

**IN THE NEWS**
**'Road map'  
back on track?**

Colin Powell urged Israel and the Palestinians to resume talks based on the "road map" peace plan.

On his last official peace mission as U.S. secretary of state, Powell met Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Monday and was expected to confer with Palestinian leaders on the upcoming election of a successor to the late Yasser Arafat. [Story, Pg. 3]

**Database  
lists survivors**

Israel's Yad Vashem launched an online database of 3 million Holocaust victims.

Beginning Monday, the database, previously only available at Israel's Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, will be accessible anywhere in the world at [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org).

The database is part of efforts to reconstruct the names and life stories of all Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem officials also are making a push to collect as many additional names as possible.

**U.N. condemns  
anti-Semitism**

In what Israel called a breakthrough, a U.N. committee passed a resolution condemning religious intolerance, including anti-Semitism.

The Third Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution calling for the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance.

The resolution also recognized "with deep concern the overall rise in instances of intolerance and violence directed against members of many religious communities in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia."

**The JTA World Report will not be published Friday, November 26, because of the U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving.**

# WORLD REPORT

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## As Palestinian picture improves, concern on Iranian nukes

By **RON KAMPEAS**

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — For Israel, it's the classic "I've got good news, but you might want to hear the bad news first" scenario.

Just when a confluence of unrelated events revived the prospect of peace talks with the Palestinians, Iran's potential nuclear threat to the Jewish state suddenly seems greater than ever.

In fact, the Iran dilemma is almost the mirror image of new hope with the Palestinians: The prospect of a nuclear-armed, radical Islamic regime suddenly has moved from the "within years" to the "within months" column, differences between the United States and Europe are dogging resolution — and the United States wants Israel to just sit still.

Reports of Iran's accelerated development of nuclear material, as well as missiles to deliver it, have profoundly unsettled Israelis.

"We believe we know what the real intentions of the Iranians are," Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said last week in Cleveland at the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group of North American Jewish federations. "The real intention of the Iranians is to develop a nuclear bomb."

Agreement over keeping at bay a nation that routinely calls for Israel's elimination and glorifies suicide bombers reached across Israel's otherwise fractious political culture.

"Israel cannot, cannot live under the shadow of nuclear Iran and the bomb," Ephraim Sneh, a leader of the opposition Labor party, said on CNN.

"Israel is very vulnerable," said Sneh, who was in Washington last week. "All our economic and intellectual assets are concentrated in a piece of 20 and 60 miles. That's all. Two bombs can turn Israel into a scorched Third World country. We cannot live with it."

Yossi Beilin, leader of the dovish Yahad party, said the issue hangs over the nation at a time when Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's death, forthcoming Palestinian elections and the Bush administration's post-election energy present renewed opportunities for peace in the region.

"Iran is a very, very important issue," Beilin told JTA. "For us it is hovering, it is a problem."

Israel and the United States were hoping the International Atomic Energy Agency would announce tougher measures at its board meeting Thursday, including more rigorous international monitoring and a trigger mechanism that automatically would refer any violation of Iran's nonproliferation agreement to the U.N. Security Council for sanctions.

Mindful of this week's IAEA meeting, the Iranians signed an agreement last week with France, Germany and Britain to temporarily suspend their uranium enrichment efforts.

Iran announced on Monday that the suspension, in effect until Iran works out a long-term agreement with the international community, is now underway.

Instead of assuaging concerns, however, the agreement underscored skepticism about Iran's intentions. Within days of signing the agreement, a reliable opposition group

*Continued on page 2*

**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

## ■ Amid hope on Palestinian front, questions emerge on Iran's nuclear intentions

*Continued from page 1*

said Iran was using advanced technology to enrich uranium at military sites and keeping the activity secret, presumably to exempt it from the suspension.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran also said that the country had purchased enriched uranium in 2001 and designs for nuclear warheads in the mid-1990s.

Iran dismissed the claims out of hand, but on Friday European diplomats — some apparently from the same nations that had negotiated the suspension agreement — were telling reporters that Iran was accelerating enrichment ahead of the suspension.

The diplomats were furious with the obvious effort to get Iran as close as possible to weaponization before the freeze kicks in.

President Bush said he found the allegations credible. Attending a meeting of Pacific Rim leaders in Chile, Bush said he considered the reports a “very serious matter.”

Another area of concern for the Americans is the development of missiles needed to deliver the warheads.

“I have seen some information that would suggest they had been actively working on delivery systems,” U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said lastweek.

