

## IN THE NEWS

**Mortars, rockets bombard Gaza Strip**

Hamas bombarded Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip with mortars and rockets.

One Israeli was injured by the two dozen explosives.

Israel demanded that the Palestinian Authority crack down on mortar and rocket crews.

"If the Palestinian Authority does not take the necessary steps to stop these terrorist launches, we will, with everything that entails," David Baker, an official in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office, said Wednesday.

Palestinian Authority security forces restored some calm by fanning out around Khan Younis, a terrorist bastion, but Hamas men opened fire late Wednesday and wounded three P.A. police officers attempting to stop them from launching mortars, Israel Radio reported.

**Hamas man killed**

A Palestinian terrorist was killed in a Gaza Strip clash with Israeli troops.

The 22-year-old Hamas man was killed Wednesday while trying to ambush soldiers near Rafah, a flashpoint Palestinian town on the Gaza-Egypt border.

Although troops returned fire, the army said the terrorist appeared to have blown himself up while trying to lay a landmine.

**Paintings question goes to Austrian panel**

Austria agreed to arbitration over paintings allegedly looted during the Holocaust era.

After more than five years of court battles over the ownership of six paintings, valued at \$150 million, the Austrian government and Maria Altmann of Los Angeles have agreed to submit the case to binding arbitration.

At stake are paintings by Viennese artist Gustav Klimt from the early 20th century, including a famous portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, Altmann's aunt.

# WORLD REPORT

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## U.S. probe of ex-AIPAC staffers focusing on alleged conversations

By RON KAMPEAS and MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Conversations that two top American Israel Public Affairs Committee staffers allegedly had with a Washington Post reporter and an Israeli diplomat appear to be a focus of a U.S. government investigation that could lead to espionage charges against the two.

In addition, information garnered during the investigation into alleged leaks from a Pentagon analyst to the two former AIPAC staffers suggests the FBI began probing AIPAC officials just before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

There is mounting evidence that the government plans to indict Steve Rosen, AIPAC's former policy director, and Keith Weissman, its former senior Iran analyst.

The pro-Israel lobby fired the two men last month, citing new information. But AIPAC is continuing to pay the men's attorneys, incurring legal costs that one source says have reached \$1 million. Rosen is being represented by Abbe Lowell, one of Washington's top lawyers.

Howard Kohr, the organization's executive director, told staff in a recent conference call that he fired Rosen and Weissman on the advice of Nathan Lewin, the attorney the organization hired to deal with the case, JTA has learned. Lewin came across the information in the course of reviewing the government's case. Kohr told his staff that Lewin did not reveal the nature of the information, according to sources.

The crux of the government's case, multiple sources say, is Weissman's meeting with Larry Franklin, a mid-level Pentagon Iran analyst, on July 21, 2004, outside a Nordstrom's outlet in the Pentagon City mall in Arlington, Va.

Franklin allegedly warned Weissman that Iranian agents in predominantly Kurdish northern Iraq planned to kidnap, torture and kill American and Israeli agents in the region.

Weissman didn't realize that Franklin apparently had been cooperating with the FBI for several months and was being used in what is believed to have been a sting against AIPAC staffers, sources said.

Weissman immediately informed Rosen and the information was relayed to the White House, sources close to the defense said.

Rosen and Weissman then called Naor Gilon, who heads the political desk at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Glenn Kessler, the State Department correspondent for the Washington Post, the sources said.

The FBI is believed to have co-opted Franklin a year earlier, after observing a lunchtime meeting he had with Rosen and Weissman at Tivoli, a restaurant in Arlington, Va.

In a criminal charge sheet filed earlier this month against Franklin, the government said that over lunch, Franklin verbally related top-secret information to two U.S. citizens. JTA has confirmed the two were Rosen and Weissman.

The FBI apparently taped the July 21, 2004, conversation that Weissman and Rosen had with Kessler, the Washington Post reporter, according to sources. Rosen and Weissman got in touch with the White House and Kessler because they wanted to get the information out as soon as possible, sources said. Franklin told the AIPAC staffers that he was giving them the information because they had better connections than he did.

In the exchange, Rosen, Weissman and Kes-

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## ■ *Ex-AIPAC staffer's conversations with diplomat, reporter, might lead to criminal charges*

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sler joked about "not getting in trouble" over the information, according to sources.

Rosen said that "at least we have no Official Secrets Act," according to sources. Acquaintances say that was a standard Rosen line, distinguishing the United States from other nations — among them Britain — that criminalize the receipt of classified information.

