

IN THE NEWS

Eight Israeli civilians die in rocket attacks

Eight Israelis were killed in Hezbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel.

Four died Thursday in the coastal city of Acre, while four died inland, near the town of Ma'alot.

Three soldiers die in Lebanon

Three Israeli soldiers were killed in clashes with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

An 18-year-old paratrooper suffered fatal wounds late Wednesday from a guerrilla attack on his outpost in Aita Shaab, a southern Lebanese village that has seen intense fighting this week. Another four troops were wounded.

Thirty-seven Israeli servicemen have died in the 22-day-old Lebanon offensive.

Israel estimates that as many as 400 Hezbollah combatants have been killed.

Israel may go deeper into Lebanon

Israel is preparing to deploy troops deeper into Lebanon.

Defense Minister Amir Peretz told Israeli army officials Thursday to take troops to the Litani River in Lebanon, apparently in an effort to take over rocket launch sites.

Nasrallah threatens to attack Tel Aviv

Hezbollah's leader threatened to bomb Tel Aviv if Israel bombs Beirut.

Sheik Hassan Nasrallah made the threat Thursday in comments aired on Lebanese television.

An Israeli defense official told Reuters in response that if Hezbollah strikes Tel Aviv, Israel will attack Lebanese infrastructure targets.

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WORLD REPORT

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Dina Kraft

Riki Malka, a Nahariya resident and asthmatic, gets a checkup from an army doctor in the bomb shelter where she has been living for the past three weeks.

As needs mount, Israeli charities swing into action throughout North

By DINA KRAFT

NAHARIYA, Israel (JTA) — Stale, hot air fills the flight of concrete stairs that barrels deep into the earth and leads to the surprising cool of a bomb shelter in a corner of Nahariya's poorest neighborhood.

A gleaming new air conditioner blows cool air for the shelter's residents, who on Tuesday were spending their 21st day underground.

The air-conditioning unit is one of 220 secured in the first days of the war by Natan Golan and Hanan Chen, founders of Galila, The Northern Galilee Development Foundation.

Residents of the northern town of Kfar Vradim, the pair founded the grass-roots philanthropic organization six months ago.

Since the fighting began, they have been on

the ground every day, assessing people's most basic needs — from flak jackets and helmets for rescue workers and municipal workers to air conditioners for bomb shelters.

"We were choking here; the air was hot and sticky," Maya Edri, 23, said of life in the shelter before Galila installed the air conditioner.

One of 25 people living in the shelter, Edri is eight months pregnant.

"We were irritated and it was hard to be here. Now we're still frightened, but at least we have a much more comfortable atmosphere to be in,"

she said.

Galila is one of several organizations working overtime to help residents of the North who have been living under a barrage of rocket fire unprecedented in Israeli history for its duration and intensity. Hezbollah has fired

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HEADLINES

■ Local charities are providing food assistance and air conditioners for bomb shelters

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thousands of rockets into northern Israel since the confrontation began July 12.

Most recently, Galila has turned its attention to getting northern residents to Jerusalem for brief holidays at hotels where they can go on guided tours, enjoy free meals and take a break from the stress of life under attack.

Oshri Shloosh, deputy mayor of Nahariya, sent a busload of residents to Jerusalem on Tuesday morning in a trip organized by Galila and a Jerusalem travel agency, Da'at.

"Everyone talks. They act," Shloosh said of Galila.

Some 300,000 residents have fled the North, finding shelter among friends and family or at hotels in central or southern Israel.

Many of the Jewish Israelis who remain in the North are those from some of the weaker segments of society — recent immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, the elderly and the handicapped.

Israeli Arabs, who make up much of the population of the Galilee, have mostly stayed at home.

Most of the local campaigning by Israeli charities has been for food assistance provided by organizations like Latet, Meir Panim and Chabad, and calls for donations of refrigerators and air conditioners.

Abroad, a host of emergency fund-raising campaigns have been launched. Major philanthropic players like the United Jewish Communities and the United Israel Ap-

peal of Canada federation systems are central addresses whose fund-raising helps support the work of organizations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Others, like the Jewish Funders Network, are working to help funnel donations to JAFI, the JDC and other private foundations that are addressing local needs.

Working with their foundation members, the group is educating donors about where the funds are most needed. There is a tremendous desire to help "to alleviate short-term and long-term problems created or exacerbated by the crisis," said Mark Charendoff, the president of the New York-based foundation, which has already sent more than \$800,000 in donor-designated funds to the region.

The JDC focuses in part on assisting the elderly through its Eshel program, which has been helping partner organizations in the North provide some 5,000 meals a day and working to evacuate northerners to hotels in the center of the country.

