

## IN THE NEWS

## Largest settlement set to be evacuated

Israeli soldiers plan to evacuate the largest settlement in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday.

Israel made the announcement about Neveh Dekalim after soldiers distributing evacuation notices Tuesday clashed with local residents.

Also Tuesday, around 50 activists who scuffled with police were detained and expelled from Gaza.

Most were freed after signing agreements not to try to re-enter the strip, but at least four remained in custody, refusing to cooperate with authorities.

## Ex-AIPAC staffers say they're not guilty

Two former American Israel Public Affairs Committee staffers pleaded not guilty to charges involving the passing of classified information.

Steve Rosen, AIPAC's former policy director, and Keith Weissman, a former Iran specialist for the pro-Israel lobby, appeared Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Va., and waived their right to a speedy trial.

Larry Franklin, a former Pentagon analyst accused of giving the two AIPAC men classified documents, also waived that right.

Judge T. S. Ellis set a trial date for Jan. 3, 2006, and all three men were released without bail.

## Gaza settlement is totally evacuated

The first Gaza Strip settlement was completely evacuated.

Israeli military sources said Tuesday that all 80 residents of Dugit, on Gaza's northern coast, left voluntarily after receiving eviction notices.

Nearby Elei Sinai and Nisanit are expected to be among the next Gaza settlements slated for evacuation.

# WORLD REPORT

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## As withdrawal begins, ambassador takes to airwaves to build support

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Every few minutes, Daniel Ayalon checks the television in the corner of his office, seeking the latest images from the Gaza Strip.

Like many American Jewish supporters of Israel, Ayalon, Israel's ambassador to Washington, is concerned about the images people will see in the coming days and weeks — settlers and their supporters forming blockades against Israeli troops who have come to evict them, defiant residents being dragged from their homes — as Israel evacuates settlers from the Gaza Strip and four communities in the West Bank.

### THE DISENGAGEMENT SUMMER

While the Gaza withdrawal has been a hot topic in Israel for months, it's just beginning to take top billing on American television screens. For the next few weeks, Ayalon's key task will be highlighting the positive elements of the withdrawal and capitalizing on the goodwill it has prompted from U.S. officials.

"I think there is a growing understanding and a growing realization of the enormity of the task and the sacrifice by the Israeli people and the Jewish state," Ayalon told JTA in an interview Monday. "It will be our task and the objective of the embassy to make sure to translate this empathy into active support for Israeli policies."

While some U.S. lawmakers were focused on providing assistance for the withdrawal to Israel and the Palestinians, and American Jewish organizations were sending out their last messages for and against the plan, Ayalon's was the loudest voice in the United States on the issue.

The 49-year-old Ayalon, a foreign policy adviser to the last three Israeli prime ministers, is no stranger to the United States. He received a master's in business from Bowling Green University in Ohio in 1983, and his wife is an American.

Ayalon calls the withdrawal plan "dramatic and traumatic." He has upped his media exposure, booking appearances on numerous television news programs this week. He also gave a well-received address at the National Press Club last Friday, taking questions from Arab reporters on the details of the withdrawal and on Israel's future plans.

Ayalon's message focuses heavily on the "day after" withdrawal. He's urging the wider world, including the United States and Arab leaders, to pressure Gaza's future rulers to "put the 'authority' in Palestinian Authority."

"Just as Israel is paying this heavy price, it is important that the Palestinians will take the same attitude, and also they have to make very important decisions about how to go forward from here," Ayalon said. "The onus, quite frankly, is on them."

He said Israel wants Gaza to be "free, secure and democratic," but that the Palestinians must show their willingness to fight terrorism before they receive more arms or a seaport, as U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urges.

P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas "has the mandate to act and he has the means to act," Ayalon said. "It's just a matter of a strategic decision, with a political will to push the strategic decision to do it."

U.S. lawmakers were circulating a letter

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## ■ Israeli ambassador to U.S. puts bright face on Gaza pullout

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Monday, spearheaded by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), calling on Rice not to provide arms or other "legal instruments" to the Palestinian Authority.

"We certainly understand the need to strengthen moderate Palestinian leaders and to provide the Palestinian people with the humanitarian assistance they need to improve their daily lives," the letter said. "However, we believe it would be a mistake to supply weapons to the P.A., particularly before its leadership acts to control the terrorist groups."

