

IN THE NEWS

Iran enriches uranium

Iran began enriching uranium. Iran began the process Tuesday of feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into centrifuges at Natanz, its main nuclear facility, on a small scale, according to Iranian news agencies and Western reports.

Enrichment is a necessary step in making weapon-grade uranium. The reports said Tuesday's enrichment was not close to that level.

Americans favor Israel, oppose P.A. funding

Americans favor Israelis over Palestinians by more than 40 percentage points in the wake of Hamas' election victory, according to a new poll.

"Americans are much more likely to sympathize with the Israelis (59 percent) than with the Palestinians (15 percent), one of the highest margins in favor of the Israelis ever recorded by Gallup," the organization said of its poll, published Monday.

A clear majority of Americans, 57 percent, oppose funding the Palestinian Authority while it is ruled by Hamas.

Omri Sharon sentenced

The son of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was sentenced to nine months in prison for campaign-funding violations in his father's 1999 race for Likud Party leadership.

Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court on Tuesday sentenced Omri Sharon to another nine months of suspended imprisonment and fined him some \$65,000.

Because of the condition of the prime minister, who has been in a coma since a Jan. 4 stroke, the start of Omri Sharon's prison term was postponed by six months to Aug. 31, Ha'aretz reported.

His attorney said Omri Sharon would appeal the sentence.

REMINDER: The JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, Feb. 20.



WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG

Pre-trial strategies suggest exposure of AIPAC lobbying style

By RON KAMPEAS AND MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Federal investigators are asking questions about ties between lay leaders of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and two former staffers charged in a classified-information case.

The renewed investigation comes as Viet Dinh, a former assistant U.S. attorney general and principal architect of the Patriot Act, argued in a brief on behalf of Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman, the former AIPAC staffers, that the case against them lacks merit because it violates their First Amendment rights.

Taken together, the defense and government actions suggest the shape of the trial to start April 25: The defense will argue that culling and distributing inside government information was a routine lobbying activity.

It also anticipates the media event AIPAC insiders have said they fear: One that picks apart, in a public forum, exactly how AIPAC goes about its business.

No one suggests that AIPAC's activities are in any way illegal, and the prosecutor in the case already has made clear that the organization is not suspected of wrongdoing. But AIPAC closely guards its lobbying practices, and is loath to reveal them to the general Washington community.

In his brief, Dinh, now a law professor and attorney in private practice, argues that the First Amendment protects the practice of seeking information from executive branch officials.

"This is what members of the media, members of the Washington policy commu-

nity, lobbyists and members of congressional staffs do perhaps hundreds of times a day," Dinh argues, describing the acts alleged in the indictment against Rosen, the former AIPAC foreign policy director, and Weissman, a former Iran specialist.

FBI agents' questions to other former AIPAC staffers interviewed in recent weeks suggest that the government is trying to assess whether receiving and disseminating classified information was routine at AIPAC.

The former staffers told JTA that the FBI agents asked questions about Rosen's relationship with three past AIPAC presidents — Robert Asher of Chicago, Larry Weinberg of Beverly Hills, Calif., and Edward Levy of Detroit, as well as Newton Becker, an influential AIPAC donor from Los Angeles.

The former employees all spoke on condition of anonymity, because the FBI has told them not to speak with the media.

The office of U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty, who is trying the case, would not comment.

Weinberg, reached Tuesday, refused to comment. Levy was on vacation and could not be reached, and Asher and Becker did not respond to messages.

The new round of FBI questions is important because the indictment, based on a World War I-era espionage statute, rests not simply on receipt of the allegedly classified information but on its further dissemination.

The indictment, handed down last August, alleges that Rosen and Weissman relayed the information — on Iran and on Al-Qaida — to fellow AIPAC staffers, journalists and diplomats at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Continued on page 2

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

AIPAC's lobbying practices may be displayed at the trial of its former staffers

Continued from page 1

Establishing whether Rosen also briefed board members on the allegedly classified information would bolster the defense claim that the acts described in the indictment are routine. Board members are regularly briefed, often in lengthy one-on-one phone calls, on meetings between the most senior AIPAC staffers and top administration officials.

Rosen routinely made such phone calls, a former staffer said.

"He made sure board members knew he was responsible and he was the one doing the work," the staffer said.

Proving that such briefings are routine, however, will not necessarily deter the government from going ahead with the case: Judge T.S. Ellis, who is hearing the case, has suggested that the routine nature of such exchanges does not preclude prosecution.

