

## IN THE NEWS

## U.S. recalls Syria ambassador

The United States recalled its ambassador from Syria for consultations.

The State Department announced the move Tuesday, a day after a suicide bomber killed Rafik Hariri, a former Lebanese prime minister, in Beirut.

Some Hariri supporters blame Syria for the killing, but Syria denies involvement.

"We're looking to stop the flow of arms through Syria to groups that are violently opposed to the peace process, that are trying to kill the Palestinian leadership as well as the Israelis," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Tuesday.

## Chertoff to head homeland security

The U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed Michael Chertoff on Tuesday to head the Department of Homeland Security.

Chertoff, a judge on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, who is Jewish, ran the Justice Department's criminal division from 2001 until 2003 and was involved in drafting the U.S. Patriot Act.

## Gloves are off at Columbia University

A Columbia University professor challenged anti-Israel professors to a debate.

George Fletcher, a Columbia Law School professor who teaches a course on the jurisprudence of war, paid for a quarter-page advertisement in the Columbia Spectator challenging Middle East studies professors Rashid Khalidi, Joseph Massad and Hamid Dabashi and other interested faculty to a debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, his assistant said.

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# WORLD REPORT

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## After Bush push for Palestinian aid, Congress is left to fill in the blanks

By RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Congress officially is lined up behind President Bush's grand vision of Palestinian democracy — but they want details along with that vision.

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives' powerful International Relations Committee met last week, right after two congressional resolutions overwhelmingly endorsing President Bush's call for a Palestinian state were passed.

The lofty language of those resolutions behind them, Republicans and Democrats on the committee made clear that they now want facts: Where should the \$350 million that Bush is asking for — and which almost quintupled recent requests — go? How should it be monitored? And should strings be attached?

"We have few details at this point about the administration's plans for assistance to the Palestinians," Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) said Feb. 10, "but I'm inclined to give the administration the benefit of the doubt on assistance to the Palestinians in the forthcoming months. However, we expect that we will receive promptly any required authorization legislation, and the administration will respond fully and in a timely manner to any legitimate questions that may be raised about the package."

So far, at least, the administration isn't getting any clearer. In his formal requests to Congress to put \$200 million of the requested \$350 million in an \$82 billion war-on-terror package, Bush did not expand on his goals beyond the broad outlines he put forward in his State of the Union speech Feb. 2.

"Following the recent historic election held by the Palestinians, this request includes \$200 million to reinforce these positive political developments by supporting the development of economic opportunity and democratic institutions," said a fact sheet attached to the White House request. "This money will be used to develop infrastructure and support critical sectors like education, home construction, and basic services."

One clue to where the money might go is State Department action in spending \$40 million in pre-approved funds, separate from the \$350 million Bush requested.

That money is going to water infrastructure, education, job creation and health care — all distributed through nongovernmental organizations and not directly to the Palestinian Authority. That's certain to assuage concerns by some in Congress

and in the pro-Israel community, who have noted that money directed to Palestinian aid in the past often ended up lining the pockets of corrupt Palestinian officials.

Until Bush comes up with more details about his request, however, the powerful members of Congress who approve the funds are looking elsewhere for answers.

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), the top Democrat on the Foreign Operations Subcommittee — which has the final say on the request — rushed into the end of a Feb. 9 Capitol Hill lunch for Natan Sharansky, the Israeli Cabinet Minister who has the president's ear with his theory that stable peace can be made only with democratic regimes.

Lowey apologized for being late and asked Sharansky how he thought the request

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## ■ Congress must figure out details of Bush's Palestinian funding plan

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should be handled. Sharansky said the money should go to NGOs.

"That's one of the most important things — to make sure it goes straight to people and not to bureaucracies," Sharansky said.

The spectacle of one of the most powerful Democrats in Washington chasing a foreigner for advice

underscored the degree to which members of Congress felt the need to fill in the gaps in Bush's vision.

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) put it most succinctly, toward the end of three hours of expert testimony from three top Jewish thinkers and one Palestinian: former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger; Danielle Pletka, a former top Republican Senate staffer and American Enterprise Institute vice president; former top Middle East envoy Dennis Ross; and Ziad Asali, who heads the American Task Force on Palestine and who was an official U.S. observer in last month's P.A. elections.

"What do you think our role should be, if you think we have a role at all?" in determining how the money is spent, Jackson Lee asked.

