the media.**

"Overall, it's finding a needle in a haystack," said JINSA's Neumann. "If you go into enough haystacks, you'll find something that resembles a needle, but is not a needle."

There also is concern that the saga may not have a succinct end.

It may be difficult to learn when the investigation into AIPAC is completed, if no charges are filed, and its exact origins — information Jewish officials say would be useful in clearing the name of AIPAC and the community in general.

"I don't think there is a great deal of trust in an investigation in this political climate," Rosenthal said. "I hope we find out the facts and find out why someone would start this story."

For now, theories abound. Some suggest anti-Semitic or anti-Israel entities within

## Sex trade expose

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A docudrama about sex slavery in Israel is being screened at the Venice Film Festival.

Amos Gitai's "Promised Land" is one of 22 offerings this week at the prestigious event, which traditionally showcases independent and avant-garde movies.

Gitai's film follows a group of European prostitutes who are smuggled into Israel from Egypt and endure abuse at the hands of their pimps and clients.

The director said he researched the subject extensively using information from human-rights groups. "We are used to industrialized sexual relations," Gitai told reporters in the Italian city. "I think it's about time to speak about it."

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# Exhibit opens celebration of American Jewry

By LARRY LUXNER

RECIFE, Brazil (JTA) — Dr. Boris Berenstein has retraced a route taken 350 years ago by other Jews from this Brazilian port city.

Berenstein, president of the Federacao Israelita de Pernambuco in Brazil, traveled to New York for an exhibit opening this week that sheds light on the largely unknown history of Jewish life in Recife and marks the launch of a yearlong celebration of 350 years of American Jewish life.

Exhibits, lectures and concerts throughout the year will focus on the Jewish experience in North America.

It was from Recife on Sept. 7, 1654, that a group of 23 Dutch-speaking Sephardim set sail for New Amsterdam in a desperate effort to escape the Inquisition imposed by Portugal, which had defeated Holland for control of Brazil.

Shortly after arriving, these 23 immigrants — the first Jews to land on American shores — established Shearith Israel, the first synagogue in New Amsterdam, the colony that eventually became New York.

“Our community wants to show the world that we were an important chapter in Jewish history,” Berenstein said. “They’re celebrating 350 years of Jews in the United States, but nobody’s made any reference to Recife until now, and that’s only because of the anniversary.”

As part of that celebration, Recife Jews have put together an exhibition entitled “Pernambuco: Gateway to New York,” which features, among other things, a multimedia and 3-D virtual tour of the recently restored Kahal Zur Israel Synagogue in downtown Recife.

The exhibit was slated to open Wednesday at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. After it completes its run there on Dec. 31, it will travel to Canada and Los Angeles.

Another exhibit, “From Haven to Home: A Library of Congress Exhibition Marking 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” opens this week at the Library of Congress in Washington.

Two years ago, Kahal Zur Israel was opened to the general public as a museum and documentation center, following a \$500,000 restoration project funded by the Sao Paulo-based Safra Foundation and the state government of Pernambuco.

The building housing Kahal Zur Israel had been demolished at the beginning of the 20th century, replaced by a bank and later by an electronics shop. Subsequent excavations revealed eight different floor levels, the foundations of the synagogue and the remains of a mikvah used in purification rituals.

Visitors, each paying the equivalent of 60 cents, enter the building from the street. They can view the mikvah and original pavement stones through glass panels on the floor, as they make their way to the building’s interior. On upper floors, explanatory panels in Portuguese and English tell the history of Recife’s Jews.

The highlight of the restored synagogue is the bimah, or dais, for Torah readings and the Holy Ark.

Behind the scenes, half a dozen archivists and researchers work at computer stations under the direction of Tania Kaufman, the director general of the Arquivo Historico Judaico de Pernambuco, a non-profit group whose employees include both Jews and non-Jews.

“This is part of a larger project to fill in the historical gaps of the Jewish presence in Pernambuco,” Kaufman told JTA. “We cover the history of the Sephardim since the 16th century and Portuguese Jews coming from Amsterdam in the 17th century, until the present time.”

