



IN THE NEWS

Israel arrests Islamic Jihad members

Israeli troops arrested 52 members of Islamic Jihad in the West Bank.

Tuesday's predawn sweep was part of a crackdown on the Palestinian terrorist group launched after it killed two Israelis in separate attacks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip this week.

Intelligence experts believe Islamic Jihad, under orders from Iran-backed Hezbollah, has been trying to undermine the Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire.

Fatal train wreck in southern Israel

At least six people were killed in a train wreck in southern Israel.

At least 120 were believed injured after a train hit a truck near Kiryat Gat on Tuesday.

The train was traveling to Beersheba from northern Israel when the collision occurred.

Officials said it was one of the worst train wrecks in Israeli history.

Israeli military helicopters helped carry some of the injured to hospitals for treatment.

"Given the damage, we can be grateful the casualties were relatively limited," said Avi Zohar, director of the MDA ambulance service. [Story, Pg. 3]

Conviction in civil rights murder

A former Ku Klux Klan member was convicted in the 1964 murders of three civil rights workers, two of them Jewish.

Tuesday's decision found Edgar Lee Killen guilty of three counts of manslaughter in the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner.

The three had come to Mississippi to investigate the burning of a black church.

The American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League commended the decision, though the ADL called it long overdue.

WORLD REPORT

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As sides coordinate pullout, Sharon insists that P.A. move against terror

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon conceived the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank as a unilateral step, but it's increasingly being coordinated by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators.

The two sides are working on joint military plans to stop Palestinian terrorists from firing on Israeli soldiers and civilians during the pullback, slated to begin in mid-August. They also are putting together a string of ambitious economic projects to provide incentives for the Palestinians to keep the peace long after the withdrawal is complete.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's lightning-quick visit to Ramallah and Jerusalem over the weekend was part of a concerted American effort to encourage coordination, and Sharon's meeting Tuesday with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas also focused, at least in part, on the coordination effort.

In the two-and-a-half hour meeting, Sharon and Abbas discussed a number of key coordination issues, including deployment of P.A. police during the evacuation, arrangements for control of the "Philadelphia route" on the border between Gaza and Egypt, administration of border-crossing points between Gaza and Israel, and demolition of evacuated settler homes.

Sharon also agreed to transfer the West Bank cities of Kalkilya and Bethlehem to P.A. control within the next two weeks.

But Sharon's main message to Abbas was that Israeli-Palestinian military and civilian coordination will have little credibility

unless the Palestinian Authority starts making good on its pledges to crack down on terrorism.

Israel claims there has been an increase in attacks by groups like Islamic Jihad over the past few days, and that the Palestinian Authority is doing very little to stop it.

On Monday night, Israeli forces arrested more than 50 Islamic Jihad activists after the group claimed responsibility for killing two Israelis in recent days. The message was clear: If the Palestinian Authority doesn't take action, Israel will.

In her visit to the area, Rice met separately with Palestinian and Israeli leaders and emphasized to both sides the importance the United States attaches to coordinating the withdrawal.

She left no doubt that the Americans see a coordinated, relatively peaceful pullback as the key to creating a favorable climate for renewed peace talks.

Coordination is "absolutely critical," Rice said.

The military coordination talks are going ahead on three levels: ministerial, top brass and officers in the field.

To strengthen the P.A.'s prestige and policing capacity, Israeli negotiators, headed by Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinski, the army's deputy chief of staff, are proposing:

- Handing over more West Bank cities, such as Jenin and Ramallah, to P.A. control before the withdrawal from Gaza. The Israeli side, though, insists that the Palestinian Authority first fulfill promises to disarm terrorists on Israel's wanted list.

- Transferring P.A. police from the West

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ANALYSIS

■ Even as the sides coordinate security, Sharon presses Abbas on terror

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Bank to Gaza to beef up their presence in key areas.

- Setting up joint Israeli-Palestinian operations rooms to coordinate movement of forces on the ground before, during and after the withdrawal.

The Israeli side has provided maps of the settlements and asked the Palestinians to come back with a detailed security plan that would dovetail with Israel's overall blueprint for protecting the withdrawal.

But some Israeli leaders are skeptical. Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu argues that because Israel is not demanding anything from the Palestinians in return for the withdrawal, members of terrorist groups have no motivation to keep the peace.

On the contrary, he says, apart from any agreement Israel reaches with the Palestinian Authority, terrorists almost certainly will fire on the departing troops because they want to create the impression that Israel is being forced to leave.

