



## IN THE NEWS

## Abbas to ask Bush to support re-arming

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas hopes to win U.S. support for re-arming P.A. security services.

Abbas was expected to raise the issue Thursday in his White House meeting with President Bush.

A White House spokesman said security reform would feature in the Abbas-Bush meeting.

## Republicans shoot down air force plan

Republicans in Congress defeated two measures to end proselytizing at the Air Force Academy.

Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.), who introduced the resolutions, said he didn't expect such fierce resistance.

"Many of my colleagues appeared to believe that the problem is not people who are coercing one religious view over another, the problem is the people who are complaining about being coerced," Israel told JTA on Wednesday.

A number of complaints have arisen in recent weeks about non-Christian cadets at the Colorado Springs academy being singled out by fellow cadets and officers for ridicule and proselytizing.

## Rights group blasts Israel

Amnesty International accused Israel of committing war crimes.

In its annual report on the state of human rights around the world, the group said certain practices conducted by Israel, "including unlawful killings, extensive and wanton destruction of property, obstruction of medical assistance and targeting of medical personnel, torture and the use of Palestinians as 'human shields,' constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes."

Israel denied the charges, calling the report one-sided and extremist.

# WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG

## AIPAC delegates rally to the cause; thousands converge on Washington

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Amid lavish multimedia presentations at this year's policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, there was a strong sense of business as usual.

The powerful pro-Israel lobby was working hard to show it is the same organization it had been before reports of a federal investigation surfaced and two senior officials, who allegedly received and passed on classified information to Israel, were dismissed.

At the same time, it was trying to broaden its appeal, highlighting the American over the Israel in its name, placing a more human face on its lay leadership and diversifying its ranks.

Its membership seemed unruffled by the scandal, more focused on such policy issues as the Iranian threat and Israel's disengagement plan than on newspaper headlines.

Since allegations first surfaced last August, supporters and political officials have rallied behind the organization, giving money and lending support.

They gathered in Washington this week in record numbers for the policy conference. The 5,000 delegates, including some 800 students, hoped to send a message that the organization is the same group it always has been.

Dania Kier Kronick, 49, doesn't believe that any of the charges leveled at the group are valid, but the public relations official from Boca Raton, Fla., said she wouldn't worry even if they were. "We have such a

strong message that even if a few flounder, and I don't think they did, it doesn't diminish the cause," she said.

AIPAC's message resonated with those who came to the Washington Convention Center for the three-day conference, which culminated with lobbying on Capitol Hill on Tuesday.

The organization received major kudos from high-profile speakers, including Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.).

"Judging by how many students I see in the audience today, I know that AIPAC's future is clearly going to be bright," Rice said in her address on Monday.

Sharon, in his first visit to the United States as prime minister without an invitation to meet President Bush, thanked AIPAC for its "tremendous work" in contributing to the close relations between Israel and the United States.

"AIPAC's continued support is more important now than ever before," he said.

Nearly half the members of the U.S. Congress participated in the conference. Most of them attended Monday night's gala dinner, which featured speeches by the leaders of both parties in both houses of Congress.

Those statements and statistics are seen as key, as detractors were watching to see whether AIPAC would lose some of its luster because of the negative press.

Inside the convention, AIPAC leaders were making the case that the organization works for the good of the United States, not just Israel. This year's theme, "Israel. An

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Support for AIPAC is strong at the group's annual policy conference

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American Value," included an opening plenary Sunday featuring non-Jewish AIPAC backers. The delegates to the conference include many non-Jewish student leaders, including some from Christian and historically black universities.

"It's important that it not just be about Jewish people coming together to support Israel," said Ryan Berni, president of College Democrats at Louisiana State University, standing with the school's College Republicans president Monday night.

The unstated goal, it seemed, was to quash suggestions that AIPAC acts more as a foreign agent for Israel than as an American lobby, allegations that many believe prompted the federal probe.

In a noted break from tradition, "Hatikvah," Israel's national anthem, was not played at Monday night's gala.

The organization also sought to highlight its lay leaders. Before Rice spoke, many members of the board of directors gave testimonials to AIPAC's work on five giant television screens that surrounded the ballrooms.

