

## IN THE NEWS

**Clashes erupt in West Bank**

Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen clashed in the West Bank city of Nablus.

At least two Israeli soldiers and 13 Palestinians were hurt in Tuesday's fighting, which erupted after an army patrol entered Nablus on a search for wanted terrorists.

Several of the Palestinian casualties were young rock throwers.

**Israel holds up Gaza-West Bank convoys**

Israel does not plan to allow convoys of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank this week as agreed.

Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, Israel's military chief, told lawmakers Tuesday that the "safe-passage" deal was on hold pending a Palestinian Authority crackdown on rocket fire from Gaza.

Halutz also complained that the Palestinian Authority has not honored its commitment under a U.S.-brokered deal to pass security information about the Gaza-Egypt border.

The movement of bus convoys from Gaza to the West Bank was to have begun Thursday, and its non-implementation could put Israel on a collision course with the United States, which sees freeing up Palestinian movement as key to reviving peace efforts.

**UJC expresses budget-cut concerns**

United Jewish Communities joined a group of charitable organizations in expressing opposition to Congress' proposed federal budget cuts.

UJC joined groups, including the Salvation Army and the United Way of America, in a letter to Republican and Democratic leaders in the Senate and House of Representatives on Monday.

The letter expresses concern over cuts to Medicaid, food stamp programs and money for child care.



# WORLD REPORT

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## Attorneys for former AIPAC officials are battling to recoup legal costs

By RON KAMPEAS and MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Attorneys for two former senior American Israel Public Affairs Committee staffers facing trial for allegedly accepting classified government information are battling the pro-Israel lobby for hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees.

At the outset, AIPAC committed to paying the legal costs for the case, but the attorneys for Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman say AIPAC has not paid any fees since the spring of this year.

In August, a grand jury indicted Rosen and Weissman on charges that they illegally accepted classified information on Iran and other Middle East issues from three government officials over a period of several years.

One of their alleged sources, Larry Franklin, a former Pentagon analyst on Iran, pleaded guilty to leaking information to them and others in October.

The outcome of the trial, scheduled to start in late April 2006, could set far-reaching precedents on how civilians deal with secret information.

AIPAC officials would not comment publicly on the case, but some board members said privately that the organization was concerned that the legal costs were spiraling out of control, which could harm the organization.

Both defense attorneys suggested that the quality of the defense, especially in the area of commissioning outside expertise, could be compromised as a result of the lack of payments.

"AIPAC's decision to discontinue payments for legal costs threatens the outcome of the case," Abbe Lowell, Rosen's lawyer, wrote last

month in a letter to Philip Friedman, AIPAC's general counsel.

Lowell has not been paid since March. Weissman's lawyer, John Nassikas, has not been paid since May.

"We will continue to represent the interests of our client zealously but in doing so there are matters and costs that we simply will be unable to pursue in the same fashion," Lowell said in the letter, obtained by JTA.

Sources close to the defense said Lowell was referring to costs associated with the hiring of outside experts to help make the case and to help select a jury. The defense attorneys say they need to pay experts to quash the notion that accepting government secrets is a crime.

The letter came to JTA from someone not directly involved in the case, but who is concerned that AIPAC isn't living up to its commitment.

Rosen, the former foreign policy chief at AIPAC, and Weissman, its Iran analyst, were fired in March. At that time, fees were estimated to be at least \$1 million. In September 2004, AIPAC had pledged to pay the fees.

AIPAC's senior officials would not comment on the record. But one board member said the organization was trying to balance the needs of the defense with the everyday costs associated with advancing the work of the pro-Israel lobby.

"Any organization has to strike a balance between its commitment to those who have done a service and not over committing what would amount to charitable, voluntary contributions," said the board member, who asked not to be identified because negotiations were still under way.

AIPAC's bylaws state that "AIPAC shall, to

*Continued on page 2*

## **AIPAC and lawyers for its former officials battle over legal fees**

*Continued from page 1*

the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, indemnify and hold harmless any person who is or was an AIPAC employee, including legal fees "arising out of or related to AIPAC, its business or affairs."

The exception is "gross negligence, bad faith, fraud, or willful misconduct or willful breach of such person's duties and responsibilities in any material respect."

A Sept. 1, 2004, letter by Lowell and initiated by Friedman, AIPAC's lawyer, days after the FBI raided AIPAC offices, states: "AIPAC has agreed to pay for the legal representation of its employees with regard to this investigation and any related matters."

The defendants say they were acting according to their duties at AIPAC.

AIPAC officials would not comment on whether they thought the case involved negligence.

Lowell's recent letter, dated Nov. 4, said he incurred \$993,000 in fees through August of this year. He said he wrote off \$300,000 and was still owed approximately \$467,000, meaning that so far AIPAC had paid him \$227,000.