Ayalon also is likely to press for increased U.S. aid to Israel. He notes that President Bush offered additional assistance in April 2004, when he endorsed the withdrawal plan, and says Israel will need foreign aid as it develops the Negev and Galilee, two areas expected to absorb settlers.

An aid package "epitomizes the friendship and the alliance between the two countries," Ayalon said. "Every time we have made a major breakthrough politically, and it involved sacrifice from Israel, the U.S. was compensating Israel for that."

Ayalon said American aid would show the Arab world that Israel has not been weakened by withdrawal, a concern for Israel supporters. He said the aid also would reassure Israelis.

The aid request should be finalized in coming months. Ayalon would not confirm the amount, but sources said Israel is seeking \$2.2 billion on top of its annual \$2.5 billion aid package.

Democratic and Republican lawmak-

ers are touring Israel this month and have expressed support for the package.

Ayalon says he believes Israel and the Palestinian Authority will be able to revert to the sequence of steps outlined in the "road map" peace plan the United States authored in 2003 with the help of the United Nations, Russia and the European Union. Though the drafters proposed a timeline for the plan, they also made clear that it is performance-based, meaning that the sides will not progress to the plan's later stages until the commitments enumerated in earlier stages have been met, a major change from the Oslo peace process of the 1990s.

Ayalon said he expects Abbas to be held to the Palestinians' road-map commitments to dismantle terrorist organizations and stop anti-Israel incitement. But he said Israel did not agree with its own road-map obligation to freeze all settlement activity, including so-called natural growth.

"We have never accepted it," he said. "I don't think it is logical, it is not feasible, it is not realistic and it is not even moral."

Ayalon said Israel has been working with the United States to define natural growth. After withdrawal, he said, no one will be able to claim that Israel has not done its share under the road map.

Though some critics have said the American Jewish community has given insufficient backing to the withdrawal, Ayalon said he isn't disappointed with the support from American Jewish organizations. He said many groups have been productive in blocking "fringe groups" from actively opposing Israel's plans.

Many U.S. Jewish groups have endorsed

the plan, but few are actively touting it this week. Congress is in summer recess, and Jewish leaders said they're answering media questions about withdrawal but not actively promoting it.

The Israel Policy Forum will launch a primer on disengagement this week, and Americans for Peace Now is taking out ads in Jewish newspapers, showcasing rabbis from Southern California who support the plan.

Opponents of the Gaza plan are more active: The Zionist Organization of America and the Israel Concert in the Park Committee held a protest Tuesday in front of the United Nations in New York.

"We still have a slight hope that more Israeli leaders will step forward and realize this rewards terror and increases terror," said Morton Klein, the ZOA's national president. ■

**It is the diplomat's task to translate empathy for the Israeli people 'into active support for Israeli policies.'**

**Daniel Ayalon**

Israel's ambassador to the United States

## Sharon praised from abroad

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The prime ministers of Britain and Turkey congratulated Ariel Sharon on the Gaza Strip withdrawal.

"I greatly admire the courage with which you have developed and implemented this policy. I believe you are right to see disengagement as an historic opportunity to pursue a better future for Israelis and Palestinians," Britain's Tony Blair wrote in a letter Tuesday to his Israeli counterpart.

Looking beyond the Gaza withdrawal, which began this week, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the next step would be to bolster the Palestinian Authority.

"I would like to commend the courage and determination of the Israeli government in formulating and implementing the disengagement process from its inception, as well as your personal involvement and leadership. We hope that this step of yours will lead to the opening of a new chapter in the region," he wrote to Sharon.

"Creating an atmosphere of security and the rule of law in the Palestinian areas, building the necessary infrastructure, improving the Palestinians' quality of life and implementing the reforms in order to lay the foundations of a democratic state — these are the challenges that must be dealt with together." ■

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# Ex-AIPAC staffers pen joint defense agreement

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (JTA) — Two former officials of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who are accused of conspiring to trade classified information are working together to fight the charges, JTA has learned.

Steve Rosen, AIPAC's former director of foreign policy issues, and Keith Weissman, a former Iran analyst, have signed a joint defense agreement to collaborate on their arguments against the charges, according to sources close to the defense.

The agreement suggests that Rosen and Weissman will have similar defense strategies and will not implicate each other.

