

IN THE NEWS

Israeli slain in West Bank ambush

Palestinian terrorists killed an Israeli in the West Bank.

Yevgeny Rider, 28, from the Hermesh settlement, was shot in the forehead Monday while driving, and a 16-year-old passenger was wounded.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack.

In the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian woman was caught trying to smuggle a bomb into Israel through the Erez border crossing.

Media reports described her as a member of the Palestinians' ruling Fatah Party who was due for treatment in an Israeli hospital.

World Likud goes to court

The international organization of the Likud Party issued a legal challenge to Ariel Sharon.

World Likud, home to a strong faction that opposes the Israeli prime minister's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, is arguing that Sharon did not follow proper procedure in nominating Ra'anana Mayor Zeev Bielski to head the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization, Ha'aretz reported.

World Likud on Sunday chose former Cabinet minister Natan Sharansky as its candidate.

The Zionist General Council is slated to vote for the chairman of the Jewish Agency and the WZO on Wednesday.

U.S., E.U. issue Mideast declaration

The United States and European Union issued a joint declaration calling on the Palestinians to quash terrorism and on Israel to freeze settlements.

The statement was issued Monday after President Bush met with E.U. Council President Jean-Claude Juncker, E.U. foreign policy chief Javier Solana and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso.

The declaration also called for free and fair legislative elections in Palestinian areas.



WORLD REPORT

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Hamas success at polls poses dilemma for British foreign policy

By DANIELLA PELED

LONDON, (JTA) — The recent admission by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw that British diplomats held talks with local Hamas officials may have angered Israel, but it hints at a wider change in British policy toward the terrorist group.

The British government reportedly is weighing sweeping changes to its Israeli-Palestinian strategy in response to the changing profile of Hamas, which increasingly is gaining political ground — though it refuses to disarm or accept the existence of a Jewish state.

Hamas won control of 30 out of 84 local councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in municipal elections held in May. Similar developments in Lebanon, where Hezbollah has won 33 seats in the 128-member Parliament, have added urgency to the U.K. policy review.

While Straw himself supports including Hamas' military wing on the U.K.- and E.U.-wide list of terrorist organizations — though there remains no ban on the group's "political" side — debate is growing over whether the fundamentalist Islamic Hamas movement, which is committed to the destruction of Israel, can evolve into a mainstream political group.

Unlike the Palestinians' ruling Fatah Party, which is widely perceived as corrupt and inefficient and whose leaders accrued immense personal benefits from the Oslo Accords, Hamas generally is seen as politically clean and honest. It runs an extensive network of soup kitchens, schools and orphanages.

The announcement by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that

parliamentary elections scheduled for July would be postponed was widely viewed as an attempt to stave off a possible Hamas triumph at the polls.

The group's growing electoral success has posed what Straw described in a radio interview ahead of a trip to the region as a "dilemma" for British diplomats.

"In the occupied territories it is de rigueur; it is required, that if a diplomat of whatever level goes into a town, they go and talk to the mayor," Straw said.

"What happened on two occasions — just two occasions — is that such discussions have taken place," Straw said. "But on each of those occasions, our staff have spelled out to the elected official" the British position "of no dealings with Hamas as

an organization as long as it continues to support violence and the destruction of Israel."

Hours after Straw's statements, Palestinians fired missiles into Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, killing two Palestinian workers and a Thai worker. More rockets were fired into the Israeli town of Sderot.

The renewed tension underlined the threat posed by rejectionist Palestinian groups. U.S. officials have said that Hamas' political success is irrelevant and that it remains a terrorist group as long as it is preparing suicide bombers as well as electoral candidates.

But the British government may be drawing on its own past experience.

"We went through years of saying we wouldn't talk to the IRA, but in the end we did," pointed out Lord Timothy Garden, security and defense expert at the Chatham House think tank. "I'm not surprised, from

Continued on page 2

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

■ Can U.K. differentiate between Hamas' political and military wings?

Continued from page 1

our experience with terrorists at home and insurgents abroad, that the British government is trying to engage. There is more advantage in engaging than in isolating.

"In general, British foreign policy is very pragmatic," Garden said. "It looks for opportunities to help things along, rather than taking absolute stands that are difficult to back down from. You can see it in our negotiations with Iran over their nuclear enrichment program, which tends to be criticized in some U.S. circles as being the soft European attitude."