"Persons who have unauthorized possession, who come into unauthorized possession of classified information, must abide by the law," Ellis said last month in sentencing Larry Franklin, the former Pentagon analyst who pleaded guilty to leaking information to Rosen, Franklin and others. "That applies to academics, lawyers, journalists, professors, whatever."

A defense source said the defendants could not recall board member briefings about the central charge in the indictment, involving allegedly classified information on supposed Iranian plans to kill American and Israeli agents in northern Iraq.

However, other alleged leaks in the indictment might have been relayed to board members, JTA has learned. One in 2002 involved David Satterfield, then a deputy assistant secretary of state and now deputy ambassador to Iraq. Satterfield relayed information to Rosen on Al-Qaida, the indictment says.

McNulty's office would not comment on whether it planned to bring charges against Satterfield. Satterfield did not respond to previous JTA requests for comment.

The defense will maintain that Satterfield would have been authorized to release the information. The administration routinely used AIPAC as a conduit to influence Israel on matters where there were differences between Israel and the United States, for instance on Israeli arms sales to China. In those cases, the information might have been classified.

The information Satterfield allegedly relayed to Rosen apparently related to Iran's ties to a wanted Lebanese terrorist.

Dinh's brief was filed last month, but was made public only last week. JTA reported on the brief last month, and has

been researching for several months interactions between Rosen, Weissman and government officials.

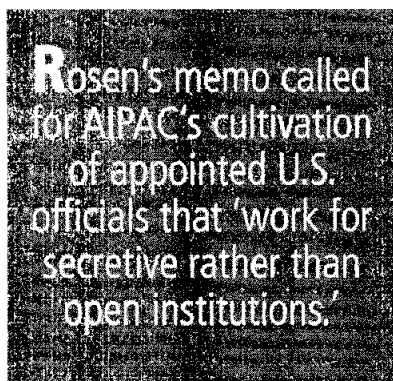
Patrick Dorton, an AIPAC spokesman, previously has said that Rosen and Weissman were fired last March because information arising out of the FBI investigation uncovered "conduct that was not part of their job and was beneath the standards of what AIPAC expects of their employees."

A December 2000 AIPAC staff handbook does not say how to handle classified information. A 1985 internal memo by Rosen, recently obtained by JTA, outlines his plans to shift AIPAC's lobbying emphasis from Congress to the executive branch. He explicitly calls for the cultivation of mid-level, non-elected officials — a description that would include Franklin.

Outlining the advantages of such lobbying, Rosen wrote: "They work for secretive rather than open institutions and agencies. And, perhaps most important of all for effective communications, they are in many cases experts in our subject themselves, as opposed to the 'generalist' in Congress who might be convinced by a few general 'talking points' explained by a layman."

Former staffers say Rosen's memo profoundly influenced AIPAC's mission. AIPAC has never repudiated the document, though last year the organization said it had changed some lobbying practices — without specifying which ones.

"AIPAC continues to discuss perfectly appropriate and legal information with people on Capitol Hill and in all levels of the administration every single day," Dorton said Tuesday.



JTA WORLD REPORT

Daniel J. Krifcher

President

Mark J. Joffe

Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein

Editor

Michael S. Arnold

Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein

Finance and Administration Director

Noa Artzi-Weill

Marketing Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Birthright applications outpace capacity

NEW YORK (JTA) — Birthright Israel has received many more applications for its upcoming trips than it has spaces available. Some 14,000 young Jews applied for 8,000 spots in the program's spring/summer 2006 trips in just the first 12 hours of registration Feb. 8.

The organization provides free trips to Israel for Jews aged 18 to 26. In the six years since its founding, Birthright has brought 98,000 people from 45 countries to Israel; the upcoming trip will include the program's 100,000th participant.

"The level of demand is unprecedented

and well exceeds our financial capability to accommodate the majority of those who currently wish to go on Taglit-Birthright Israel trips," said Susie Gelman, chair of the Birthright Israel Foundation. Taglit is the Hebrew name for the program.

"As Taglit-Birthright Israel grows rapidly and develops into a community-supported organization, we hope that our friends will support us in enabling more young Jews to participate in the Taglit-Birthright Israel experience, so that we can send the 100,000th participant and plan for the next 100,000."

New Air Force guidelines allow public prayer

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Jewish community's efforts to reform the Air Force Academy's positions on religious tolerance and proselytizing were overmatched by the evangelical community, which fought any move to restrict religious discussion on campus, Jewish leaders are acknowledging.

