

IN THE NEWS

Israel evacuates West Bank settlements

Israeli forces evacuated two remaining West Bank settlements.

Israeli forces being lowered in empty shipping containers used tear gas and water hoses Tuesday on protesters attempting to prevent them from landing on the roof of a building in Sa-Nur, but no violence was reported.

In Homesh, a settler who attempted to stab an Israeli soldier was arrested, and a few youths burned an Israeli flag.

The two settlements are the last to be evacuated under Israel's withdrawal plan.

Pakistani leader to address U.S. Jews

Pakistan's president will address a group of American Jewish leaders.

In an unusual step for the leader of a Muslim nation that doesn't have ties with Israel, Pervez Musharraf will speak at a mid-September dinner in New York sponsored by the American Jewish Congress' Council for World Jewry.

"Someone needs to break the ice so that Muslims, Westerners, Jews and other religions can have a dialogue and end the confrontation that we're in," said Jack Rosen, the AJCongress' chairman. [Story, Pg. 3]

Bush presses Palestinian officials

President Bush called on Palestinian leaders to establish a "working government" in the Gaza Strip.

Speaking with reporters in Idaho on Tuesday, Bush said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was "courageous" for uprooting Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

He also said Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas should consolidate security forces in the Gaza Strip and that confidence in the Palestinians needed to be established before parties could move forward with the "road map" peace plan.



WORLD REPORT

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After Gaza withdrawal, Palestinians focused on economic rehabilitation

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA)—Contrary to Israeli fears, Palestinian terrorist groups held their fire during the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The doomsday prophecies that the Israeli withdrawal would take place under fire did not come true.

Some see this as proof that the Palestinian election campaign has begun and that Hamas has an interest in projecting the image of a responsible and legitimate political force that can run state affairs as effectively as it can wage war. Hamas leaders, too, read the polls.

One recent poll, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion in Ramallah, showed that the majority of Palestinians believe the Palestinian Authority can't improve their quality of life.

Nabil Kukali, the center's director, noted that the majority of Palestinians favor an open market and joint ventures between Israelis and Palestinians. The vast majority, around 77 percent of respondents, worry about their families' subsistence and believe the Palestinian Authority is unable to provide opportunities to laborers who used to work in Israel.

The election campaign may focus more on who can improve the economy than on who can best fight the Israelis.

General elections are set for Jan. 25, 2006. Hamas previously refused to participate in elections, arguing that this meant recognition of the Oslo accords — which led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority — and thus of Israel, which Hamas refuses to accept.

Now Hamas, like Hezbollah in Lebanon before it, is joining the political system. It's too early to tell whether this will replace the group's terrorist activities or exist alongside them.

P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas opened the election campaign over the weekend in Gaza, linking the Israeli withdrawal to the "road map" peace plan and demanding a "permanent settlement in which the Gaza Strip and the West Bank will be void of settlements."

But the real challenge lies less in the political statements than in economic developments. Gaza residents will judge the electoral contenders mostly by their ability to use the void left by departing Israelis to improve Palestinian welfare.

"It is time for us to stop building other countries and concentrate on building our homeland," Abbas said at a weekend rally in Gaza. He was referring to the chronic Palestinian need to seek work, whether in Israel or in Arab countries. Some 120,000 Palestinian workers used to work in Israel until the Palestinians launched the intifada in September 2000, leading Israel to close its border because of security concerns.

"The little jihad is over, and now we have the bigger jihad — the bigger battle is achieving security and economic growth," Abbas said, intentionally using Hamas' vocabulary referring to holy war.

Much could depend on the cash flow from potential donors, though the Palestinians in the past squandered massive infusions of international aid through terrorism and corruption. The G-8 industrialized countries

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THE
DISENGAGEMENT
SUMMER

■ *Palestinians look to grow the economy in the Gaza Strip*

Continued from page 1

promised \$3 billion for Gaza's economic rehabilitation. The bulk of the money will go to projects such as a new seaport, housing construction and infrastructure. The United States already provides the Palestinians with roughly \$1 billion a year.

The Palestinians plan to build apartment complexes on top of the demolished settlements. One plan, for example, calls for a 4,000-unit housing project in place of the Morag settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. Israeli contractors hope to take part in the impending building tenders.

Businessman Shmuel Flatto-Sharon has expressed interest in building a casino in the evacuated settlement of Elei Sinai, on the Gaza-Israel border a few miles south of Ashkelon.