With Hamas' operational capability severely weakened by Israeli anti-terrorism actions such as targeted killings of leading terrorists, some analysts suggest now is the time to seize the opportunity to try to coax Hamas into the mainstream.

Hamas leader Khaled Meshal already has proposed "a PLO in which Fatah no longer has a monopoly."

While Britain is unlikely to support direct negotiations or even open communication with Hamas, it may lean toward low-rank, exploratory discussions to understand changing dynamics within the group and assess whether direct contact would be feasible or productive.

Israeli political scientist Menachem Klein of Bar Ilan University points to previous, unofficial British contacts with Hamas through Alistair Crooke, a former intelligence agent assigned to the Middle East as a security adviser to the European Union. Crooke held talks with Hamas and

other terrorist groups three years ago.

The Israeli government and public opinion do not accept the idea that Hamas could change, but Klein believes there is a growing international consensus that Hamas is now part of the system.

"Officially Hamas is only involved on the local level, though they are preparing to run in the general election — and if they achieve, as they are expected to, 25 to 40 percent of the vote, they will be a minority that no one can disregard," he warned.

That presents a dilemma "not just for the U.K. but for the international community and Israel," said a British Foreign Office spokesman. Still, the spokesman insisted that no more meetings with Hamas were planned "at this time."

Israel's displeased response to Straw's comments was predictable: U.K. contacts with Hamas can be seen not only as consorting with a terrorist group committed to Israel's destruction but also as weakening the legitimacy of Abbas and the Palestinian Authority.

But Klein does not think Straw's admission will spark major tensions between Israel and Britain, believing that Israel trusts the U.K. leadership far more than it does that of other European states.

Britain is also held in high esteem by Palestinian groups.

"Hamas wants to open dialogue with the West, but not with Israel. Therefore, talking to the U.K. government, which has an open door to Sharon's office, can be a vehicle to transfer messages

between Hamas and the Israeli leadership," he said.

Klein pointed to the situation in the 1980s. Though the PLO was officially boycotted as a terrorist group, the CIA maintained a channel with PLO officials in Beirut, and the late PLO chief Yasser Arafat tried to transfer messages via Norway, which is an Israeli ally.

"When an organization is not ready to talk or two sides aren't mature enough to talk, they need a third party," said Klein, who believes that could be Britain. ■

**U.K. talks with Hamas
'can be a vehicle to
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Israeli leadership.'**

Menachem Klein
Bar Ilan University

Rice sees deal on Gaza housing

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Just as the cracks were showing in Israel's attempt to coordinate its upcoming Gaza Strip withdrawal with the Palestinian Authority, in stepped the United States to cement a deal.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, visiting the region ahead of a meeting this week of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, announced that the sides had agreed on a solution for a pressing issue in Gaza — the fate of some 1,200 Israeli homes to be evacuated in August.

"Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree that the settler homes in Gaza should be removed," Rice told reporters after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "Therefore the parties will work toward a plan for destruction and cleanup."

The deal has symbolic value, given the distrust that has dogged efforts to secure a smooth pullout, but it was quickly overshadowed by an eruption of violence in Gaza.

Palestinian terrorists killed an Israeli soldier near Rafah, a flashpoint town on the Egyptian border, and wounded two others. Army return fire killed a gunman.

Israel has made clear that a cessation of Palestinian violence is a precondition for its withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank and for any resumption of moves to implement the "road map" peace plan.

Sharon, who is to meet Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Tuesday, said he would press him on the point.

Rice, who met Abbas in Ramallah on Saturday, echoed the call. But she also was quoted as saying that the Palestinian leader was "in a difficult internal struggle." ■

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In Berlin, a new Jewish school offers tradition

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — The creation of a new Jewish preschool in the city that once was the heart of Nazi Germany reflects a growing need for traditional Jewish education in Germany, observers say.

Some say it even could attract young Orthodox families from elsewhere in Europe.

Talmud Torah Or Avner is scheduled to open in August with 18 students, JTA has learned. It will be run under the auspices of the Rohr Chabad Center of Berlin.

"The Jewish community has made an official decision to take it under its auspices," said Rabbi Yehudah Teichtal of Chabad Berlin.

The school will offer prayer and traditional religious studies for students.

"It's not an Orthodox school to make people Orthodox, but it works on tradition," Teichtal said. "We want to show people the beauty" of Judaism.

The impetus for the new school came from frustrated parents of children at the Heinz Galinski school who, "after truly years of trying to work with the staff there, saw that there was no opportunity to offer their children a traditional Jewish education within that framework," said Donnell Reed, gabbai at the Chabad congregation in Berlin.