Iran dismisses the reports as unfounded and compares them to the erroneous intelligence on weapons development that helped draw the United States into war with Iraq.

“The burden of proof is on the shoulder of the person who makes the claims,” Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said Monday in an interview on CNN.

The problem with that explanation is that Iran often is the source of the claims.

In August, Iran released photos of a new version of its Shihab missile that had a baby-bottle design, as opposed to the usual cone shape.

The design apparently was drawn from Soviet era ICBM nuclear missiles, said Patrick Clawson, an Iran expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, since a nuclear device fits better in a baby-bottle shape.

Why would the Iranians allow the release of those pictures?

“They want people to know,” Clawson said.

With Iraqi despot Saddam Hussein out of the way, flexing muscles sends a message that Iran is now a dominant power in the Middle East. That would allow Iran to continue its disruptive involvement in Lebanon, where Israel says Iran has armed Hezbollah terrorists with 13,000 missiles. Hezbollah and Iran also have emerged among the main financiers of Palestinian terrorist attacks in the West Bank.

The revelations late last week only increased skepticism among some on the 35-member IAEA board, and the United States has expressed its determination to impose stiffer standards, especially since Iran reneged on previous deals.

Europeans also are unnerved that the newer Shihab missiles apparently could put major European cities within range.

On the other hand, China and Russia — which as declared nuclear nations have considerable influence at the IAEA — are averse to sanctions. Russia has a financial stake in Iran's main nuclear reactor at Bushehr.

Furthermore, Mohammed ElBaradei, the IAEA's director-general, on Monday called Iran's enrichment suspension a “step in the right direction,” despite skepticism by Israel and others that any real suspension was under way.

Should Iran clear the IAEA hurdle,

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) plan to reintroduce their bipartisan “Iran Freedom Support Act” when Congress reconvenes in January. It would allow the president to sanction countries that do business with the Islamic regime and strengthen support for opposition groups.

That likely would have the strong support of the pro-Israel community in Washington, which believes the suspension agreement with Europe is inadequate.

“Iran is intensely working to marry its nuclear and missile programs so that it can deliver a nuclear weapon

at the earliest possible date,” said Andrew Schwartz, a spokesman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. “Nothing in the agreement stops Iran from completing nuclear warhead designs or improving its missiles to enable them to deliver nuclear weapons.”

After this meeting, Bush likely would raise the threat of sanctions when the IAEA board meets again, in about four months.

Israel, meanwhile, is sitting on its hands, not wanting to upend delicate U.S. efforts to build international support. U.S. officials have made clear they do not want Israel to repeat its successful 1981 strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak.

“I don't see how it would do anything but provoke . . . a conflict between Israel and Iran, and we want to avoid that at all costs, and I think the Israelis recognize that,” Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said Sunday on NBC's Meet the Press. “It's one thing to attack a reactor in Iraq 20-some years ago. It's something entirely different to take on that challenge now.”

Israelis say they are happy to comply, for now. On the record, they say the window for Iran's nuclearization is two years; off the record, they say the world is looking at 12 months.

“The complacency of the international community drives Israel, pushes Israel to the corner,” Sneh, a retired general, told CNN. “We don't prepare a pre-emptive strike, but, gradually, along the axis of time, we are pushed to the corner.” ■



### JTA WORLD REPORT

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# In party victory, Sharon ups diplomatic prospects

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After a string of embarrassing defeats in his own party, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's victory in the election of key Likud officers raises the chances that he will be able to broaden his government and push through a promised withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip — though it's still not certain.

Likud rebels, who have been at the forefront of the campaign against Sharon's disengagement plan, put up candidates for three top party posts. Had they won, Sharon's political future would have been bleak.

"The message of such a victory will be that Sharon is finished," pundit Yossi Vertzer wrote in Ha'aretz ahead of Monday's vote. "It would be very difficult for Sharon to lead the Likud again in the next Knesset elections."

Instead, the victory of three people who aren't diehard Sharon loyalists but are figures the prime minister feels he can work with, improves the prospects for progress just as the United States and Europe prepare for a reinvigorated peace push.

The vote came as U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in the region to see whether new chances for peace have opened in the wake of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's death, and what the United States can do to facilitate elections for a new Palestinian leader.

On the plane coming in, Powell hinted that if the Palestinians make real efforts to stop terrorism, the United States would be ready to contribute \$20 million toward Palestinian elections.

Sharon told Powell in Jerusalem on Monday that Israel would do all it could to facilitate the Palestinian electoral process. He said Israel was ready for security coordination with the Palestinians in the run-up to the elections, would allow Arabs from eastern Jerusalem to vote and would allow full freedom of movement in the Palestinian territories on election day.

