

## IN THE NEWS

**Ezer Weizman, 80, buried Tuesday**

Thousands attended the funeral of Ezer Weizman, a former president of Israel.

Weizman, a hero of the 1967 Six-Day War and one of the architects of Israel's 1979 peace accord with Egypt, died of pneumonia Sunday. He was 80.

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**DeLay crony sent money to settlers**

A lobbyist close to embattled U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) funneled money intended for an inner-city charity to Israeli settlers in the West Bank, *Newsweek* reported.

More than \$140,000 that Jack Abramoff raised for the Capital Athletic Foundation reportedly went to settlers to defend against Palestinian violence.

*Newsweek* also reported that some of the foundation's money was used for a now-defunct Jewish school in suburban Maryland.

The FBI is investigating the charges.

DeLay, who is facing questions about the sources of funding of some of his foreign trips, is trying to distance himself from Abramoff.

*Newsweek* says an Abramoff spokesman defended the expenditures and stressed Abramoff's strong support for Israel.

**Two die in Hebron**

A Palestinian taxi driver ran over and killed an Israeli in the West Bank. Security sources said Monday night's incident near Hebron was believed to be a deliberate attack by the motorist, who was shot dead by Israeli soldiers.

According to witnesses, he deliberately plowed into a group of Israelis standing by the road.

The Israeli was the first killed in the West Bank or Gaza Strip in more than three months.

**In observance of Passover, the JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, May 2.**



# WORLD REPORT

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## After departure of key AIPAC man, some ask who'll guide group now

By MATTHEW E. BERGER and RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA)—Not so long ago, the word on Steve Rosen, policy director for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, was that he was so knowledgeable that he trained the group's board members in the ways of Washington.

In his 23 years with the pro-Israel lobbying powerhouse, Rosen's encyclopedic knowledge of Middle East geopolitics and Beltway power politics nurtured AIPAC's lay leadership and guided its policies.

Now that the same leadership has fired Rosen because, AIPAC says, of information arising out of an FBI investigation into alleged mishandling of classified Pentagon documents, the question is raised: Who will guide AIPAC now?

Rosen's imprint remains in substantial ways: Iran's threat to Israel, his top priority in recent years, is to be the centerpiece of this year's AIPAC policy conference, which begins May 22. The conference will feature a walk-through exhibit on how close Iran is to developing a nuclear weapon.

Yet tactically Rosen's departure already is being felt as AIPAC returns to its roots, working Capitol Hill and moving away from the executive branch lobbying that was emblematic of Rosen's approach.

Significantly, the only on-the-record statement proffered by AIPAC since JTA revealed last week that AIPAC had fired Rosen and Keith Weissman, its senior Iran analyst, who also has been targeted by the FBI, emphasizes congressional lobbying.

"With growing membership, record at-

tendance at events around the country, and continued successes on Capitol Hill, AIPAC is energized and focused on the future," spokesman Josh Block said.

Some of the group's recent successes on the Hill include backing Congress' approval of \$2.6 billion in foreign aid for this year, extending the duration of Israel's loan guarantees and attaching strict oversight guidelines to \$200 million in assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The Senate also unanimously passed a bill expanding homeland security cooperation between Israel and the United States. The House of Representatives passed a resolution urging the European Union to put Hezbollah on the E.U. terrorist list and overwhelmingly passed two resolutions condemning Syria for its occupation of Lebanon and continued human-rights violations.

A key House panel has approved the Iran Freedom and Support Act, which has garnered more than 155 co-sponsors in less than three months since its introduction.

AIPAC's grass-roots supporters have sought assurances that the FBI investigation won't impinge on the lobby's effectiveness. AIPAC hosted a conference call last week for Jewish leaders to address the revelation that Rosen and Weissman had been fired. The key message: AIPAC as an organization was not the target of the FBI probe.

A measure of AIPAC's determination to reassure its base is its recent willingness to go on the record about its Capitol Hill successes, a sharp reversal of a longstanding policy to play down AIPAC's influence.

AIPAC officials say the grass roots are  
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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Questions about AIPAC's direction follow as key staffer leaves

*Continued from page 1*

solidly on board. AIPAC expects 5,000 people at the policy conference, which culminates with a day of show-of-strength lobbying on the Hill. The number is commensurate with previous conferences, AIPAC officials said.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon are slated to address the conference, a show of support from both governments. A wide list of congressional leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), also will be featured.

Officials say that financial contributions continue to grow, and that 5,000 people have attended AIPAC events across the country in the past five weeks.