The Galinski school is under the umbrella of the city's Jewish community and isn't affiliated with any particular stream of Judaism. It is open to non-Jews as well.

"It's a positive development that for the first time since the war there will be a grade school in Berlin that offers a traditional Jewish education," Reed said.

Ronit Vered, director of the Galinski school, declined to comment for this story. But parent association spokesman Roland Kruse-Kraft said he wished the new school well, "as long as the financial resources of the Heinz Galinski school are not impacted."

The new school will not drain state funds from others, Jens Stiller, a spokesperson for the Berlin Senate's administration for education, youth and sport, told JTA.

"This is not cannibalism," Stiller said.

Only a few families are expected to switch from one school to the other.

The state funds up to 93 percent of costs for private schools — which teach the required curriculum, plus an additional

component of religious studies — with each school funded according either to the size of its student body or the number of spaces it offers.

As a private school, the new Talmud Torah Or Avner, or Jueddishe Traditionsschule Talmud Torah, will receive state funding at a level yet to be determined.

Teichtal said he's seeking support from international educational organizations, though he wouldn't provide specifics. Funding already is being provided by the Or Avner Foundation of philanthropist and businessman Lev Leviev, a major supporter of Chabad schools in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

"I am certain that this will bring people to Berlin," Albert Meyer, president of the Jewish Community of Berlin, told JTA.

He said the existing Jewish grammar school and high school here "have little Jewish identity."

"For a liberal-minded person like I am, this is OK," he said. "But we have to provide sufficient ways to educate traditional families. Therefore this is an enrichment of Berlin."

Some parents have complained about kashrut at the Galinski school, which installed separate kitchens for dairy and meat meals about a year ago under the supervision of Berlin's Orthodox Rabbi, Yitzchak Ehrenberg.

Still, some observant families prepare kosher meals at home for their children.

The Galinski school also has offered extra-curricular classes for children from observant families. But parents who want an all-around traditional atmosphere for their children say extra classes aren't enough.

"Rav Teichtal is the only person who does concrete things in that direction," said Reed, who plans to send his two children to the new school.

Meyer said the new school will open with a first-grade class at the site of the current Chabad kindergarten program in former West Berlin.

"But the objective is that Yehudah Teichtal would run an educational program on

the grounds of the Heinz Galinski school," he said. "So we would have the security, and it will be visible that we are working together under the united community," the Berlin Jewish umbrella organization.

The existing Jewish schools in the city — there is also a kindergarten and a high school — run at a high deficit, Meyer said, because they provide services not covered by the state and generally collect lower fees from Russian immigrant families.

Germany's Jewish population has quadrupled to more than 100,000 in the past 16 years with an influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

"I consider the immigration very positive, but many families are not in a position to pay high education fees," Meyer said, adding that the Jewish secondary school has cut out its lunch program to save about \$194,000 a year.

The Galinski school serves 320 children through grade six, including many non-Jewish pupils. The new school also would be open to all, though some say the adherence to strict Orthodox regulations is less likely to attract non-Jews.

The ceiling of 93 percent state funding usually is reached in a few years, as new pupils and new grades are added. But because the new school has been officially recognized as a successor to Jewish schools shut down by the Nazis, it has been granted the full 93 percent funding level without a waiting period, according to Kenneth Frisse, spokesman for the Berlin Senate's administration for education, youth and sport.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Josh Spinner, vice president of the Ronald S. Lauder foundation and head of its Orthodox yeshiva in the former East Berlin, said efforts are under way to start an Orthodox preschool in that part of the city.

"We will consider attempting to meet any and all Jewish educational needs which develop in an organic way and which for real objective reasons — such as our distant location in east Berlin — cannot be met by the existing Jewish institutions," he said, adding that no state funding would be sought.

'For the first time since the war there will be a grade school in Berlin that offers a traditional Jewish education.'

Donnell Reed

Gabbai, Chabad shul in Berlin

AROUND
THE
JEWISH
WORLD

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Pedestrian vs. premier

A Jerusalem yeshiva student was arrested after trying to block Ariel Sharon's motorcade.

The suspect threw himself in front of a security vehicle accompanying the Israeli prime minister's car in Jerusalem on Monday, witnesses said.

The motorcade circumvented him while a police car gave chase.

Shabbat in Tehran

An Israeli journalist visited Iran.