The Israeli Manufacturers Association is optimistic. Its president, Shraga Brosh, said negotiations are under way to revive the industrial zone near the Erez checkpoint, along with other industrial projects.

Through the mediation of James Wolfensohn, who is coordinating economic aid to the Palestinians on behalf of the diplomatic "Quartet" of the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia, some 3,500 acres of greenhouses in the Gush Katif settlement bloc have been sold to Palestinians for some \$14 million.

Mohammed Dahlan, the P.A. Cabinet minister in charge of coordinating the

withdrawal with Israel, recently told Forbes magazine that the greenhouses would have created 7,000 jobs in the strip.

But any economic progress depends on a continuation of the cease-fire that largely has held since the winter. Palestinian political analysts say that like Hezbollah, Hamas aims to form a bloc in the next Palestinian

Parliament, but at the same time it wants to keep its arms to retain a terrorist option.

Most analysts expect Hamas to maintain a measure of restraint until the

elections. The behavior of other terrorist groups, such as Islamic Jihad or the mainstream Fatah movement's Al-Aksa Brigade, can't be predicted.

Palestinian provocations could trigger sharp Israeli reactions, both military and civilian.

If Palestinians attack Israeli targets, Israel in theory could cut off Gaza's power supply. Gaza is also dependent on Israel for gas and water.

Renewed Palestinian terrorism also may throw into question the revival of the "safe passage" arrangement between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, an essential element in building a viable Palestinian state. ■

'The bigger battle is achieving security and economic growth.'

P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas

West Bank evacuations completed

By DINA KRAFT

SA-NUR, West Bank (JTA) — Teenage girls wept, young men were dragged out of synagogues and protesters staged a rooftop stand-off with police — but overall, the last stand against Israel's historic withdrawal from Gaza and part of the northern West Bank ended with more of a whimper than a bang.

Several thousand Israeli soldiers and police swarmed the West Bank settlements of Sa-Nur and Homesh early Tuesday morning. By late afternoon, the evacuations had been wrapped up without the violence that had been forecast.

"We expected a very harsh situation here, so we prepared for it," Sgt. Yonina Burkey of the Israeli border police said as she watched the Sa-Nur evacuation proceed. She was relieved to see the operation go more smoothly than expected.

"We're not here to fight each other," she said, "we are here to complete a mission."

In recent weeks, residents already had left two other West Bank settlements the government ordered evacuated.

In Homesh and Sa-Nur, however, officials feared that resistance would be more fierce than in Gaza because of the West Bank's biblical significance and the numbers of hard-line settlers here.

In fact, warnings that hundreds of anti-pullout foes who had flocked to Sa-Nur and Homesh could be armed and dangerous proved false.

Instead, the taunts and light physical resistance that characterized the protests in Gaza were the order of the day in the

West Bank as well.

"You will wear this stain until the end of your lives," one man shouted through a loudspeaker from the roof of an Ottoman-era stone building where about 30 resisters had gathered.

"Are you part of the Jewish nation or merely the pawn of a Jewish prime minister who is a dictator?" another man shouted.

Throughout the day, men took turns heaping insults and guilt on the security forces below.

The soldiers and police quietly carried on with their work, disassembling the makeshift tent camps that had sprung up in Sa-Nur to protest the withdrawal. They used electric saws to open doors welded shut, evicting protesters who had holed up in two separate synagogues in the hilltop settlement.

At a former mosque that had been turned into a synagogue and a study house used by the Chabad movement, young men pounded their fists on wooden tables and sang of the coming of the Messiah.

When soldiers began to evacuate them, the group of several dozen men huddled in a corner of the building, trying to hold on to each other as they were dragged away by soldiers one by one.

"Why are you doing this to me? I am your brother," one young man shouted as he was dragged away.

A senior commander overseeing the scene urged soldiers to be as gentle as possible.

"Go slowly, slowly," he said.

A young soldier watching the last of the demonstrators in Sa-Nur being taken away on Tuesday summed up the scene in two words: "Game over." ■

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Pakistani leader to address U.S. Jewish groups

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Pakistan's president visits the United States in September for the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly, his itinerary will include an unusual stop for the leader of a Muslim nation with no ties to Israel: the American Jewish Congress.

Pervez Musharraf's decision to address a group of American Jewish leaders at a New York meeting hosted by the AJCongress, shortly after the U.N. meetings is a bold move, those familiar with details of the visit say, especially considering that he already has survived several assassination attempts by Muslim extremists.

