



IN THE NEWS

Militant said he trained in Syria

A Hamas member admitted he received military training at a Hamas camp in Syria.

Osama Mattar, 20, told the Associated Press in a jailhouse interview that he received training at a Hamas base outside Damascus earlier this year.

It is believed to be the first time a Palestinian has spoken publicly about being trained at a terrorist camp in Syria.

Israel long has accused Syria of harboring Palestinian terrorists, but Syrian officials have denied that such training camps exist.

Israeli officials said the timing of the man's training, which he said took place in February, demonstrates that Hamas is not serious about the current Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire.

Graves of founding fathers vandalized

The grave of David Ben-Gurion and a memorial to Theodor Herzl were defaced with Nazi graffiti.

Police dispatched forensic teams to Sde Boker, Ben-Gurion's hometown, on Wednesday, after "Hitler" was discovered on the first prime minister's grave.

In Jerusalem, vandals scrawled the phrase "Neo-Nazis — long live Beilin" on Herzl's tomb in an apparent allusion to liberal lawmaker Yossi Beilin.

Police believe the vandalism could be the work of right-wing extremists who oppose Israel's planned withdrawal from settlements in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

Jewish-owned shop in Paris suburb bombed

Two homemade bombs were thrown at a Jewish-owned pastry shop in a Paris suburb Tuesday, causing little damage.

The incident was reported to the National Bureau of Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism, which characterized the attack as "deliberately anti-Semitic."

WORLD REPORT

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Jewish groups wary but hopeful as Congress prepares budget requests

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish groups preparing for looming battles on the nation's budget are heartened that funding for Medicaid seems to have been salvaged — but they anticipate many other struggles this year.

Several Jewish groups had placed the battle against proposed Medicaid cuts at the top of their agenda. They were ready to square off against the Bush administration and congressional conservatives who have advocated a reduction of up to \$20 billion over five years for the program, which helps pay for health care for the poor and disabled.

However, the U.S. Senate voted earlier this month to strip the Medicaid cuts, suggesting Congress may be willing to reconsider other White House spending priorities as well.

Jewish groups remain very concerned about a proposal in President Bush's \$2.6 trillion budget to cut domestic spending by one percent across the board. They worry about how it might affect programs that aid elderly and impoverished Jews. But the Senate's Medicaid move is being read as a signal that not all of Bush's priorities will pass congressional muster.

"I think it means they're not a rubber stamp," Sammie Moshenberg, Washington director of the National Council for Jewish Women, said of the Republican-controlled Congress. "It sends a message to all of us who care about issues that it's not hopeless."

Many Jews are looking to Congress to fight proposed cuts to housing subsidies and other retirement services. While Jewish organization largely have chosen to stay out

of the Social Security debate, opponents of the White House's privatization plans hope Congress will act deliberately on any reform to the program.

However, the Medicaid cuts were included in the U.S. House of Representatives' budget proposal and could be reinserted when the two chambers craft a conference version next month.

"There's a lot of disagreement between the Senate and the House right now," said Barbara Weinstein, legislative director for the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism. "Our hope is that when they reconcile their versions, the right side will win out."

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs has been pushing members to meet with legislators and urge them to keep Medicaid funding.

"It's a recognition that this is a central program for low-income Americans, and it should be studied further before making random cuts," said Reva Price, JCPA's Washington director.

The budget bill sets the overall spending and tax guidelines for appropriations, which Congress will take up later in the year.

Jewish groups remain concerned about other proposed cuts in Congress' spending priorities, including \$27 billion cut from education and job-training programs over five years, and the potential for deep reductions to food stamp programs because of cuts in the Agriculture Department budget.

A measure that would have blocked food stamp cuts, proposed by Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), was defeated.

Advocates also are watching a proposal to

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BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

■ As Congress looks at budget requests, Jewish groups hope for the best

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decrease the foreign-operations budget below Bush's request. The Senate's version called for \$33.9 billion for international affairs, or \$239 million less than Bush requested. The House recommended a \$32.17 billion budget, \$1.4 billion below the White House request.

Jewish groups often have backed foreign aid across the board in order to limit attention to money going to Israel.

Both the House and Senate proposals are higher than last year's foreign

aid bill of \$29.72 billion. Nonetheless, foreign aid advocates said they will press for additional increases, and they remain hopeful.

"It shows that it's not an automatic, that Congress won't accept whatever the president is proposing," said Jason Gross, director of governmental affairs for the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, a foreign-aid advocacy group.

Gross said the true test will come in the next few months when appropriators set limits for each spending bill.

