


IN THE NEWS
**ARZA wins
WZO elections**

The Association of Reform Zionists of America easily won elections for the American slate to the World Zionist Organization's 35th Congress of the Jewish People.

ARZA took home just over 38 percent of the 75,686 votes cast, garnering it 55 delegates to the June congress in Israel.

It was followed by the Religious Zionist Slate, which won 24 percent and 35 delegates; and Mercaz U.S.A., the Zionist organization of the Conservative Movement, which won 22 percent and 32 delegates.

**Friedman named
AIPAC president**

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee named Howard Friedman as its new president.

The Baltimore entrepreneur, 40, was elected by the AIPAC board a year ago but does not succeed the current president, Bernice Manocherian of New York, until this year's AIPAC policy conference is completed on Tuesday.

Friedman, the immediate past president of JTA and current chairman of the JTA board, was feted Monday at the policy conference by a host of AIPAC board members.

**Jewish camping
program launched**

The Foundation for Jewish Camping announced a program for experienced camping professionals to gain business, management and leadership skills.

The Executive Leadership Initiative, unveiled this week at the foundation's first National Leaders Assembly, will include development seminars over the course of 18 months, such as one-on-one coaching and mentoring, in addition to other programming.

One foundation leader likened the initiative to an MBA, or Masters in Business Administration, for Jewish camping professionals.

WORLD REPORT

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

AIPAC offers clear goal on Iran but mixed messages on Hamas

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The lobbying assignment has never been clearer for the 5,000 or so activists at this year's American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference: Stop Hamas and stop Iran.

Yet when it comes to the details — particularly relating to the Palestinian Authority — the message gets murkier, and reveals differences between Washington's pro-Israel lobby and the Bush administration.

AIPAC has never been starker in presenting the threat it believes Israel faces. Howard Kohr, the group's executive director, suggested the threat had never been as dire since the rise of Nazism.

"The parallels of the geopolitical climate of March 5, 1933 and that of March 5, 2006 are stunning in their likeness, eerie in their implication," Kohr said Sunday night, addressing the assembled delegates, including about 1,000 students. Hitler became Germany's chancellor on March 5, 1933.

"Evil men and their regimes must not be given time to grow and strengthen," Kohr said, as huge images of Hitler and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad were displayed on video screens in the conference hall. "We must convince our leaders to take all the necessary actions to fundamentally affect the course of history while there is time."

The message — that Iran must be stopped before it acquires even more destructive capacity — was repeated by speaker after speaker at the conference.

But a tug of war over presidential dis-

cretion between Congress and the Bush administration, together with Israel's own uncertainties three weeks before its election, contributed to mixed messages as AIPAC activists headed to the Hill on Tuesday in the year's most impressive lobbying effort.

The activists are touting Senate and House of Representatives versions of the "Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act" that agree on the broad issue of isolating a Hamas-run Palestinian Authority but differ on key details, especially on whether the president can waive the legislation.

In talking points AIPAC distributed to the delegates, it clearly favors the tougher House version.

The Senate bill, introduced Monday by Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky), the majority whip, and Sen. Joseph

Biden (D-Del.), includes a presidential waiver on aid to the Palestinians that Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the sponsors of the House version, had strongly resisted. It also drops bans on representation by the Palestine Liberation Organization in the United States.

The differences reflect an emerging White House strategy of sustaining aid to P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, a relative moderate, while isolating Hamas in the wake of the terrorist group's stunning victory in Jan. 25 Palestinian legislative elections. Abbas remains nominally in power as P.A. president, and is tussling with Hamas over his authority. He also retains control over the PLO, the organization that represents Palestinians throughout the world.

The waiver in the Senate version allows President Bush to fund Abbas' office at Bush's

Continued on page 2

**NEWS
ANALYSIS**

■ One complication for AIPAC's Hamas policy is the upcoming Israeli elections

Continued from page 1

discretion. The Senate bill leaves in a ban on P.A. representation in the United States, but removes the House version's ban on PLO representation.

That maintains the status quo, because only the PLO is represented in Washington and the United Nations.

AIPAC talking points for delegates urge lobbyists to campaign against PLO representation on U.S. soil and for congressional restrictions on all U.S. aid to the Palestinians. That put delegates in the confusing position Tuesday of asking senators to vote for a bill, but against some of its key elements.

AIPAC officials said any distinctions between a P.A. and a PLO office were spurious.

