

IN THE NEWS
U.S.-born soldier dies in the fighting

A North American immigrant to Israel was among three soldiers killed Tuesday in southern Lebanon.

The soldier, 1st Sgt. Michael Levin, 22, from Philadelphia, had been living in Jerusalem for the past five months. Two other soldiers, Staff Sgt. Yonatan Einhorn and Lt. Ilan Gabai, also died in Tuesday's fighting.

On Wednesday, David Lalshouk, 52, a Kibbutz Sa'ar resident originally from Boston, was killed by a rocket.

Hundreds of Hezbollah militiamen killed

Israel estimates that it has killed 300-400 Hezbollah combatants during three weeks of fighting in Lebanon.

Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog told reporters Tuesday that as many as 400 enemy fighters had died in air and ground strikes.

This estimate was offset by Justice Minister Haim Ramon, who put the number at around 300. Hezbollah denied the Israeli reports, saying it has lost no more than 40 men. But Israeli officials accuse Hezbollah of obfuscating or, at best, being unable to gather full information on casualties as many of the southern Lebanese battlegrounds are now off-limits to it.

Olmert hopeful on W. Bank plan

Israel's offensives in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip will help it carry out planned withdrawals in the West Bank, the Israeli prime minister said.

In a Reuters interview Wednesday, Ehud Olmert said that by fighting Hezbollah and Hamas-led Palestinian terrorists, Israel was building the stability needed to implement his withdrawal plan.

The remarks were denounced by Israelis who see the current flare-up in regional violence as a direct result of Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza last year.

WORLD REPORT

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Does Kana fallout show a rift between White House and State?

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It was as if the stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and Foggy Bottom lengthened, well, to the distance between Jerusalem and Miami Beach.

President Bush and his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, staked what appeared to be radically different approaches to the aftermath of an Israeli strike on the village of Kana in southern Lebanon that killed dozens of civilians.

Less than a day after Rice, in Jerusalem, extracted an agreement from Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to temporarily suspend Israel's air attacks on Lebanon — reportedly because she was "sickened" by the deaths — Bush was telling supporters in Florida that Israel has a right to defend itself.

"It is important to remember this crisis began with Hezbollah's unprovoked terrorist attacks against Israel," Bush said. "Israel is exercising its right to defend itself, and we mourn the loss of innocent life, both in Lebanon and in Israel."

Around the same time, on a flight back to Washington, Rice was saying why she favored the suspension of air attacks: "Most importantly, it's meant to allow the Israelis to look at their operations of the kind that caused Kana so that that won't happen again, to have an investigation," she said.

Earlier, in Jerusalem, Rice barely contained her frustration with Israel for failing to notify her of Sunday's pre-dawn attack before her meetings with top officials.

"I first learned of this tragic loss of life as I was meeting with the Israeli defense minister this morning and once again I was reiterating our strong concern about the impact of Israeli military operations on innocent civilians during crisis," she said.

In an interview on Fox News, Bush called Kana an "awful situation," without naming the village.

"I think there's been a lot of pressure on Israel to stop," he said. "But Israel's a sovereign nation and, you know, she will defend herself."

The original statement outlining Israel's commitment — distributed Sunday not by the Israelis, but by Rice's spokesman, Adam Ereli — noted Israel's agreement to "a 48-hour suspension of aerial activity in south Lebanon while it investigates today's tragic incident in Kana."

Tony Snow, the White House spokesman, suggested during a briefing Tuesday that the White House expected little more from Israel than a breather to allow for humanitarian relief.

"I will direct all questions about Israel's tactics and how it matches up with rhetoric to them, but the way it was presented to us was not just a blanket cease-fire," Snow said.

"The one thing that was blanket was 24 hours free passage for humanitarian aid and also for people to get out of the area."

Snow did not mention the investigation.

Asked about the apparent differences between what the White House and the State Department expected from Israel, State Department officials had no comment other

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ANALYSIS

■ *Bush and Rice are staking what look like radically different approaches to the Kana strike*

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than to refer reporters to a Tuesday interview with Rice on Fox News in which she said she still expected an Israeli investigation into Kana.

White House officials dismissed any hint of a rift.

"There is no schism," a White House official said. "We don't all huddle about who's going to say what. We don't mention a lot of things."

Hezbollah launched the war July 12 with rocket attacks and a cross-border raid in which eight Israeli soldiers were killed and two were abducted.