The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization for the Jewish federation system, also is likely to push for more homeland-security funding for high-risk nonprofit institutions. The Bush administration did not request the funds this year, after \$50 million was earmarked for that purpose last year.

Stephan Klein, UJC's director of governmental affairs, said he believed the homeland-security spending still had a good chance of becoming law again this year through congressional sponsorship. ■

Found book answers question: Yes, Hitler knew about genocide

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — Hitler knew in detail about the attempted extermination of the Jews. That's according to "Das Buch Hitler" — "The Hitler Book" — a newly published German translation of a work written in Russian for the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin in 1949.

Though few have really doubted that Hitler knew about the genocide of European Jewry, the book seeks to make clear that SS chief Heinrich Himmler conferred with Hitler about the details of the mass murder, according to historian Matthias Uhl of the Institute for Contemporary History in Berlin.

An English-language edition of "The Hitler Book" is due out in November.

"The most remarkable thing about the

book is the direct connection between Hitler and the Holocaust," Uhl said. "This is the first information showing that Hitler got real information from Himmler on the gas chambers, and that Himmler showed him the sketches of the project of the gas chambers. This is the first time that we have this information that Hitler was so involved in the Holocaust."

Not all historians agree that the book makes important contribution. It's one of several new books focusing on Hitler and the Third Reich, including "Hitler's Bomb," by Berlin historian Rainer Karlsch, about Nazi testing of atomic weapons; and "Hitler's Ethnic State: Robbery, Racial War and National Socialism," by journalist and Hitler expert Goetz Aly.

"I think it's completely insignificant how much Hitler knew of the details of the genocide," said Wolfgang Benz, director of the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the Technical University in Berlin. "It's clear that Hitler knew. And whether he knew about the methods in detail, or if he just told Himmler to get rid of the Jews, it's all the same."

"If you take the international scene, I would agree that most historians do know that of course Hitler knew," said rabbi and historian Andreas Nachama, director of the "Topography of Terror" archive and documentation on the history of the Gestapo.

"But German historians are in a class by themselves. They say, 'We haven't seen any proof for that.' So for a German historian that might be of importance, even though for me personally I never had any doubt that anything important that happened in the Third Reich was basically known to Hitler," Nachama said.

Nachama said he would read the new book with interest. "But the interrogations were probably done by KGB intelligence

personnel, and you have to be in a way cautious with these kinds of sources," he said.

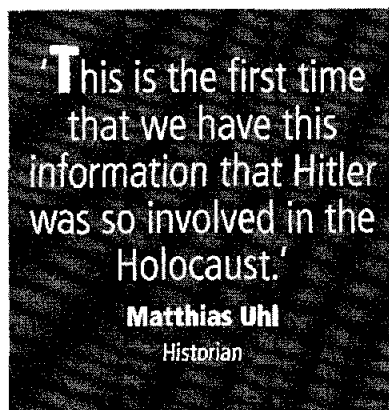
The book, which had been stashed in a Soviet archive for decades, was based on interviews with two of Hitler's aides — his butler, Heinz Linge, and SS adjutant Otto Guensche, who worked as Hitler's assistant for 10 years.

Soviet authorities arrested Linge and Guensche in Berlin on May 2, 1945. The two had been present when Hitler's body was burned in his bunker.

The interviews were conducted while the two men were in Soviet prisons; interviewers got them to talk by beating them, Uhl said. The resulting text, which Uhl described as "entertainment for Stalin," was completed in December 1949.

"It's a description of how Hitler ruled between 1933 and 1945," Uhl said. "It's a history of Hitler."

Linge and Guensche were sent back to Germany in 1955. Linge died in 1980, and Guensche died in 2003, shortly before Uhl rediscovered the text. ■



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Cotler deflects praise as Canada fights racism

By BRAM EISENTHAL

MONTREAL (JTA) — Since he was appointed justice minister and attorney general in December 2003, human rights lawyer Irwin Cotler has shown he's not afraid to tackle challenging or controversial issues.

Cotler, who had been a parliamentarian from Montreal, has fought to make legalization of same-sex civil marriage one of the key legislative goals of the Liberal government, as well as the decriminalization of possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use.

Now the lifelong crusader against anti-Semitism has helped make the fight against racism another priority for Prime Minister Paul Martin's government.

The rise in hate crimes and racism in Canada and around the world — including incidents such as the April 2004 firebombing of a Jewish school in Montreal — demonstrates the need for the government to take concrete action, Cotler said.