For those elderly too frail to leave the bomb shelters, the JDC also has put together kits with basic supplies like toothbrushes and flashlights.

The organization also is helping to bring some 16,000 children to central Israel to attend day camps. For children in the shelters, it's providing packages with toys, computer games and arts and crafts supplies, as well as providing support for trauma counseling through an umbrella organization called the Israel Trauma Coalition.

"Because we are familiar with the needs, we were able to mobilize," said Becky Caspi, a member of JDC's emergency response team.

Charlotte Friedman, director of Shiloh, which helps the elderly in Haifa, said her organization's efforts to provide clients with hot meals, medications and trips to the doctor depend on support from the JDC during crises like this. About a quarter of Shiloh's clients are Holocaust survivors.

The JDC is "transferring money into our account, and that's what's needed now," she said. "They're not just talking; they're helping."

Officials at JAFI, meanwhile, are spearheading efforts to help children from the North by bringing 20,000 so far to overnight camps in the center of the country. The price tag is about \$4 million; \$3 million came from the UJC and another \$1 million from an Israeli philanthropist, according to Michael Jankelowitz, a JAFI spokesman.

Arab and Druse children also have been brought from the North to two of JAFI's camps.

JAFI also is assisting in the purchase of air conditioners for public bomb shelters and is helping recent Ethiopian immigrants at ab-

sorption centers in the North cope with the crisis through psychological counseling in their native language of Amharic.

Trauma counseling is another urgent need. Ruth Bar-On, founder of Selah, the Israel Crisis Management Center, focuses on those who have lost loved ones and need psychological counseling and those with no money for rent, food or extra medicine.

Selah is seeking extra funds to hire a Russian-speaking social worker and a volunteer coordinator for the North.

"The first thing we have to feel is that we are safe in our homes, and this crisis shows us we are not safe," Bar-On said.

Natal, another organization that provides trauma counseling, tries to reach those directly affected by terrorism and war. The group has been sending counselors to shelters and also to train community leaders dealing with residents in distress.

The organization typically receives 4,000 calls a year for assistance; now it's getting about 4,000 calls a week.

To help ease the psychological stress, Jerusalem's Hadassah-University Hospital is sending teams of pediatric psychiatrists, pediatricians, social workers and even clowns to meet with children and their parents at shelters.

'We were irritated and it was hard to be here. Now we're still frightened, but at least we have a much more comfortable atmosphere to be in.'

Maya Edri, 23

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Cuban Jews on Castro vigil

By LARRY LUXNER

MIAMI (JTA) — Cuban Jews on both sides of the Florida Straits are reacting with emotions ranging from joy to sadness to unbridled patriotism following the announcement that Fidel Castro — for the first time in 47 years — is no longer president of Cuba.

An official statement read Monday on Cuban TV said Castro, who turns 80 in two weeks, had “temporarily” ceded power to his younger brother, Raul, in the wake of surgery for severe gastrointestinal bleeding.

A statement issued in Havana late Tuesday night described his condition as stable.

It's unclear whether Cuba's Communist-run news outlets are telling the truth. In the streets of Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, conspiracy theories run rampant, with some observers saying that for all they know Fidel could be lying in a coma, or already could be dead.

“I would like to say Kaddish for him and his henchmen as soon as possible,” quipped Moises Asis, a former leader of Havana's Jewish community who fled the island in 1992, eventually settling in Miami.

“Most Cuban Jews here feel the same way I do, but in Cuba they're not free to express their beliefs,” Asis said. “When Fidel dies, they'll cry for him the same way Soviet Jews cried for Stalin when he died, and the same way Jews in Egypt cried when Nasser died.”

Jaime Suchlicki, director of the University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, says the long-awaited succession is already under way.

“The process of building up Raul's personality cult has been taking place for years,” said Suchlicki, a Jewish academic who left Havana in 1960. “I think what has happened is irreversible. I don't think Fidel will ever come back. He's already passed the baton to his brother Raul.”

But Suchlicki doesn't expect Cuba to open up under the younger Castro, who is 75.

“I don't think Raul can risk any policy initiatives without altering the balance of forces that exist in Cuba,” he said. “If he makes overtures to the United States or opens up the economy, some people will want more, others will want less. Anything

he does can alter the balance that has been maintained for years.”

An estimated 500 to 800 Jews live in Cuba, an island of 11.2 million people that has been ruled by Fidel Castro and his Communist Party since January 1959.

The number of Jews was as high as 1,500 in the mid-1990s, but nearly half are believed to have immigrated to Israel over the past decade.

