

**IN THE NEWS**
**Report: U.S. offers Iran nuclear technology**

U.S. nuclear technology and aircraft parts would be part of an incentives package to get Iran to stop enriching uranium, a report said.

The United States at the last minute agreed to include assistance in civil nuclear technology and Boeing parts for aged aircraft in the major powers' proposal delivered to Iranian leaders on Tuesday by Javier Solana, the European Union foreign policy chief, The Associated Press reported.

The United States has long abjured deals with Iran ostensibly aimed at civilian use but with the potential for military use.

**U.S. government declassifies Nazi papers**

The U.S. government declassified more than 8 million pages of files related to Nazi war crimes.

The material includes documents relating to the CIA's employment of suspected Nazi war criminals after World War II.

The members of the government's Interagency Working Group said at a news conference Tuesday that the revelations pointed to the dangers of working with war criminals, as the United States did after World War II.

**Abbas delays referendum deadline**

Mahmoud Abbas postponed a deadline for Hamas to accept a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or face a Palestinian referendum.

Abbas originally gave the radical Islamic group until Tuesday to accept the proposal composed by Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

But with debate still raging between Hamas, which runs the Palestinian Authority government, and Abbas' more moderate Fatah faction, the president put off the deadline until Thursday.

# WORLD REPORT

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## A Fatah-Hamas showdown could scuttle Olmert's plans

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — Three and a half months after fundamentalists swept to power in the Palestinian elections, the Islamicist Hamas and the secular Fatah are on the brink of a major showdown that could have far-reaching implications for Israel and the government's plans for a unilateral withdrawal from Palestinian territory.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah seized the initiative in mid-May, by backing a call by Palestinian prisoners for a Palestinian state along the pre-1967 borders with Israel. In doing so, he forced Hamas to face up to the challenge of recognizing Israel or losing power. Abbas' move also opened up the possibility of international pressure on Israel to negotiate on the basis of those borders.

Abbas' move could also clear the way for ending the Palestinians' diplomatic isolation and freeing the flow of much-needed international funds. Those funds were blocked in the wake of the Hamas government's refusal to recognize Israel, accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements and renounce terror. But while the Fatah leader's initiative could break the diplomatic logjam, it is fraught with danger.

Fighting between small groups of Hamas and Fatah militants on the streets of Gaza shows signs of intensifying. Both sides have mobilized large forces in Gaza and the West Bank, and some Palestinian observers are predicting civil war.

Abbas' call in late May for a national referendum on the prisoners' document pushed the sides closer to the brink.

Yet despite the mounting tension, the Fatah-Hamas confrontation could still play itself out politically.

On Tuesday, Abbas was supposed to set a date for the referendum, but the Fatah executive deferred the deadline for agreement on the prisoners' document for a "few days," ostensibly to give the sides more time to negotiate. But the move was seen as an effort to step back from confrontation.

Even if Abbas eventually does set a date for a referendum, the outcome could still be a nonviolent political solution.

In one scenario, victory for Abbas in the referendum could bring Fatah back to power. A loss on the other hand, could see Hamas winning the presidency as well as maintaining control of Parliament and the government. Or, an 11th hour agreement between the two parties could see the formation of a national unity Fatah-Hamas government, with Abbas taking the lead in Palestinian diplomacy on the international stage.

Abbas' determination to go through with his initiative and the way he has gone about winning support for it have gained him considerable prestige on the Palestinian street. He spent weeks traveling the Middle East getting Arab leaders behind the initiative. He also met with Jack Wallace, the American consul in eastern Jerusalem, to coordinate the move with Washington.

Often seen in the past as a weak, vacillating leader, afraid of confrontation, Abbas is now perceived by Palestinians as someone who could make a difference.

A recent poll showed that if the referen-

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## ■ *A Palestinian showdown could have far-reaching implications for Israel*

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dum goes ahead, Abbas would win with more than 80 percent of the vote. Since he embarked on his initiative, his own rating has gone from 51 percent to 62 percent, and that of Fatah from 34 percent to 45 percent.

Conversely, support for Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh is down from 49 percent to 38 percent, and Hamas is down from 42 percent to 29 percent. The figures reflect Fatah's newfound confidence on the street. The freezing of international aid is starting to bite, and many Palestinians blame the Hamas government for the non-payment of salaries and the lack of food and medicine.

Heartened by the new mood, Fatah leaders have stopped their internal bickering and are rallying around Abbas. Fatah received an additional fillip last week when it won a sweeping 80 percent victory in student elections at the Gaza branch of Al-Quds University.