Martin's government recently unveiled Canada's first-ever National Action Plan Against Racism, which would earmark some U.S. \$45 million to combat racism and racial hatred over a five-year period.

Cotler, who sat down with JTA last week to discuss the plan, said its announcement in early March was no coincidence, coming shortly after the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in late January.

After a series of attacks on Jewish institutions and personal property in Toronto and Montreal last spring, Cotler was asked in Parliament how the government intended to respond.

"I said that we regarded these as an assault on the inherent dignity and worth of every human being, an assault on the equal dignity and worth of all human beings, an assault on the rights of minorities to protection against groups vilifying hate, an assault on our undertakings with respect to protecting against racism and hatred in international treaties," he said. "I concluded by saying that we would not be silent, we will not be intimidated, we will speak out, we will act and we will consign racism to the dustbin of history where it belongs."

In October 2004, the government pledged to strengthen Canada's ability to combat racism, hate speech and hate crimes. The result is the new action plan, which has as its slogan "A Canada for All."

The plan sets out a 10-step series of

measures designed to deal with racism and hatred, both inside Canada and internationally, including on the Internet.

An important first step is moral and political leadership "as an antidote against the consequences of indifference or inaction," Cotler said. "The second thing is working with civil society to develop a common front against racism, a constituency of consciousness against racism."

Public education is another major component of the plan, especially focusing on youth.

A legal regime that will combat racism in all forms is being strengthened and publicized. The upcoming 20th anniversary of Canada's Equal Rights Provision will be used to sensitize the public to issues of equality and multiculturalism in Canadian society.

"We are maybe the only country in the world that has made multiculturalism a constitutional norm," Cotler said.

It's essential to increase awareness of the range of remedies available against racism, Cotler said, "because they are not sufficiently appreciated by all actors in the justice system, let alone the public as a whole."

The Justice Department doesn't yet have a branch or a person dedicated to researching or monitoring racial hatred on the Internet, Cotler said, but he has made that a priority.

"We need a government agency or department that would be responsible for Internet hate," he said.

The struggle is an international one, he stressed, "because no country alone can combat what is in effect a faceless, borderless, predatory racist hate that requires the mobilization of international resources against hate."

Canada will sign an optional protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime that will enhance the country's ability to fight hate on the Internet, both domestically and internationally, he said.

Cotler also is working with justice ministers around the world to take on racial hatred.

Recently, for example, Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel, who had exhausted his legal appeals in Canada, was deported to his native Germany, where he was put in jail. The arrangements around the deportation gave Cotler the opportunity to discuss bilateral approaches for combating racism, hate speech and hate crimes with his German colleagues.

"We agreed to exchange our respective views in order to learn from each other and enhance mutual legal cooperation in this regard," he said.

Cotler deflected praise from himself, saying that a comprehensive legal program against racism already was in place before he took office, and that the government merely had made fighting racism more of a priority.

Yet some might conclude that it took a committed Jewish human rights lawyer and lifelong enemy of anti-Semitism and racism to get Canada to take such issues more seriously.

'No country alone can combat what is in effect a faceless, borderless, predatory racist hate that requires the mobilization of international resources.'

Irwin Cotler

Canadian justice minister and attorney general

Jewish group is anti-gay marriage

TORONTO (JTA) — Orthodox groups in Canada launched a campaign publicizing their stance against a government move to approve same-sex marriage.

Advertisements headed "Message from the Orthodox Jewish Community of Canada" have been placed in the National Post, the Canadian Jewish News and other newspapers in which the organizations "state, clearly and without qualification,

that the Torah sanctions only the union of a man and woman in matrimony."

The advertisement reads, "Jews who value the divine Torah and its ideals, carefully transmitted over the ages, know that nothing is more important than to be willing to stand apart from society's shifting mores."

It also includes an expression of gratitude "for the opportunities of religious freedom" that Canada offers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Palestinian gunrunners arrested

Israeli forces caught four Palestinian gunrunners in the Gaza Strip. The arrests took place overnight Wednesday in two incidents in Rafah, a flashpoint town on Gaza's border with Egypt.

The Palestinians, who were apparently traveling overland, were carrying caches of small arms.

It was the first known incident of arms smuggling by Palestinians since terrorist groups in Gaza and the West Bank declared a de facto truce in January.

Since the warming of ties with Israel, the Palestinian Authority has shut down several smuggling tunnels in Rafah.

Reaping the rewards

Ariel Sharon tapped seven Likud loyalists for ministerial posts.

