

IN THE NEWS
Olmert leaves for Europe talks

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert left for his first official European tour.

Olmert set off Sunday for London, where he will meet British Prime Minister Tony Blair. On Tuesday he is to continue to Paris for talks with French leaders.

The Israeli prime minister is expected to try to muster support for his West Bank withdrawal plan and press European leaders to maintain a tough line against Iran's nuclear program.

Hamas calls off truce

Hamas called off its truce with Israel after an Israeli attack killed seven picnickers on a Gaza Strip beach.

Israel was responding to rocket attacks last Friday in the wake of its assassination the previous night of Jamal Abu Samhadana, a top terrorist and the senior Hamas-appointed security official in the Gaza Strip, when gunboats fired at the beach in northern Gaza.

At least 10 Palestinians were killed in the strikes.

Israel apologized and suspended the operation as soon as it was revealed that the dead were civilians and included children.

"The earthquake in the Zionist towns will start again and the aggressors will have no choice but to prepare their coffins or their luggage," Hamas said in a leaflet calling off the truce, which has lasted since February 2005.

Ahmadinejad protested at World Cup

A protest against Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was held before Iran's match against Mexico in soccer's World Cup.

German politicians and leaders of the country's Jewish community were among the 1,000 estimated people who protested Sunday in the city of Nuremberg against the Iranian president's comments denying the Holocaust.

WORLD REPORT

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Israel celebrates quarter-century since strike on Iraqi nuke facilities

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Twenty-five years ago, eight Israeli fighter pilots took off in their F-16s on a crucial and extremely dangerous mission that forever changed the Middle East.

The June 7, 1981, strike against Iraq's atomic reactor at Osirak, which many believed denied Saddam Hussein the bomb, has long been a case study in air power virtuosity.

Of late, with Western jitters building over Iran's nuclear ambitions, it is also being examined as a model for a pre-emptive action to deprive a dangerous regime of doomsday weaponry.

Israel has been celebrating the 25th anniversary of Osirak by lifting some of the secrecy over the mission. The seven surviving pilots have been giving interviews, while real-time footage of the mission, captured by the planes' onboard cameras, was publicly broadcast.

"I felt that it was the future of the State of Israel on my shoulders," recalled Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, a former F-16 pilot turned military intelligence commander.

At the time, of course, there was no place for triumphalism. Israel knew that no matter what the outcome, it would be accused by the international community of brinkmanship, even warmongering.

There were also U.S. ties to consider.

Israel had received its first fleet of F-16s from Washington by chance, after a shipment destined for Iran was canceled in light of that country's Islamic Revolution in 1979. And despite the warplanes' advanced capabilities, getting them to make the round trip to Bag-

dad without support required a major gamble on Israeli technical ingenuity.

Israel was also in the midst of implementing its landmark 1978 peace accord with Egypt, and knew that this could be imperiled should Cairo choose to back an aggrieved Baghdad.

But for Israel's then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin, almost all risks were worth taking in order to ensure the continued survival of the Jewish state.

"We decided to act now, before it is too late," Begin would say. "We shall defend our people with all the means at our disposal."

Relik Shafir, who flew last in the eight-plane formation, would later confess that he expected to be killed by Iraqi ground fire, along with his wingman Ilan Ramon. As it happened, the late Ramon went on to an illustrious air force career, culminating in his appointment to become Israel's first astronaut on the ill-fated Columbia space shuttle mission.

Any small mishap might have ended the mission. The chief of Israel's air force at the time, David Ivry, said that one of his main concerns was that one or more of the F-16s would suffer mechanical problems as they zoomed at an ultra-low altitude from a secret base in the then-occupied Sinai Desert across Jordan and Saudi Arabia and into Iraqi territory.

Then there were the freak glitches. A Mossad agent almost blew the mission when in front of air crew servicing the F-16s, he dropped a briefcase full of Iraqi dinars that were to be given to the pilots to use for bribes should they be shot down. The formation was also spotted after takeoff by Jordan's King Hussein as he holidayed upon a yacht in the

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ *The Osirak strike has also been examined as a model for pre-emptive action*

Continued from page 1

Red Sea. Thankfully for Israel, his efforts to alert Saddam about the incursion failed.

The Osirak mission went off almost without a hitch. The reactor core was destroyed in a surgical strike that was timed for a Sunday afternoon to reduce civilian casualties. The pilots made it home to the embrace of families that they had kept in the dark about the planned operation for months.

As predicted, there were condemnations across the board, from the United States to the United Nations to the Arab League. But no serious sanctions against Israel materialized, and some insiders recounted feelings of relief and sympathy in Western halls of power.

