

IN THE NEWS

**UJC dismisses
six staff members**

The federation system's umbrella group dismissed several senior staff members as part of a major reorganization.

The United Jewish Communities dismissed six senior staff members in an effort to restructure the organization and cut costs.

The move comes under the leadership of Howard Rieger, who became UJC's president and CEO on Sept. 1.

Deep cuts were made in two UJC departments — Israel and Overseas and Renaissance and Renewal — in which the top executives were removed. [Story, Pg. 3]

**Israel hands
over Jericho**

Israel gave the Palestinian Authority control over Jericho.

Israeli troops withdrew Wednesday from checkpoints around the West Bank city, the first of five to be handed over under last month's cease-fire agreement reached by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Under the deal, armed Palestinian police are responsible for security inside Jericho and for ensuring that no terrorists leave the city to carry out attacks.

Israelis are still banned from entering the city, dismayed Jericho residents who had hoped the rapprochement would boost the local tourism industry and casino.

**House OKs
Palestinian aid**

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved \$200 million in aid to the Palestinians.

The House voted 389-43 Wednesday on an \$81 billion supplemental package, which is mostly for the war in Iraq, but includes \$200 million in fast-track aid for the Palestinians.

An amendment set aside \$5 million of the \$200 million for an outside audit of the money and removed the president's traditional national security waiver.



WORLD REPORT

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Rapprochement in Middle East finding its way to Washington

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In case anyone has missed the latest rapprochement between Israel and the Palestinians in the Middle East, take a look at what's happening in Washington.

The pro-Israel lobbying group American Israel Public Affairs Committee and Americans for Peace Now are joining forces to defeat an effort to strangle massive aid to the Palestinians.

And the Israeli and Palestinian envoys to Washington are exchanging pleasantries while agreeing on the need for American generosity to the Palestinians — as well as Palestinian transparency and self-discipline.

All those forces were lined up this week to push \$200 million in emergency assistance for the Palestinians through the U.S. Congress. The aid was overwhelmingly approved Wednesday by the House of Representatives. The Senate is expected to approve a similar measure.

The \$200 million is part of the House appropriations bill for \$81 billion in supplemental aid for the war on terrorism, including for Iraq. The bill earmarks \$5 million of the \$200 million in assistance to the Palestinians for an outside audit before any aid is disbursed.

The package included an amendment approved last week by the House Appropriations Committee. The amendment, introduced by Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.), removes a national security waiver, which presidents have used in the past to rush aid to the Palestinians. That could slow down the aid, as now

each dollar of the \$200 million must come under congressional scrutiny.

But lawmakers defeated an effort to put a brake on the aid altogether.

Last week, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) introduced a measure that would prohibit all assistance to the Palestinians pending presidential certification that the Palestinian leadership "is not tainted by violence," a tall order given the intifada over the past several years.

The measure, which Weiner then offered as an amendment to the legislation on Tuesday, was defeated by the House.

Make no mistake: There are still some substantive differences among the new-found pals — chiefly over the arduousness of the reporting procedures attached to the aid — but there's a definite shift in perspectives.

"It symbolizes the changes of the time, and I hope the time is changing," Daniel Ayalon, Israel's ambassador to the United States, said Monday of his Capitol Hill appearance with Hassan Abdel Rahman, the Palestine Liberation Organization representative.

The joint appearance at a Peace Now event marked the first time the two had shared a platform.

In its effort to garner support for the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank planned for this summer, the Israeli Embassy has sought the assistance of dovish organizations that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government once tried hard to marginalize.

"Israeli representatives have always and

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ANALYSIS

■ *Changed politics makes for surprising alliances in Washington*

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will continue to reach out to Jewish organizations across the spectrum," said an Israeli official. "This is particularly true in a period in which Israel is facing difficult decisions."

Americans for Peace Now has, at the embassy's invitation, attended briefings for American Jewish leaders on the merits of the disengagement in recent weeks. The group says that it has not usually been invited to such briefings.

The new dynamics emerged into the open on Monday when Ayalon joined the Capitol Hill forum sponsored by Peace Now and featuring the Palestinian, Jordanian and Egyptian ambassadors.

