

IN THE NEWS

Israel fires into Gaza after Palestinian attack

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip fired more rockets into Israel, and Israel responded with artillery.

No injuries were reported in either attack.

Following earlier Israeli attacks, Hamas renewed its commitment to a cease-fire with Israel.

But Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said Tuesday that he is not satisfied with the pledges, particularly after Hamas claimed responsibility for the death of Sasson Nuriel, an Israeli man who was kidnapped in Jerusalem and killed in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israel seeks Security Council seat

Israel applied for membership on the U.N. Security Council for the first time.

In a meeting Monday of the Western European and Others regional group, Ambassador Dan Gilleman officially announced the Jewish state's candidacy for the council in 2018.

Israel will be running for a spot from the WEOG group, although no vote on Israel's candidacy will take place until 2017, a spokeswoman for Israel's U.N. mission said.

Halpern to chair public broadcasting

A former chairwoman of the Republican Jewish Coalition was chosen to lead the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Cheryl Halpern was elected by the corporation's board Monday to replace Kenneth Tomlinson, whose term as chair expired.

As a board member, Halpern has been critical of Middle East reporting by National Public Radio, which the board oversees.

Halpern, a New Jersey attorney and real estate developer, is an influential Republican donor.

WORLD REPORT

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Local, national partnerships make community's alert network stronger

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA)— In an effort to fortify its institutions against terrorist attacks, the U.S. Jewish community has added a security resource center, which law enforcement officials say could save lives and serve as a model for other American communities, to the rapid-warning service it launched last year.

Partnering with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and state and local law enforcement agencies, the Secure Community Network, becoming known as SCN, works with a Tennessee-based communications company whose high-speed alert system allows SCN to quickly disseminate information on threats to its 55 member organizations, which in turn can warn their own constituent groups.

"The phrase that comes to my mind is 'responsible self-reliance,'" said Steven Pomerantz, former chief of the FBI's counterterrorism section and chairman of the SCN Law Enforcement Advisory Committee. "It's not a uniformly shared threat."

Over the past year, SCN, founded by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, has initiated close working relationships with law enforcement agencies and has begun operating a full-time security monitoring center that is in continuous contact with these agencies nationwide and around the globe, officials say.

SCN also has teamed up with the Department of Homeland Security recently in a series of comprehensive security audits of more than 40 Jewish facilities nationwide, including synagogues, day schools, camps and homes for the aged.

The group also is working with the department to develop self-assessment tools that would enable organizations to determine some of their needs and vulnerabilities on their own. Homeland Security has given SCN a high-level designation facilitating notification and information exchanges between the groups.

SCN established the Law Enforcement Advisory Committee, comprising current and former high-ranking law-enforcement officials charged with crafting a response when warnings come in.

Most recently, SCN went online last week with its Web site, www.scnus.org. The site includes security recommendations ranging from policies on handling mail and threatening phone calls to sections on understanding the terrorist threat against the Jewish community and dealing with bomb threats. The site has links to other security sites.

SCN's Web presence was initiated amid the typical security concerns that emerge in the run-up to the High Holidays and shortly after four Muslim prisoners in California were indicted on charges that they were plotting to attack Israeli, Jewish and military sites in California.

"Law enforcement can't deal with the threat of terrorism alone," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference.

"We had an obligation in an era in which things are going to get worse before they get better," he added. "No one has ever done this before. There are no prototypes, no models."

SCN has a "written understanding" on security cooperation with Homeland Security and the New York Police Department, and

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FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ *The Jewish world's response to terrorism could be a model for other communities*

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an "oral understanding" with the FBI, its leaders say.

The group also has relationships with several other police departments and is encouraging communities to develop relationships with their local police.

Sidney Caspersen, director of the New Jersey Office of Counterterrorism and homeland security adviser to New Jersey's governor, said his office has a "very, very, very close relationship" with SCN and its leadership.

"Every religious community could do a similar type of operation," he told JTA. "And it doesn't just have to be a religious community."

"What you want to do when you produce an intelligence product like we do, you want a broad audience. You want to get it to as many people as possible," Caspersen said. "This gives us the opportunity to take it all the way down to the synagogues and to the schools and get the information out rapidly."

The alert system is intended not only to warn groups of potential risks but also to defuse spurious reports of threats. Last year, for example, reports that Jewish buildings in a specific part of the United States were potential terrorist targets were quickly exaggerated by rumor to include Jewish sites all over the country, said Stephen Hoffman, former UJC president and current president of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland.