In their first court appearance Tuesday, Rosen and Weissman plead not guilty to the charges. Appearing stoic, the two men briefly addressed the judge, agreeing to waive their right to a speedy trial.

Both men were told to surrender their passports and were released without bail.

Judge T. S. Ellis III of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia set a trial date for Jan. 3, 2006. He did so expressing concern that the attorneys were seeking so much time to view classified material relevant to the case.

In a foreshadowing of their defense, the attorneys for both men suggested they would seek to suppress evidence obtained during searches of AIPAC's offices last year and request an explanation for why prosecutors waited so long to indict the men, who have been under FBI surveillance since at least 1999.

Larry Franklin, the former Pentagon aide accused of giving the AIPAC staffers the sensitive material, returned to court as well Tuesday. Seated next to Rosen, Franklin maintained his not guilty plea from a previous indictment.

Rosen and Weissman are accused of receiving classified information from Franklin and two other, unnamed U.S. government officials and passing the information to three officials at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. The Israeli officials include Naor Gilon, a former political officer who returned to Israel earlier

this month. Rosen and Weissman are also accused of giving the information to reporters.

All three are charged with one count of conspiracy to communicate national defense information to persons not entitled to receive it, punishable by 10 years in prison. Rosen and Franklin are also charged with communicating national defense information to persons not entitled to receive it, also punishable by 10 years in prison.

Franklin is charged with two additional counts of communicating national defense information and one count of conspiracy to communicate classified information to an agent of a foreign government, which carries a five-year prison sentence.

Attorneys for Rosen and Weissman made separate pretrial requests to the judge Tuesday, but they are working together in preparing a defense, sources said.

Rosen and his attorney, Abbe Lowell, consulted at length with Weissman and his counsel, John Nassikas, before court began.

AIPAC, which has not been targeted in the probe, continues to pay the legal fees for both former employees, who were fired in April as the investigation intensified.

Franklin is not a party to the joint defense agreement, sources said.

Joint defense agreements are signed between defendants to allow consultation and information sharing between attorneys without violating the attorney-client privilege, according to legal experts.

Both defendants and their attorneys declined to comment after the hearing.

A spokesman for AIPAC, Patrick Dorton, also refused to comment about the searches of AIPAC's offices, which

occurred in August and December of last year.

But Lowell suggested in court that the defense would request an evidentiary hearing on the matter.

Franklin, whose case was originally to be heard in September, is now scheduled to be tried with Rosen and Weissman.

But Plato Cacheris, Franklin's attorney, said outside the courtroom that he was contemplating seeking a separate trial for his client. Lowell suggested Rosen and Weissman's team may seek severance from Franklin's case as well.

Severances are rarely granted in conspiracy

cases, legal experts said, but often requested. Denied severance requests are often used as a basis for appeal if a defendant is found guilty.

Much of Tuesday's hearing focused on setting dates for motions and other matters, as well as requests from the defendants' attorneys to see classified information pertinent to the case.

Kevin DiGregory, the assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, said much of the classified information Rosen and Weissman's attorneys need access to relate to five documents, but he did not elaborate.

But, he added, because of the nature of the investigation and the manner in which it obtained its evidence, significant amounts of classified material will need to be turned over to the defendants for review.

At the hearing, both Weissman and Rosen sought and received permission to leave the Washington area. Weissman asked to visit his mother in New York and tour prospective colleges with his daughter. Rosen asked to visit his son in Madison, Wisc., and travel throughout the Northeast for consulting work. He did not specify what kind of consulting he was doing. ■

Attorneys for both men suggested they would seek to suppress evidence obtained during searches of AIPAC's offices last year and request an explanation for why prosecutors waited so long to indict the men.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Roberts backed moment of silence in schools

Supreme Court nominee John Roberts backed a moment of silent prayer in the public schools.

While working in the Justice Department for the Reagan administration in 1985, Roberts wrote in a memo to his supervisor that he would not object to a constitutional amendment on school prayer.

Referring to a Supreme Court ruling that struck down a school prayer law in Alabama, Roberts wrote that the idea that the "Constitution prohibits such a moment of silent reflection — or even silent 'prayer' — seems indefensible."