"As to the aid package to the Palestinians, we were very much for it," Ayalon said, on the eve of the full House of Representatives debate on the assistance. "I think it is very important to try and help economic opportunities over with the Palestinians."

Key to the decision to line up with Americans for Peace Now, Israeli officials said, was the fact that the group defines itself as Zionist—something its president, Deborah DeLee, emphasized in introducing the speakers. The decision was influenced as well by the group's friendly ties with diplomats from Arab countries that Israel wants on board in facilitating the transition to Palestinian self-rule.

For his part, Rahman fully endorsed a provision in the package that subjects the Palestinian Authority to an outside audit

before any aid gets under way.

He said P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas would welcome an audit "by the World Bank, by any institution that will assist us."

Opposition to Weiner's proposal united unlikely bedfellows: officials for Americans for Peace Now and AIPAC, whose relationship is usually defined by grim stares exchanged across crowded committee rooms.

Ayalon, carefully saying he usually prefers to stay out of American political fights, nonetheless noted that holding up the money would keep Israel from using some of it to build new high-tech crossing points that would help accelerate secure travel for Palestinians crossing from the West Bank and Gaza Strip into Israel.

He said Israel was "encouraged by the fact that this part of the package, the assistance package, is being used also as a bridge between Israel and the Palestinian Authority," allocating some of it for special terminals with high-tech and technological equipment.

The rest of the money goes to job creation, home and school construction, institution building and road works.

There was broad-based community support for the aid — but apparent divisions over how it should be accounted for.

"There is an historic opportunity for progress between Israel and the Palestinians at the moment," AIPAC said in a statement sent to congressmen that was seen as critical in driving the aid through.

"AIPAC is supportive of aid to the Palestinians with the right oversight to ensure that such aid is used properly to help the Palestinian people and advance America's interests."

AIPAC endorsed the overall Kolbe amendment — which also calls for an end to incitement and provides the \$5 million audit — but would not comment on its particulars.

Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum decried the removal of the waiver as a

roadblock to reinforcing Abbas' efforts to quash violence, which have been praised by the Bush and Sharon administrations as effective.

The Reform movement strongly endorsed the \$200 million.

Mark Pelavin, the associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said throwing obstacles in the way of the assistance was a mistake. "We support the bill as it was," he said, without the Kolbe amendment. "We share the concern about the possible misuse of funds and we feel

that the president would deal with such concerns appropriately."

The waiver could still be restored in conference with the Senate, a body that is less averse to getting aid to the Palestinians, Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.) said in endorsing the package.

"I hope, in conference with the Senate, we can give back to the president the flexibility he needs to promote U.S. security interests in the region," she said Tuesday on the House floor during debate on the package.

The only national Jewish organization publicly on board with Weiner's provisions was the Zionist Organization of America, which is running a national ad campaign that more or less reflects the resolution.

ZOA President Morton Klein, who said he worked closely with Weiner on his resolution, said the decrease in Palestinian violence was deceptive and accused Abbas of continuing to peddle violent rhetoric.

"President Bush is making a historical mistake in funding a terrorist regime," Klein said.

Another congressman, attending the Peace Now event Monday, said the days of Congress getting in the administration's way in the Middle East could be numbered.

"I warn opponents of Prime Minister Sharon in Israel: Don't regard the House of Representatives as an appellate body," said Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.).



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New head of UJC moves to reshape his staff

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — Howard Rieger says his move this week to dismiss several senior staff members of the United Jewish Communities is more about vision than cost-cutting.

There was “no pressure to do anything,” Rieger, who took the helm of the federation umbrella group six months ago, told JTA. “No gun pointed to my head.”

Instead, he said, “My goal is to make this organization more impactful,” and if the reorganization called for increased spending, he would have considered it.

At the same time, he acknowledged the need to rein in expenses, saying that “left to its own devices, the cost of the UJC would grow dramatically.”

Since becoming president and CEO of the UJC, the longtime president of the United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh has spoken often about the need to consolidate the organization’s work, focusing on its greatest strength: fund raising.

In the latest restructuring, he plans to make good on his promise.