The civilian coordination talks aim to provide incentives for a more enduring commitment to peace. At least five major projects are under consideration:

- a rail link between the Gaza Strip and West Bank;
- completing construction of a seaport in Gaza;
- reopening the Gaza airport;
- streamlining border crossing points between Gaza and Israel; and
- a massive housing project for Palestinian refugee resettlement.

In early June talks with the Palestinians, Israeli Cabinet minister Haim Ramon proposed a rail line from Erez on the Gaza border to Tarkumiya, near the West Bank city of Hebron.

"The idea is to show the Palestinians that the planned withdrawal is not a case of 'Gaza first and last,' as many of them fear, but rather that it is a first step leading to a full-fledged, unified Palestinian state incorporating both Gaza and the West Bank," Ramon said.

Even more important for the "economics of peace" are the border crossing points between Gaza and Israel. Israeli officials admit that the way the crossing points operate at present could stifle Palestinian economic development by holding up the transport of goods to ports in Israel for export.

To solve the problem, the Defense Ministry has drawn up plans for rapid, high-tech security checks, and the World Bank has agreed in principle to help meet the cost of building a pilot, state-of-the-art crossing point.

Another key issue on the civilian agenda is the fate of evacuated settler homes. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators agreed to demolish the houses after the Palestinians said they don't want them — because what they need in densely populated Gaza are high-rise buildings, not villas.

According to the agreement, Israel will destroy the homes but the Palestinians will remove the debris and use it in the construction of the Gaza seaport.

Another Israeli proposal, that the international community help finance a major high-rise housing project in the evacuated

area for the resettlement of Palestinian refugees, also is under consideration.

American economic envoy James Wolfensohn, who until recently was president of the World Bank, is reportedly trying to raise \$3 billion for Gaza rehabilitation projects.

"The hope is that if they materialize, these projects will provide work for thousands of Palestinians and help stabilize the security situation," a senior Israeli official told JTA.

'The U.S. strategy is to help Mahmoud Abbas to survive.'

Menachem Klein

Political scientist, Bar-Ilan University

Such actions amount to conflict management, Menachem Klein, a political scientist at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, told a hearing Tuesday on Capitol Hill in Washington. What the United States needs to advance to is conflict prevention, he said, by producing a breakthrough between the sides that would help placate Israeli fears of renewed violence and Palestinian fears that Sharon wants to squeeze them out of a state.

Currently, "the U.S. strategy is to help Mahmoud Abbas to survive — not succeed, but survive," Klein said. "In my view, conflict management is not enough because we face the renewal of the intifada."

With the evacuation less than two months away, finalizing these ambitious coordination plans will be a race against both the clock and Palestinian militiamen. Indeed, the degree of coordination could decide the immediate future of Israeli-Palestinian relations: whether or not the ongoing violence finally gives way to economic cooperation and the beginning of a credible peace process.

(JTA Washington Bureau Chief Ron Kampeas contributed to this report.)

Lawmaker says Dems demonize Christians

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Republican lawmaker accused his Democratic colleagues of "denigrating and demonizing Christians" for seeking an amendment backing religious tolerance at the Air Force Academy.

Rep. John Hostettler (R-Ind.) addressed the comments to Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) on the House floor Monday during a discussion of an amendment that would chastise the Colorado Springs school for "coercive and abusive religious pros-

elytizing" and called for a congressional report within two months on a plan to improve religious tolerance on campus. Hostettler's comments, which he later withdrew following protests from Israel and other lawmakers, were criticized by Jewish Democrats.

The amendment, offered by Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.), failed 198-210. A replacement amendment, which placed less pressure on the Air Force Academy, passed by a voice vote.

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Military helps rescue train-wreck victims

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — A veteran of responding to Palestinian terror attacks, Brig. Gen. Amir Eshel did not hesitate to scramble all of Israel's military helicopters when news that a train had derailed first reached his bunker.

It turned out that Tuesday's crash near Kibbutz Revadim in southern Israel was an accident, not a terrorist attack.

For many of the 180-odd casualties, the air force duty officer's quick response might have meant the difference between life and death.

"We assumed it was a major terrorist incident," Eshel told Channel Two television. "Even though it wasn't, the ability to reach the remote site by air was very important in getting people to treatment."

At least six passengers of the south-bound train, and the driver of the truck it hit, were killed.

The force of the collision squashed the first two cars of the train like an accordion. Debris was scattered for hundreds of feet around the scraggly bushes in the desert.