As tension mounts, both Fatah and Hamas have been trying to show their strength. Fatah, which wields considerably more firepower in the West Bank, has put large forces on the streets in Jenin and other West Bank cities. Hamas has beefed up its street presence in Gaza, where it is believed to be stronger.

Nevertheless, 10,000 mainly Fatah security personnel demonstrated in Gaza last Thursday against the Hamas government for its failure to pay their salaries.

Commenting on the street clashes and the general mobilization on both sides, dovish Fatah leader Kadoura Fares declared

that he could see "all the signs of civil war."

But Danny Rubinstein, an analyst who writes for Ha'aretz, does not believe a major armed confrontation is imminent. "The war of nerves will most likely continue for a while longer. Abbas enjoys broad national support and the backing of Arab leaders," he wrote.

"Hamas enjoys popular support. It does not appear that the violence, so far limited to local incidents, is likely to slide into a full-blown civil war," he wrote.

Fatah leaders depict the prisoners' document as an attempt to find the lowest common denominator for a Fatah-Hamas agreement that, once adopted, could get the wide international boycott of the Hamas government lifted.

"The referendum constitutes a lifeline to the Hamas government to rescue it from international isolation, but they are finding it difficult to grab hold of it," Yasser Abed Rabbo, a top PLO official, declared.

For Haniyeh, the internal dilemma is that if he accepts the document, he could run afoul of the more radical Hamas leadership abroad; if he doesn't, he could come

in for criticism from the influential Hamas prisoners who signed it.

Whether or not he reaches agreement with Abbas on the document, Haniyeh opposes the referendum idea in principle. He sees it as a ploy to overturn the result of the January election that he won. Some Hamas spokesmen say ominously that the movement will not

allow a referendum to be held, others that they will merely boycott it.

Either way the looming clash with Fatah, whether violent or political, could change the face of Palestinian politics.

So far, Israeli leaders are studiously avoiding comment on what they describe as an internal Palestinian affair. But the implications for Israel could be huge.

A clear-cut Hamas victory could accentuate questions about to whom Israel would be handing back territory after a unilateral withdrawal. Fatah victory could lead to pressure for a negotiated settlement. In the face of Palestinian developments, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert may have to draw on all his diplomatic skills to keep his unilateral withdrawal plan on the table. ■

**Fatah leaders have stopped their internal bickering and are rallying around Abbas.**

## Argentine court to study bombing cover-up

**BUENOS AIRES (JTA)** — An Argentine court is studying a possible cover-up in the investigation of the 1994 bombing of an Argentine Jewish center that killed 85 people.

This week, the court began inspecting the events following the July 18, 1994, bombing at the AMIA Jewish social service building in Buenos Aires.

The attack remains unsolved.

The main AMIA court investigation ended almost two years ago with the entire case being thrown out by a special tribunal that had spent three years hearing the evidence. This trial was reportedly the longest and costliest in Argentina's history.

A few weeks ago, an appeals court upheld that decision and opened up a judicial process to investigate the original failed investigation of the AMIA bombing.

Now a federal court will begin to try to unravel the mystery of whether there was a cover-up after the bombing — and whether it reached into the highest levels of the

government of former President Carlos Menem.

Among those who were ordered to testify in this new proceeding are an ex-federal judge, Juan Jose Galeano; two of the original prosecutors; the former chief of the Argentine intelligence service and Ruben Beraja, then-president of the main Jewish political organization, DAIA.

The questioning is expected to center on why Galeano apparently paid a suspect \$400,000 — from intelligence service coffers, whose expenditures must be approved by the president — to change his testimony and finger other defendants, why evidence went missing or was altered and why films of interrogations were burned with knowledge of the judge, the prosecutors and some lawyers involved in the case.

Galeano was forced to resign his court post earlier this year in the face of an impeachment trial concerning these charges. ■

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# Bush's gay marriage appeal could backfire with Jews

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It's a familiar calculus in the relationship between the Jewish community and the Bush administration: a social issue that divides the country 50-50 has the Jewish community split 75-25 against where President Bush stands.

On Monday, Bush strongly endorsed the federal marriage amendment to the U.S. constitution, which would effectively ban gay marriage.

"Marriage is the most fundamental institution of civilization, and it should not be redefined by activist judges," Bush said after meeting with supporters of the constitutional amendment. He was referring to the 2004 decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Court to recognize same-sex marriages.