The U.S. Air Force on Feb. 9 introduced revised guidelines on religious tolerance and practices at the academy, which has been accused of fostering a Christian environment on campus and allowing proselytizing by senior officers and cadets.

Some see the new guidelines as more permissive of religious discussion than were interim guidelines issued last August. Air Force officials admit that the guidelines were revised following an angry response from Christian groups and from 72 members of Congress who sent a letter to President Bush last month.

"We didn't like what came out in August, but this is a public retreat from where they were before," said Mikey Weinstein, an Air Force Academy graduate who is suing the school for allegedly violating the constitutional separation of church and state.

Others, however, say the new guidelines do contribute toward ridding the military of religious intolerance.

Jewish leaders said more efforts are

needed to counterbalance the evangelical Christian community.

"We have not galvanized Congress, but we will have to," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

The Air Force Academy has been under scrutiny since reports surfaced of an overtly Christian environment that permitted Christian prayer and

proselytizing by senior officers, and did not accommodate minority religious practices.

The new rules allow for public prayer, stating only that it "should not imply government endorsement of religion and should not usually be part of routine official business."

The previous guidelines outlawed public prayer in official settings but allowed for a "brief non-sectarian prayer" at special ceremonies or events.

The new guidelines also focus on reaffirming senior officers' rights to free exercise of religion, while warning that superiors need to be "sensitive to the potential that personal expressions may appear to be official, or have undue influence on their subordinates."

"There is enough leeway in these

guidelines to permit proselytizing," Foxman said.

Last August's guidelines went further toward highlighting the need for sensitivity from senior officers.

"The more senior the individual, the more likely that personal expressions may be perceived to be official statements," the former guidelines read.

The new guidelines do note that chaplains are not required to participate in religious activities that

are inconsistent with their faith.

Maj. Gen. Charles Baldwin, the Air Force's chief of chaplains, told the Washington Post that the new guidelines came about as a result of criticism from evangelicals. Several organizations flooded

administration officials with complaints, calling the August report a violation of freedoms of speech and religion.

More than 70 lawmakers petitioned President Bush to sign an executive order guaranteeing the right to pray "in Jesus' name."

A spokeswoman for the Air Force told JTA the guidelines had been augmented after feedback, especially where the "original language had been misunderstood," Jennifer Stephens wrote in response to JTA's questions.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

'There is enough leeway in these guidelines to permit proselytizing.'
Abraham Foxman
National director, ADL

Israeli folk singer Shoshana Damari dies at age 83

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Shoshana Damari, the singer who brought an Oriental flavor to Israeli folk music, died Tuesday. She was 83.

The Yemeni-born Damari helped shape popular culture in Israel with nature ballads and patriotic tunes, putting on spirited performances until she was brought down by pneumonia.

"It feels good to know that I am leaving so much behind, that I made an entire nation happy," she said in a recent interview.

Relatives said Damari passed away in Ichilov Hospital listening to a recording of her most famous song, "Kalaniot," or "Poppy Flowers."

"She went out with a bang, just like she lived," said Damari's niece, Havazelet.

Born in Damar, Yemen, in 1923, Damari was brought to pre-

state Israel by her parents when she was 2. She studied drama and music in Tel Aviv, developing a distinctively husky contralto and giving her first solo performance at age 16.

Damari's talents were recognized by national poet Nathan Alterman and composer Moshe Vilenski, who wrote several hit songs for her, including "Kalaniot," "Hayu Zmanim" ("There Were Times") and "Mul Har Sinai" ("Before Mount Sinai").

Bringing out her first album soon after Israel's 1948 War of Independence, Damari became one of the best-known singers in the country and beyond.

"She was the pride of all of Israel, not just the Yemenite community," said Uzi Cohen, an Israeli politician of Yemenite descent.

Damari won an Israel Prize for Hebrew Song in 1988. She continued innovating into old age, recording two duets with Israeli world music star Idan Raichel last year.

OBITUARY

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Germany talks tough on Hamas

Germany's foreign minister, on a visit to Israel, pledged to keep up pressure on Hamas to reform.

"Three conditions must be met for the peace process to advance: laying down arms, recognizing Israel and implementing the accords which were signed by the Palestinian Authority," Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Monday in Jerusalem.

Germany has led European calls on Hamas to reform before it takes over the Palestinian Authority following its recent election win.

During his visit, part of a Middle East tour, Steinmeier held talks with his Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni, toured Yad Vashem and met with Holocaust survivors.

Conscript service cut

Israel is gradually reducing the duration of mandatory military service.