"I heard the train's horn sound, and then we were all thrown forward as it slammed

on the brakes," an off-duty soldier rescued from the scene told reporters in the hospital. "Next thing I know, there was a huge explosion, dust, and everything spun around. It was all I could do to get out of there."

The worst hurt were taken by helicopters to hospitals. The walking wounded lay on the sand next to the tracks, awaiting ambulances that took at least half an hour to reach the remote location.

Given that the train was carrying as many as 1,000 passengers, many of whom had moved up front during the voyage after the air conditioning failed in the rear cars, the death toll could have been far worse.

"In such situations perhaps one should not say 'Thank God,' but I think given the damage we can be grateful the casualties were relatively limited," said Avi Zohar, director of the MDA ambulance service.

Authorities were quick to rule out terrorism as the cause of the collision. Transportation Minister Meir Shearit

noted that the truck driver who was killed — apparently the truck stalled astride the tracks en route to work on a nearby highway — was Jewish.

The train conductor was hospitalized and not immediately available to give testimony. With witnesses lacking, speculation was rife that negligence could have played a part in one of Israel's worst-ever transportation tragedies.

There was talk of an excess cargo of coal aboard the train, and

the fact that the site saw two similar, albeit milder, accidents in 2000 and 2003.

"I warned them that the writing was on the wall, that the system had to be fixed, but no one paid attention," Moshe Hazut, a former train safety supervisor, told Channel One television.

Tuesday's collision came only days after Israel marked a decade since its worst train accident, in Kibbutz Habonim, when a school bus straddled the tracks and was smashed. Twenty-two people were killed in that incident, including 19 children. ■

'Given the damage we can be grateful the casualties were relatively limited.'

Avi Zohar

Director, MDA ambulance service

Journalist who defended Dreyfus gets city square in Paris

By BRETT KLINE

PARIS (JTA) — A small square in Paris has been named in honor of Bernard Lazare, the radical turn-of-the-century French Jewish journalist and thinker who was among the first to defend Capt. Alfred Dreyfus.

Chief speakers at the June 15 dedication ceremony just south of Place de la Republique were Paris Mayor Bertrand Delano and Pierre Eidenbaum, mayor of the city's third district. About 200 people attended.

Lazare was born in 1865 in the southern city of Nimes into a well-established, assimilated Jewish family. A writer and literary critic, his first book, "Anti-Semitism, Its Causes and History," published in 1894, was heavily critical of Jewish capitalists in Europe and called for total assimilation of the Jews.

The militant anarchist was the first journalist or intellectual in France to defend Dreyfus, a Jewish captain in the French army who was accused of spying for the Germans. Others, such as Emile Zola, followed.

Beginning in 1894, the Dreyfus trial set off major anti-Jewish demonstrations and is considered one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents in French history. It led Lazare to become involved in the defense of oppressed Jews everywhere and to drop his assimilationist stand.

The trial was covered by a journalist from Vienna named Theodor Herzl. The trial was instrumental in helping Herzl formulate his vision of political Zionism.

Dreyfus was found guilty and spent several years on Devils Island, the French penal colony off the coast of South America. The verdict eventually was overturned, but Dreyfus returned to France a broken man.

Lazare was involved in the earliest stages of Zionism. But he never broke with his anarchist beliefs, and subsequently separated from the Zionists.

"I have great admiration for Bernard Lazare," said Jean-Louis Levy, Dreyfus' grandson, who attended the ceremony. "He was the first public figure to defend my grandfather. We never spoke about the affair at home, but we admired Lazare."

Jean Michel Rosenfeld, vice president of the Circle Bernard Lazare, a left-leaning secular Jewish group in Paris with links to the Yahad Party in Israel, called the ceremony "very powerful."

"Until now, Bernard Lazare has only existed in French history books and in our group. Now he will exist in daily Parisian life," said Rosenfeld.

Worn out by his battles, Lazare died in 1903 at age 38. He and Dreyfus are both buried in Paris' Montparnasse Cemetery. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Former Nazi guard deemed 'removable'

Former Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk can be deported from the United States.

U.S. judge Michael Creppy ruled late last week that Demjanjuk, 85, has until June 30 to appeal his deportation for having served as a guard at the Sobibor, Majdanek and Flossenburg camps, and having lied about his service when he applied to enter the United States in 1952.

Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian national who lives near Cleveland, was acquitted in Israel in 1993 of being "Ivan the Terrible," one of the most notorious Nazi guards.

U.S. travel warning lessened

The U.S. State Department revised its travel warning for Israel, allowing U.S. government personnel to travel more extensively in the West Bank.

