

## IN THE NEWS

## Cheney: All options on the table with Iran

Vice President Dick Cheney said "the United States is keeping all options on the table" in dealing with Iran.

Cheney told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on Tuesday that the United States would not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

## Russia: Hamas examining Saudi deal

Hamas is ready to consider a Saudi diplomatic initiative that recognizes Israel's existence, Russia's foreign minister said.

Sergei Lavrov, who met Tuesday with Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, said he met with delegates of the terrorist group last weekend to impress upon them the need to recognize Israel and abide by Palestinian Authority agreements with Israel.

He said the delegation told him it was considering a Saudi proposal that would recognize Israel in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 boundaries, although it leaves the status of Palestinian refugees unclear.

## WJC refuses to drop lawsuit

The World Jewish Congress will not drop a lawsuit against one of its former executives, despite demands from its affiliate in Australia.

In a letter to Grahame Leonard, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry — a copy of which was obtained by JTA — the WJC's secretary-general, Stephen Herbits, said his group was "quite saddened" by the council's decision to pass a resolution calling on the WJC to drop a court case in Israel against Isi Leibler, a former WJC vice president whose charges of financial wrongdoing at the organization spurred an investigation by New York state's attorney general.

The investigation uncovered serious financial mismanagement at the WJC.

# WORLD REPORT

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## For politicians and candidates, AIPAC event is a time to shine

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — The upcoming Israeli election was not the only race for head of state on the minds of participants at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference.

The three-day gathering this week featured major policy addresses by four likely American presidential candidates in 2008, all of whom have been out of the foreign-policy spotlight in recent years. Without contentious political issues on the pro-Israel lobbying agenda, the conference provided all of them with an opportunity to condemn Hamas and Iran, and win standing ovations.

It also provided a rare opportunity for Democrats to showcase their support for Israel, and Democratic Jewish leaders seemed eager to seize the moment.

While AIPAC does not allow active political challengers to address its annual policy conference — Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) was notably absent in 2004, when President Bush gave the keynote address — it served this year as a key forum for undeclared candidates.

Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) was given a prime position as the Democratic speaker at AIPAC's gala dinner Monday. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and former Virginia Gov. Mark Warner (D) spoke to high donors at an off-the-record luncheon Monday, and former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), the 2004 vice presidential nominee, addressed an open forum Monday morning.

AIPAC officials said the men were chosen because of their expertise and political stature. It was clear that all relished the opportunity

to give a major foreign-policy address.

"For years I have argued that the United States has not been doing enough to deal with the growing threat in Iran," Edwards said. "While we've talked about the dangers of nuclear terrorism, we've largely stood on

the sidelines as the problems got worse. I believe that for far too long, we've abdicated our responsibility to deal with the Iranian threat to the Europeans. That is not the way to deal with an unacceptable threat

to America and an unacceptable threat to Israel."

Vice President Dick Cheney also spoke, telling the audience, "We will not abandon our belief in democracy, we will not abandon our opposition to terrorism, and we will not abandon our commitment to the security of our friends and allies."

He added, "Israel can count on the United States of America."

Participating at the AIPAC conference has, for years, given politicians close access to active donors from across the country who are willing to feed money into the campaigns of pro-Israel candidates. In addition to the formal program, AIPAC conferences include several small cocktail receptions for high donors, where business cards and alcohol flow freely.

"It's fund-raising, it's votes and it's leadership," Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), who is running for Senate, said at a National Jewish Democratic Council reception on the sidelines of the conference. "It puts us together with people that are influential in the community."

In addition to presidential hopefuls, the

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ U.S. politicians appeared at the conference to express support for Israel

*Continued from page 1*

conference included appearances by more than half of the Senate and 125 members of the House of Representatives. Those numbers were significantly lower than in past years, largely because the House was out of session.

A mix of critical issues for Israel and a contentious political environment has made the pro-Israel circuit an important stop on the campaign trail. Several congressional and presidential hopefuls spoke of planned trips to Israel and had tough words for the Iranian government and for Hamas, which won a majority in January's Palestinian Authority parliamentary elections.

Control of both parties of Congress is seen as up for grabs this November, escalating the outreach. Several Jewish candidates are seen as among the best chances for Democrats to pick up seats in the House, including Ron Klein, a Democratic state senator in Florida seeking to unseat Rep. Clay Shaw (R), and Gabrielle Giffords, a Democratic Arizona state legislator seeking to fill an open seat.