■  
In his annual address, AIPAC's executive director, Howard Kohr, thanked members for standing with the organization, and suggested the investigation was a test of AIPAC's collective resolve.

He said the organization has learned directly from the government that no current AIPAC staffers are a target of the federation investigation. Neither is

the organization. Kohr also stressed that the organization would work harder to be above reproach.

"I work for you," Kohr told delegates Sunday. "So, I therefore pledge to you that I will take the steps necessary to ensure that every employee of AIPAC, now and in the future, conducts themselves in a manner of which you can be proud, using policies and procedures that provide transparency, accountability and maintain our effectiveness."

Kohr's leadership also received a strong endorsement from AIPAC's president, Bernice Manocherian, who said the organization had not missed a beat.

"Since the beginning of my presidency, Howard and the entire staff have exhibited a level of professionalism and decorum that makes me very proud," Manocherian said to applause. "People are not just defined about how they act in a moment of ease, but how they conduct themselves under the most difficult circumstances."

Later, she spoke glowingly of the group's membership, comparing its political clout to that of the National Rifle Association, which has a much larger budget, and the AARP, which has five times as many members.

"I don't think our respect for this organization has diminished," said Susan Carlisle, 56, an accountant from Agoura Hills, Calif. "If anything, we're a little fearful and we're going to close ranks even more."

■  
Outside the convention halls, people were still talking about the probe.

Steve Rosen, AIPAC's former director of foreign policy, was quoted in The New York Times on Sunday as saying that he had done nothing wrong.

The same article suggested that AIPAC fired Rosen and Keith Weissman, an Iran analyst, last month after lawyers heard a tape of a conversation Weissman had with Larry Franklin, a former Pentagon

analyst since indicted for passing classified information.

According to the report, the tape caught Franklin, who was cooperating with the FBI at the time, telling Weiss-

man that he was giving him classified information about the threat to American and Israeli agents in the Kurdish part of northern Iraq, at the hands of Iranians.

Rosen and Weissman passed the information onto an Israeli Embassy staffer and a reporter at the

Washington Post, sources tell JTA.

Franklin will be in court for a preliminary hearing Friday, and sources close to Rosen and Weissman say the two expect to be indicted as well.

Franklin now faces additional charges. On Tuesday, he was charged with possessing classified information at his West Virginia home.

Some AIPAC members at the conference questioned whether the organization should have dismissed Rosen and Weissman, believing they did nothing wrong.

Rosen, in particular, spent 23 years with the lobby and was famous for briefings to board members and other donors.

"It's a regrettable situation, but probably the right thing to do," said David Hirsch, 43, a real estate developer from Greenwich, Conn.

"Those two individuals were extraordinary people and enormous contributors, but they became too much of a political liability, and we are a political organization."

Supporters said this week's convention provided a major boost to the group's image.

"I don't think any less of AIPAC, but I have concerns about whether it will make a difference in its effectiveness," Joseph Sitrick, 84, a retired foreign service officer from Chevy Chase, Md., said.

"But look at the turnout. You couldn't have greater support than that." ■

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U.S. Secretary of State

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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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# Jewish groups lobby on judges, stem cells

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish groups hope to maintain the high level of activism they have brought to several recent key domestic policy discussions on Capitol Hill.

Organizations were sending out messages and calling rabbis as the U.S. Senate prepared to take on controversial judicial nominations and the House of Representatives passed a bill to expand stem-cell research.

Even after a deal was struck preventing Senate Republicans from using the "nuclear option" on judicial nominations, several Jewish groups were poised to keep up the pressure on nominees they see as too conservative.

The sudden activism came in part because the congressional fate of both issues had been uncertain beforehand, a rarity in recent years, when Republicans have controlled the White House and both houses of Congress.

Leaders of several Jewish organizations said they heard a desire from their members for a more activist approach to counter the growing presence of Christian conservatives, who infuse religious context into their advocacy for positions that often are in opposition to positions held by many Jews.

On judges, the National Council of Jewish Women and the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism urged senators not to change rules and end the filibuster, which allows opponents to block a vote by prolonged speechmaking on topics not necessarily relevant to the issue.