Kaufman said that between 1637 and 1644, Jews enjoyed complete religious freedom under the reign of the local Dutch administrator, Joao Mauricio de Nassau. These new arrivals also came for economic reasons, as Portuguese Jews who had settled in Amsterdam years before had enjoyed strong commercial ties with Dutch entrepreneurs.

The community eventually grew to 600 families led by Rabbi Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, who was sent by the Amsterdam Congregation. Jews flourished in the sugar industry and were slave owners.

But with the decline of Dutch rule in 1654 and the reinstatement of the Portuguese regime, Recife’s Jews were forced to leave. Some of them did, sailing off to the Caribbean or North America, though most of them stayed, undergoing public

conversion to Christianity while continuing to practice Judaism in secret.

“These people mixed with the local population and sometimes went into hiding, because if the Inquisition found them, they would be sent to Lisbon and burned alive,” she said.

Jewish life in Recife remained dormant until right after World War I, when large numbers of Eastern European Jews began arriving as immigrants. Today, Recife has about as many Jews as it did in 1654.

“We’re a small community, but today’s Jews are not descended from the Sephardim who were here in the 1600s,” said Berenstein, a radiologist. “My family, for instance, was from Romania. They

survived the Shoah and came to Brazil in 1948.”

Recife’s Jewish population has stagnated because of its geographic and economic limitations. The nearest communities are in Salvador, home to 500 Jews, Fortaleza, 120 Jews, and Natal, 40 Jews. Recife is more than 1,200 miles from Sao Paulo, the center of Jewish life in Brazil.

Recife maintains an 85-year-old Jewish school, the Colegio Israelita Moises Schwartz, which currently has 150 students but faces serious financial problems despite the local Jewish community’s relative wealth.

“The school is going through a difficult time, and it’s about to close because a lot of the Jews aren’t sending their kids there anymore,” said Recife businessman Alan Rabinovici. “One of the biggest reasons for that is intermarriage. Since one of the parents is not Jewish, they tend to send their children to non-Jewish schools instead.”

Rabbi Alexander Mizrahi is spiritual leader of the local Bet Habad, which also happens to be Recife’s only functioning synagogue. He agreed that there’s been enormous interest among Brazilians in their supposed Jewish roots.

“Many Brazilians come here asking about conversion, but most of them are not serious. The majority have certain interests, like jobs, or because they want to marry a Jewish girl,” said Mizrahi. “People who are really serious about Judaism nowadays must go to Israel or the states.”

In 1654, a group of 23 immigrants from Brazil became the first Jews in America.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Report: Probes into war criminals rising

The number of new probes against suspected Holocaust-era criminals increased by nearly 150 percent, according to a new report.

Between April 1, 2003, and March 31, 2004, probes were launched against at least 335 suspected Nazi-era criminals, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said in a report released Tuesday.

Seven World War II criminals were convicted during that period, all in the United States.

### E.U. to discuss anti-Semitism?

The European Union's Dutch presidency may propose a meeting of E.U. education, justice and interior ministers to discuss anti-Semitism.

At a meeting Monday with a senior delegation from the European Jewish Congress in The Hague, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende said that he would present the proposal to the E.U.'s Council of Ministers, Serge Cwajgenbaum, secretary general of the EJC, told JTA.

Jewish leaders also called on the European Union to initiate interministerial meetings on the subject based on a model already employed by France. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is to visit the Netherlands, which currently holds the E.U.'s six-month rotating presidency, in mid-October.

### Paramedics transcend politics

Magen David Adom is hosting counterparts from the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Israel.

Attending the first-ever international exchange in Israel for young ambulance-service volunteers this month are representatives from America, Bulgaria, Denmark, Jordan, Norway, Uganda and the United Kingdom, Magen David said Tuesday.