"Someone needs to break the ice so that Muslims, Westerners, Jews and other religions can have a dialogue and end the confrontation that we're in," said Jack Rosen, chairman of the American Jewish Congress, whose Council for World Jewry is sponsoring the Musharraf dinner. "If he's willing to take that risk and do it, then we are willing to give a home to that platform."

In May, Rosen — along with Phil Baum, the AJCongress' senior adviser on foreign affairs, and David Twersky, the group's director of international affairs — met Musharraf in Islamabad. Discussions focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, normalization of relations with Israel, Muslim extremism, terrorism and Musharraf's theory of "enlightened moderation."

The Pakistani president "was very personal, easy to talk to," Rosen said of the 90-minute meeting. "He understood his subject matters well on all the topics we brought up. We had a very interesting and enlightening conversation."

During the discussion, Rosen said, the American Jews suggested to Musharraf that he address a Jewish audience on his next visit to the United States. Three weeks ago, he accepted their invitation.

The event will be held in mid-September, shortly after the opening session of the General Assembly.

Pakistani officials could not be immediately reached for comment.

Jewish officials lauded the move.

"It's a good opportunity," said Mal-

colm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "Pakistan is a key country. We have had contact in the past, and I think his willingness to do a public event of this kind is significant."

Indeed, Jewish officials say, Musharraf's address could inspire other Muslim leaders to speak out

more vocally for religious moderation.

Rosen said he hopes the event "will attract others and allow others to step forward as well, and maybe it will spark something new here and be the beginning of a dialogue that has to take place here between Muslims and the West, and certainly Muslims and the Jews."

Israel's recent Gaza Strip withdrawal may have a similar effect.

"We are finding greater openness, desire for dialogue between leaders of Muslim countries, both in the Middle East and elsewhere — African Muslim leaders, Asian Muslim leaders," Hoenlein said. "The disengagement enhances what already was a trend before that."

But not everyone is thrilled by Musharraf's approaching visit. Though he said U.S. Jewry should take every opportunity to sensitize Musharraf to Jewish concerns, Abraham Foxman said he is wary of the Pakistani leader's intentions.

Pakistan, said Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, long has been a center of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda, and has turned a "blind eye when it comes to terrorism against Israel, Jews."

Like leaders of other Muslim nations, Musharraf may believe that the path to better relations with Washington runs through the Jewish community. He may also want to balance Israel's grow-

ing ties with India, Pakistan's historic rival.

"I think we're being used by the Pakistanis," Foxman said. "I don't feel comfortable with that. I don't think they've earned for us to be used. They find it in their interest to show Washington that, Look, we're meeting with the Jewish community. I find that distasteful."

Further, some complain that Pakistan has not done enough to

fight terrorism within its borders and to tamp down on the radical version of Islam being taught in some of its madrassas, or religious academies.

But AJCongress officials said that makes the visit even more important.

"At a time where it is difficult, if not almost impossible, to find a moderate Muslim leader of any stature to speak out publicly" against terrorism, "we feel this is an opportunity that shouldn't be passed by," Rosen said.

"We are facing a war of civilizations here, and we have to take some risks," he added.

Musharraf raised Jewish leaders' expectations two years ago, when he spoke of the possibility of Pakistan establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. He later backtracked in the face of Muslim anger over his comments.

Rosen said he expects Musharraf's remarks to address his philosophy of "enlightened moderation." Musharraf outlined the policy in the summer of 2003 and has spoken about it repeatedly since, arguing that it's the best method to counter extremism and terrorism.

The strategy calls on Muslims to shun violence and extremism in favor of "socioeconomic uplift," and urges the West to resolve all political disputes justly and with an eye toward the economic betterment of the Muslim world.

"He's not going to say anything new here," Rosen said. "What's unique here is the constituency that he's going to be speaking to — a constituency that the Muslim world has been demonizing." ■

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Jack Rosen

American Jewish Congress

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Abbas praises pullout

Mahmoud Abbas praised Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in a conversation with Israeli President Moshe Katsav.

Israel Army Radio quoted the Palestinian Authority president as telling Katsav on Tuesday that the withdrawal increased chances for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Katsav reportedly asked Abbas to carry out Palestinian obligations under the "road map" peace plan to crack down on terrorist groups.

Al-Qaida claims Red Sea salvo

Al-Qaida claimed responsibility for last week's rocket attack in a Jordanian Red Sea port.