The bill, which was likely to be considered by the U.S. Senate on Wednesday, has virtually no chance of passing. Constitutional amendments need 67 of the 100 Senate votes to pass, and no one anticipates the vote breaking 55.

That makes it a win-win for Bush in his effort to keep evangelical conservatives on board ahead of the November midterm congressional elections. The reasoning is that the amendment will still resonate with the Republicans' conservative base five months from now, but will likely have disappeared from the memories of social moderates who may lean Republican for other reasons.

However, Jewish Republicans, who have been trying to lure Jews away from their solid 3-to-1 support for Democrats, might have been dealt a blow, at least according to the amendment's opponents.

"It's unclear to me how the Republican Party will gain ground in the Jewish community by bringing forth a centerpiece of the religious right's agenda," said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center. "For a large section of the Jewish community, this is an issue of fundamental rights and they will be watching closely to see how their senators vote."

The Reform and Reconstructionist movements oppose the amendment. On Tuesday, the Conservative movement's leadership joined in the opposition, in a statement that referred to a 2003 United

Synagogue resolution opposing any such discrimination. Also in opposition are major Jewish civil liberties groups, including the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League.

The National Council of Jewish Women has taken a lead in opposing the legislation, organizing clerical lobbying against it and leading an alliance of liberal Jewish groups in urging senators to vote it down. Orthodox groups, led by the Orthodox Union and Agudath Israel of America, support the amendment.

The most recent polling on the issue, by Gallup, found 50 percent of Americans in favor of the amendment and 47 percent opposed. A 2004 American Jewish Committee survey of American Jews found 24 percent in favor and 74 percent opposed.

Jewish supporters of the amendment suggested they would sell the amendment to the Jewish community as one that would guarantee religious freedoms.

Proponents of gay marriage were "pursuing a deliberate plan of litigation and political pressure which will not only redefine marriage, but will follow from that to threaten the first freedom enshrined in the First Amendment — religious liberty," said Nathan Diament, the director of the Washington office of the Orthodox Union.

Diament, the only Jewish participant at the meeting with Bush on Monday, told JTA that the Massachusetts ruling already had a negative impact on religious freedom. He cited as example the state's Roman Catholic Church decision to drop out of the adoption business because it would be required to consider gay couples as parents.

"They're trying to impose their position on society at large," he said of proponents of gay marriage. "How a society defines marriage affects everybody."

That view had some backing from at least one Jewish civil rights group, the American Jewish Congress.

Marc Stern, the AJCongress' general

counsel, cited the example of an Orthodox kosher caterer who could face a lawsuit for refusing to cater a same-sex wedding.

A successful compromise would "recognize the marriages in the context of a secular economy, for instance by not discriminating on domestic partner benefits, but it would not force people to act in areas they find morally reprehensible," Stern told JTA.

Chai Feldblum, a Georgetown University law professor and an activist for gay rights, said such arguments had no place in the public arena.

"There are lots of ways in which a religious organization can run its business as it wishes. Rabbis don't have to perform a marriage that they don't agree with, a religious organization does not have to allow lesbians as rabbis," said Feldblum.

"The problem is when religious organizations are operating in the public arena, with lunch banks, day camps, shelters. Then it's very diffi-

cult to allow a religious organization to go against the public policy of the state."

Feldblum, who grew up Orthodox, said she has compassion for her observant opponents. "The world is shifting beneath their feet," she said.

Republican Jewish spokesmen turned down requests for comment, but the amendment was not likely to help their efforts to appeal to Jews on domestic issues.

The emphasis before the 2004 election on Bush's friendship with Israel and his tough reputation on security issues failed to make much of a dent on the Jewish Republican vote, which crept up to between 23 percent and 25 percent from about 19 percent in 2000.

Since then, Jewish Republicans have learned the lesson of emphasizing foreign policy too much and have carefully calibrated a social message designed to appeal to younger Jews. In Jewish newspaper advertisements and in stump speeches, Bush's pro-business record is pitched to Jewish voters who may be more fiscally conservative than their parents. ■

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'How a society defines marriage affects everybody.'

Nathan Diament

Director, Washington office of the Orthodox Union

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Israel: Hamas involved in rocket attacks

Israeli officials accused Hamas of being involved in recent rocket attacks against Israel. The officials said they would not hesitate to retaliate against Hamas officials involved in rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.

The comments came after an Israeli home suffered a direct hit by a Palestinian rocket. One woman was lightly hurt in Tuesday's attack against the border town of Sderot.