Since then, at least 530 Lebanese, the vast majority civilians, have died; over 50 Israelis — about half of them civilians — have been killed.

Some Jewish analysts said the difference between Bush and Rice was more of style than of substance.

"Bush doesn't care what people think. He's not being diplomatic, he's being honest and straightforward," said Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

Others said there was an evident split.

Former State Department staffers blamed the split on the exigencies Rice faces in attempting to find a way out of the war, while the Bush administration backs Israel's attempt to crush a terrorist group.

"Condoleezza Rice has been out there, she looked people in the eye,"

said David Mack, vice president of the Middle East Institute in Washington and a former deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs. "You've got to appreciate that, for her, the emotional impact of this has been great," he added.

The high number of civilian deaths, and the media storm that has ensued in the Arab world, created pressures, said David Makovsky, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"The Kana attack has added a layer of concern for people in the State Department who may be concerned that this is complicating American interests in the region," he said.

Danielle Pletka, a vice president at the American Enterprise Institute who has close administration ties, agreed that the split resulted in part from the natural difference between a White House focused on the whole forest and its top diplomat, who was clearing it tree by tree.

"The secretary is doing the hour-to-hour, and the president is not," she said.

However, Pletka said Rice, who is known for her loyalty to Bush, was less responsible for the split than was a departmental culture naturally more susceptible to international opinion.

"There's only so much pressure from the international community that Foggy Bottom can tolerate," Pletka said.

"When you have the Europeans and the Arabs beating down your door 24/7, it's harder to stay true to your principles."

Ed Abington, another former deputy assistant secretary of state who served multiple times in the Middle East, said he suspected Olmert was taking his cues directly from the White House.

"He thinks he has Bush's authorization to keep up the attacks," said Abington, who has represented Arab governments as a lobbyist.

"Bush, as evidenced by his statement in Miami, sees this as a proxy war against Iran," Hezbollah's principal

backer, Abington said. "Hezbollah has to be defeated in order to teach Iran a lesson."

Shimon Peres, Israel's deputy prime minister, who was set to meet with Rice on Tuesday in Washington, ridiculed the idea that the White House was somehow guiding the war.

"The United States never asked from Israel anything to do except to defend ourselves," Peres said at a briefing hosted by the Washington Institute.

The United States and Israel want Hezbollah neutralized and the abducted soldiers returned before a cease-fire begins.

Rice's job was to persuade the international com-

munity that an immediate cease-fire would be counterproductive, and buy Israel enough time to disable Hezbollah in the South.

However, after Kana, the international community seemed more resolute in reversing the sequence, calling for an immediate cease-fire before dealing with the removal of Hezbollah.

"First step: immediate cessation of the hostilities in order to get a sustainable cease-fire," French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin said Monday. "This is the necessary precondition for alleviating the intolerable suffering of the civilians."

France is considered key to establishing the multinational buffer force that would keep Hezbollah out of the South.

By Tuesday, the State Department appeared to be back on administration message: Hezbollah bore ultimate responsibility for the deaths in Kana.

"We all mourn the loss of innocent life here," spokesman Sean McCormack said. "It's a terrible, terrible thing. But that loss of innocent life came about because Hezbollah launched an unprovoked attack on Israel."

Rice, for her part, appeared to tire of questions about how she felt about being blindsided by the attack.

"I have had more questions about how I felt," she said Monday before landing.

There is no schism. We don't all huddle about who's going to say what. We don't mention a lot of things.

White House official

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Jewish groups backing Bolton

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — What a difference a two-front war makes.

John Bolton's tough pro-Israel rhetoric at the United Nations during Israel's recent crisis has galvanized Jewish support for the once-embattled nominee — and may have helped secure his nomination as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), a key Jewish opponent of Bolton a year ago, said he now is undecided, principally because of the Israel issue.

"I'm assessing it," Schumer said on CNN last weekend. "A lot of Democrats are deciding, weighing the positive of Bolton that he's been for Israel and negative that he has almost an antagonistic, 'go at it alone' attitude to the nations of the world, which we need with us to fight a war on terror."

Bolton has been steadfast in supporting Israel in its crisis in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

"The current conflict is a direct result of the terrorist acts of Hezbollah and Hamas and their state sponsors in Iran and Syria," Bolton said July 27 during his latest nomination hearings in the U.S. Senate. "Lopsided resolutions, such as the one the United States vetoed this month, would do nothing to promote a long-term solution and would only prolong the suffering of innocent civilian populations in the region."