Under a plan unveiled this week by the Defense Ministry, male soldiers drafted last summer will spend 28 months in uniform, rather than three years.

Further reductions will bring the final service term for men down to two years by 2010.

Soldiers who need extra training time for specialized posts will receive professional salaries.

More limited cuts are expected for female conscripts, who generally serve a maximum of 24 months in the military.

Though the reform plan was ordered last year, political rivals accused Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz of publishing it now to boost the Kadima Party's prospects in March 28 general elections.

Arab lawmakers grilled over travels

Two Israeli Arab lawmakers were questioned over visits to Syria and Lebanon.

Taleb a-Sana and Azmi Bishara, who claim that parliamentary immunity protects them from prosecution for the unauthorized visits to enemy states, appeared before Israeli police investigators Monday.

Under questioning, Sana noted that during his trip to Damascus he addressed the Syrian Parliament, a first for an Israeli lawmaker.

He argued that the event could help Israeli-Syrian rapprochement. Bishara, asked about a visit to Beirut, said freedom of movement was vital to his work as a legislator.

There was no immediate word on whether police would recommend lifting Sana's or Bishara's immunity so they can be tried.

WORLD

Australian in Holocaust cartoon flap

An Australian cartoonist said two of his old works dealing with the Holocaust were entered into an Iranian newspaper contest without his permission.

Michael Leunig, whose Holocaust cartoons were rejected for publication in Australia in 2002, said Tuesday he had discovered they were submitted to Iran's Hamshahri newspaper.

"This is a fraud and a hoax emanating, we believe, from Australia," Leunig said in a radio interview.

He said that Hamshahri had withdrawn the submissions at his request. According to press reports, one of Leunig's cartoons showed a poor man, marked with the Star of David, entering Auschwitz with its slogan "Work Brings Freedom."

The second showed a similar scene, except that the man is bearing a rifle, the slogan is "War Brings Peace" and the caption reads "Israel 2002."

Peru's 'Jews of the jungle' get rabbi

A Jewish community living in the heart of the Peruvian jungle region has a new rabbi.

The Jewish community of Tarapoto got its new Spanish-speaking rabbi last week.

The community comprises several hundred people, descendants of Moroccan Jews who migrated to the area in the late 19th century.

"Assimilation and intermarriage took a heavy toll on the Moroccan Jews who chose to remain in the area," said Michael Freund, chairman of Shavei Israel, the organization that dispatched the new rabbi.

"Now, however, their children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren have begun to return to their Jewish roots." Tarapoto is located adjacent to the Andes Mountains, more than 600 kilometers north of Lima, the country's capital.

The community is well-organized, and its members include doctors, lawyers, architects and academics.

NORTH AMERICA

White House denies Hamas 'plot'

There is no U.S.-Israeli plan to oust Hamas from power, the White House said.

"There is no plot, there is no plan," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Tuesday, denying a New York Times report that Israel and the United States hope to oust the terrorist group by starving the Palestinian Authority of cash.

Hamas won a landslide victory in legislative elections last month. McClellan said the Bush administration still expects Hamas to recognize Israel, end terrorism and renounce calls for Israel's destruction. Those U.S. views are shared not just with Israel, he said.

"The conversations that we have with Israel are the same kind of conversations we have with European governments, Arab governments and others," he said.

Presbyterians call for divestment policy change

Regional bodies within the Presbyterian Church USA are calling on the church to end or change its policy of divestment in companies working in Israel.

The five church presbyteries have drafted the documents calling for a change in the organization's selective divestment policy, which was adopted in 2004 to pressure Israel to pull out of Palestinian territories, The Associated Press reported.

The move had strained relations between the church and the Jewish community. Church officials are still negotiating with some of the multinational corporations in question.

As such, the officials said they would have no position on the new recommendations at the church's General Assembly in June.

Anti-Semitic graffiti on Chicago synagogue

Vandals spray-painted swastikas and anti-Semitic phrases on a Chicago synagogue.

City police were conducting a hate-crime investigation into Monday's incident at the Agudas Achim North Shore Congregation, the Chicago Tribune reported.

Among the graffiti left on the synagogue's outer windows reportedly were "Mein Kampf," "Kill the Jews," and "White Power."

"Frankly, I was shocked because this is a blight on the neighborhood of Uptown," said the synagogue's spiritual leader, Rabbi Philip Lefkowitz.

"Everyone has been working together in this neighborhood. This is a bizarre situation." He said he would seek volunteers to help remove the graffiti before members came to the synagogue.