That does not count costs subsequent to August. One source close to the defense says Lowell's fees average \$80,000 a month.

In October, AIPAC made a onetime final offer of \$800,000 in legal fees each to Rosen and Weissman, in addition to fees paid through May, according to sources close to the case. They rejected the offer.

A source close to AIPAC said the \$800,000 offer was in addition to an "already significant amount" spent on the defense.

The AIPAC source also said that the organization had included in its calculations "the legal costs of protecting the organization from the consequences of Rosen and Weissman's behavior." AIPAC had retained attorney Nathan Lewin to represent the organization in the case.

U.S. prosecutors have made clear that AIPAC as an organization is not a target of the investigation.

Lowell's office would not comment on the story. Nassikas confirmed that he had not been paid since March, but would not say how much he was owed.

"It creates a serious side issue in frustration," Nassikas told JTA. "They need fully focused counsel on the lack of merits of this prosecution, and not on who's paying the bills."

The case came into the open in August 2004, when the FBI raided the AIPAC offices here. AIPAC fired the two in March, citing information that arose out of the FBI investigation. Rosen and Weissman had led the lobby's efforts to expose what they believed was the threat Iran posed to Israeli, American and Western interests in the region.

The firing related to a July 2004 conversation the two had with Washington Post reporter Glenn Kessler, JTA has reported. Rosen and Weissman allegedly relayed to Kessler classified information that Franklin had leaked to them, regarding reports of an imminent Iranian attack on Israelis and Americans in Iraq.

Lewin, AIPAC's lawyer in the case, recommended firing Rosen and Weissman after learning of the conversation, JTA has reported.

Making it worse in Rosen and Weissman's view, AIPAC wanted to attach conditions to the offer of a onetime payment of \$800,000.

In its offer, AIPAC wanted Rosen and Weissman to waive any further rights concerning their employment, and to sign a non-disclosure agreement, according to sources close to the defense. Rosen reportedly feels that he is owed more than the severance he got, and both men are eager to clear themselves in the public arena after the trial.

At least one former AIPAC board member and major contributor, Larry Hochberg

of Chicago, is trying to rally support for Rosen and Weissman.

Hochberg was driven to act, he said, partly because an AIPAC appeal for extra funds in September 2004 cited the case.

"Your generosity at this time will help ensure that false allegations do not hamper our ability or yours to work for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and a safe and secure Israel," said

the letter from AIPAC's executive director, Howard Kohr, and Bernice Manocherian, then AIPAC's president.

Patrick Dorton, AIPAC's spokesman, said no funds were ever raised specifically for Rosen and Weissman.

"The notion that any funds were specifically raised for this purpose is completely absurd and absolutely untrue," he told JTA.

But sources close to the defense say \$14 million was raised in a campaign that had a \$10 million target, and that they were told by top AIPAC officials that the extra \$4 million came from supporters of Rosen and Weissman. Dorton disputed this, and said just \$9 million was raised in the September 2004 campaign.

Meanwhile some community leaders reacted with concern over the development — and the outing of the controversy.

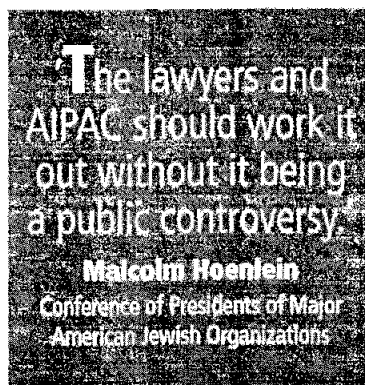
"There is an organizational responsibility to make sure they have the best defense," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"What have they been accused of doing? Of working on what they thought were their responsibilities?"

Hoenlein said that he understood that AIPAC had already contributed significant funds to the defense, but suggested that this was a matter best dealt with quickly.

"The lawyers and AIPAC should work it out without it being a public controversy, which is detrimental to the community," he said.

Dorton also said that AIPAC had informed its members that "the matter of legal fees for the two employees has been under constant review." Dorton would not comment on whether AIPAC had told the lawyers that the payment was under review.



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# Prague Jews hope strife will lead to good

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — Can the strife that has afflicted the Prague Jewish community over the last two years end up serving the greater good?

That's the question community members are asking as they try to move forward after an extraordinary election was held last month in an effort to end conflicts over leadership, rabbis and money that have divided the 1,500-strong community.

"I think something good has definitely come out of all the fighting," said Sylvia Wittmann, who runs Bejt Simcha, the Czech capital's Reform congregation. "A lot of issues were brought to the forefront, and never again will the leaders be able to do whatever they want."

The new leaders say they're only too aware of such concerns.