Cuba has five synagogues: three in Havana, one in the central provincial capital of Camaguey and one in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba.

Jews enjoy relative freedom of religion in Cuba, despite the regime's hostile position toward Israel.

Castro broke diplomatic relations with Israel in 1974, following the Yom Kippur War, and just last week angrily condemned the “Israeli genocide against innocent civilians” in Lebanon, without mentioning a word about the Hezbollah attack on Israel that precipitated Israel's response.

Isaac Russo, president of Havana's local B'nai B'rith chapter, couldn't be reached for comment. But Stanley Cohen, international chairman of the Pittsburgh-based B'nai B'rith Cuba Jewish Relief Project, said he spoke with Russo by phone Monday and the Jewish leader assured him there wouldn't be any major changes as long as Fidel is alive.

Cohen was gloomy about the immediate future, noting that Raul Castro has a reputation for being “difficult.”

“Raul is in charge of the armed forces, and in the last year he's been given much more responsibility for security,” he warned. “Security has been much tighter, and should get even tighter now. People will have to watch themselves, though the Jewish community doesn't feel it will be treated differently from anyone else, except for possible anti-Semitism because of what's going on in the Middle East.”

Cuba's Office of Religious Affairs has

assured Russo that there won't be any problems, Cohen said.

Enrique Oltuski, a hard-line Communist who fought with Che Guevara in the 1950s against the Batista dictatorship, is Cuba's vice minister of fisheries and one of the highest-ranking Jews in the Castro regime. He insists everything is normal.

“We revolutionary Cubans feel very deep in our hearts the news about Fidel's illness,” Oltuski, 75, told JTA by phone Tuesday from Havana. “We feel sure that he'll be back soon, and in the meantime, Raul Castro will take over the government. We have great confidence in Raul. Everything will keep on going.”

Cuban Jewish exiles in Miami come to a very different conclusion.

“In Cuba, nobody's going to talk. They're all afraid,” said Bernardo Benes, 71, a banker who left Cuba in 1960.

Benes has received death threats from other Cuban exiles over the years for his outspoken support of negotiation, rather than confrontation, with the Castro regime.

“We'll have to see how things develop. I personally believe this is going to continue for a while, but nobody knows how long,” he told JTA. “Obviously, Raul doesn't have the same personality or charisma as Fidel, and the people of Cuba follow Fidel.”

The United Nations voted 179-4 last year to condemn Washington's four-decade-old embargo of Cuba. Only the United States, Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands voted against the resolution; Micronesia abstained.

Despite their government's public hostility toward Havana, private Israeli companies have invested heavily in Cuban agriculture and real estate ventures, and former Mossad spy chief Rafi Eitan — now a member of the Israeli Cabinet — recently announced that Fidel Castro would light a menorah at a public Chanukah service in Havana this year for the first time in Cuban history.

Now many people doubt Fidel will even make it to Chanukah.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

‘When Fidel dies, they'll cry for him the same way Soviet Jews cried for Stalin when he died, and the same way Jews in Egypt cried when Nasser died.’

Moises Asis

Former leader, Havana Jewish community

Israeli reservists gear up

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) – Eyal, a captain in the Israeli reserves, received an emergency call-up order and is waiting to find out where he is to report for duty. His brother, also an officer in a reserve unit, is already on Israel's northern border.

"People go to the reserves for same reason they go to army in the first place — from the deep feeling that despite all these years of existence, we still need to defend our home," said Eyal, who served for a year in Lebanon in the 1990s, and like most of his counterparts, never thought he might ever have to return.

The Israeli government decided late last week to call up some 15,000 reserve soldiers in case the fight against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon intensifies. Now a routine of goodbyes and preparation has set in as reservists find themselves on their way to Israel's most recent war.

The decision to call up reservists indicates that the conflict might be longer and more involved than was originally expected.

In such times Israel depends on its reserve troops, who were not allowed to give their last names for this article. The army does not release exact figures on its reserve force, but it is believed to number as many as 500,000.

Some 18,000 reservists have been called up since the beginning of the fighting July 12.

Most reservists are men, who serve until they are about 40.

Because of budget cuts in recent years, fewer men serve in reserve units than in past decades. Those who are called to serve are either in combat units or support units such as logistics, supplies or intelligence.

During times of relative peace, a reservist is called for about 21 days annually; during times of war, the call-up is indefinite. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, for example, reservists were called up for as long as four to five months.

Some reservists try to get out of duty, but many accept it as part of living here.