Off the Hill — especially at the State Department and the Pentagon — Rosen's departure is expected to diminish AIPAC's Washington visibility.

"Steve Rosen is not a politically known Hill quantity," one former AIPAC staffer said. "But he was very well known in the State Department, Pentagon and Israeli Embassy."

Still, lower visibility in those areas might not be a bad thing for now. It was precisely the relationship between Rosen and Weissman and a Pentagon Iran analyst, Larry Franklin, that precipitated the FBI's investigation.

Sources say the FBI moved against

AIPAC after FBI agents observed Franklin exchanging information with Rosen and Weissman at a restaurant in Arlington, Va., in 2003. It's not clear whether the agents were targeting Franklin or the AIPAC staffers.

However, several reports subsequently said that the FBI threatened Franklin with prosecution unless he mounted a sting against the two AIPAC staffers, giving them false information about an imminent threat to alleged Israeli agents in Kurdistan.

Once Rosen and Weissman relayed that information to Israel, according to those accounts, the FBI moved in, confiscating files from their offices in August and December. Franklin since has returned to work for the Defense Department, albeit in a nonsensitive post.

After the August raid, and again in December, AIPAC stood squarely behind the two men. A rift began to show around January, about the time several top staffers were testifying before a federal grand jury convened by Paul McNulty, the U.S. attorney for eastern Virginia. That was when AIPAC placed Rosen and Weissman on paid leave.

The rift was revealed to be final last week. After prodding by JTA, lawyers for Rosen and Weissman issued the following statement: "Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman have not violated any U.S. law or AIPAC policy. Contrary to press accounts, they have never solicited, received or passed on any classified documents. They carried out their job responsibilities solely to serve AIPAC's goal of strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship."

It was the first on-the-record statement to come from the pair's lawyers, Abbe Lowell and John Nassikas; in the past, all such statements have come from AIPAC and its lawyers. It also was the first statement to suggest that Weissman and Rosen had been accused of violating AIPAC policy.

Within hours, AIPAC countered with its own statement.

"The statement made by Rosen and Weissman represents solely their view of the facts. The action that AIPAC has taken was done in consultation with

counsel after careful consideration of recently learned information and the conduct AIPAC expects of its employees," an AIPAC statement said.

AIPAC would not detail the new information.

Nothing in the statements from either side suggested that action by McNulty was imminent.

Former AIPAC staffers say there are good and bad things about Rosen's departure.

With Rosen pegged by those staffers as a "loose cannon," some hope the organization can become more focused without his pervasive presence.

"He was a brilliant bureaucratic fighter," one former staffer said. "He knew how to do the little things to further his agenda."

Rosen's connections with bureaucrats and appointed officials helped AIPAC garner insider information on Middle East policy. Policymakers on the Hill and Jewish donors craved the tidbits Rosen's operations uncovered, and helped the organization gain a loyal fan base in Washington.

Rosen also crafted strong ties with AIPAC board members, which helped him win internal political battles over the years, former staffers said.

"You can't look at AIPAC now and say it is successful despite Steve Rosen," one former staffer said.

Steve Grossman, a former AIPAC president, said Rosen had a "virtually encyclopedic knowledge of the issues." But he believes the organization has many other professionals who can pick up the mantle.

He said Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director, "has made sure there were a considerable number of people with lots of credibility who are able to step in and do it without losing a beat."

Former staffers, many of whom did not get along with Rosen, suggested last week that he could try to sabotage AIPAC or the pro-Israel agenda if he is unhappy with his severance settlement from AIPAC. Grossman said he did not believe that was possible.

"Steve's committed to and personally dedicated to the cause of U.S.-Israeli relations," Grossman said. "It is such a critical part of his life that I have no concerns at all."

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at AIPAC now and  
say it is successful  
despite Steve Rosen.'**

**Former AIPAC staffer**

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# Former Israeli president Ezer Weizman dies

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — He was the ultimate Israeli highflier, literally as well as metaphorically, shepherding and shaping the Jewish state through war and peace with a singular, sometimes mordant charm.

And though Ezer Weizman, who died Sunday at 80, ended his public career tainted by scandal, to many Israelis he typified a national ideal.

"Ezer was a symbol and the embodiment of the Israeli sabra," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said of the former air force chief, defense minister and president. "I have lost a commander and a friend."

Israel's political and military establishment showed up en masse at Tuesday's memorial service to listen as Sharon, President Moshe Katsav, Israel Air Force head Eliezer Shkedi and Weizman's daughter, Michal Yaffe, eulogized him.