"There's no reason to believe that these recent disputes need to have a long-term impact on the community," said Frantisek Banyai, the newly elected chairman, who hopes to be a conciliatory figure.

He said his top priority is pushing through the Hagibor home for the aged, a \$7.3 million project championed by his predecessor, Tomas Jelinek. Jelinek had accused his opponents of being more interested in building monuments than in taking care of Holocaust survivors.

Banyai was part of a platform, Community for All, formed last year with the goal of removing Jelinek from office. The group was a mix of religious and non-religious Jews, including some who were loyal to the pre-Jelinek leadership and others who opposed what they called Jelinek's "dictatorial" leadership style.

Jelinek, for his part, argues that his critics simply couldn't stand to see him reform the community's entrenched power structures.

His opponents ousted Jelinek during a special community meeting last November, though Jelinek refused to recognize the move. In this year's elections, which were viewed as an acceptable solution by both sides, Community for All won three-quarters of the seats on the 24-member board. Jelinek and his supporters, called Coalition for a Democratic Community, won three seats, and another three went to independents.

Jelinek's supporters and detractors

have issued a long list of accusations and counter-accusations. A public rift surfaced in 2003 when a principal at the Lauder School, who was backed by Jelinek, fired a teacher whom she held responsible for pornography found on the school computer's server. The teacher was supported by the community's former leadership, particularly Jiri Danicek, a former community chairman, and Leo Pavlat, a board member and director of the Prague Jewish Museum.

Seventeen teachers resigned from the school and one-third of its pupils left as well. Since last month's elections, the new community leaders have created an independent supervisory board to search for a new principal and reinvigorate the school.

An even more controversial step was Jelinek's firing last year of Prague's chief rabbi, Karol Sidon, a former anti-communist dissident and a pillar of post-communist Jewish life in the Czech Republic. Jelinek said Sidon had mismanaged religious objects, but a personality clash and struggle for control also appeared to be involved.

Jelinek argued in the Czech media that before he took over, the community had been stifled by a lack of financial transparency, rigid orthodoxy and nepotism. He also criticized the Jewish Museum for keeping some \$5 million in reserve that Jelinek believes could have been used to help the elderly.

Jelinek's political tactics earned him the ire of community members like Jakub Roth, a founder of the Community for All platform and the new board's vice president.

"It's time to disband the platform, put aside differences and work on communication that was so problematic in the past," Roth said. "I hope Mr. Jelinek will be a constructive, not a destructive, critic."

Jelinek said the new leaders want to brush reform under the carpet. Roth, however, said the new leadership should be given time to prove itself, and his goals for the community aren't so different from Jelinek's.

There now are two facilities for the aged in temporary quarters, housing some 65 people. With more than half of the com-

munity is older than 60, Roth said elder care is something the new board takes seriously.

Roth said the community will make "more of an effort than ever before" to find out how it can best service non-Orthodox congregations. Along with Bejt Simcha, there's Bejt Praha — which describes itself as an "open" congregation and is particularly popular with foreigners — and a Conservative movement.

"We need to sit down and find out what it is they need, whether it's a place to worship or some other type of support," Roth said.

Roth, who holds a degree from MIT and speaks fluent English, admitted that the community has a reputation for being closed to outsiders.

"I've heard that tourists and foreigners living in Prague don't know how to get information about services, about community activities, about kosher food," he said. "That's going to change, I promise."

Roth is working to put more English information on the community's Web site, as well as English-language fliers on synagogues and community headquarters. He joked that sometimes the bodyguards posted at community facilities look like dance-club bouncers, who can discourage visitors.

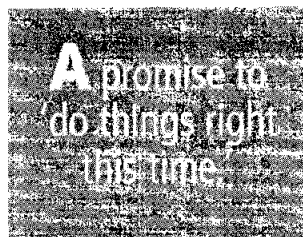
Roth acknowledged that the policy of granting full membership in the community only to halachic Jews had upset some people, but said the community wanted to reach out to those with any kind of Jewish ancestry.

"We provide social-care services to all Holocaust survivors whose persecution was based on their Jewish heritage," he said.

Roth, who is a financial expert with a leading Czech bank, also promised to professionalize community operations, saying good governance would be a cornerstone of policy.

Roth added that battles between individuals in the community could have a silver lining.

"The Prague Jewish community managed to resolve its differences in a democratic election, which is something of which we can all be proud," he said. "Many people who didn't care about the community came forth and asked to be listed as members. People participated in public matters with resolve unseen before. This has invigorated the community, and we have a strong mandate to do things right this time."



AROUND  
THE JEWISH  
WORLD

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Saudi prince funds Islamic studies

A Saudi prince donated \$40 million to finance Islamic studies at Georgetown and Harvard universities.

Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz al Saud's gifts come amid growing concern over Saudi influence in American education.