"In Israeli society it is part of life, part of the routine, just as there is winter and summer and the holidays: There is also reserve service, it is part of the way of life," said Moshe Lissik, a retired professor of sociology and anthropology at Jerusalem's Hebrew University who has studied the



BP Images

Soldiers from the Golani Brigade return to Israel after rescuing the bodies of comrades killed in battles with Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon.

relationship between military and civilian life in Israel.

Reserve duty is hardly ever convenient, especially for people with their own businesses and those with young families.

"You come because you know that if you don't come your friends will have to work harder, go on more patrols, do more guard duty or go home less, so everyone comes," Eyal said.

There is also a feeling of comradeship that reservists often speak of, a feeling of family that springs up after often 10 to 15 years of serving every year together. Some even look forward to reserve duty during less tense times as a time to reconnect with friends and detach from the pressures of everyday life.

Now, during a time of war, the feeling is not just one of friendship but national obligation.

Dan, 25, a lieutenant in the reserves — and Eyal's younger brother — has been serving near the northern border for about 10 days. He said that after about a week of watching the news on television, he had been anxious to join his reserve unit. After serving in northern Israel in the past, the Hezbollah threat did not surprise him.

"I wanted to be part of something already, to do something," said Dan, a univer-

sity student majoring in political science. "Most of my friends served extra time in the army. We knew that if we were called up there was nothing to do but respond. If we do not go, who will?"

He serves with people who are like him, in their 20s, and also those in their 30s and early 40s, many of whom leave behind wives and young children.

Shlomi, 40, from Tel Aviv, had thought his days in the reserves were coming to a close. But when he was called over the weekend, he did not hesitate. He said goodbye to his wife, six months pregnant, and traveled north on Sunday.

"You see the residents in the North and it really touches you," he said. "There is a feeling of

mutual responsibility here that perhaps is different than in other places like the United States where the army is made up largely of the lower socioeconomic classes."

In Israel, he said, there is a strength that comes from knowing you are serving with your fellow Israelis from across the country and from all backgrounds.

Dan also has no doubts about his path. "Everyone is giving their all and we don't know exactly when we will go home next but we do this out of the belief that what we are doing will help us win the war," he said.

'You come because you know that if you don't come your friends will have to work harder, go on more patrols, do more guard duty or go home less - so everyone comes.'

Eyal
Israeli reservist

Orthodox show their support for Israel

By CHANAN TIGAY

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — This past Shabbat, as is the custom at his synagogue, Rabbi Chaim Shapiro called several individuals from the congregation to join him on the bimah as he made kiddush.

Among them was Yonatan Blush, whose grandparents are congregants at Congregation Torah Ohr in Boca Raton, Fla.

Even as fighting along Israel's northern border intensified, Blush was getting ready to leave the safety of Palm Beach County Monday and return to Israel for induction into the army, and Shapiro wanted to wish him well.

The timing of Blush's move was unusual — fighting in Israel is at its worst in a decade — but the synagogue's tight connection to Israel was not.

"Many of us have either children or relatives there in Israel," Shapiro said of his congregation, which is made up largely of retirees. "It's on our minds. We're very concerned about it."

Shapiro himself has two grandchildren who recently returned from yeshivas in Israel and are planning to go back in August. Another granddaughter is becoming bat mitzvah in Jerusalem next month, and Shapiro will be flying over in two weeks.

"I'm a little nervous," he admitted.



Agudath Israel

Agudath Israel of America head Rabbi Yaakov Perlow leads a prayer for Israel's well-being at the overflowing Yeshiva Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn.

While the fighting has generated strong support for Israel across the American Jewish religious spectrum, with several rallies drawing truly interdenominational participation, some observers say the Orthodox are overrepresented among those taking a vocal stand.

"I think that Orthodox Jews are probably disproportionately involved in these kinds of activities because of their own personal connection with Israel," said Jonathan Sarna, a Brandeis University expert on the American Jewish community. Plus, he noted, "the Orthodox community tends

to be very well-organized in terms of schools and camps and synagogues that can turn people out."

The Orthodox have turned to prayer in hopes that the power of communal supplication not only will turn things Israel's way but will offer a spiritual salve to those praying during a difficult time.

"We're going to be on a prayer alert until the violence is over and the campaign is finished," said Rabbi Avi Shafran, spokesman for the fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America.

Rabbi Yossi Lew, associate rabbi of Chabad's Congregation Beth Tefillah in Atlanta, said prayer has been an important part of his shul's response to the situation. He also has directed congregants to the Bible for historical insight into Israel's enemies.

In his Shabbat sermon, Lew compared Hezbollah to the Amalekites, who attacked the Children of Israel after they left Egyptian slavery. In the Torah, Israel is instructed to destroy the nation of Amalek and blot out its memory.