"Weizman will be remembered as a great patriot," Katsav said. Directing his

words to his dead friend, he added, "A sense of hope and resilience is following you, not that of despair and grief."

As Sharon paid tribute to Weizman's strength, importance and wisdom, he added, "There was also another Ezer, of the colony, the bottle of drink, the laughter, which all created a special spirit in the Air Force."

Weizman was buried later Tuesday. By his choice, his final resting place is not on Jerusalem's Mount Herzl, where many of Israel's national leaders are buried, but in Or Akiva, next to his son Shaul and his daughter-in-law Rachel, both of whom died in a 1992 road accident.

The scion of Zionist aristocracy — his uncle Chaim was Israel's first president — Weizman was born in Tel Aviv in 1924 and served in the Haganah underground. After earning a flying license as a teenager, he volunteered to fight alongside British pilots in the Royal Air Force during World War II.

The experience gave Weizman the knowledge needed to help found the Jewish state's air force.

Weizman grew up in a multilingual home — Yiddish, Russian, Arabic, English and Hebrew all could be heard there — and spent time studying in London, where his sister lived. Those experiences combined to give him command both of the Queen's English and European-style diplomacy, both of which proved useful in brokering Israel's landmark Camp David peace accord with Egypt in 1979.

"Just as he fought bravely for Israel's security, so too did he struggle spiritedly for peace," fellow elder statesman Shimon Peres said. "He never ceased charming the country, from its first founding."

Former President Carter, who brokered the Camp David agreement, called Weizman "one of the true heroes of Israel, in both times of war and peace."

But Weizman always remained the scrappy sabra, indifferent to — and some-

times clearly delighting in — the offense his wit could cause among feminists, gays and the religious.

Approached by a young woman who wanted to become one of Israel's first female fighter pilots, Weizman notoriously responded, "Maydele, have you ever seen a man darnin' socks?"

After the 1967 Six-Day War, a victory in which the Israel Air Force that Weizman had created played such a key role, the deputy chief of staff doffed his uniform and joined Golda Meir's coalition government. Yet Weizman resigned a year later to

protest Jerusalem's acceptance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which called for Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands captured during the conflict.

That he was to become a key player in Camp David, when Israel agreed to return the Sinai to Egypt, heralded a rather contrarian

style of politics on Weizman's part. Having helped engineer the election victory of Menachem Begin's Likud party in 1977, he later became a member of Labor.

Weizman quit parliamentary politics in 1992, shortly after his son and daughter-in-law were killed in a car crash. A year later he accepted Labor's nomination to become Israel's president, a post confirmed by the Knesset.

Following the 1993 Oslo peace accords, Weizman harangued Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for being too quick to negotiate with the Palestinians, and later criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for being too slow.

Weizman relished the office of president, which allowed him not only to challenge Israeli leaders but also to represent the country abroad. Yet his tenure ended under a cloud in 2000 when Weizman, dogged by revelations of financial impropriety while he served in the Cabinet, became the first president to resign.

His health declined soon thereafter, and he spent much of this year hospitalized. Weizman is survived by his widow Reuma and their daughter Michal.

## OBITUARY

'Just as he fought bravely for Israel's security, so too did he struggle spiritedly for peace.'

**Shimon Peres**

Israeli vice premier

## THIS WEEK

### WEDNESDAY

■ The Rand Corporation, the think tank affiliated with the Pentagon, releases a study on what would make a Palestinian state successful. Leading the panel behind the study is Frank Carlucci, U.S. defense secretary from 1987-1989.

■ Two European officials will inaugurate an exhibition based on research conducted for a project focused on European Jewish life. On April 27, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy will open the exhibit of items in Bulgaria from Centropa's Bulgarian archive. The archive is made up of more than 700 privately owned photographs and 50 interviews with elderly Sephardi Jews living in Sofia, Plodiv and other cities.

■ The PLO's negotiating unit briefs officials at the U.S. State Department, the National Security Council and Vice President Dick Cheney's office on the Palestinian Authority's plans to coordinate with Israel on the Jewish state's withdrawal this summer from the Gaza Strip and a portion of the northern West Bank. The meetings will last through Friday.

### THURSDAY

■ Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, the Israeli army's chief of staff, confers with senior U.S. administration officials before Israel's Gaza withdrawal begins this summer.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Hamas to disarm?

Mahmoud Abbas said Hamas will have to give up its weapons after it takes part in Palestinian legislative elections set for July.

"The moment a militia or organization becomes a political party, there is no need for it to be armed. There will be only one authority, one law and one legitimate arsenal," the Palestinian Authority president told reporters Monday.