By the time community leaders were able to establish that the rumors were false and get word out to concerned groups, "it was way too late," he said.

Some events were needlessly canceled because the rumors weren't quashed earlier, Hoenlein said,

Once law enforcement determines that a particular threat is credible and warrants warning groups, the alert system can almost instantaneously send out warnings to e-mail addresses, pagers and telephone numbers. The national groups then can put out warnings to their member groups.

If a particular site is targeted, it would receive information beyond what comes through this system. If a specific region seems to be at risk, the system can be activated regionally.

Ultimately, SCN officials say, they hope the system will be able to dispatch warnings to a significantly larger number of groups.

As the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have demonstrated, security "is really incumbent upon communities," said Paul Goldenberg, SCN's national director, who was New Jersey's first chief of the Office of Bias Crimes and Community Relations.

"There's a 24- to 48-hour time period where communities will need to rely on themselves, and good planning could

make the difference between life or death," he said.

The annual cost of running the program is about \$500,000, to be covered by both private donations and membership fees for each participating group. SCN is managed by a consortium of 10 Jewish organizations.

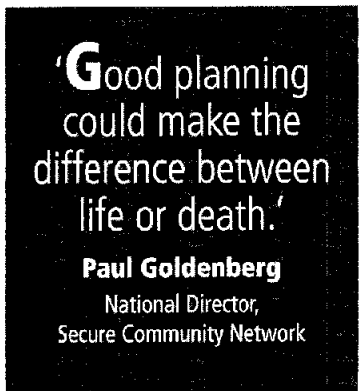
While local security agencies in the past have offered Jewish organizations aid in assessing

their security needs, the Homeland Security audits — which SCN said represent the first time nationwide security audits were conducted for nonprofit groups — are of a different nature, participants say.

"Security audits, of which I have seen many and probably oversaw quite a few, they were based on good-old crime prevention," looking to prevent purse snatching, stealing silver off Torahs and other such crimes, Goldenberg said. "It's a much different issue when we're talking about comprehensive terrorist audits."

On Aug. 31, Homeland Security ran a "soft-target awareness training" seminar for synagogues in the Los Angeles area.

"There are 18,000 law enforcement agencies in this country," some good, some less so, Pomerantz said. "To have the people from the Department of Homeland Security, where this particular expertise is well developed, is a major step forward."



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Danish Jewish school marks 200 years

By ELON COHN

COPENHAGEN (JTA) — A Danish Jewish school celebrated its bicentennial with a royal touch.

Queen Margrethe II and the Danish ministers of education and integration took part Sept. 1 in the Caroline School's 200th anniversary celebration.

The school was established in 1805 by a Jewish newspaperman, L. Nathansen, who was a friend of King Frederik VI. Nathansen felt that children from poor Jewish families in Denmark should study

the Danish language and math and acquire vocational training to become good burghers and rise above their parents' poverty and misery.

Donating some of the funds himself, Nathansen established his school in central Copenhagen, with the king's permission.

The two schools continued to teach Jewish children from poor families even after Denmark passed a royal decree in 1814 granting full rights and citizenship to Jews born in the country.

Currently, some 220 pupils attend the school's nine grades.

Jewish centers open in ex-Communist lands

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

KISHINEV, Moldova (JTA) — The ceremonial openings of two state-of-the-art Jewish community centers in the former Soviet Union have ushered in a new page in the history of two communities in the former Soviet Union.

The new facilities in St. Petersburg, Russia, and in Kishinev, Moldova, were built by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee with funds raised primarily from North American federations and private donors.

But even as the new centers were feted, their completions also highlighted the tension between some local Jewish leaders and the JDC over how the international organization operates on the ground.

For its part, the JDC says its projects are there to serve the local community and they are conceived and carried out with the participation of local community leaders.

Both centers were dedicated — in St. Petersburg on Sept. 9 and in Kishinev on Sept. 13 — in the presence of sizeable Jewish delegations from North America, JDC leaders and local community members.

Although the centers are not yet operating, staff members hope they will be ready to open their doors by the end of the year.

The centers are the newest additions to the family of JDC-run community centers already in operation in several other cities in the region. They mark another effort by the group to put a greater emphasis on investing in the future of the former Soviet Union communities.

Just a few years ago, JDC was primarily involved in charity programs dealing with the humanitarian needs of the elderly Jews in the region.