The NCJW flew constituents to Washington to meet with swing senators during the Passover holiday, and the RAC asked members to get in touch with their lawmakers.

"I think legislators understand they have to represent their constituents, and when the grassroots reach out, I think legislators listen," NCJW President Phyllis Snyder said.

A group of senators reached a compromise Monday evening allowing three judges to receive floor votes and allowing the filibuster option to continue only in "extraordinary" circumstances. In addition, Republicans agreed not to change rules to circumvent the filibuster, a last-

ditch move that has become known as the "nuclear option."

Jewish groups applauded the compromise because it kept the filibuster intact but remained concerned that controversial nominees, including those for the Supreme Court down the line, will be confirmed.

"It's very much a beginning," said Mark Pelavin, the RAC's associate director. "All the deal really did was set the ground rules for the debates we are now going to have."

The RAC took out ads in several Jewish newspapers this week, noting, "The next fight will be even harder."

Pelavin and many others anticipate that a U.S. Supreme Court vacancy will be announced this summer.

Several other Jewish groups focused their attention on a bill supporting research on human stem cells from embryos that otherwise would be discarded.

The bill passed the House, 238-194, Tuesday evening. It is expected to pass the Senate, but the House vote suggests congressional support is not strong enough to override President Bush's promised veto.

Hadassah has led the fight in the Jewish community, using its stature as a medical-research organization.

"Hadassah can make a big impact because we are so large and we have real credibility on this issue," said Marla Gilson, the organization's Washington director. "If there is a district that has a targeted member, we have someone who can call them up and talk on this issue."

They have had support from many groups, including the RAC, which rallied members who were motivated after hearing actor Michael J. Fox, who has Parkinson's disease, speak on the issue in March.

The Orthodox Union sent a letter to lawmakers last week, also expressing its support for the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act.

The stem-cell issue represents a rare opportunity for the Orthodox community to stand with other Jewish organizations and many Democratic lawmakers. In the past, Nathan Diament, director of the O.U.'s Institute for Public Affairs, has reached out to Democrats on stem-cell research.

"It's important that we as an organization and a community pursue and promote policy positions consistent with our religious values," Diament said. "And wherever that puts us on the political spectrum, we let the chips fall where they fall."

He added that he has had many "teachable moments," using the issue to show that the Orthodox community is not in lock step with Christian conservatives, even though they do agree on such issues as faith-based initiatives and school vouchers, which most other Jewish groups oppose.

Jewish leaders said they have been able to change some lawmakers' minds on stem-cell research.

"We have seen instance after instance where a member of Congress was absolutely tied to a position, and we brought in a 10-year-old diabetes patient or a young woman attached to a wheelchair," Gilson said. "Seeing that real people are tied to research has had an impact."

Jewish leaders say they will stay on top of these issues after this week's votes. Many are expected to participate in a meeting Thursday with Senate Democratic leaders, organized by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.).

'It's important that we as an organization and a community pursue and promote policy positions consistent with our religious values.'

**Nathan Diament**

Director, Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Lebanese vow to take land

Lebanon's president pledged to win a portion of the Golan Heights from Israel.

Emile Lahoud said Tuesday that he was "determined to liberate the remaining occupied Shebaa Farms from Israeli occupation," the Associated Press reported.

Israel captured the Shebaa Farms, a portion of the Golan Heights, from Syria in the 1967 Six Day War and annexed it in 1981.

The United Nations investigated Lebanon's claim to the area and found it baseless, but the Hezbollah terrorist group has used the issue as a pretext to continue attacking Israel.

#### Dichter: Hamas still robust

Hamas' fighting capabilities have been largely unaffected by the killing of its leaders, the former head of Israel's Shin Bet security service said.

"Hamas has thousands of fighters in the Gaza Strip, and its command structure is robust despite our 'targeted preventions,'" Avi Dichter, who stepped down as Shin Bet head this month, told a forum of civil servants Wednesday in Jerusalem.

The comments appeared to run counter to long-running Israeli assertions that the assassination of Palestinian terrorist leaders hobbled the organizations' fighting abilities.

#### Noted Jewish columnist dies

Newspaper columnist Carl Alpert died May 12 at 92.