Despite the broad range of views at the table, all four panelists agreed on Congress'

role: oversight, oversight, oversight.

"Congress has always been the feet-to-the-fire agency in the peace process," Pletka said. "Congress has always been, in a very bipartisan way, the branch of government that has been most willing to do very, very serious oversight to ensure that aid is being used properly, that it is being directed correctly."

A few minutes later, Asali, Pletka's ideological opposite, echoed the thought and urged assurances of Palestinian accountability.

**'That's one of the most important things — to make sure it goes straight to people and not to bureaucracies.'**

**Natan Sharansky**  
Israeli Cabinet Minister

## Jews hope Bush presses Putin

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Amid the growing concern about anti-Semitism in Russia, Jewish activists in Washington are hoping President Bush will press his Russian counterpart to do more.

Bush is expected to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Slovakia Feb. 24. The summit will focus in part on concerns about democratic efforts in Russia, and Jewish leaders say the rise of anti-Semitism is an important trend to discuss.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a federal body created to monitor religious freedom in other countries, was expected to meet with Bush on Friday. During that meeting, commission members are expected to broach their concerns about threats to Jews in Russia, hoping Bush will raise the topic with Putin.

Felice Gaer, vice chairman of the commission and director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Human Rights at the American Jewish Committee, said she hopes the president will push Putin to increase police efforts to protect Jews, to prosecute anyone thought to be guilty of physical attacks against Jews or other hate crimes in Russia and to be aware of the rising number of skinheads.

"He gets it," Gaer said of Bush. "It's a longstanding concern of our commission, and the situation itself is more inflamed

"Our aid, I think, should be predicated on building a bilateral relation between the United States and Palestine that is acceptable to us and useful for the Palestinians, and certainly is acceptable to Israel," Asali said.

One powerful Democrat wanted accountability elsewhere as well — among Gulf Arab states that have not made good on hundreds of millions of dollars in aid pledges to the Palestinians.

"Many Americans join us in wanting to help the Palestinian people, but we can't want to help them more than the Arabs themselves do," said Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the International Relations Committee. "That is why I intend to pursue an initiative that will condition our aid on the demonstrated performance of oil-rich Arab states in providing assistance to the Palestinians." ■

than it was in the past."

The lobbying efforts come after a few highly publicized incidents raised the fear that anti-Semitism is on the rise in Russia.

Last month, a letter signed by 20 Russian lawmakers called on Russia's prosecutor general to ban all Jewish organizations because they are extremist and anti-Russian. Next, on Feb. 3, more than half of the viewers who called the television station during a prime-time debate on one of the country's most popular talk shows supported a lawmaker who made anti-Semitic comments throughout the program.

"It's a horrific situation when elected officials continue to expand and expound on the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' and other anti-Semitic tracts," said Mark Levin, the executive director of the NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia. "We believe that it is a far more serious situation for Jews than it was six months ago."

The NCSJ recently held a conference call during which the chief rabbi of Moscow, Pinchas Goldschmidt, briefed North American Jewish officials on the issue.

The news is not all bad. Jewish leaders have been impressed with Putin's tough rhetoric on anti-Semitism, and hope he can be pushed by the Americans to combat the growing threat more actively. ■

(JTA Foreign Editor Peter Ephross in New York contributed to this report.)

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# Choice of Dean irks some Israel supporters

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Even before he officially became the Democratic National Committee's new chairman, Howard Dean was a source of contention.

Questions about Dean's support for Israel, which first made headlines during his run for the Democratic presidential nomination last year, resurfaced this week, just before he was elected leader of the Democratic Party, and have been intensified by advertisements from the Republican Jewish Coalition.

The criticism was expected. Some Democrats had worried that Dean would be a lightning rod for Republican attacks. But at a time when Democrats are trying to shore up their standing among Jewish voters, the presence of a national chairman whose support for the Jewish state is questionable could be a stumbling block.

"It certainly doesn't help," one Jewish Democratic operative said. "He suffers from the same bad perception. The same way the party got tainted, he got tainted."

Dean, a former Vermont governor, was the subject of an e-mail smear campaign during the Democratic primaries last year after he made several off-the-cuff remarks suggesting the United States should take a more "even-handed" approach to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The term is often understood in the Jewish community as a code word for being less supportive of Israel.

Dean was criticized at the time by other Democratic presidential candidates, including Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and other party leaders. Now those quotes have resurfaced in RJC ads that appeared this week in Roll Call, a Capitol Hill newspaper, and in Jewish newspapers across the country.