Leaders of the Islamic terrorist group vowed to keep their weapons as long as "Israeli occupation" lasts but were expected to negotiate with Abbas on his demand.

### Rockets in Sderot

Two Palestinian rockets landed in a southern Israeli border town.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the two rockets that were fired from the Gaza Strip on Tuesday and struck Sderot, causing no casualties or damage.

Most terrorist groups in Gaza, except for the Popular Resistance Committees, a breakaway faction, generally have abided by a de facto cease-fire brokered by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

An early-warning system in Sderot detected Tuesday's launches in time to warn residents to take shelter.

### Haifa U. prof pressed to quit

The president of Haifa University called on a professor who supports boycotts of Israeli universities to resign.

"It is fitting for someone who calls for the boycott of his university to apply the boycott to himself," Aharon Ben Ze'ev said of Ilan Pappé, a far-left political science professor at the school.

Pappé supports a boycott launched by a British union of university teachers against Haifa and Bar-Ilan Universities.

Pappé has yet to respond to Ben Ze'ev's call.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Bush presses Saudis to back Palestinians

Bush administration officials stressed the need for financial support for the Palestinian Authority in meetings this week with the Saudi ruler.

Crown Prince Abdullah met President Bush and other officials Monday at Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Israel's planned withdrawal this summer from the Gaza Strip was a central topic of discussion.

### Lawmakers to reintroduce Saudi sanctions bill

A bipartisan coalition of U.S. lawmakers plans to reintroduce legislation that would impose sanctions on Saudi Arabia for supporting terrorism.

Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) is one of the sponsors of the Saudi Arabia Accountability Act, which would restrict diplomatic travel and prohibit the export of certain military equipment to Saudi Arabia until the country takes steps to end terrorism.

The announcement of the plans came Tuesday, the day after President Bush met Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

### NCJW: No compromise on judges

The National Council of Jewish Women opposed any compromise that would allow any of seven conservatives to assume spots on the U.S. federal bench.

Democratic senators reportedly are negotiating an end to a stand-off with Republicans over seven nominees by President Bush.

Republican senators have threatened the "nuclear option" that would end the right of the minority to shelve judicial nominees through the filibuster, a vote that requires only 41 of 100 senators to pass.

Under the reported compromise, Democrats would allow two of the judges to sit on the bench and Bush would shelve the other five nominations.

The nominees include judges who have advocated for severe restrictions of abortion rights and loosening restrictions on church-state separation.

### Three boys die in Passover fire

Three Jewish boys in Brooklyn died after a fire on Passover ripped through their apartment.

Sunday's fire began in the kitchen, where the Matyas family had left two stove burners on since Friday evening.

The boys who died in the Chasidic neighborhood of Williamsburg on Sunday were brothers Shyia and Yidal Matyas, 13 and 15, and their nephew, Shlomi Falkowitz, 7.

Jewish law prohibits the lighting or extinguishing of flames on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals; in order to heat up food, families often leave burners on over the holidays.

Passover began at sundown on Saturday night this year, immediately preceded by the Sabbath, so the burners were left on for an extended period.

## WORLD

### Group commends Ukrainian government

A group that monitors Jewish life in the former Soviet Union commended the Ukrainian government for denouncing anti-Semitism.

"It's a good first step in responding to the problem," Mark Levin, executive director of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia, said after Aleksandr Zinchenko, Ukraine's state secretary, pledged that Ukraine would defend human rights and oppose intolerance and xenophobia, including anti-Semitism.

Zinchenko's comment was a response to an anti-Semitic letter circulated in the former Soviet republic earlier this month.

Levin said his group would like to see the speaker of the Parliament also condemn the letter.

### Papal olive branch

Pope Benedict XVI extolled Jews for sharing a "spiritual heritage" with Christians.

In a Vatican sermon Sunday marking his installation as pontiff, Benedict offered greetings to "my brothers and sisters of the Jewish people, to whom we are joined by a great shared spiritual heritage, one rooted in God's irrevocable promises."

The German-born Benedict is widely expected to pursue the path of religious reconciliation forged by his predecessor, John Paul II.

Rome's chief rabbi, Riccardo di Segni, received a personal invitation to the Sunday Mass but could not attend due to Passover.

### France marks camps' liberation

France marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. French President Jacques Chirac spoke at a solemn ceremony Sunday in Paris attended by more than 2,000 survivors.

"We have not forgotten, and we will never forget" what happened, he said. "They are engraved in letters of blood and tears on our history. They trace our duty for us."

Chirac spoke from the Human Rights Esplanade, where a plaque was installed to commemorate the anniversary.