Alpert, who was born in Cambridge, Mass., wrote a column for Jewish newspapers and magazines, beginning in 1937 and continuing until March.

He also was very involved with the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, and with the World Union of Jewish Journalists and the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel.

### WORLD

#### London mayor defends himself

The controversial mayor of London denied charges of anti-Semitism.

"Those who try to stifle all debate on the policies of Ariel Sharon by saying that criticizing Israel's current policies makes one anti-Semitic do a grave disservice to the noble cause of fighting anti-Semitism," Mayor Ken Livingstone said in a letter published Wednesday by the Jerusalem Post.

Livingstone was rebutting an article in the newspaper suggesting that his actions — including branding the Israeli prime minister a "war criminal" and calling a critical Jewish journalist a "concentration camp guard" — inflamed anti-Semitism in Britain.

#### France proposes TV ban

A French Cabinet minister proposed that the Hezbollah TV station Al-Manar be banned throughout the European Union.

At a meeting of European government ministers Tuesday in Brussels, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres insisted that a station that is forbidden in one member state must be forbidden in all member states.

The United States placed Al-Manar on its list of terrorist organizations in December 2004, days after France banned the station from its airwaves for its incendiary and anti-Semitic programming.

#### Home of former Israeli president defaced

Swastikas were painted on the childhood home in Ireland of former Israeli President Chaim Herzog.

SS insignias also were painted on the Herzog house, where Herzog lived with his father, Rabbi Isaac Halevy Herzog, chief rabbi of Ireland and then Askhenazi chief rabbi of Israel, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The attack is the latest example of anti-Semitic vandalism in Ireland during the past month.

#### Rabbis head to Germany

A dozen rabbinical students headed to Germany to get a firsthand look at the country and how it's dealing with its history.

The students from the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary were to leave Wednesday on Bridge of Understanding, a 10-day German-sponsored program for young American Jews.

Participants will meet with German Jews and non-Jews, scholars, politicians, journalists and governments officials.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Franklin hearing postponed

A lawyer for the man accused of passing classified information to two American Israel Public Affairs Committee staffers said he thinks an indictment is imminent.

A preliminary hearing for Lawrence Franklin, scheduled for Friday in a Virginia federal court, has been postponed. Franklin's attorney, Plato Cacheris, told JTA that he expects his client to be indicted.

Franklin, a Pentagon Iran analyst, was charged in a criminal complaint earlier this month with passing information to two men, confirmed as Steve Rosen, AIPAC's former policy director, and Keith Weissman, a former Iran analyst for the pro-Israel lobby.

Franklin was charged Tuesday on separate charges of possessing classified information at his West Virginia home.

Sources told JTA that Rosen and Weissman expect to be indicted as well for allegedly giving classified information to an Israeli embassy official.

#### Canada bans Jewish group

Canada banned three groups as terrorists, including the right-wing Jewish organization Kahane Chai.

Canada's Cabinet named Kahane Chai, or Kach, along with the Mujahedin-e Khalq, an Iranian terrorist group, and the Afghan group Hezb-e Islami, which is aligned with Al-Qaida.

They are the first groups added to Canada's list since Prime Minister Paul Martin took office last year.

Anyone who supports a listed group is subject to imprisonment for up to 10 years.

#### Rabbi opens Senate session

A Cincinnati rabbi was invited to open the U.S. Senate with a prayer Thursday.

Gary Zola, a historian, is executive director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives on the Cincinnati campus of the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Zola was invited to be guest chaplain by Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio).

Voinovich, Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio) and Rep. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) co-sponsored a resolution honoring 350 years of American Jewish life in America and recognizing the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish history.

The commission, which Zola chairs, is a collaboration of the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, the American Jewish Historical Society and the Marcus Center.

#### Bezmozgis wins fiction prize

David Bezmozgis, author of the short-story collection "Natasha and Other Stories," won the Canadian Jewish Book Awards' fiction prize.

The prize ceremony is scheduled for May 30.

The 31-year-old Latvian-born author garnered enormous critical praise for his debut collection of seven linked narratives about the experiences of a Latvian-Jewish boy and his family in a Russian Jewish area of Toronto in the 1980s.