The move comes only months before the UJC will pass its annual budget — a perennial time of scrutiny for federations, which complain that the UJC budget is too bloated. And UJC insiders have said that adhering to a strict budget figured prominently in Rieger’s personnel moves.

The staff members being dismissed, effective July 1, are Robert Hyfler, senior vice president for research and development; Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, vice president of renaissance and renewal; Rabbi Eric Lanekin, director of religious and educational activities; Yoav Ben-Horin, director of the Israel and Overseas Pillar; Lorraine Blass, a senior planner who managed the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey; and Michelle Israel, communications manager.

Eric Levine, past associate vice president of financial resource development, will take over UJC’s Renaissance and Renewal Pillar. And Doron Krakow, vice president of the Israel and Overseas Pillar, will coordinate its work with the activities of United Israel Appeal and

UJC’s Israel office.

“I think this is just Howard Rieger’s reshaping of the organization in the image that he wants it to be in, given the budget constraints he’s confronting,” said Jay Sarver of St. Louis, a member of UJC’s board of trustees.

In his interview with JTA, Rieger spoke repeatedly of the need to build an organization based on collaboration and team work.

“It’s all about creating a synergy and a reality that grows out of a merger,” Rieger said. “We have not mined the depth of the opportunity that this merger has presented to us.”

The Renaissance and Renewal Pillar will lose two top people, both rabbis. Asked about the loss of a rabbinical presence at UJC, Rieger said it was “lamentable.”

“But I think the job of UJC at this moment is to decide what are the resources that can get us to where we want to be,” he said.

“Nobody wants to spend one more dollar on UJC operations than is absolutely necessary,” and assigning the job to Levine, who has a background in federation experience, “will enable us to move

forward aggressively,” he said.

“This is about how do we get our job done.”

One of UJC’s chief beneficiaries, the Jewish Agency for Israel, is also being rocked by personnel departures.

Yossi Hogri, chief financial officer, has resigned. And Michael Rosenberg, director-general of aliyah and absorption, is planning to leave the organization.

Asked about these developments, the Jewish Agency responded in general terms, referring to its new strategic plan for the organization.

“The Jewish Agency is currently undergoing far-reaching organizational and structural changes based on the revisited strategic plan approved recently by its board of governors,” said spokesman Michael Jankelowitz.

“The purpose of these changes are to adapt the Jewish Agency to current trends and challenges facing the Jewish people, especially in the face of aliyah, education and partnerships,” he said. “These challenges also require changing of the guard and the injection of fresh talent into the organization.”



Israeli gays wed in Toronto

TORONTO (JTA) — Four gay couples from Israel who were married in Toronto hope that Israel will recognize their marriages, but they are skeptical.

Surrounded last Friday by a small group of friends and a larger group of reporters and photographers, the four male couples took advantage of Canada’s recent same-sex marriage provisions as well as Ontario’s willingness to allow non-residents to be married legally in the province.

Etai Pinkas, a city councilman from Tel Aviv, was one of the marriage partners. “We’ll probably be rejected by the Interior Ministry, but this is our right,” he told a reporter.

A spokesman for Israel’s Interior Ministry confirmed that it does not recognize same-sex unions, no matter where they are performed.

“The moment it does, we will register them,” Sabin Hadad said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Bush: U.S. will not waver

America is targeted for criticism in the Middle East because of its friendship with Israel, President Bush said.

"You know, Israel is an easy target for some of the media in the Middle East, and if you're a friend of Israel, you become a target," Bush said in a news conference Wednesday, detailing his expectations of Karen Hughes, a trusted deputy he has nominated to lead a public diplomacy effort in the Middle East.

"And since we're not going to abandon our alliance with Israel, you know, there was some churning in the press and there was some unhelpful things being said. And so part of that is to make sure people understand the truth. And that is, on this particular issue, you bet we're going to stand by Israel."

Calif. juries keeping Jews off?

An accusation that Jews and black women were excluded from death-penalty juries in California is putting dozens of convictions in question.

A former prosecutor in Alameda County said in a sworn declaration that excluding the groups from juries in capital cases was standard practice, The New York Times reported.