U.S. law is clear about assigning criminal penalties for leaking classified information, but it is murky when it comes to receiving such information.

Prosecutors seem likely to allege that the conversation with Kessler and the comment about an "Official Secrets Act" prove Rosen and Weissman knew the information was classified, according to sources familiar with the FBI interrogations.

That's where the conversation with Gilon comes in. While the simple receipt of classified information is hard to prosecute, relaying it to a foreign official may violate the 1917 Espionage Act, which deals with obtaining classified information "to the advantage of any foreign nation."

It's not clear how truthful the information Franklin relayed in the Pentagon City meeting was, and Weissman and Rosen, to whom Weissman had relayed the information, have claimed they didn't know the information was classified.

Franklin later broke off cooperation with the FBI and was arrested earlier this month on charges of leaking classified information.

Franklin is due to appear at a prelimi-

nary hearing on May 27. His lawyer suggested he will plead not guilty.

Franklin's lawyer, Plato Cacheris, would not otherwise comment; neither would Weissman's lawyer, John Lassikas, or Lowell, Rosen's attorney.

The FBI declined comment, as did the office of Paul McNulty, the federal attorney in Virginia who is prosecuting the case against Franklin and who may indict Rosen and Weissman as early as next month, according to sources close to the case.

The New York Times reported Saturday that the FBI wanted to speak to four journalists who had information about the case, including one who worked for a major newspaper.

Kessler, who did not publish a story with the leaked information, declined to comment on his news gathering.

AIPAC also maintained its official silence. When the organization fired Rosen and Weissman last month it said it was because of "recently learned information and the conduct AIPAC expects of its employees."

If the government does plan to pursue espionage charges against the two former AIPAC staffers, it could be a stretch, according to legal experts.

The language of the 1917 Espionage Act emphasizes solicitation — its first sentence describes a transgressor as someone who pursues "information with intent." Yet it was Franklin who allegedly told Weissman that he had new information and suggested the Pentagon City meeting. Sources say attorneys for the two men will argue entrapment.

A former close associate of Rosen confirmed that he routinely tells his sources that he doesn't want them to do or say anything that would risk their careers.

The Espionage Act also emphasizes injury to the United States, yet Gilon — the alleged recipient of the information from Rosen and Weissman — remains at his Washington post eight months after the case first made headlines when FBI agents raided AIPAC headquarters last Aug. 27. The Israeli Embassy would not comment.

The initial conversation between Franklin, Rosen and Weissman in June 2003 — the one that apparently led the FBI to move in on Franklin — dealt overwhelmingly with an unclassified memo on the Bush administration's Iran policy, sources close to the case said.

In its charge sheet against Franklin, the FBI mentions top-secret information about a threat against U.S. troops in Iraq. Sources close to the case say Weissman and Rosen have told investigators that they do not recall hearing that tidbit in their first meet-

ing with Franklin, suggesting it could have been made in passing and was not their central interest.

The United States traditionally has been hesitant to prosecute those who receive classified information. The Nixon administration, after failing legally to prevent The New York Times from publishing the Pentagon Papers, reportedly considered prosecuting the Times after it published the classified documents relating to the Vietnam War. But it backed off because of First Amendment considerations.

Just as prosecuting a journalist for mining a source for classified information could chill reporting, prosecuting Rosen and Weissman could crimp lobbyists and advocates for Jewish organizations and others.

The coin of a successful lobbyist is inside information, and Rosen's success in his 23 years at AIPAC was his vast array of contacts, valued by AIPAC board members, members of Congress and officials in four administrations.

Many Jewish organizational leaders meet routinely with Israeli officials and relay information they might not even know is classified.

Indeed, it may be less the quality of the information Rosen and Weissman gathered and more their closeness with power that drew the FBI's attention. Sources close to the case say the evidence suggests that the FBI targeted Rosen starting in early September 2001, when The New York Times reported that President Bush was contemplating a meeting with the late Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat. ■

**Although receiving classified information is hard to prosecute, relaying it to a foreign official may be considered espionage.**

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# Israeli ambassador's visit disappoints Pollard

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In a first, Israel's ambassador traveled to a North Carolina prison to meet Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard — a visit Pollard has said is crucial to getting U.S. authorities to consider freeing him.

Daniel Ayalon's visit Tuesday comes at a sensitive time for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government, which faces formidable resistance from Israel's settler movement before Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip this summer. Increased engagement with Israel's best-known spy could be a sop to the right wing.