In St. Petersburg, the modern stone-and-glass center is called YESOD, which means foundation in Hebrew and is the Russian acronym for the Jewish St. Petersburg Community House.

It will serve as the new home for many Jewish organizations in Russia's second largest community that have rented office space in various parts of the city until now.

Nonna Levina, the director of the center, envisions it as a hub for Jewish life in St. Petersburg.

"We expect to have Jewish concerts, art exhibitions, lectures, performances and

discotheques," she said. Because the center will house organizations that touch upon a wide spectrum of Jewish life, the JDC and founding organizations hope that YESOD will appeal to all members of the Jewish community.

The building was designed with the "specific needs of the St. Petersburg community in mind," said the JDC's executive vice president, Steven Schwager. "The idea is to have it alive from morning to night."

Amid the chorus of voices welcoming the new projects, there is a note of discontent coming from some of the leaders in these communities who say that the JDC was mostly interested in impressing the overseas donors instead of serving — and listening — to the real needs of the communities on the ground.

While some observers argue that there may be some organizational jealousy involved similar criticisms accompanied the opening of the second new center in Kishinev.

The name of the center in the Moldovan capital is also a play on words. KEDEM is the Hebrew word for "progress," and also the Russian acronym for the "Kishinev United House of Jews in Moldova."

But despite what its Russian name suggests, the center has yet to unite the Moldovan Jewish community, which is estimated to be between 20,000 and 30,000 people.

On the day of the center's opening, the leaders of Moldova's two main indigenous Jewish community organizations used a conference held in Kishinev to criticize the JDC for what these leaders described as "disregard" of the needs of Jews in Moldova and "disrespect" toward local community organizations.

"We are grateful to JDC and those donors who helped to make this building," said Yakov Tichman, a local entrepreneur and chairman of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Moldova, the main community.

"But when we see a plaque on the center saying it was built by JDC, we cannot help a strange feeling," Tichman told an international gathering of Jews attending a session of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress in Kishinev on Sept. 13.

Tichman was referring to the fact that

the building that became the core of KEDEM was originally a property of the local community that was returned to local Jews a few years ago. The building in downtown Kishinev, the former Lemnaria or "Woodcutters" Synagogue, was originally built in 1835 and confiscated by the Communists after Moldova became part of the Soviet Union in 1940. The building, which was rundown when

it was returned to the community, later housed a variety of facilities, including a warehouse and a garage.

Another local Jewish leader, the president of the Jewish Congress of Moldova, Alexander Pinchevsky, said local JDC officials were interested in cooperating with the local community until they talked the community leaders into transferring the property rights for the old shul to the JDC.

But after that transfer occurred, he said, JDC no longer consulted with local leaders on key issues, including the appointment of its director.

Pinchevsky even threatened possible legal action against JDC to get the property again returned to community ownership.

JDC officials declined to respond to specific questions on the matter, but JDC's Schwager wrote in a statement to JTA: "JDC's community-building endeavors in the former Soviet Union are done with the community and for the community."

"We will continue to listen to all voices of the community; however, when we carry out large-scale initiatives in communities of significant Jewish population, it is inevitable that a small number of Jews may be dissatisfied with the decisions."

But some local activists said that despite the existing tensions, the new center is a huge step forward for the community.

"This is a big investment into our future," said Roman Komaritsky, the director of the Kishinev Hillel. "I believe we should not be talking about organizations here. There is a home for Jews and it should be filled with different programs. Sooner or later the dust will settle and the house will stay serving the community."

(JTA correspondent Yasha Levine in St. Petersburg contributed to this report.)

Both applause and criticism are heard as two centers open in the former Soviet Union.

ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Russian rabbi turned away

A leading Russian rabbi was forced to leave Russia on Monday night upon arrival from Israel.

Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, who is a Swiss citizen, had his multi-entry Russian visa annulled at passport control and was forced to take a return flight to Israel.

Goldschmidt and his Moscow office refrained from comment.

Goldschmidt, 41, has lived in Russia for nearly 15 years and has served as Moscow's chief rabbi for 10 years.

Why the incident occurred is still unclear.

Rome hosts interfaith forum

A three-day international conference is taking place in Rome to mark the 40th anniversary of a landmark Catholic document on interfaith relations.

"Nostra Aetate Today," which opened Sunday, includes presentations on Jewish-Christian relations, Christian relations with the religious traditions of Asia, and Muslim-Christian relations.