John Quatman made the statement in the case of Fred Freeman, an inmate who was convicted of a killing and robbery at a bar in 1987.

The statement is already being used in the case of another inmate who is appealing his decision. County officials denied the claim.

Wolfowitz tapped to head World Bank

President Bush nominated Paul Wolfowitz to head the World Bank. Wolfowitz, a former deputy secretary of defense, is Jewish.

He would take over from the current president, James Wolfensohn, who is stepping down effective June 1.

Bush said he canvassed other world leaders for support for his nomination.

The nomination is not guaranteed, but the bank's 24-member board traditionally supports the American nominee.

Michigan defeats divestment

The University of Michigan student government defeated a resolution to consider divestment from Israel.

The Michigan Student Assembly voted 25-11 on Tuesday against establishing a committee to consider dropping the university's investments in companies that do business with Israel, according to the campus newspaper.

Hundreds of students and community members showed up for the meeting.

Israel's detractors wore T-shirts calling Israel an apartheid state, and Israel's supporters wore blue tape on their shirts for solidarity with the Jewish state, said Wayne Firestone, executive director of the Israel on Campus Coalition.

Disengagement head talks with O.U.

Israel's point man on disengagement fielded tough questions from leaders of the Orthodox Union.

Yonatan Bassi, the head of Israel's Disengagement Administration, answered seven or eight "tough questions" from Orthodox officials during Wednesday morning's conference call, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, the O.U.'s executive vice president, told JTA.

The queries centered largely on determining whether Bassi is "truly going to be sensitive to the people who are going to lose homes and schools and synagogues and graveyards" when Israel

withdraws from Gaza and parts of the West Bank, Weinreb said.

"We left feeling better informed than before," he said. Still, he added, "Talking to Mr. Bassi does not indicate that we support what he's doing."

Orthodox Union leaders were slated to meet Thursday with leaders of the settler movement.

Arctic drilling vote blasted

The defeat in the U.S. Senate of an amendment to ban Arctic drilling is an outrage, the Reform movement said.

Wednesday's decision to go ahead with the drilling is "an offense to the environment, endangers vulnerable species and infringes on the sacred space of the indigenous Gwich'in tribe," said Rabbi David Saperstein, the director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

An amendment by Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) to stop the drilling was defeated in a 51-49 vote.

Saperstein cited Torah readings to describe a Jewish tradition of protecting the environment.

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French leader pledges Israel ties

France's prime minister pledged to strengthen relations with Israel.

Meeting Tuesday with leaders of the American Jewish Committee in Jerusalem, Jean-Pierre Raffarin said five French Cabinet ministers soon will visit Israel to discuss joint projects.

"We are persuaded that the Raffarin government is committed to defend the rights of all French people against the scourge of anti-Semitism," said David Harris, the AJCommittee's executive director.

The meeting took place just before the new Yad Vashem Holocaust museum was dedicated.

MIDDLE EAST

Hezbollah will stay armed

Hezbollah will not lay down its weapons, the group's leader said.

Speaking to Al-Manar Television in Lebanon on Wednesday, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said holding onto arms is the best way "to protect Lebanon and deter Israeli aggression."

Nasrallah was responding to President Bush, who on Tuesday called on the Lebanon-based Shi'ite group to prove it is not a terrorist organization by disarming.

Petition against gay pride parade

A Jewish-Christian coalition launched a drive to cancel the annual international gay pride parade in Jerusalem.

"Israel has accepted upon itself to ensure the sanctity of the holy places in Jerusalem. As the city's guardian, Israel cannot, in good faith, allow this parade to trample on the religious sensitivities of the city's Muslim, Christian and of course Jewish residents," Leo Giovinetti, an American pastor leading efforts to gather a million signatures on a petition against the summer parade, said Wednesday.

Giovinetti's campaign is backed by Israeli lawmakers from the religious Shas Party and right-wing National Union bloc.

Organizers of the International Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Pride Parade vowed the event would go ahead as planned Aug. 28.

"Jerusalem belongs to us all," said Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, a co-chair of the event. "It is outrageous that any religious leader would seek to exclude our community from Jerusalem."