After talks later with the new Palestinian leaders in Jericho, Powell said he had the impression that they were committed to reform, suggesting that he expected them to take steps, such as fighting terror, to get peace talks with Israel back on track.

Clearly, the Americans want to exploit any chance there is to kick-start the dead-

locked process, and Powell sounded an upbeat note after his talks in Jerusalem and Jericho. He spoke of a "new attitude on the Palestinian side" and "flexibility in Israel," and said, "there is enough for us to move forward now."

The Israelis also are upbeat. A senior Israeli intelligence source told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday that with the new Palestinian leadership there is a good chance for a "total change in Palestinian political culture."

If so, the Likud vote improves the chance that Sharon will find an Israeli coalition able to break the diplomatic deadlock.

The rebel candidates — Uzi Landau for the key Central Committee chairmanship, Michael Ratzon for the secretariat and Gilad Erdan for the bureau — were comfortably beaten by, respectively, former Public Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz and Health Minister Danny Naveh.

The results show that the rebels do not control the 2,970-member Central Committee, the Likud's highest decision-making body, when there is full turnout.

Sharon lost a number of key Central Committee votes when turnout was low. For Monday's showdown, his supporters focused mainly on getting out the Central Committee vote, and pundits agree that it was the huge 91 percent turnout that sank the rebels.

Analysts say the vote shows the rebels control a hardcore of around 30 percent of the Central Committee, and that Sharon can count on about the same number.

The rest vote according to the issue at hand. That means Sharon theoretically could win support for moves to widen his coalition.

The prime minister's losses in the party began in May 2002, when the Central Committee defied him and put the party on record against the establishment of a Palestinian state. In May this year, Sharon was defeated in a full party membership vote on his disengagement plan, with Landau, Ratzon and Erdan leading the campaign against him.

Then, in August, the Central Committee

defied Sharon again, voting against bringing in Labor to bolster Sharon's shaky government.

The successive defeats heightened perceptions of the prime minister's vulnerability inside the party. In the Knesset, a growing number of Likud legislators came out against his disengagement plan.

As the anti-Sharon bandwagon gathered pace, Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launched a move designed to unseat the prime minister. He and five other Likud Cabinet min-

isters planned to vote against Sharon's disengagement plan in the Knesset last month, a move that could have created a major government crisis and sparked an early national election with Netanyahu leading the Likud.

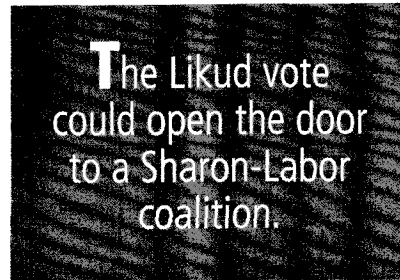
But Sharon's overwhelming victory in that Knesset vote, after Netanyahu backed down, was a turning point for the prime minister's standing in the party. Several Knesset members who had vociferously opposed him suddenly declared their allegiance. Monday night's triumph shored up Sharon's position.

The question now is whether Sharon will be able to bring Labor into his coalition and create a firm political base to carry out the promised withdrawals.

Labor wouldn't be able to join the coalition without other parties such as Shas or United Torah Judaism, Hanegbi said. In other words, if Sharon can persuade either of the two fervently Orthodox parties to join his coalition, he would be able to bring Labor in as well.

What Hanegbi and many in the Central Committee oppose is a Likud-Labor-Shinui government, in which the Likud likely would be bullied into more dovish positions by the two more moderate secular parties. But a coalition in which Likud and at least one right-wing, fervently Orthodox party force Shinui out and dominate Labor is a different proposition.

If Sharon is able to cut a deal, the Central Committee under Hanegbi will be asked to approve it, despite its earlier vote against a unity government with Labor. And if a new vote goes Sharon's way, Monday's victory will have been extremely significant for Sharon — and for disengagement. ■



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Senate praises Bush peace push

The Senate passed by acclamation a motion praising President Bush's latest push for Mideast peace.

The resolution, passed Friday, cites Bush's Nov. 12 news conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in which they called for free Palestinian presidential elections and Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as first steps toward peace.

"These steps lay the basis for more rapid progress on the 'road map' as a reliable guide leading to final status negotiations," the resolution said, referring to an internationally backed peace plan.

#### Hawks, doves press Bush

Some 70 Jewish leaders wrote to Condoleezza Rice, asking her to press forward with President Bush's latest Middle East peace initiative.