JTA has revealed that Bin Talal is discussing funding the Middle East Policy Council, a Washington think tank that publishes a teaching manual for middle and high school students.

The manual about Islam and the Arab world has been blasted by critics for distorting history and propagating bias about Israel, America and Islam.

In 2001, then-New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani rejected a \$10 million check from the prince for relatives of victims of the Sept. 11 attacks after the prince criticized Israeli policies regarding the Palestinians and called for a more balanced U.S. approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### Reform movement showcases anti-war stance

The Reform movement sent a letter to President Bush, highlighting its call for a plan to end the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

The letter, sent Tuesday, comes the same day the Republican Jewish Coalition expressed its support for the war effort with a full-page ad in The New York Times.

The Union for Reform Judaism letter emphasizes the process the movement went through to reach its statement against the war last month.

"Respectfully but firmly, Mr. President, we want our leaders to tell us the truth, the whole of it, and we therefore call on your Administration to adopt a policy of transparency," said the letter, signed by the URJ's chairman, Robert Heller, and its president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie. "With regard to troop withdrawal, we call not only for a clear exit strategy but also for specific goals for troop withdrawal to commence after the completion of parliamentary elections scheduled for later this week and then to be continued in a way that maintains stability in Iraq and empowers Iraqi forces to provide for their national security."

The movement also plans a written response to the RJC ads.

### Warning issued on circumcision practice

The New York City Health Department warned against a type of circumcision.

The warning issued Tuesday concerns metzitzah b'peh, a circumcision method, used only in some fervently Orthodox communities, that involves the mohel placing his mouth directly on the wound.

The warning comes after Rabbi Yitzchok Fisher's use of metzitzah b'peh allegedly led to the death of a baby who contracted herpes.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Iranian president again doubts Holocaust

Iran's president again questioned the Holocaust.

"If the killing of Jews in Europe is true," the Web site of Iran's state television quoted Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying, "and the Zionists are being supported because of this excuse, why should the Palestinian nation pay the price," according to The Associated Press.

### Iran bomb looms

Iran could be as little as three years away from developing nuclear weapons, Israel's military chief of staff said.

Addressing the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz said that unless the United Nations

nuclear watchdog successfully threatens Iran with Security Council sanctions, it will begin uranium enrichment by March — a key step for making atomic arms.

"If they move to the start of uranium enrichment and it goes successfully, they will be years away from establishing nuclear capability," Halutz said. "The range of assessments is 2008 to 2015."

### Anti-poverty party launched in Israel

An Israeli woman who marched on Jerusalem in an anti-poverty protest formed a new political party.

Vicki Knafo said this week she had turned down an offer to join the Labor Party, and instead set up the Bread Party to fight for the rights of Israel's growing economic underclass.

The Hebrew word for bread, lechem, is in this case an acronym for "United Social Strugglers," she said.

Knafo gained nationwide fame in 2004 by walking from the poor southern town of Mitzpeh Ramon to Jerusalem in a bid to boost government welfare benefits.

### Israel reports tourism boom

The number of first-time visitors to Israel is increasing dramatically, officials said.

The Tourism Ministry said Tuesday that in the first six months of 2005, there was a 73 percent increase in the number of first-time visitors to Israel — 328,000 compared to 190,000 in the same period last year.

The number of those arriving in the country for sightseeing purposes more than doubled to 156,000 from 75,000 in the first half of 2004.

Revenues from foreign tourism rose 23 percent to \$1.1 billion.

## WORLD

### London mayor cleared of a charge

London's mayor was partially cleared of charges stemming from his comparison of a Jewish journalist to a concentration camp guard.

Ken Livingstone was cleared Tuesday of a misconduct charge made after the incident, which took place earlier this year.

The panel hearing the case ruled that Livingstone did not make the comments in an official capacity because he said them after leaving a reception.

But Livingstone still faces a second misconduct charge of harming his post as mayor. If found guilty, he could be removed from office.

### E.U. report on Jerusalem shelved

The European Union shelved a report criticizing Israel's policies in Jerusalem.

Leaked parts of the report accused Israel of sealing off Palestinians in eastern Jerusalem from the West Bank as part of efforts to unify the capital, but E.U. officials this week said it would not be released for now, citing the political upheaval in the Jewish state.

"There is a general election coming up in a few months time," said British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, whose country holds the E.U. Presidency. "So we thought it was appropriate not to endorse or to publish the document, but instead to continue to make representations about our concerns in the normal way."

### French memorial honors Nazis' victims

A memorial was erected in France to victims of a Nazi doctor.

The memorial erected Sunday in a cemetery near Strasbourg honors the 86 victims of Dr. August Hirt, who conducted experiments on the bodies of Jews killed during World War II.