The ads feature Lieberman saying Dean's comments "break a 50-year record in which presidents, Republican and Democrat, members of Congress of both parties have supported our relationship with Israel based on shared values."

Jay Footlik, the Jewish liaison for Sen. John Kerry's presidential campaign last year, also is quoted suggesting that centrist Jewish Democrats would be turned off by Dean as party chairman.

Lieberman said the ads don't tell the full story.

"Gov. Dean responded to me and others by calling his comments a mistake," Lieberman told JTA in a statement Tuesday. "I'm confident that as party chairman, Howard will uphold the Democratic Party's historic commitment to support and strengthen our democratic ally Israel."

The ads are being criticized by the Anti-Defamation League, in part because they feature an image of several men covered in white sheets with explosive vests, fawning over a young boy dressed to emulate a suicide bomber.

Democrats said the picture was too much, but the RJC's executive director, Matt Brooks, defended it.

"I think we are all outraged by the photo, but unfortunately, that's the reality of the world today," Brooks said. "When he says it's not our place to take sides, what he is saying is Israel should be forced to negotiate under the threat of terror."

Brooks said the organization considered using a different photo, of Dean wearing a keffiyeh, a traditional Arab head covering.

Aside from the photo controversy, the ad raises questions about how Dean and the party he leads will be perceived among Jews. While his campaign fought against the criticism last year — and the National Jewish Democratic Council has circulated pro-Israel statements Dean made on the campaign trail — Dean suffers from the stigma of being seen as anti-Jewish, at least in some Jewish circles.

Jewish Democrats worked hard last year to quell the perception that the Bush administration and Republicans were stronger supporters of Israel than the Democrats. While any shift of Jewish support to the Republicans was small, it was significant enough in some key swing states to effect outcomes.

Democratic operatives worry that Jews who are unsure about the party's support for Israel — including traditional Democrats who backed Bush last year — might be turned off by Dean.

"The little comments and the questions

they raise, you don't have to have a seismic impact for it to matter," said Dan Gerstein, a Democratic strategist.

"Dean dug himself into a real hole with Jews concerned about U.S. support for Israel and who are wary of the Democrats for this."

Ira Forman, the NJDC's executive director, said he understood that such criticism of Dean was legitimate "from an attack-dog perspective."

"It is incumbent on all of us to show all of what he has

said," Forman said. "I'm confident he is going to work with the Jewish community."

Jewish Democrats say they welcome the opportunity to showcase Dean's full record on Israel.

"What we want to talk about is not what Howard Dean may or may not have said, but what he's going to say," said Susan Turnbull, a Democratic activist in the Jewish community who was elected Saturday as the DNC vice chairwoman. "These attacks are unfounded, and what Howard Dean has said is he will never abandon Israel."

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee issued a news release Monday congratulating Dean on his election.

"AIPAC has a long-standing relationship with Governor Dean," said the statement by AIPAC President Bernice Manocherian and Executive Director Howard Kohr. "We are confident that as chair of the Democratic Party, Governor Dean will carry on the party's deep and abiding commitment to a strong and unshakable relationship between the United States and Israel."

Dean did receive some support from the Jewish community during his presidential campaign. He also often cited the fact that his wife, Judith Steinberg, is Jewish, and that his children chose to practice Judaism.

Dean participated in Chanukah celebrations with staffers on the campaign trail in New Hampshire, even reciting Hebrew prayers over the menorah.

Dean continued his quest for Jewish approval Feb. 10 at a party honoring his ascension to the DNC chairmanship. Presented with a shofar by the NJDC, Dean lifted it pressed it to his lips and blew. ■

**'Dean dug himself into a real hole with Jews concerned about U.S. support for Israel and who are wary of the Democrats for this.'**

**Dan Gerstein**  
Democratic strategist

**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Jericho handover held up

A geographic dispute held up Israel's handover of Jericho to Palestinian Authority control.

The two sides deadlocked Tuesday over whether Al-Awja, a village outside the West Bank city, should be included in the handover.

Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, ruled this out, and also rejected Palestinian demands for a removal of all checkpoints around Jericho, citing security concerns.

Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian Authority official in charge of negotiations, said he hoped the dispute would be resolved by day's end.

Jericho is the first of five West Bank cities from which Israeli forces are to withdraw as a goodwill gesture to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and as a means of testing Palestinian intentions.