The new warning, issued Monday, allows personnel to travel and stop in cities and towns in the West Bank for government business, based on security conditions, and travel on primary roads.

Personal travel to cities like Jericho and Bethlehem remains prohibited.

The previous warning allowed travel to the West Bank only for "official, critical operational needs only."

While terrorist attacks have declined in frequency, the report acknowledges that the potential for violence remains high, including from Jewish settler groups. It calls on U.S. citizens to "carefully weigh the necessity of their travel to Israel."

More costly than an overdue movie

Blockbuster recently agreed to pay \$50,000 to a former employee who was fired for wearing a yarmulke.

Under the terms of the consent decree with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the video chain also agreed to change language in its personnel policy.

Blockbuster also agree to provide a letter of apology to Leonard Teplitzky, who was 17 when he filed the complaint against Blockbuster two years ago.

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli prez to hold summit

Israel's president is gathering top Jewish communal leaders to discuss critical Jewish issues.

Moshe Katsav is gathering the heads of major Jewish organizations from the Diaspora and Israel, along with Knesset members, for a two-day meeting starting Wednesday to discuss assimilation, Jewish education in the Diaspora, anti-Semitism and security of Jewish communities worldwide.

The meeting, which Katsav intends to fashion into a global Jewish advisory group, follows a conference of Jewish intellectuals from outside the organizational world that was held late last month in Washington.

Powerhouses like Harvard University President Lawrence Summers, U.S. philanthropist Michael Steinhardt and Brandeis University President Jehuda Reinharz met to discuss how to stem the tide of declining Jewish affiliation in the Diaspora, the Forward reported.

Mubarak: Israelis spared at Sinai

Egypt's president said his security forces thwarted a terrorist attack planned against Israeli tourists.

"Two days ago, we captured a terrorist cell in the Sinai, with weapons and ammunition, that planned to attack Israelis," Hosni

Mubarak told Yediot Achronot in an interview published Tuesday.

"We have no interest in Israelis getting hurt, and we are doing the maximum to prevent terrorist actions."

Mubarak appeared to be referring to a police raid in the Sinai last Friday, in which a man suspected of involvement in a series of suicide bombings against Red Sea resorts last October was killed.

He also said he hoped to visit the Jewish state after Israel's Gaza withdrawal in August.

P.A. talks tough

The Palestinian Authority rebuked Gaza Strip terrorists who sent a woman on a suicide bombing mission in Israel.

"We condemn the continuation by some of attempts to violate the national decision to maintain calm," the P.A.'s Interior Ministry said in a statement Tuesday, referring to a 20-year-old Gaza woman who planned to blow herself up while receiving treatment in an Israeli hospital this week but was caught at the border.

"A sick and innocent girl was used in an unacceptable and reprehensible manner," the ministry said.

Chief rabbi recuses self

Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi suspended himself from key clerical posts pending a Justice Ministry decision on whether to charge him in a bribery case.

Yona Metzger said Tuesday that he was temporarily stepping down from the Rabbinical High Court and Israel's national committee for selecting religious judges.

The decision was a response to a petition filed by an Israeli watchdog group to the High Court of Justice, saying Metzger should not remain active in office as long as he is dogged by corruption allegations.

Police said last month that Metzger was suspected of taking bribes and breach of trust, but Attorney General Menachem Mazuz has not decided whether to press charges.

WORLD

Interfaith coalition in England blasts attacks

Jewish and Muslim leaders in Britain joined in condemning attacks on cemeteries belonging to the two communities.

Two Jewish graveyards, one in London and one in Manchester, were desecrated within 72 hours of each other last week.

The attacks followed an incident in Wales earlier this month where 25 Muslim gravestones were vandalized.

Pope to hear 'Jerusalem of Gold'

A 16-year-old kibbutz girl will sing for Pope Benedict XVI.

Liel Kolet plans to sing "Ave Maria" and "Jerusalem of Gold" when the pope officiates at a youth conference in Germany in August, her agents said this week.

Kolet's most recent project is a joint album with a heavy metal group, the Scorpions.

Israeli diva Ahinoam Nini and contralto David Daor performed for Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II.

Trading justice for ping-pong

Canada's justice minister is slated to represent his nation at the Maccabiah Games in Israel next month.

Irwin Cotler so far is Canada's sole registered participant in the table tennis competition.

Cotler always has loved table tennis and — while he never thought himself good enough to play competitively — he admitted in a recent interview that "It will be a great opportunity to just be there and move from tabling laws to table tennis."