Giffords was seen meeting party leaders and AIPAC delegates Monday; Klein was in Washington last week, hosted by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) at a fund-raiser.

Of note, two senators who are not seen as supporters of Israel — Sens. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.) — came to the gala dinner. Both are up for re-election this year.

More candidates with their eyes on 2008 shook hands throughout the Monday night

gala. Sens. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) and George Allen (R-Va.) made appearances, as did Kerry.

AIPAC delegates do not like to speak about their donations to political candidates. But one donor, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the conference provided him the best opportunity to hear from aspiring White House occupants outside of New Hampshire, which holds the nation's first presidential primary.

Following Monday's dinner, the NJDC put on its own show, highlighting pro-Israel senatorial candidates, particularly Pennsylvania State Treasurer Bob Casey, who is running against incumbent Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.).

Santorum has garnered some Jewish support for his pro-Israel leadership, but remains controversial because of his conservative views on many social issues. NJDC Executive Director Ira Forman said Casey is an alternative whom supporters of Israel should consider.

"We want to show that there is a pro-Israel candidate choice in Pennsylvania," he said.

NJDC's political action committee will not give Casey money because he opposes abortion, a position that has hurt him in some Jewish circles. But the candidate seemed unfazed by the group's decision to host a reception in his honor while not supporting him financially.

"There's a lot of great friends in that room," he told reporters after the reception. "If that's a lack of support, I wish every group was like that."

Casey also articulated a position on stem-cell research that might hurt him in the Jewish community. While a broad coalition of Jewish groups has been advocating for embryonic stem-cell research, Casey told reporters he could not support legislation that would lead to the destruction of an embryo.

"If there's disagreement with me on abortion or on any other issues, I've got to tell them what my position is," he said.

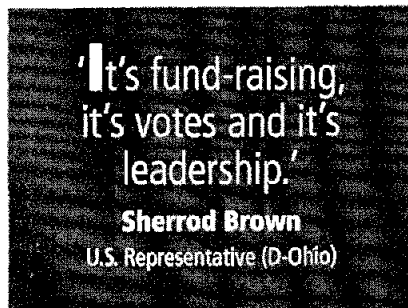
But Casey also stressed that his positions were not based on religious faith, marking a clear distinction between himself and Santorum, who received warm

applause at the dinner.

Forman said he has been encouraging his supporters to attend AIPAC policy conferences in recent years. AIPAC has shown strong support for the Bush administration — Vice President Dick Cheney, Tuesday morning's keynote speaker, received 48 rounds of applause, including eight standing ovations — and support for Republican candidates among pro-Israel voters has risen.

For its part, the Republican Jewish Coalition also made sure that rising Republican candidates were being seen and heard. Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele was shepherded around the gala, as was Rep. Mark Kennedy (R-Minn.), both of whom are running for Senate.

There were notable absences. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, a keynote speaker last year, did not attend the AIPAC conference. She was not invited to speak because she is seeking re-election.



## Rabbis press Bush

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Nearly 400 rabbis signed a letter to President Bush urging him to maintain indirect assistance to the Palestinians and "constructive engagement" with the Palestinian government.

The letter comes as Congress considers bills that would severely restrict aid to the Palestinians in the wake of the Jan. 25 victory of Hamas, a terrorist group, in Palestinian Authority legislative elections.

"Despite Hamas' victory, recent polls indicate that the majority of Palestinians remain committed to a peace agreement with Israel," the letter says. "With this in mind, we urge constructive engagement with the new Palestinian government, in ways that bolster moderates such as President Mahmoud Abbas and sustain the cease-fire that has allowed for relative calm over the past year."

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, a left-wing grassroots group, organized the letter, which has garnered signatures from Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis.

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# Young Jews go to Tel Aviv with UJC

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Sipping wine at restaurants along the sea and strolling through streets lined with designer boutiques and cafes, the next generation of potential North American Jewish leaders took in Tel Aviv and contemplated its significance back home.

“When you’re in your everyday life you can let your priorities shift, but when you come here it’s the shot you need to get your priorities back in order,” said Elizabeth Kaplan, referring to taking an active role in one’s Jewish community.

Kaplan, 34, a financial planner from St. Louis, was one of 1,000 young North American Jews who gathered for the four-day Tel Aviv One conference, which ends Wednesday. The United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, which organized the event, hopes that a connection with Israel will help jump-start involvement among young Jews whose interest in the federation system has been lagging.