"In our meeting today I conveyed our support for his release on a humanitarian basis," Ayalon said in a statement. "I came to him with a message of strength and support from the Israeli government and people."

Ha'aretz quoted Pollard and his wife Esther as criticizing the meeting, saying it lacked substance. Ayalon met with Esther Pollard before meeting her husband.

Calls to Pollard activists and to his lawyer, Jacques Semmelman, were not returned.

Sharon is scheduled to be in Washington on May 24 to deliver a keynote speech at the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference, appealing for U.S. Jewish support for the withdrawal. News about Pollard could overshadow withdrawal detractors at the conference, some speculate.

Israeli prime ministers routinely have raised Pollard's release in their meetings with U.S. presidents, but Pollard has been telling sympathizers for years that the United States will not take Israel's demands seriously until its embassy visits him regularly.

"Make no mistake: The Americans are not fools," Pollard wrote last August to two Israeli legislators who back his cause. "Unless and until the ambassador is activated and deputized to deal with my case on a regular basis, and for the duration, Washington will not relate to you or the rest of your colleagues with any degree of seriousness."

It was not clear whether Ayalon would follow up with other visits. Regular visits would reinforce Israel's claim of responsibility for Pollard, made when it granted

him citizenship in 1995 and again in 1998 when it acknowledged he was an Israeli agent.

It also could help nudge the United States into treating Pollard as a possible bargaining chip in its diplomatic relations with Israel.

Israel has attempted to win Pollard's release in exchange for concessions in peace talks several times, most famously at Wye Plantation in 1998, when it agreed to go ahead with a deal with the Palestinians after securing President Clinton's assurances that he would consider pardoning Pollard.

Clinton ultimately decided against a pardon, under pressure from U.S. intelligence figures outraged by what they saw as a betrayal by one of their own. Pollard had been a naval intelligence analyst.

The thinking is that the more Pollard is identified as an Israeli agent, and not as an American spying for a foreign country,

the easier it would be for an American president to release him.

The meeting with Ayalon comes as Pollard's legal recourses dwindle. A federal appeals court is considering his request for a new trial and to review classified information that was used to sentence him.

The three-judge panel that heard oral arguments in the case last month expressed skepticism about Pollard's arguments.

Pollard was sentenced to life in prison in 1987, after pleading guilty to spying for Israel. The sentence ignored a plea deal between Pollard and government officials.

A 40-page classified declaration written by then-Secretary of State Casper Weinberger outlined the damage Pollard caused to U.S. interests, and is considered to be responsible for the severity of the sentence.

Officials at Butner prison, where Pollard is held, declined comment.

**'I came to him with a message of strength and support from the Israeli government and people.'**

**Daniel Ayalon**  
Israeli ambassador to the United States

## In Sri Lanka, group helps tsunami victims

NEW YORK (JTA) — One Jewish organization is looking to the children as it works to help those affected by the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

Together with the U.S. Agency for International Development and a Sri Lankan group known as Sarvodaya, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is working to rebuild and upgrade 40 children's parks and playgrounds that were destroyed by the Dec. 26 tsunami. The tsunami killed more than 225,000 people across the Indian Ocean region, including more than 30,000 in Sri Lanka alone.

The program is "on the border between rebuilding and development," Eliot Goldstein told JTA by telephone from Sri Lanka. With his wife, Rebecca Bardach, Goldstein is launching the JDC's efforts in Sri Lanka.

About \$500,000 from the more than \$18

million the group collected for tsunami relief — money that came from individual donors, foundations and Jewish federations — is likely to be pledged soon to the playground project, JDC officials said.

The federations involved pitched in beyond what they normally give to the JDC.

The project is not without controversy, however: It's running up against laws passed after the tsunami that seek to prevent building near the water.

But Goldstein said the comments he heard about the program from Sri Lanka's prime minister, Mahinda Rajapakse, last week were positive. Rajapakse said the law was targeted at schools and homes, not at outdoor areas such as playgrounds, Goldstein said.

The JDC also is also helping victims of the tsunami in Indonesia, India and Thailand.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### P.A. pulls 'Protocols'

The Palestinian Authority pulled a link to "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" from one of its Web sites.

A link to the 19th-century anti-Semitic forgery, which purports to spell out a Jewish plot to take control of the world, appeared on the Web site of the State Information Service.

The link was found on a page with a list of historical sources about Zionism.

The move came after the Anti-Defamation League wrote to the Palestinian Authority demanding that it remove the Protocols from its site.

As part of the "road map" peace plan, the Palestinians have pledged to stop inciting against Israel, but Israeli officials contend that changes are not coming fast enough.