The 35 delegates will spend two weeks in Netanya exchanging tips on emergency responses to terrorism and natural disaster. Magen David said it hopes the event will ease its integration into the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

### Hearing into hate in S. Africa

A South African court paved the way for a hearing on whether a Muslim radio station broadcast a program containing Holocaust denial. On Monday, the country's Supreme Court of Appeal ruled that Radio 786 could not appeal a court decision made earlier this year that a hearing should be held into a May 8, 1998 program.

The broadcast featured an interview with Yacoub Zaki, a historian at the Muslim Institute in London.

During the interview, Zaki said, "I accept that 1 million-plus Jews died during the Second World War, but I dispute the fact that they were murdered, that they were killed by gassing."

### Chief rabbi: U.N. needed for religion

One of Israel's two chief rabbis renewed calls for a Jerusalem-based "religious United Nations" to promote dialogue. Yona Metzger is attending a weeklong interreligious conference organized by the Milan Archdiocese and the St. Egidio community, a Catholic social action group.

"We should form a permanent assembly of religious leaders, like the U.N. General Assembly for international political and diplomatic relations, with its permanent center in Jerusalem," Metzger told the opening session Sunday.

### Kazakhstan gets new synagogue

A new synagogue was inaugurated in Kazakhstan. The synagogue is located in the capital, Astana. Nursultan Nazarbayev, president of

the predominantly Muslim nation, and Yona Metzger, Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, were among those who addressed the festive crowd.

The Beit Rachel-Chabad Lubavitch Shul was constructed with funds donated by local Jewish and business leader Alexander Mashkevich in honor of his mother. Astana is home to an estimated 300 to 500 Jews.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Satellite crash to be probed

Israeli officials ordered an investigation after the crash of a spy satellite intended to increase surveillance over Iran.

Also, a Knesset subcommittee dealing with intelligence and security assessments will gather for an urgent meeting to discuss the implications of the failed launch of the Ofek-6 satellite on Israel's security, Army Radio reported Tuesday.

The Ofek-6 crashed Monday in the Mediterranean Sea shortly after takeoff due to a rocket malfunction.

### Assad offers peace talks

Syria reportedly offered to resume peace talks with Israel. "I am ready to resume peace talks with Israel, if Israeli Prime Minister Sharon is prepared to do so," Al-Hayat newspaper this week quoted Syrian President Bashar Assad as telling U.S. officials.

Negotiations with Damascus stalled in 2000 over former leader Hafez Assad's demand for all of the Golan Heights to be returned, including land Syria conquered from Israel in 1948.

Jerusalem was cool on the overture by Assad's son and successor, with officials on Monday calling it a bid by Syria to duck U.S. censure for its backing of terrorists.

### Rabbis want crackdown

Settler rabbis accused the Israeli government of "turning the other cheek" in its counterterrorism efforts.

"We refuse to be agitated by those who preach a Christian morality of turning the other cheek, or to be impressed by those who have descended to the ethical and logical nadir of preferring the lives of our enemies over our own lives," the rabbis said in an edict issued Tuesday, alluding to Israel's policy of limiting innocent Palestinian casualties during operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip despite the added risk this can pose to Israeli troops.

The signatories, which included leading West Bank rabbis, said more sweeping counterterrorist crackdowns would help prospects of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Other Jewish authorities disagreed.

"The Torah of Israel and Jewish morality have consistently come out against harming innocents," said Rabbi Michael Melchior, an Israeli politician. "The determined and justified fight against terrorism and its actors does not warrant collective punishment."

## NORTH AMERICA

### ADL runs ads deriding anti-Semitism

The Anti-Defamation League will run television ads abroad deriding anti-Semitism. The ADL is running the 30-second spot on Bloomberg Television's pan-European network, which reaches Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"The message is that anti-Semitism, when left unchecked, threatens everyone, and that individuals can be a force in helping to eradicate hate," the ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, said in a statement.

The ad campaign, called "Anti-Semitism Is Anti-All of Us," will air Sept. 9-Sept. 15 and is timed to coincide with an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe conference in Brussels on racism.