Bolton also is credited with shepherding through this week's Security Council a resolution setting an Aug. 31 deadline for Iran to come clean about its nuclear capabilities or face sanctions. He also was instrumental in dismantling the discredited U.N. Human Rights Commission, which often singled Israel out for disproportionate criticism.

President Bush resubmitted Bolton's nomination to the Senate last month. Bush appointed Bolton during the congressional recess after last year's nomination failed; such appointments are good only for the life of the Congress, which will expire Dec. 31.

After two days of U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee testimony last week, the committee decided Monday to delay consideration of Bolton's nomination until the Senate returns from its summer break after Labor Day.

Last year, Democrats had the minimum 41 votes in the Senate to block Bolton. This

year, Schumer said on CNN, he doubts his party has the numbers for a similar filibuster.

That could be due partly to enthusiastic Jewish lobbying this time around.

The American Jewish Committee reversed its policy of not weighing in on nominations, and sent a letter to all 100 U.S. senators urging them to vote yes.

"As a general rule, AJC, with a proud history of nonpartisanship, does not endorse nominees for government offices," the letter said. "But Ambassador Bolton, with whom we have

worked over the course of two decades in his various federal posts, is a rare exception."

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which held back last year, also weighed in.

"John Bolton is an important and very effective representative of the United States at the United Nations and has consistently been a strong advocate for the U.S. on issues that matter to the pro-Israel community," AIPAC spokesman Josh Block said.

Similar endorsements have rolled in from the Anti-Defamation League, Orthodox Union, Agudath Israel, Zionist Organization of America and Republican Jewish Coalition.

More substantially, Jewish leaders have agreed to make clear to senators that they would like to see Bolton approved. When the matter came up at a recent meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, there was immediate unanimity, one participant said.

"It was like there were two issues we didn't need even to debate — Israel's crisis and John Bolton," the participant said.

Such sentiments were notably lacking last year, when White House officials expressed frustration with Jewish community leaders for not explicitly backing the nominee.

The officials wondered why Bolton — who was credited, as an assistant secretary of state in 1991, with overturning

a 1975 U.N. resolution denigrating Zionism as racism — could garner open support only from diehard supporters of Bush administration foreign policy such as the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

The perception among Republicans was that the Jewish establishment was beholden to the Democrats.

The senators who blocked Bolton's nomination last year "were given the clear impression by the pro-Israel community that it was okay to use the Bolton vote as a partisan weapon against the president," said Noam Neusner, a former White House liaison to the Jewish community.

At the time, Jewish groups said that was unfair, and that they were preserving a tradition of keeping out of the nomination process.

This year, however, when Jay Zeidman,

the current liaison to the community, started making calls, he found endorsement letters ready to go.

David Harris, the AJCommittee's executive director, said there was "overwhelming" support on his executive committee for an endorsement of Bolton.

It helped that Bolton's most prominent 2005 detractor, Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio), reversed position and is ready to vote for him.

Voinovich is known for his distaste for bullies, and expressed concerns about reports that Bolton intimidated subordinates and backstabbed colleagues during his State Department career. In a Washington Post opinion piece last month, Voinovich wrote that Bolton has shown an ability to work with others at the United Nations.

Bolton's ability to reach out was especially evident in this week's Iran sanctions vote, his Jewish admirers said; his hard work finally brought around Russia and China, two key holdouts.

"Bolton, in the midst of an international crisis, personifies U.S.-Israel policy in the world's eyes right now," Neusner said. "If he were to be repudiated again by a powerful minority of the U.S. Senate, it would send a message to the rest of the world — particularly Israel's enemies." ■

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

Several Jewish groups that held back last year actively lobbied for Bolton's nomination this year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Commandos snatch Hezbollah men

Israeli special forces captured five Hezbollah members in a Lebanon raid.

Commandos backed by helicopter gunships and warplanes landed in Baalbek, a Hezbollah stronghold near the Syrian border, before dawn Wednesday, grabbing five combatants.

Several Hezbollah fighters were said to be wounded or killed as they tried to stop the Israeli forces from getting away.

Israel suffered no casualties.

According to Lebanese reports, at least three of the detainees were seized at a hospital, and one could be a relative of Hezbollah chief Sheik Hassan Nasrallah.