"They should not have an embassy here in the United States," David Gillette, AIPAC's deputy director of policy and government affairs, said in a session on lobbying issues

■
McConnell waited until the last minute — just hours before AIPAC's lobbying blitz — to introduce the legislation, apparently because of last-minute consultations among his office, the White House and AIPAC.

He noted another distinction from the House bill: The Senate legislation continues funding for democracy programs.

"Both Senator Biden and I appreciate the need not to punish the Palestinian people for actions its future government may take," he said.

Traditionally, Senate legislation more

closely reflects the will of the White House, but the fight is hardly over.

Both bills radically restructure the relationship between the Palestinian Authority and the United States, setting tough markers for allowing the Palestinian Authority, no matter who's running it, to reestablish ties with America.

Instead of just showing progress on key issues, for instance, the Palestinian Authority must now prove that it has crushed terrorism and incitement before it reenters the United States' good graces. It also must recognize Israel as a Jewish state, a step further than merely recognizing Israel's existence.

AIPAC officials and their allies in Congress say the new markers would finally force moderates such as Abbas to confront and defeat extremists, instead of trying to co-opt them — the strategy that allowed Hamas to take power.

The White House is unhappy with the requirements, wanting instead to limit punitive measures to Hamas so that the aid spigot can swiftly be turned on if moderates come to power.

■
The differences were evident when AIPAC officials openly criticized the White House — a rarity under Bush — saying its insistence that Palestinians go to elections Jan. 25, as Abbas' Fatah party was imploding, had been a colossal mistake.

"The United States should not have supported elections moving forward with Hamas as a candidate," Gillette said.

Significantly, Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet prisoner of Zion whose work was cited by Bush in pushing elections forward, agreed. Sharansky, a former Israeli minister who has close ties to AIPAC, chastised the president in a Los Angeles Times op-ed piece published Sunday.

"Despite my faith in 'democracy,' I was under no illusion that elections should be held immediately," Sharansky wrote. "Over the previous decade, Palestinian society had become one of the most poisoned and fanatical on Earth."

Another complicating factor for

AIPAC's Hamas policy is the uncertainty in the weeks before the Israeli elections.

Ehud Olmert, Israel's acting prime minister and the centrist Kadima Party's candidate, and Amir Peretz, the Labor Party candidate, both echo Bush's strategy of cultivating moderates while isolating Hamas.

■
Olmert favors more unilateral withdrawals like the one from the Gaza Strip last year, which Likud Party candidate Benjamin Netanyahu rejects.

In a videolinked speech to AIPAC delegates, Olmert got warm applause

when he repudiated Hamas, but stony silence when he said he planned further withdrawals and still hoped for a moderate Palestinian state to emerge in evacuated areas.

"We want the Palestinians to have their own state in contiguous territory," he said.

By contrast, AIPAC's push to isolate Iran was a more straightforward sell, with much of the West now united in its determination to stem the Islamic Republic's nuclear weapons program.

Even there, however, AIPAC backs legislation that would impose wide-ranging sanctions on any investment in Iran's oil sector. The White House likely would fight against sanctions that would limit Bush's flexibility in dealing with Iran. ■

Reform leaders head to Israel

NEW YORK (JTA) — More than 100 U.S. Reform movement leaders are heading to Israel for a mission.

The 10-day trip to Israel is the latest in a surge of travel to Israel by the Reform movement, which was criticized for scaling back such trips after the intifada began in 2000.

More than 70 Reform congregations are going to Israel this year, and 700 NFTY participants went last summer. ■

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Howard Kohr
Executive director, AIPAC

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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.
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In Moscow, Hamas talks pay off — for Russia

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russia's invitation to Hamas to come to Moscow for talks failed to yield any concessions from the terrorist group that is about to take over the Palestinian Authority — but it may have paid some dividends for Moscow.

Russian critics of the visit — including most of the nation's leading newspapers and political analysts — accused President Vladimir Putin of double standards on terrorism and said Russia's gamble was targeted at boosting the country's global influence, which has declined greatly since Soviet times.

Now that the visit is over, some say Moscow satisfied its ambition without striking a mortal blow to Russian-Israeli relations. Israel was furious that Russia undermined its efforts to isolate a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, arguing that while Hamas leaders offered no concessions at the talks — they refused to renounce violence or recognize Israel — an invitation from one of the countries overseeing the “road map” peace plan, which Hamas rejects, conferred invaluable international legitimacy on the group.

Israel and the United States have classified Hamas as a terrorist organization, saying one can't make a distinction between its political and military wings. The Kremlin has never officially included Hamas on its list of terrorist organizations, but has refused to make a similar distinction between the military and political wings of the Chechen separatist movement that has carried out several high-profile terrorist

attacks in Russia.