It also features roundtable discussions aimed at analyzing progress made since the promulgation of Nostra Aetate, which absolved Jews of collective responsibility for the death of Jesus, and proposing future objectives.

NORTH AMERICA

Halpern to chair public broadcasting

A former chairwoman of the Republican Jewish Coalition was chosen to lead the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Cheryl Halpern was elected by the corporation's board Monday to replace Kenneth Tomlinson, whose term as chair expired. As a board member, Halpern has been critical of Middle East reporting by National Public Radio, which the board oversees.

"We have a duty to provide the public an explanation for the kind of work we do," Halpern said in Washington after being elected. "And we must honor the principles clearly stated in our charter, to encourage objective and balanced programming."

Halpern is a New Jersey attorney and real estate developer, and is an influential Republican donor.

In addition to the RJC, she is active with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Anti-Defamation League.

Ebay auction for Katrina relief

The umbrella group for North American Jewish federations will auction off celebrity-decorated tzedakah boxes on eBay for Hurricane Katrina relief.

The boxes to be auctioned by the United Jewish Communities were decorated by the likes of actor William Shatner and Donald Trump.

The boxes will be on eBay from Tuesday night through Oct. 2.

Jewish institutions get security funds

Thirty Jewish institutions in New York City received government money to help bolster security.

The yeshivas and synagogues received an average grant of \$65,000 each as part of a \$7.3 million aid package to nonprofit groups in New York City and its suburbs.

Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) helped the institutions get the money, which came from federal and state homeland security funds.

Torah dedicated in Pentagon

Pentagon officials helped dedicate a Torah in a chapel built where a hijacked plane struck on Sept. 11.

Jacob Hank Sopher, a Florida parking-lot magnate, donated the Torah scroll dedicated Monday in a ceremony featuring representatives of the different services and the Pentagon chaplain's office.

The Aleph Institute, a Chabad-affiliated group that ministers to Jews in prison and the military, organized the Torah dedication.

"In the most powerful country in the world, the most powerful building in the world, we did a dedication to Jewish eternity," said Sholom Lipskar, director of the institute.

Petition presses universities on Israel

More than 2,500 people have signed on to a petition calling for changes in how the Israeli-Arab conflict and anti-Semitism are taught in the University of California system.

The petition says courses on the conflict are biased and that instructors and guest speakers create a hostile environment for Jewish students.

It calls on Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to press university administrators to review existing courses, develop courses about post-Holocaust global anti-Semitism and ensure that campuses are "forums for intellectual inquiry and not vehicles for discrimination, intimidation and hate."

USC gets Holocaust testimonies

Some 52,000 Holocaust testimonies, videotaped by Steven Spielberg's foundation, will be housed at the University of Southern California.

The collection of testimonies, making up the world's largest visual history archive, will be transferred to USC on Jan. 1, it was announced recently by Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation and USC's Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

Moving the collection to USC will ensure its preservation and access, Spielberg said. "All of us know that the survivors and witnesses have given us a precious gift, whose wise use will build a better world for this and future generations," Spielberg said.

MIDDLE EAST

New West Bank arrests

Israeli forces arrested scores of terrorist suspects in the West Bank.

Tuesday's detentions brought to almost 300 the number of Palestinians taken into custody since Israel launched a crackdown in response to a weekend of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel.

The Israeli air force also launched new strikes against terrorist infrastructure in Gaza overnight. There were no casualties.

Israel opens archaeological site

Israel is opening an archaeological site to tourists near Jerusalem's Western Wall.

The center goes underground near the wall and features a wall that dates to the First Temple and a ritual bath from the Second Temple period.

An Islamic leader condemned the move, calling archaeology there a confiscation of property.

Shmuel Rabinovich, chief rabbi of the Western Wall, said the site does not affect nearby mosques.

Investment in Israel up

Foreign investment in Israel is at a record high.

Investment totaled \$7.3 billion from January-August 2005, a rise from \$7.2 billion in all of 2004, the Israeli newspaper Globes reported.

Terror scare in Israel

Two suspected Palestinian terrorists were captured en route to central Israel.

The suspects were nabbed in a Shin Bet dragnet Monday in the northern city of Zichron Ya'acov.

An intelligence alert of an impending Palestinian attack prompted police to set up checkpoints around Netanya and Tel Aviv, slowing traffic throughout central Israel for hours.