#### Olmert, Abdullah talks near

Ehud Olmert is expected to visit Jordan on Wednesday for talks with King Abdullah II. Sources in Jerusalem said the Israeli prime minister would use the meeting, which has yet to be officially announced, to enlist Jordanian support for his plan to withdraw from parts of the West Bank and annex others in the absence of peace talks with the Palestinians.

Abdullah is believed to be jittery about unilateral Israeli moves in the West Bank, given their impact on the Palestinian majority in Jordan. Olmert is believed to have won only partial endorsement of his policies from Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, when they met last week.

The talks with Mubarak and Abdullah are expected to pave the way for a first summit between Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the end of the month.

#### Soldier suicide probed

A U.S.-born conscript in the Israeli army holed up in a West Bank mosque and committed suicide.

Military officials said the soldier, who recently enlisted in a religious regiment, went AWOL on Monday night during a training exercise.

He ended up in the West Bank village of Akaba, entering its mosque and shooting up its interior before turning the rifle on himself. A probe is under way, with evidence suggesting the soldier suffered temporary insanity.

Officials have not ruled out the possibility that the incident was a botched attack against the Palestinian villagers, despite the lack of any known connection between the soldier and Jewish terrorist groups.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### State Dept. blasts Israel for human trafficking

Israel is on a U.S. State Department watch list of nations that fail to effectively prevent human trafficking. Israel was classified as being on the Tier Two watch list in the report released Monday.

Tier Three is the worst classification, reserved for countries that fail to comply with minimum U.S. standards.

Israeli law enforcement has made strides in cracking down on sex trafficking, the report said, but the same was not true of labor trafficking and "the estimated thousands of victims of forced labor were not provided with protection."

It described fees demanded of laborers ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, "a practice that often leads to debt bondage and makes these workers highly vulnerable to forced labor once in Israel," it said.

#### Justice Dept. criticized over AIPAC case

The U.S. Senate's Judiciary Committee slammed the Justice Department for its interpretation of a 90-year-old statute used to indict two former pro-Israel lobbyists.

The department is basing its classified information leak case against Steve Rosen, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's former foreign policy director, and Keith Weissman, its former Iran analyst, on a 1917 statute that criminalizes the receipt of classified information.

The statute had never been used until last year's indictment. In a hearing Tuesday, a bipartisan slate of senators on the committee said they were especially concerned by prosecutors' statements that the statute could in the future be used against journalists.

"It's highly doubtful in my mind that that was ever the intent of Congress," Sen. Arlen Specter (R.-Pa.), the committee's chairman, who is Jewish, told the department's chief of staff of the criminal division, Matthew Friedlich.

### WORLD

#### U.N. asks Israel to stop making nukes

A U.N. commission recommended that Israel refrain from manufacturing any more nuclear weapons as a step to a nuclear-free Middle East. The U.N.'s Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, chaired by weapons inspector Hans Blix, released its 60 recommendations Monday.

Regarding the Middle East, Blix recommended that most nations commit to not possessing any nuclear weapons. However, with Israel he recommended only that it commit to not manufacturing any more weapons. Israel is highly unlikely to agree to dismantle the 200 warheads it is believed to possess as the region's sole nuclear power. Israel's agreement would be a start, Blix said.

#### Birthright hits six figures

The Birthright Israel program celebrated the arrival in Israel of its 100,000th participant.

New York City resident Stephanie Lowenthal, 26, arrived Tuesday, becoming the 100,000th young Jewish adult from around the world to enjoy the free educational tour of the country. Some 12,000 Jews will arrive in Israel through the program in the summer of 2006, from 28 countries.

#### Croatian rabbi attacked

Croatia's chief rabbi was attacked. Eliezer Aloni was attacked Saturday on a street in the country's capital of Zagreb, Ha'aretz reported.

Aloni was pushed to the ground by men yelling "Jews out" in German, witnesses said.

#### Netherlands to get Holocaust-denial law?

A Christian political party in the Netherlands proposed a bill to make Holocaust and genocide denial a criminal offense.

The proposed law would make illegal the "denial, trivialization, approval or justification of genocide and crimes against humanity," with punishments of up to one year imprisonment or large fines.

The bill was proposed by the Christian Union Party, which holds three of the 150 seats in the Dutch Parliament.

The legislation could be discussed for several months before it is put to vote in both houses of Parliament.

#### Russians graduate from Jewish-funded school

Twenty-three young Russian professionals graduated Sunday from the new Moscow school for nonprofit management.

Initiated in 2005 by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the 12-month business school-type program, called the school for NGO Management and Leadership, focuses on providing developing leaders with the tools necessary to manage non-profits.