Richard Allen, U.S. national security adviser at the time, was the first to inform President Reagan of the Osirak strike. According to Allen, Reagan was nonplussed but quick to quip: "Boys will be boys!"

Bereft of his prized, French-supplied reactor, Saddam ordered a secondary, secret nuclear program to be enacted. It was uncovered by the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency in 1991. Few dispute that had the Osirak strike not been carried out, U.S.-led forces would have faced off with a nuclear-armed Saddam in the first Gulf War.

Ivry, who served as Israel's ambassador to Washington in the late 1990s, has a satellite image of the destroyed reactor that he received as a gift from Vice President Dick Cheney. A handwritten note on the picture reads: "With thanks and appreciation. You

made our job easier in Desert Storm."

Today's Iran, of course, is not Saddam-era Iraq. Its nuclear facilities are numerous, dispersed and fortified — a challenge that many foreign experts believe is beyond even Israel's formidable capabilities.

Patrick Cronin of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London said that for Israel, "while tactically military options are not nil, they are close to nil" when it comes to Iran.

Yet while Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has backed U.S.-led efforts to curb Iran's nuclear program through diplomacy, like President Bush he has refused to rule out Osirak-like pre-emptive strikes.

A bluff? Anyone who knows is not saying.

But Ivry has suggested that some assessments of Israel's current military limitations are based on the wrong assumption

that the objective would be to destroy Iran's capabilities.

"When Israel struck Osirak, the intention was never to get rid of Saddam Hussein's nuclear plans. We wanted to buy time, and we succeeded in doing that," he told Reuters last year.

"You cannot eliminate an idea, a national will. But you can delay progress on a nuclear program with the appropriate

military action."

But surely, thanks to Osirak, Israel or its U.S. ally have lost the key element of surprise?

Ivry pointed out that the Osirak strike was not unprecedented, as Iraq's reactor had previously come under repeated attacks from its foe Iran. The secret, it seems, is in the audaciousness of the execution.

"If and when Iran is attacked, I think I can assure you it will come as a surprise to everyone," Ivry said.

'Boys will be boys!'
President Reagan,
following the Osirak strike

Moscow synagogue celebrates centennial

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — Moscow Jews usually gather in the city's most famous synagogue in large numbers only for High Holidays.

But June 7 was different. The Moscow Choral Synagogue was celebrating the restoration of its main sanctuary as part of yearlong events commemorating its 100th anniversary.

Within a few evening hours, several hundred Jews were treated to a speech by Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, the showing of a movie about the synagogue's history, a children's choir recital and fireworks displayed outside the synagogue located a few minutes walk away from the Kremlin.

Organizers said the crowd could have been bigger. But due to the mayor's presence and because of this year's stabbing incident in another Moscow synagogue, the event was by invitation only. The street was closed to traffic and passers-by.

There were two lines of police and two metal detectors. Despite these precautions, the synagogue was packed.

"Thank God, children's voices are being heard in the synagogue more and more today," Luzhkov, who was sporting a white yarmulke, said about the many children in the audience. "This symbolizes that the faith will live on," he added.

For Jews outside of Russia, the Moscow Choral Synagogue is probably best known as the site where thousands of Soviet Jews gathered in 1948 to greet Golda Meir, Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, in a rare display of Jewish and Zionist pride for a Soviet Jewry demoralized by Stalin's repression.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the street next to the synagogue became the site of mass gatherings of Jews. Defying the ever-present KGB agents, members of the community celebrated Jewish holidays, sang, danced and exchanged news about the emigration status of their friends.

Technically, the synagogue is more than 100 years old. It was built in the 1890s, but closed by the authorities after it was completed and remained shut for more than a decade. Only in 1906 did the authorities allow worship service here amid a loosening of laws on religious minorities.

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THIS WEEK**MONDAY**

■ Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert meets British Prime Minister Tony Blair in London during a European tour to sell his plan to unilaterally withdraw from parts of the West Bank. He meets with French President Jacques Chirac and French Jewish leaders later in the week.

TUESDAY

■ The Shalom Center, a Philadelphia-based Jewish peace group, joins other peace groups in launching a "Don't Spy On Me" campaign against domestic surveillance of war dissenters.

■ An American couple will be inducted into Yad Vashem's Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem, a Holocaust memorial that honors non-Jews who risked their lives to harbor Jews during the Holocaust. Martha Sharp and the Rev. Waitstill Sharp are the second and third U.S. citizens to receive this honor.

■ Members of the American Jewish Press Association meet in Baltimore. The annual four-day meeting brings together Jewish journalists from across North America. In addition to workshops and networking, the annual Rockower Awards highlighting the best in Jewish journalism will be presented.