The nominations of Roni Bar-On for immigration minister and Ze'ev Boim for Knesset liaison minister were approved Wednesday by the Cabinet, but were withdrawn from a ratification vote after it became clear there was no majority in the Knesset.

The Israeli prime minister is expected to resubmit the nominations in May. Another five senior Likud lawmakers who, like Bar-On and Boim, have openly backed Sharon in the face of a dozen "rebels" in the ruling party were named to deputy ministerial posts.

The move was seen as Sharon's reward to those who helped him pass the 2005 budget Tuesday and who support the upcoming withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank.

Opposition lawmakers accused Sharon of cronyism.

Ethiopia envoy shoots himself

Israel's ambassador to Ethiopia attempted suicide.

Doron Grossman was flown back to Israel in critical condition Wednesday after being discovered in an Addis Ababa hotel room with a gunshot wound.

Ethiopian police said Grossman shot himself Tuesday.

According to Israeli security sources, Grossman, 48, may have been distraught after learning he had cancer.

His next appointment was to have been as ambassador to South Africa.

Work stopped on Israeli 9/11 memorial

An Israeli court ordered work stopped on a memorial to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The Jewish National Fund was stopped Tuesday from erecting the memorial to the World Trade Center bombing in a Jerusalem forest because the area is zoned for preservation.

JNF received an anonymous \$1 million donation for the memorial, but environmental groups have objected to the proposed site.

NORTH AMERICA

Jewish feminists claim e-mail hoax

A Jewish feminist group claimed credit for a hoax e-mail aimed at the Conservative movement Tuesday.

Jewish Women Watching, a watchdog group whose members retain their anonymity as they attack what they see as hypocrisy, sexism and homophobia in the organized Jewish world, claimed credit for an e-mail that said the Conservative movement was planning to "achieve gender and sexual equity" in all of its ranks.

It also said the movement would begin ordaining gay and lesbian rabbis by the year 2010, by which time all Conservative synagogues would be required to become "fully egalitarian."

Declared gays and lesbians are officially barred from the Conservative movement's rabbinical seminaries; each synagogue is free to make its own decision about egalitarian practice.

On Wednesday, a follow-up e-mail claimed credit for the hoax.

Pipes speech goes peacefully

A protest outside a Toronto speech by a pro-Israel scholar drew fewer people than expected.

Before the talk by Daniel Pipes, director of the Philadelphia-based Middle East Forum, a group of 110 professors, students and librarians published an open letter asserting that "hate, prejudice and fear-mongering" have no place on the University of Toronto campus, but only about a dozen students demonstrated peacefully Tuesday outside the building where Pipes spoke on "Radical Islam and the War on Terror."

Pipes enjoyed intense police protection at his last Toronto speaking engagement in 2003, when he was greeted by hundreds of protesters at York University and his audience was subject to photo-identification and metal-detector checks at the door.

Cochran saw Holocaust reparations as model

Celebrity defense lawyer Johnnie Cochran Jr., who died Tuesday of a brain tumor in Los Angeles, had hoped Jews' success in winning Holocaust restitution could serve as a model for African Americans seeking redress for slavery.

Cochran, a past trustee and honoree of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, was "a tireless advocate for the strengthening of Black-Jewish relations," foundation president Rabbi Marc Schneier said.

Cochran was especially interested in the Holocaust reparations issue.

"We had many discussions about it. He wanted to learn about the process the Jewish community went through in their restitution efforts with the European nations, which he believed could serve as an example and as a model for African-American restitution efforts in this country," Schneier said.

Schneier described Cochran as "a great champion of civil rights, an advocate for the downtrodden, with a clear commitment to the strengthening of race relations" in America.

WORLD

Bank probe deepens

Russian magnate Vladimir Goussinsky was questioned in an Israeli money-laundering case.

The Jewish tycoon, who also holds Israeli citizenship, flew to Israel for Wednesday's meeting with police investigating allegations that staff at a Tel Aviv branch of Bank Hapoalim laundered millions of dollars in ill-gotten foreign funds.

Goussinsky denied any wrongdoing.

Dozens of account-holders, including major financiers, have been implicated in the case.

Serbian jailed for anti-Semitic posters

Three men were sentenced to jail for putting up anti-Semitic posters in Serbia.

The men were sentenced Wednesday in Belgrade for putting up the posters, which showed the logo of a local radio and television station inside the Star of David, with the message: "Boycott because of anti-Serbian influence, dangerous influence on the Serbian youth, supporting the independence of Kosovo, supporting the spreading of drug use, homosexuality and other Western sicknesses and supporting the multiracial new world order."