Orly Azoulai of Yediot Achronot published an account Monday of a recent trip to the Islamic Republic, in what appeared to be a first for the Israeli press.

Azoulai, who did not say how she gained an Iranian entry permit, described spending Shabbat with the Jewish community of Tehran.

"For 30 years, no Jew has come here from outside Iran," she quoted a worshiper at the city's 13th Street Synagogue as saying when she introduced herself.

She described Iran's 30,000 Jews as socially cohesive and politically insecure, many of them dreaming of joining relatives in Israel or the United States.

NORTH AMERICA

Subcommittee OKs aid to Israel, Palestinians

A U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee approved funds for Israel and the Palestinians.

The powerful Appropriations Committee's foreign operations subcommittee approved standard levels of assistance for a number of Middle East countries last Thursday and doubled assistance for the Palestinians, to \$150 million, per President Bush's request.

That \$150 million is in addition to the same amount approved earlier this year in emergency assistance to the Palestinians.

The subcommittee also approved the expected \$2.28 billion in military assistance to Israel, as well as funds for Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

House passes measures favoring Israel

Two pro-Israel measures were attached to the U.N. reform act passed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The act, which passed last week and which recommends funding cuts if the United Nations fails to adopt accountability reforms, also would expand the Western European and Others Group at the United Nations to afford Israel permanent membership with full rights and privileges, said Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), who authored the pro-Israel measures.

The other pro-Israel measure would withhold funds commensurate with the cost of running offices "focused on the Palestinian agenda" until such offices are eliminated or consolidated into other U.N. groups.

Rice: Maintain aid to Egypt

The Bush administration wants Congress to maintain current levels of aid to Egypt.

"The United States believes that we have the right balance in the various forms of aid that we grant to Egypt," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Monday in a talk at the American University of Cairo.

A number of members of Congress, led by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the ranking member on the U.S. House of Representatives

International Relations Committee, want to shift some of the \$1.3 billion in military aid Egypt now receives to economic aid and make it conditional on democratic reform.

Student donates bar mitzvah money to UJA

A bar mitzvah boy donated more than \$14,000 in gifts to the UJA-Federation of New York to promote an interethnic Israeli soccer league.

New Yorker Jesse Graff's donation, through the UJA's "Give a Mitzvah-Do a Mitzvah Project," will pay for the finals of the Israel Association of Community Centers' Junior Soccer League, which organizes games among Jewish and Arab youth.

The family included a request in Jesse's bar mitzvah invitations asking guests to donate money to the Israeli association rather than give him gifts.

Con man fights deportation

An Israeli Arab who defrauded Muslims and Islamic organizations, including terrorist groups, is pleading with Canadian officials not to deport him to Israel because he fears for his life.

Mohammed Mustaf Agbareia, a 39-year-old Nazareth native, is known as a career con artist who has been deported from Canada twice before.

He is wanted by law enforcement authorities in Michigan and New York and has been convicted of fraud in England.

Agbareia, who lives near Toronto with his wife and teenaged son, is fighting a third deportation order.

Refugee rescuer to be honored

An American journalist who rescued more than 2,000 artists and writers from the Nazis will be posthumously honored.

Varian Fry will have a street in his hometown of Ridgewood, N.J. named after him in a special ceremony June 26.

In 1940 Fry traveled to Vichy France to establish a clandestine network to rescue refugee intellectuals being persecuted by the Nazis.

Among those he saved were artists Marc Chagall, Marcell Duchamp, Max Ernst and Jacques Lipschitz and writers Franz Werfel, Lion Feuchtwanger and Hannah Arendt, among others.

WORLD

Canada's 'dishonest' awards

A media watchdog group gave its first "Dishonest Reporting Canada" award to a Canadian Broadcasting Company reporter.

CBC reporter Neil Macdonald, whose repeated negative references to Israel have triggered on-air clarifications and an admission by a CBC ombudsman of a perception of bias, took the "prize" sponsored by HonestReporting Canada, an organization that fights what it considers imbalanced coverage of events relating to Israel and the Middle East.

'O Jerusalem' author dies

Larry Collins, who co-authored "O Jerusalem," a best-selling account of Israel's founding, died at age 75.

Collins, an American, authored a number of best-selling documentary books with Dominique Lapierre.

"O Jerusalem," published in 1971, was an account, based on a wide range of interviews and research, of Israel's struggle for independence between the end of World War II and its founding in 1948.

Collins died Monday in the south of France of a cerebral brain hemorrhage.