The signatories, who include the rabbinical leaders of the Reform and Conservative movements, past presidents of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and major philanthropists, want Rice to help ensure fair Palestinian elections on Jan. 9 and encourage Israel's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Bush mentioned both elements in a Nov. 12 news conference in which he said the passing of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat had created new opportunities for peace.

The letter, sent Monday, also said it is time for Israel to fulfill its commitment to stop settlement activity.

Also on Monday, Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, wrote a letter to Bush saying that Palestinian obstructionism was not confined to Arafat, but shared by others in the Palestinian leadership.

#### UJC says no to divestment

The North American Jewish federation system is opposing efforts by the Presbyterian Church USA to divest from companies that do business with Israel.

In the wake of the church's decision to begin a "phased selective divestment" process and the subsequent move by Episcopalians to consider divestment, the United Jewish Communities' board of trustees voted unanimously last week to take opposing action.

The UJC resolution "recommends that federations, community relations councils and other Jewish organizations take actions at the national and local levels aimed at convincing the leadership of the Presbyterian Church to rescind its divestment decision, and demonstrating to other church groups both the seriousness with which the American Jewish community views divestment and that divestment from Israel is counterproductive in helping to build an enduring peace between Israel and her neighbors."

#### Pro-Israel stance criticized

Bush administration support for Israel boosts Al-Qaida, a former CIA official said.

Michael Scheuer, a retired senior analyst for the CIA, said Sunday that "our unqualified support for Israel" is among U.S. foreign policies that help Osama bin Laden's terrorist network garner backing in Islamic countries.

"No one is advocating dumping Israel as an ally," Scheuer said on NBC's "Meet the Press" program.

"But there is a perception in the Muslim world, and I think there is a perception on the part of many Americans, that the tail is leading the dog in this case. And perception, for better or worse, is often reality."

The Bush administration has strongly backed Israel, seeing Muslim hatred of the Jewish state as symptomatic of a broader hatred of the West.

#### Cross burning on L.I.

The Anti-Defamation League condemned a cross burning on Long Island.

The ADL's New York regional director, Joel Levy, said in a statement that the act "has no place in our society."

The cross burning occurred Sunday on the front lawn of a two-family home where two interracial couples live.

### WORLD

#### Antwerp shooting appears to be criminal

The shooting of a fervently Orthodox Jewish man in Antwerp does not appear to have been an anti-Semitic act.

Jewish community leaders in Antwerp told JTA on Monday that the Nov. 18 shooting appears to have been a criminal act linked to debt collection.

Spokespersons for the Coordinating Committee of Antwerp Jewish Communities and the Forum of Antwerp Jewish Organizations both confirmed that police were pursuing a criminal angle in the case.

Over the weekend, the community's national security organization withdrew news of the attack from its Web site that charts anti-Semitic acts in the country.

Moshe Na'eh, 25, who worked as a sexton for one of the city's Chasidic groups, was shot in the head in the center of the city.

He died later in a hospital.

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Abbas in race to succeed Arafat

The dominant faction in the Palestinian Authority named Mahmoud Abbas as its presidential candidate.

The Fatah Central Committee unanimously elected Abbas on Monday, making him the frontrunner to succeed the late Yasser Arafat in Jan. 9 elections.

A former Palestinian Authority prime minister, Abbas is favored by the United States and Israel for his calls to end Palestinian violence and curb terrorist groups.

#### Three Palestinian fugitives killed

Israeli commandos killed three Fatah terrorists who had hidden in Yasser Arafat's West Bank compound.

The three fugitives were shot dead in their car by undercover Israeli police in Ramallah on Sunday.

They had been among dozens of Fatah and Al-Aksa Brigade terrorists who Arafat sheltered in the compound in the city for months, but who left after the Palestinian Authority president died Nov. 11.

#### Arafat wasn't poisoned

Yasser Arafat's medical file showed his body contained no traces of poison, but it still can't be ruled out, a senior Palestinian official said.

"There is no clear diagnosis of the reason for the death and the toxicological tests were made and no known poison was found," Arafat's relative, Nasser Al-Kidwa, told reporters in Paris on Monday.

He added, however, that he had not read the whole file, which is more than 500 pages long, and could not say definitively that the Palestinian Authority president wasn't poisoned.

Al-Kidwa, who is the P.A.'s ambassador to the United Nations, received Arafat's medical file earlier Monday despite last-minute attempts by Arafat's wife, Suha, to prevent disclosure of the document.