The raid appeared to be part of efforts to boost Israeli intelligence on Hezbollah or gather bargaining chips to gain the release of two Israeli soldiers held by the group.

Record number of rockets fly into Israel

An estimated 210 Hezbollah rockets slammed into northern Israel on Wednesday.

The number is believed to be the most in a single day since Israel-Hezbollah fighting began July 12.

Israeli Arab lawmakers protected

Security is being stepped up around Israeli Arab lawmakers for fear they could be targeted by extremist Jews. Israeli sources said Wednesday that Ahmed Tibi, a leading Arab lawmaker who has drawn flak for denouncing Israel's Lebanon offensive, had been assigned bodyguards.

Moreover, several other Arab lawmakers were instructed by Knesset security officers to notify them if they planned to visit Jewish towns in the near future.

Mainstream Israeli outcry against the Arab lawmakers has increased in recent days, especially after four of them criticized Defense Minister Amir Peretz for his handling of the war against Hezbollah, calling him a murderer.

Ex-spy chief: Talk to Iran

A former Israeli spymaster called for talks with Iran aimed at ending the crisis in Lebanon.

Efraim Halevy, a former head of the Mossad, said Wednesday that along with trying to force Hezbollah to free two soldiers abducted last month, Israel should be speaking to the terrorist groups sponsors in Iran.

"There will be no release of the two Israeli soldiers without the Iranians giving their consent," Halevy told Army Radio.

Temple Mount sealed off

Israel increased security at the Temple Mount ahead of Tisha B'Av.

Jerusalem police said Wednesday that a request by the Temple Mount Faithful, an extremist Jewish group, to pray near the Al-Aksa Mosque during the fast day had been turned down.

Police also plan to limit Palestinian access to the site Thursday to worshippers older than 45, out of concern that political activists could try to incite riots to protest Israel's offensives in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Arabs protest Lebanon offensive

Israeli Arabs protested Israel's military actions in Lebanon. Organized in part by Knesset member Jamal Zahalka of the Balad Party, Sunday's demonstration in Umm el-Fahm in the Galilee drew at least 700 Israeli Arabs.

The protesters shouted slogans such as, "Israel is a terror state," and "Our people in Gaza and Lebanon will not surrender," Ha'aretz reported.

WORLD

France to boycott peacekeepers meeting

France is refusing to participate in a U.N. meeting aimed at discussing peacekeeping troops in Lebanon.

France's refusal to participate in Thursday's meeting stems from its opposition to discussing such a force before an Israeli-Hezbollah cease-fire takes place.

The United States has been more reticent about pushing for an immediate cease-fire.

Tony Blair backs Israel

Tony Blair strongly backed Israel in a speech Tuesday in Los Angeles. The British prime minister said the "issue of Israel is just part of the same wider struggle for the soul of the region."

Blair also said he wants the war in Lebanon to end and that he considers any loss of civilian life unacceptable.

But, he said, Hamas and Hezbollah triggered the current problems by kidnapping Israeli soldiers.

Vandals strike in Rome

Anti-Israel vandals defaced some 20 Jewish shops in Rome.

Fliers signed by a group calling itself the Armed Revolutionary Fascists included pro-Hezbollah slogans and condemned the "Zionist economy," The Associated Press reported. Rome's mayor condemned the vandalism.

Poll: Dutch willing to send soldiers to Lebanon

Most people in Holland support Dutch participation in an international military force in Lebanon, according to a new poll.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents want the army to take part in international peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, and some 65 percent believe the Dutch army should help Lebanon rebuild after the fighting.

Almost 60 percent say the United States is not doing enough to work toward peace in the region.

The news about popular support for Dutch participation comes after government officials said Holland would not be able to participate in such a force due to military obligations elsewhere.

NORTH AMERICA

Alleged Seattle shooter to be charged

The alleged gunman in last Friday's attack on the Seattle Jewish federation will be charged with an array of crimes, including first-degree murder.

Naveed Afzal Haq, 30, also has been charged with five counts of attempted murder in the first degree, kidnapping in the first degree, burglary in the first degree and malicious harassment.

King County's prosecuting attorney, Norm Maleng, said he would seek either the death penalty or life imprisonment without possibility of parole.

Resolution commends Magen David Adom

The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution congratulating Israel's relief agency for achieving membership in the International Red Cross.

The measure, passed Wednesday, commemorates Magen David Adom's acceptance in May following 57 years of rejection.