What may well have been the main dividend for Russia was a point made by the head of the Hamas delegation, Khaled Meshaal, who described the Chechen issue as an internal Russian problem.

That statement angered Chechen rebels, who were hoping for Hamas support of their cause. The Kremlin long has tried to destroy the international support Chechen separatists receive from Islamists outside Russia, and Hamas' stance on the issue may prove important for Moscow's fight there.

Regardless of what the Kremlin wanted from the visit, it was received with much passion by many Russian Jews. A prominent Russian Jewish leader voiced his protest on the eve of the visit.

“Putin should have taken the opinion of Russian Jews into consideration,” Mikhail Chlenov, general secretary of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, wrote in a statement March 2.

In the small eastern Russian town of Kamensk-Uralskiy, local Jewish activists issued a statement protesting the visit. The activists said they were prompted by the memory of a town native, a 14-year girl who was killed in a Palestinian terrorist attack in Israel in 2001.

Another top Jewish leader praised Putin for the initiative.

Adolf Shayevich, one of Russia's two chief rabbis, described the invitation as

a “contribution to strengthening relations with the Jewish state.”

The Federation of Jewish Communities, Russia's largest Jewish group, refrained from commenting on the visit. But on the eve of Hamas' arrival, the group's newspaper published two columns criticizing the visit. One carried a headline “Back to the USSR?” — a reference to Russia's attempts to once again project influence in the Middle East, as it used to in the days of the Soviet Union.

Putin did not meet with the delegation personally, which some observers interpreted as a desire not to damage relations with Israel any further.

Given a chance to present its vision of a dialogue, Hamas did its job perfectly, sarcastically commented Yevgeny Satanovsky, president of the Institute for Israel and Near Eastern Studies, a Moscow think-tank.

Although the visit was a perfect opportunity for Hamas to present a more moderate face, the group did not appear willing to involve in any constructive cooperation with Israel. The most it offered was a continuation of tenuous year-old truce, along with demands that Israel evacuate all the territory it won in the 1967 war as a precondition for talks.

“In Moscow, Hamas made its stand on a dialogue with Israel crystal clear: an unconditional capitulation of Israel,” Satanovsky said. “So what was billed as an opening of a dialogue has in fact turned into its closing.”

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

**In talks, Hamas
leaders distanced
themselves from
Chechen rebels.**

‘Munich,’ ‘Paradise Now’ denied at award ceremony

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — “Munich” and “Paradise Now,” two films that caused controversy in the American Jewish community and Israel, came up empty-handed at this year's Academy Awards.

Non-controversial was the selection of Jewish actress Rachel Weisz as best supporting actress in “The Constant Gardener.”

Host Jon Stewart left no doubt about his ethnic heritage in his opening monologue. After pointing to Steven Spielberg sitting in the audience, Stewart mentioned the director's films “Schindler's List” and “Munich,” and then cracked, “I speak for all Jews when I say I can't wait for what happens to us next.”

“Munich,” Spielberg's take on the Israeli hunt for the Palestin-

ian killers of its athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games, struck out on all of its five nominations.

“Paradise Now,” an entry in the foreign-language film category, has drawn even more heat from a small but vocal Jewish community segment, which charged that the film “humanized” two suicide bombers on a mission to blow up a Tel Aviv bus. It lost to the South African entry “Tsotsi.”

In addition, the film had originally been listed as coming from the non-existent country of “Palestine,” though it was made by an Israeli Arab. At Sunday evening's award show, its provenance was given as the “Palestinian territories.”

Violinist Itzhak Perlman made a surprise appearance, performing music from movies nominated for their original scores.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Two militants killed in strike

Two Palestinian militants were killed in an Israeli Air Force strike in the Gaza Strip on Monday. Ha'aretz identified the two as Ashraf Shaluf of Islamic Jihad and Munir Suqar of the Al-Aksa Brigade. Three other people, likely bystanders, also were killed, and at least seven were wounded.

Sharon recovery chances considered slim

The director of the hospital treating Ariel Sharon said the Israeli prime minister is unlikely to recover.

"There is a chance the prime minister will wake up. The chances are not great but it is not something that can be ruled out," Prof. Shlomo Mor-Yosef, director of Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital, said Monday at a medical conference in Tel Aviv. "The condition he will be in if he wakes up is still an open question." Sharon has been in a coma since a Jan. 4 stroke.