The memo was among nearly 5,400 pages of records pertaining to the Supreme Court nominee released by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Roberts also wrote in a memo that a California group's memorial service to protest abortion was an "entirely appropriate means of calling attention to the abortion tragedy."

Roberts' confirmation hearings are expected to begin early next month.

### Lawmakers: No arms for P.A.

U.S. lawmakers began circulating a letter calling on Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice not to provide arms to the Palestinian Authority.

"We certainly understand the need to strengthen moderate Palestinian leaders and to provide the Palestinian people with the humanitarian assistance they need to improve their daily lives," reads the letter, circulated by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.). "However, we believe it would be a mistake to supply weapons to the P.A., particularly before its leadership acts to control the terrorist groups."

The letter says the Palestinian Authority does not have a shortage of weapons "but a shortage of will to confront the terrorists within Palestinian society."

Rice has recently said that increased weaponry may be necessary for the P.A. to fight terrorist organizations, particularly after Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

### Withdrawal foes rally in New York

Hundreds of protesters against Israel's Gaza Strip withdrawal rallied Tuesday outside United Nations headquarters in New York.

Demonstrators held signs that read "Gaza surrender endangers lives and rewards terror."

The rally was organized by the Israel Concert in the Park Committee, in association with the Zionist Organization of America.

### Poll: Mixed results on U.S. Mideast policy

Some 45 percent of respondents to a recent poll gave the United States an A or B in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sixteen percent of the 1,004 adults surveyed by Public Agenda, a New York-based nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization, and Foreign Affairs magazine gave the United States an A when asked to rate the statement that the United States is "doing our best to bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians," with 29 percent giving the United States a B.

Approximately 30 percent gave a C grade, 11 percent a D grade and 7 percent an F.

## MIDDLE EAST

### West Bank evacuations begin

Israeli forces evacuated two settlements in the West Bank. Residents of Kadim and Ganim, two of four settlements in the

northern West Bank slated for removal under the Israeli government's withdrawal plan, were evacuated Monday night and the settlements were sealed, the army said.

The move ran counter to original army plans to complete the withdrawal from Gaza before moving on the northern West Bank.

Sparsely populated, Ganim and Kadim were considered easy tasks.

But at the two other West Bank settlements on the removal roster, Sa-Nur and Homesh, hundreds of anti-withdrawal activists are vowing to resist evacuation.

### Abdullah backs 'right of return'

King Abdullah said Jordan would not resettle any Palestinian refugees in its territory.

Addressing Parliament in Amman on Tuesday, Abdullah said that Jordan would insist that Palestinian refugees go to lands under Israeli control.

"It is the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland and create an independent state on Palestinian land and nowhere else," he said.

Jordan was created from land included in Britain's original Palestine Mandate, and its population is mostly Palestinian.

### Third intifada seen

The Palestinian terror campaign could resume in 2006, Israel's military intelligence chief predicted.

Addressing the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday, Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash said Palestinian terrorist groups were expected to launch a new wave of violence next year if there is no progress in peace talks with Israel.

### Hamas gloats over withdrawal

Hamas said the Gaza Strip withdrawal was the "beginning of the end" of Israel.

"We see the withdrawal as the first step toward liberation and regaining all of our rights," Khaled Meshaal, the politburo chief of the Islamic terrorist group, said in an interview with the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat published Tuesday.

"Today it is Gaza, tomorrow it will be the West Bank, and later it will be all of the land," he said. "It is the beginning of the end of Israel."

Having scaled back its attacks at the behest of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas vowed new violence after the Gaza withdrawal is completed.

## WORLD

### Amnesty raps Israeli detentions

Amnesty International criticized Israel for detaining suspected activists against the Gaza withdrawal without charge.

After a Jewish terrorist killed four Israeli Arabs earlier this month, the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service, placed three of his suspected associates under administrative detention.

One, who has U.S. as well as Israeli citizenship, was freed on condition that he leave the country for at least 40 days.

In a statement issued Tuesday, Amnesty International urged Israel to abandon the practice of administrative detention, which is usually exercised against suspected Palestinian terrorists.

"Those detained administratively must either be charged with a recognizable criminal offense and given a fair trial within a reasonable time or else be released," it said.

"The organization believes that the practice of administrative detention in Israel and the Occupied Territories violates fundamental human rights, notably the right to a fair trial, which should be guaranteed at all times, even in an emergency."