However, P.A. Information Minister Nabil Sha'ath said Wednesday that he had ordered the suspension of Sheik Ibrahim Mdaires, a Gaza Strip imam who told his congregation last week that "Jews are a virus resembling AIDS."

### Settlers given deadline

The Israeli government gave Gaza Strip settlers a week to accept a special relocation deal.

Justice Minister Tzipi Livni told an inter-ministerial committee Wednesday that 426 settler families, roughly a third of those to be evacuated from Gaza this summer, had signed up to move to Nitza-nim, a few miles north along the coast.

She warned the rest of the settlers that if they don't do the same within a week, they could lose such special privileges as priority housing and choice of schools for their children.

### No charges against chief rabbi

Israel's Sephardi chief rabbi was cleared of complicity in the assault on a yeshiva student who had courted his daughter.

Attorney General Menachem Mazuz recommended Wednesday that no charges be brought against Rabbi Shlomo Amar in connection with the incident that took place over Passover, officials said.

Amar has denied any knowledge of the abduction and assault of a 17-year-old believed to have conducted an illicit romance with his daughter.

The chief rabbi's son, Meir Amar, has been charged in the case, along with two alleged accomplices.

Amar's wife, Mazal, also was indicted for conspiracy.

### The king and Peres

Shimon Peres met with Jordan's King Abdullah II.

The two met Wednesday in Jordan at the Petra Conference of Nobel Laureates, whose guests included 25 prizewinners, former U.S. President Bill Clinton and actor Richard Gere.

Jordan and the Elie Wiesel Foundation sponsored the gathering. Peres, Israel's vice premier, and the king discussed how Israelis and Palestinians could enjoy the benefits of coexistence.

### The ties that won't bind

The United Arab Emirates denied reports that Israel is planning to open an economic office there.

The denial comes after Israeli sources said an office would be opened.

A Dubai official said his country would establish ties with Israel only after the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved.

## NORTH AMERICA

### This year in Jerusalem?

A new law prevents insurers in Washington state from life insurance discrimination due to travel.

The issue of is of concern to the Jewish community because some insurers were denying insurance based on past travel to countries on the State Department's travel warning list, including Israel.

Washington joins New York and Illinois in enacting such legislation

### Israeli envoy's remark angers Muslims

Canadian Islamic leaders protested an Israeli diplomat's statement that most terrorists are Muslim.

Ya'acov Brosh, Israel's representative in Toronto and western Canada, made the comment earlier this month during a Muslim-Jewish dialogue session at a Toronto-area synagogue.

Asked later for an apology, Brosh said in an e-mail that he regretted that his words had caused offense, adding that he believed "my message was wrongly interpreted by some people who attended the event."

## WORLD

### Kabul to Jerusalem

An Afghan Cabinet minister said her country is interested in establishing ties with Israel.

"We are very interested in returning to the fold of the international community and be respectful of all different countries," the country's minister of women's affairs, Massouda Jalal, told the Jerusalem Post on Wednesday.

The country is still rebuilding in the wake of the U.S.-led overthrow of the Taliban regime.

She said Afghanistan supported ties with the "countries in partnership with the U.S., and Israel is one of those countries."

But Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah was quoted as saying that bilateral relations could only be established following a comprehensive peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

### Fight marks school ceremony

A fight broke out between Jews and Muslims at a school ceremony in France. The incident occurred in front of the Raoul Dufy Middle School in Lyon, just before the unveiling of a plaque honoring students and professors deported during World War II.

Fifteen Israeli students who had been invited to the ceremony were being introduced when several North African youths began yelling "Dirty Jews" and "Death to the Jews."

A fight broke out between the Israeli students' guides and the North African youths. Several complaints were filed at the police precinct.

### Bulgarian court looking into property claim

A Bulgarian court should rule within a month on whether the government will honor a property claim by Bulgarian Jews. The Bulgarian government confiscated Jewish real estate in 1943, and the Rila Hotel — now worth an estimated \$34 million — was built more than 40 years ago on land where a Jewish school had stood before World War II.

In 1992, a Bulgarian court ruled that the Bulgarian Jewish organization Shalom was the legal owner of nearly 49 percent of the property and ordered that that portion of the hotel's property, or its value, be returned.

Despite repeated promises, however, the Bulgarian government refused to transfer ownership or pay Shalom any compensation, and in 2000 the hotel was privatized.

Shalom pressed its claim over the past decade, and on Tuesday the case opened before the highest Bulgarian court for civil appeals.