■ The University of Scranton in Pennsylvania will host a three-day conference on Modern Orthodoxy. Topics will focus on the movement between 1940 and 1970 and on the differences between modern Orthodoxy in Israel and the United States.

■ The Board of Governors of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia, will honor the group's executive director, Mark Levin, and the former chairwoman of the group, Shoshana Cardin.

WEDNESDAY

■ Supporters of divestment from Israel protest outside the annual Caterpillar shareholder meeting in Chicago. The farm equipment giant sells bulldozers to Israel that have been used to destroy Palestinian buildings that have allegedly harbored terrorists.

FRIDAY

■ The Association of Reform Zionists of America holds its biannual National Assembly in Jerusalem through June 19 to discuss the future of Reform Judaism in Israel.

SUNDAY

■ The Central Conference of American Rabbis, the rabbinic association of Reform Judaism, begins its annual three-day national convention in San Diego. Sessions will address topics ranging from sexual ethics among adolescents to conversion, intermarriage and outreach.

Ex-residents gather in Shanghai

By LARRY LUXNER

SHANGHAI (JTA) — Leah Jacob Garrick took a leisurely stroll through China's largest metropolis in April, exploring the sights, smells and flavors of Shanghai's bustling Hongkou district.

But Garrick, 77, was no ordinary tourist.

The San Francisco resident — returning to the city of her youth — is a direct descendant of wealthy Sephardi Jews who came to Shanghai in the late 19th century from Baghdad, by way of Bombay.

"We used to live on Joffre Avenue. We had the top floor, and the servants lived on the roof," she told JTA. "I just went back this afternoon. It was so emotional. My nursemaid had died recently, as had our cook. But his children and grandchildren are still living there. I did a lot of crying."

So did most of the other 108 Jewish Americans, Austrians, Israelis and Europeans who recently gathered in Shanghai to relive their distant past.

Unlike Garrick, a fourth-generation Shanghai resident, nearly all the rest were former Ashkenazi refugees who settled here as a last resort, fleeing Nazi aggression. An "open city" under mixed Chinese and colonial rule, Shanghai was one of the few places European Jews could escape to without a visa.

As such, Shanghai received nearly 30,000 Jews between 1937 and 1941, though the Jews — like most other foreigners — were forced to leave in 1949 when the Communists took over China.

"Many of these people had not been back to Shanghai since they left in 1949," said Rene Willdorff, 78, of Palo Alto, Calif.

Willdorff, who organized the mid-April "Rickshaw Reunion," said his group has held nine previous reunions, including one in San Francisco in April 2002 and Toronto in October 2004. But this is only the second time former Jewish refugees have gathered in Shanghai itself.

"The first time was in 1993, with only a small group of people who did it entirely

on their own," he said. "This time was different. There's now an appeal to UNESCO to declare" the old Jewish ghetto a World Heritage Site.

Home to more than 16 million people, Shanghai today boasts one of the world's most modern skylines and fastest-growing economies.

Yet pockets of poverty persist, including in Tilanqiao, where open sewers still foul the streets and apartments crammed with five families each are common.

Tilanqiao is also the center of Shanghai's Jewish heritage — and it's here where tourists stop to photograph a black granite monument in Chinese, English and Hebrew commemorating the "designated area for stateless refugees," defined by the city's Japanese occupiers in 1937.

Tilanqiao is also the home of Ohel Moishe Synagogue, built in 1927 by the Ashkenazi community and recently restored by the Shanghai municipal government. The 109 "Rickshaw Reunion" participants toured all these sites, as well as Ohel Rachel, the former Sephardi synagogue which is generally closed to

the public.

Keeping memories alive seemed to be a major focus of the Shanghai event, as evidenced by the large number of Jews who donated passports, documents and old family photographs to the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, which is leading the campaign to make the old 69-acre Jewish quarter a heritage site.

Bruno Keith, 95, is one of the oldest of the group that is still alive. A Hawaii resident for the last 40 years, he traveled to China himself in April because, he said, "everybody else is dead."

Keith taught Hebrew in the Shanghai ghetto because he was one of the few Jews who could speak it. He also lectured on Chinese history and geography. But in the late 1940s, he sensed it was time to leave.

Asked why he decided to return now — after 59 years — Keith responded simply, "because I'm not going to live that long." ■

**AROUND
THE
JEWISH WORLD**

There is now an appeal to UNESCO to have Shanghai's Jewish ghetto declared a World Heritage Site.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Abbas sets referendum

Mahmoud Abbas called for a July 26 referendum on coexistence with Israel.

The Palestinian Authority president made the announcement over the weekend, resisting pressure by the rival Hamas government.

The referendum will be based on a document drafted by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails that calls for a Palestinian state in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and eastern Jerusalem.