"Your brothers in the Al-Qaida organization in Iraq have been planning the Aqaba raid for a while," the group's Iraqi chapter said in an Internet statement Tuesday, referring to the Jordanian port where U.S. Navy vessels were targeted. "The rockets were fired at their targets — a group of ships belonging to the crusader American forces."

No American personnel were hurt in last Friday's salvo, as the three Katyusha rockets overshot their targets. One rocket landed over the border in Israel, striking the runway of the Eilat airport. Jordanian authorities have made arrests in the case.

Ex-settlers in tent camp

Some former residents of the Gaza Strip set up a tent camp near Tel Aviv.

Some of the estimated 60 people in the tent camp said they preferred to stay there rather than in dormitories in Jerusalem, while others said they would stay until they could move en masse to a kibbutz in southern Israel.

Israeli refusenik demoted

An Israeli combat soldier who was jailed for refusing to evacuate Gaza Strip settlers was reassigned to menial duties.

Avi Bieber, a U.S.-born corporal in the Combat Engineering Corps, was jailed for 56 days after refusing evacuation orders in June.

He ended his sentence in the stockade this month and was reassigned to menial tasks such as cleaning and other errands, military sources said.

Fearing mutinies over the Gaza withdrawal, the Israeli army announced that anyone refusing orders on ideological grounds would be barred from further combat duties.

Bieber's family said he doesn't regret his decision.

Swimming pork is kosher

A kosher fish that ancient Jewish sages said tastes like pork has arrived in Israel.

The shabut, which is mentioned in the Talmud as having a pig-like taste, was shipped from Iran in formaldehyde by Israeli academics with the help of an Iranian liaison, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The medieval commentator Rashi noted that the shabut's brain tastes like pig and that the fish could serve as a potential alternative for kosher keepers who want to taste the "other white meat."

The shabut, whose scientific nomenclature is *Barbus grybus*, also inhabits rivers in Iraq and Syria.

Some Israeli fish farmers are considering breeding the fish.

NORTH AMERICA

Nazi war criminal dies

A former Nazi guard died before he could be deported from the United States.

Jakob "Jack" Reimer, who was ruled to have participated in the persecution of Jews in Poland during World War II, died Aug. 3 at age 86. Reimer, who had lived in New York, previously was found to have lied about his wartime activities when he applied to enter the United States in 1951.

The U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations and the Department of Homeland Security had launched deportation proceedings against him.

Lefkowitz named N. Korean envoy

A Jewish domestic policy adviser to President Bush has been named a special envoy for human rights in North Korea.

Jay Lefkowitz, who was a delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva and to a conference on international anti-Semitism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, was named last Friday.

Plea reinstated in JDL case

A U.S. judge reinstated a plea deal in the case of a Jewish radical accused of bomb plots against Muslim targets.

Monday's decision means prosecutors cannot pursue additional charges against Earl Krugel, a member of the Jewish Defense League arrested in 2001 in California for plotting to bomb a mosque and the offices of a Lebanese-American congressman.

Krugel's accomplice, Irv Rubin, killed himself in jail in 2002.

Reform schools get library

The Reform movement is donating 50,000 books to the movement's early-childhood programs.

Some 280 schools in the United States and Canada each will receive more than 150 books.

The books include teaching guides, textbooks, activity books, picture books and board books on topics including the celebration of Shabbat and major holidays, Jewish life around the world and Jewish texts.

The books are being donated to coincide with the beginning of the Jewish school year.

WORLD

Group wants suspected war criminal prosecuted

The Simon Wiesenthal Center called on Australian and Hungarian authorities to investigate the World War II activities of an Australian citizen.

Hungarian-born Lajos Polgar, 89, has admitted to Australian media that he was a high-ranking official in the fascist Hungarian Arrow Cross Party, which was responsible for the persecution and murder of thousands of Hungarian Jews.

The party deported more than 80,000 Jews to Nazi camps in 1944. In an interview at his Melbourne home with ABC-TV news, Polgar denied being a Nazi.

He said, "There were two Nazis . . . Germans and Jews. I did nothing wrong." Polgar told The Australian newspaper, "After the war all the leaders were hanged, but there was not one among them who was guilty.

Everybody was in the hands of the Jews.

They just hanged them," he said, calling the party members "completely innocent people."

Polgar arrived in Australia in 1949 under the name of Lajos Kardos, a name he is believed to have assumed in 1944 to conceal his true identity as authorities started to bring Arrow Cross members to justice.