Younger Jews tend to be much less engaged with Jewish causes than their parents, and the challenge in cultivating the next generation of Jewish leadership is to find what will resonate with them, organizers say.

Jews of this generation who may think of giving to their local soup kitchen or environmental causes before Jewish ones are interested not just in writing the checks, but seeing where that money is going.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

“It’s not enough to sit in a fancy living room in Baltimore and talk about the challenges a community faces. We need to get our hands dirty and have moments of meaningful connection,” said Jennifer Meyerhoff of Baltimore, a national co-chairwoman of the conference’s development committee.

Making that connection means coming to Israel, she said, and the only way to make that happen on a large scale was to make the event affordable.

In past years, the federation’s outreach to younger members was held in Washington. The plan now is to rotate the conference between Washington and Tel Aviv.

Most participants paid \$500 for this year’s all-inclusive trip, while the UJC subsidized the rest of the \$2,130 price tag.

“We had to make the cost so attractive that they could not afford not to go,” Meyerhoff said.

She added that participants were expected also to make a \$500 gift to their federations.

“It has to go hand in hand,” she said.

Steve Marlowe, who co-chaired the conference, said previous generations contributed to Jewish causes almost as a matter of fact.

“Our generation is looking for more ac-

countability,” he said.

The decision to have the conference in diverse, cosmopolitan Tel Aviv was a bid to show young Jews that Israel is a compelling, modern country with which they can identify.

“There was a clear recognition that matching young leadership with the city would be an ideal way to spark a real interest in Israel,” said Glenn Rosenkrantz, UJC’s director of media affairs and marketing.

Participants had the opportunity to tour Tel Aviv — from its fashion houses and high-tech centers to its first neighborhoods — and to see UJC-funded projects such as programs for Ethiopian pre-schoolers or at-risk teenagers.

With an eye to promoting young philanthropy, individual federations brought their participants to see projects that their communities are funding.

About 70 percent of the conference participants had not been to Israel previously.

Howard Rieger, UJC’s CEO and president, said one of the conference’s goals was to give participants a sense that they belonged to part of a global Jewish community that needs their support and involvement.

“We have no one to look to but ourselves,” Rieger said. “We don’t have another partner other than the Jews.”

‘Our generation  
is looking for more  
accountability.’

Steve Marlowe  
Conference co-chair

## Yitzhak Rabin’s assassin permitted artificial insemination

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Yitzhak Rabin’s assassin is inching toward a normalcy that many Israelis would like to deny him.

Yigal Amir, who is serving a life sentence in solitary confinement, won the Justice Ministry’s permission Tuesday to artificially inseminate the woman he married in absentia two years ago.

Amir and Larissa Trimbobler have long lobbied for conjugal visits.

“He sounded pretty pleased, but there was no shouting for joy,” Amir’s lawyer, Ari Shamai, told Israel Radio.

But the development smarted for those Israelis who see Amir’s marriage, and the prospect of him having children, as throwing salt on the still-open wound he inflicted by gunning down Rabin, then Israel’s prime minister, at a 1995 peace rally.

“It is incumbent on the state to prevent this despicable and vile

murderer from enjoying the privileges granted to other prison inmates, as the murder was committed against Israel and Israeli democracy,” said the director of the Rabin Center, Yossi Lahmani.

A former law student who opposed the prime minister’s signing of the Oslo accords, Amir is under 24-hour surveillance in an isolation block, and the Prisons Service forbid him to see visitors in private on the grounds that he might pass propaganda messages to the outside world.

That enforced lack of privacy was among reasons given for the refusal to let Amir and Trimbobler consummate their union.

According to Justice Ministry sources, Amir’s current request was approved because he filed a High Court petition on the matter and was expected to win.

Amir enjoys the support of many civil liberties experts. Other convicted murderers in Israel, including Arab terrorists, are allowed conjugal visits.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### NATO spy planes fly in Israel

NATO spy planes conducted an exercise in Israel, apparently as a signal to Iran.

"We've had NATO AWACS deployed to do some demonstrations in Israel, and we do have an active dialogue with the Israeli defense force in terms of interoperability, and particularly as it regards the security of the Mediterranean basin at sea," Gen. James Jones, the U.S. general who is the supreme allied commander in Europe, said Tuesday in Senate testimony.