The Cabinet, led by Hamas, opposed the referendum. A referendum, which appears likely to pass, could strengthen Abbas' hand in his bid to negotiate with Israel without Hamas.

Iran mixed on U.N. plan

Iranian officials gave a mixed reaction to a U.N. Security Council proposal aimed at persuading Iran to abandon its nuclear enrichment program.

Two officials said Sunday the plan drafted by the five permanent members of the Security Council contained both "acceptable" and "ambiguous" aspects. One of the officials, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamidreza Assefi, said Iran had not decided when to respond to the proposal.

The incentives include economic help, trade, cultural and educational exchanges and assistance in developing a civilian nuclear capacity. Iran could face sanctions if it turns down the offer.

Bin Laden deputy rejects referendum

Osama bin Laden's deputy urged Palestinians to reject a referendum on coexistence with Israel.

In a tape broadcast last Friday on Al-Jazeera, Ayman al-Zawahiri said that whether or not one accepts the 1967 borders as parameters for a border with Israel is not up to the Palestinians alone to decide.

"I call on Muslims to reject any referendum on Palestine, because Palestine is part of the Islamic world and not subject to any compromise," he said.

Hamas denies mourning al-Zarqawi

Hamas denied posting a statement mourning the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Reuters quoted the Palestinian terrorist group June 8 as mourning the al-Qaida leader in Iraq, who had been killed in an American airstrike.

Last Friday, Hamas denied the statement, although it said Zarqawi was a "symbol" of resistance to the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.

Poll shows majority opposes pullout

Most Israelis oppose Ehud Olmert's plan to withdraw from parts of the West Bank according to a new poll.

The Ha'aretz-Dialog poll, published last Friday in the Ha'aretz newspaper, found that 56 percent of Israelis are against the Israeli prime minister's plan for a unilateral withdrawal from parts of the West Bank should Palestinians continue to reject negotiations, while 37 percent supported it.

It also found that 51 percent of Israelis believed it would come to pass.

NORTH AMERICA

U.S. House approves aid for Israel

The U.S. House of Representatives approved \$2.46 billion in assistance to Israel.

The appropriations bill, approved last Friday in a 373-34 vote,

includes \$2.34 billion in military aid and \$120 million in economic assistance.

Another \$40 million was approved for the absorption of former refugees in Israel.

The bill now goes to the Senate for approval.

U.S. House rejects cut in Egypt aid

The U.S. House of Representatives rejected an amendment that would cut assistance to Egypt.

The amendment proposed June 8 by Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) and to have been attached to the foreign operations appropriations bill, would have cut \$100 million in \$1.8 billion in assistance to Egypt and diverted it to humanitarian assistance elsewhere.

The amendment was defeated 225-198.

House nixes aid to Saudis

The U.S. House of Representatives passed an amendment banning assistance to Saudi Arabia.

The amendment, which passed by a vote of 312-97 last Friday, was sponsored by Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.). The amendment must be confirmed in House-Senate conference.

Saskatchewan judge overturns hate crime

A judge overturned the hate crimes conviction of a native Canadian leader.

Saskatchewan Justice Robert Laing, ruling June 8 on an appeal of David Ahenakew's conviction, said that the fact that Ahenakew's reference to Jews as a "disease" was made in an interview with a reporter undermined the prosecution's contention that the former head of the Assembly of First Nations intended to spread hate.

WORLD

Boycott vote overturned

A recommendation by a British teachers union to boycott Israeli academics was overturned. The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education overturned the original vote Sunday after it merged with another teachers union, the Association of University Teachers, whose leaders had opposed the boycott.

The latter union had voted to boycott Israeli academics last year, but rescinded the decision in the face of international criticism.

Sudanese tribal leader blames Jews

A Sudanese tribal leader blamed Jews for the conflict in Darfur. Mowadh Jalaladin, a representative of the Barty tribe, said his people would wage a "jihad" against any U.N. peacekeeping force.

"The root causes of the Darfur conflict are the doing of the Jewish organizations who financed this armed rebellion," he told representatives of the U.N. Security Council touring the region last week.

Annan asks Lebanon to respect border

Kofi Annan asked Lebanon's prime minister to respect a U.N.-demarcated border with Israel.

In a letter sent last week to Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, the U.N. secretary-general said the Shebaa Farms matter should be settled between Syria and Lebanon.

The United Nations certified the Lebanese-Israel border after Israel's withdrawal in 2000, but said the Shebaa Farms was Syrian and should therefore not be handed over to Lebanon.

The Hezbollah terrorist group has since used Israel's presence in Shebaa Farms as a pretext for continued attacks on Israel.

However, Syria has not formally relinquished the area to Lebanon.