### Resettling Gaza settlers

Israel plans to create new towns in the Negev and West Bank for settlers evacuated from the Gaza Strip.

An Interior Ministry committee this week approved the Halutzit 4 program in the Negev, with orders for 500 homes earmarked for Israelis evacuated from Gaza under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's withdrawal plan.

On Tuesday, the Housing Ministry announced a plan to create a new settlement, Gvaot, in the West Bank's Gush Etzion settlement bloc.

"There is no doubt that in carrying out the disengagement plan there is a need to expand towns in the Negev and the Galilee, and on that we are placing our priority," Housing Minister Isaac Herzog told Israel Radio. "This will not prevent a person who has received his compensation to go and buy an apartment where he wants, and if he wants to buy one in Gush Etzion he would be completely within his rights," he said.

### Egypt: We'll stop smuggling

Egypt eventually could stop the smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip, its foreign minister said.

Ahmed Aboul Gheit met Monday in Washington with Jewish officials at a luncheon organized by the American Jewish Committee.

Once Egypt deploys additional troops along its border with the Gaza Strip, Gheit said, he was confident that it could control arms-smuggling into Gaza.

Terrorist groups have smuggled in arms used in attacks on Israeli troops, settlements and towns near Gaza.

Israel sees Egypt's expanded role in Gaza as crucial to its plans to leave the strip this year, and it has agreed to allow Egypt to deploy more troops there than allowed under the 1978 Camp David peace agreement.

### Abbas under scrutiny

Israel's top general demanded that Mahmoud Abbas prosecute terrorists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We will not be satisfied with just a deployment of police," Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday, referring to Palestinian Authority security forces that the P.A. president ordered to stop Hamas rocket fire in the Gaza Strip last month. "Those involved in terrorism must be arrested, interrogated, tried and jailed."

### Russia to sell missiles to Syria

Russia will proceed with a military sale to Syria, despite Israeli objections.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Russian President Vladimir Putin told him the sale of anti-aircraft missiles would go ahead.

Israel is worried that the missiles would reach anti-Israel groups in Lebanon, such as Hezbollah.

### Report: Abbas releases Hamas funds

Mahmoud Abbas reportedly agreed to unfreeze Hamas funds in Palestinian banks.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Palestinian Authority president is freeing the funds as part of a deal to convince Hamas to accept a cease-fire deal Abbas reached last week with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Lowey to stay on oversight committee

A Jewish Democrat in Congress is keeping her top spot on a powerful oversight subcommittee.

Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives met Tuesday to reshuffle membership on the Appropriations Committee and its subcommittees.

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) will remain the ranking Democrat on the foreign operations subcommittee, which reviews budget requests for foreign funding, including aid to Israel, the Palestinians and Arab countries.

### DNC picks Jewish vice chairwoman

A Jewish activist was elected vice chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee.

Susan Turnbull, who serves on the board of the National Jewish Democratic Council, has worked with Hillel and was the DNC's deputy chair before her election Saturday.

The Republican National Committee elected Ken Mehlman, the Jewish campaign manager of the Bush-Cheney re-election campaign, as its national chairman last month.

### Free trade for Palestine?

The United States could extend free-trade status to a future Palestinian state.

Robert Zoellick, the U.S. trade representative who has been nominated to be deputy secretary of state, said in confirmation hearings Tuesday that the Palestinian areas now come under the U.S. free trade agreement with Israel.

The United States could maintain that status in a future Palestinian state as a means of promoting peace, he said.

## WORLD

### Romanian leader pledges to teach Holocaust

Romania's prime minister told a visiting Jewish delegation that he places great importance on teaching "exact knowledge" of the Holocaust.

Calin Popescu Tariceanu met Tuesday with more than 50 members of a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, who are on a five-day mission to Bulgaria and Romania before going on to Israel.

Tariceanu also said he believes in fostering cultural dialogue and tolerance.

The conference's executive vice chairman, Malcolm Hoenlein, said Tariceanu also assured the group he would encourage legislation to enable restitution of Jewish communal property in Romania.

### Chirac says no on Hezbollah

French President Jacques Chirac refused to add Hezbollah to the E.U.'s list of terrorist organizations.

Chirac reportedly rejected the request about the Shi'ite fundamentalist group during a meeting Monday with Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom.

The European Union is expected to hold an initial discussion Wednesday on the Israeli request, but France's position is considered crucial in the matter.