### Mofaz threatens Hamas

Israel's defense minister said even Hamas members in the Palestinian Authority government aren't protected from counter-terrorist operations.

Shaul Mofaz said Tuesday that Ismail Haniyeh, who is in line to become the Palestinian Authority prime minister, and other senior Hamas politicians could be targeted by Israel if they order a new wave of terrorism.

"The moment Hamas chooses the path of terror, there is no question here of whether it is political or non-political," Mofaz told Army Radio. "It would be a terrorist leadership, and thus none of its members would be immune."

But Mofaz emphasized that Israel has not given up on the possibility of peace talks if Hamas renounces terrorism and recognizes the Jewish state's right to exist.

### Israel sells arms to China

Israel resumed arms sales to China after resolving a dispute on the matter with the United States.

Yaakov Toren, director general of Israel's Defense Ministry, announced the resumption of sales March 1, according to Jane's Defence Weekly.

Israel had suspended the sales after signing an agreement last August allowing U.S. officials to review Israeli arms sales.

### Saudis to host Israel boycott forum

Saudi Arabia will host a conference next week aimed at promoting a boycott of Israel.

The conference comes despite a Saudi pledge to the United States to end its participation in the boycott, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of the 57-member Organization of Islamic States, the Post reported.

### Netanyahu would control more territory

Benjamin Netanyahu said he would move Israel's security barrier deeper inside the West Bank.

The Likud Party leader was the third of the three candidates in Israel's March 28 elections to address this year's American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference.

Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of the Kadima Party and Amir Peretz of Labor both said they would cut off a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority but would seek moderates with whom to deal, and Olmert said he was ready to unilaterally withdraw from some West Bank territory.

### Sharansky faults Bush on democracy

Natan Sharansky said President Bush's policy of democratization has failed because Bush is rushing tyrannies to elections.

Bush repeatedly has cited Sharansky, a former Prisoner of Zion and former Israeli Cabinet minister, in touting democratic reforms in the Arab world.

"Despite what I believe to be the president's genuine commitment to promote sweeping change, the policy shift hasn't matched the rhetoric, with one glaring exception: an intense focus on holding elections everywhere as quickly as possible," Sharansky wrote Sunday in the Los Angeles Times. "This has been a mistake because, although elections are part of the democratic process, they are never a substitute for it."

## NORTH AMERICA

### Party leaders pledge support for Israel trips

Leaders of both major U.S. parties are making sure that educational trips to Israel for legislators are not affected by lobbying reforms.

Rep. Steny Hoyer, the Democratic whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, said he and his Republican counterpart, Rep. Roy Blunt (D-Mo.), both consider such trips invaluable to members of Congress.

"There has been some talk recently of eliminating these trips," Hoyer said Tuesday in an address to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference. "Roy Blunt and I are going to fight to make sure that doesn't happen."

Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), a sponsor of lobbying reform legislation in the Senate, also told the AIPAC conference that educational trips overseas would be exempt from reforms.

### Former Forward manager dies

Harold Ostroff, who helped launch the Russian and English editions of the Forward newspaper, died March 2 at age 82.

Ostroff was general manager of the Forward Association, which publishes the two papers, from 1976 to 1997.

During that time, Ostroff saved the Yiddish paper from extinction and oversaw the launch of the two other editions, in part by selling radio station WEVD.

## WORLD

### World Bank to help Palestinian Authority

The World Bank approved \$42 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority.

A World Bank statement said the Palestinian Authority would use the grant to meet its immediate financial needs and to avoid suspending basic services.

The European Union recently said it would release \$143 million in emergency funding for the Palestinian Authority.

### Church advisers oppose divestment

The Anglican Church's financial advisers recommended against divesting from Caterpillar because it does business with Israel.

The Ethical Investment Advisory Group voted unanimously Tuesday against divestment, saying it "could find no compelling evidence that Caterpillar is or has been complicit in human rights abuses."

The vote contravenes a Feb. 6 vote by the church's General Synod. Israel uses Caterpillar vehicles when it razes homes in Palestinian areas as part of its counter-terrorism efforts.

### Holocaust commission makes awards

The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims is offering \$7 million to Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

The money is the third set of grants made by the commission and would bring the total distributed to \$14.8 million.

Established in 1998 to settle unpaid Holocaust-era insurance claims, ICHEIC has been accused of sloppy management, foot-dragging in claims processing and favoritism toward European insurers.