Hamas to Al-Qaida: No thanks

Hamas rejected an offer of support from Al-Qaida's No. 2 man. In a video shown Saturday on Al-Jazeera, Ayman al-Zawahiri called for jihad to reclaim Palestinian territory and implied backing for Hamas' continued rejection of Israel.

But a Hamas official quoted anonymously by The Associated Press said the two terrorist groups differ.

Hamas plans new offensive

Hamas' armed wing plans to continue attacks on Israel even after the radical Islamic group takes over the Palestinian Authority. Hamas politburo chief Khaled Meshal told the U.A.E. newspaper Al-Khalij on Monday that the armed wing, izz a-Din al-Kassam, would continue to "to fight the Zionist occupier" once the new Palestinian Authority government is in place.

E.U. urges Israel payout

The European Union urged Israel to release withheld tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority. "It would be important that the Israelis pay out what is actually Palestinian money — the customs duties," European Commission official Benita Ferrero-Waldner told Austria's Der Standard newspaper Monday.

Rosenstein extradited to U.S.

Israel extradited a suspected drug lord to the United States for trial. Ze'ev Rosenstein was flown from Tel Aviv to Miami on Monday, accompanied by U.S. marshals. The Drug Enforcement Administration accuses Rosenstein of running an international ring that smuggled large amounts of Ecstasy into the United States — estimated at anywhere from 700,000 to nearly 2 million pills. He denies the charges.

Olmert probed again over real estate

Israel's state comptroller launched a probe into a second real-estate deal involving Ehud Olmert. Micha Lindenstrauss' office said Monday he was checking the interim Israeli prime minister's recent purchase of a Jerusalem house for around \$1.2 million.

Olmert used the proceeds from the sale of his previous home, a deal which the state comptroller checked for wrongdoing and cleared last week.

WORLD

More anti-Semitic attacks in France

Three anti-Semitic attacks in a Parisian suburb over the weekend led the country's interior minister to increase security measures in

the community. Nicolas Sarkozy announced at a meeting Sunday that further police reinforcements would be put in place in Sarcelles.

Suspect in French slaying extradited

The chief suspect in the grisly murder of a young Parisian Jew was extradited to France late Saturday night.

Youssef Fofana was indicted and placed in police custody. Fofana had fled to the Ivory Coast after the murder, and was arrested there Feb. 22. He is being charged with criminal association, kidnapping, acts of torture and barbarism, and murder, with aggravating charges of anti-Semitism.

Vatican forgives firecracker family

The Vatican publicly forgave an Israeli family arrested for detonating fireworks in a Nazareth church.

Haim Eliahu Havivi and his Christian wife, Violette, and their daughter entered the Basilica of the Annunciation last Friday with a baby stroller loaded with firecrackers and gas canisters. Ensuing riots left 13 police officers and 13 civilians wounded, as well as four cars in flames.

Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Vatican's representative for holy sites in Israel, met with the Havivi family Monday afternoon.

Bucharest school expands

The Lauder Reut Jewish school in Bucharest, Romania, will open a high school this fall. The high school will begin with 20 students coming from earlier grades, and administrators hope to attract at least another 20 from other schools in Romania.

Rabbi for Reform Poles

Beit Warszawa, Poland's only Reform congregation, has hired its first full-time rabbi. Burt Schuman, currently with a Reform congregation in Altoona, Penn., will join the Warsaw-based group in July. The congregation has approximately 100 members.

Zagreb has new Orthodox rabbi

The Jewish community of Zagreb, Croatia, got a new Orthodox rabbi. Zwi Eliezer Aloni, who since 2001 has been serving in the German city of Mainz, was hired by the Zagreb community for a year. Aloni takes the place of Rabbi Kotel Dadon, who was fired last summer after seven years of service.

NORTH AMERICA

Architect under fire for Israel views

A British architect involved in a large-scale New York project is under fire for ties to a group that has called for a boycott of Israel. In an effort to save his job, Lord Richard Rogers, who is overseeing the Jacob Javits Center redesign project, has cut ties with Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, a group of architects that has compared firms building in the West Bank to companies that worked in South Africa during apartheid.

Supreme Court upholds Solomon Amendment

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld an amendment that would cut federal higher education funds to colleges and universities that refuse to allow military recruiters on campus. The court's unanimous decision upholding the Solomon Amendment rejected the free-speech argument made by some schools based on the military's ban on openly gay soldiers.

Jews had followed the case because it pitted traditional views on gay rights in large parts of the community against their interest in curbing some freedoms of speech, such as virulently anti-Israel rhetoric in higher education.