"The message is that you cannot deal with people who hate you so blindly that they attack you for no reason whatsoever," Lew recounted saying in the sermon. "The only way one is able to live in peace and pursue peace is by eliminating that which stops a person from living — a

hatred that does not want you to live. Hezbollah does not want the Jewish people to live.

"It's about time we stand up to the world that doesn't care about Jewish blood, and we declare that Jewish blood is not free. Jewish blood must be defended," he said.

On July 19, some 2,000 Jews came together to pray for Israel's well-being at an overflowing Yeshiva Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn. They prayed the afternoon service, then heard from Aguda head Rabbi Yaakov Perlow — who, Shafran said, called on Jews to "repair their relationship with God and fellow men in this time of travail."

At the end, participants recited the same verses with which Yom Kippur worship ends.

The Orthodox Union, along with the

Rabbinical Council of America and the National Council of Young Israel, issued a call July 19 for a simultaneous recitation of psalms at 9 p.m. David Olivestone, the O.U.'s director of communications, said that 400 people turned out to take part at Teaneck, N.J.'s Rinat Shalom

The Orthodox community tends to be very well-organized in terms of schools and camps and synagogues that can turn people out.

Jonathan Sarna
Brandeis University

synagogue alone.

Olivestone is not only a spokesman for the union, but the parent of a teenage daughter who spent last year learning in a Jerusalem yeshiva and plans to return in the fall. With all the fighting going on in northern and southern Israel, Olivestone, who also has a son and two brothers living in Israel, is "not worried at all" for his daughter, because Jerusalem, which in the past has been a flashpoint in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, has been quiet of late.

"My wife has expressed a little more concern," he said.

But keeping his daughter away "would be what our enemies would like us to do: for those who aren't there to stay away and those who are to leave the country," he said. "But we can't give in to that." ■

Pennsylvania man killed in Lebanon

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — On Monday evening, thousands of pro-Israel demonstrators in Bucks County, Pa. cheered for Michael Levin, 22, a local boy serving in the Israeli army.

By the next day, they were mourning his loss.

Levin was killed in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, along with two other Israeli soldiers. He is believed to be first American casualty of Israel's war with Hezbollah. He is the 36th Israeli soldier to lose his life since fighting began July 12.

Levin was remembered by family and friends as a "Zionist through and through."

A long time camper at Camp Ramah in the Poconos, Levin was active in the Hagesher Region USY and in his Conservative temple, Congregation Tifereth Israel.

Rabbi Jeffery Schnitzer remembered Levin as "a prize student" who would "debate you to death."

Levin loved speaking about, Judaism and Zionism, Schnitzer said.

"When he wasn't in Israel, Israel was inside him," said Richard Waloff, a close friend of the family. "Ever since he was 15, he wanted to graduate high school and make aliyah."

In part, friends and family say Levin was motivated by his grandfather, who fought in World War II. He also formed strong feelings about Israel on an eight-week Alexander Muss High School in Israel program.

At age 18, Levin acted on his dream of aliyah. He moved to Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi and studied Hebrew before enlisting in the army.

Baruch Ganz, 23, a close friend from both Israel and Bucks County, said Levin was a "thin, small guy," but he quickly worked his way into an elite paratrooper division.

"The thing with Michael was that it was his energy, you know?" Ganz said. "A really passionate person — you can't stop them for anything."

Levin also was remembered as a congenial, popular young man.

"He was the kind of friend everyone's looking for," said Rabbi Todd Zeff, director of Camp Ramah in the Poconos. "He always had a smile on his face."

Levin had been at camp just two weeks

earlier while on a visit to the United States.

"He was in great shape and great spirits," Zeff said. "He talked about the fact that for him it wasn't having to go back, it was going back to do something that he believed in."

"This was his choice, it was his dream, to serve and be in Eretz Israel," Schnitzer added. "He said, 'I'm going in with my eyes wide open.'"

Still, the shock for family and friends was almost too great to bear.

Schnitzer said that when news of Levin's death spread through the synagogue, an executive committee meeting was ended on the spot.

"We've known this family for years," Schnitzer said. "They were one of the early members of the congregation. People were in tears."

"I never really experienced my heart breaking before," he continued. "Now I know what that feels like."

At Camp Ramah in the Poconos, where

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Levin spent eight years as a camper and one as a counselor, about 100 staff members gathered to swap stories and memories.

"These guys all grew up together in camp for years and years and years," Zeff said. "It's a loss for the whole community."

Levin will be buried Thursday at the military cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

A memorial service will be held Aug. 7 at Shir Ami Synagogue in Newtown, Pa. Camp Ramah in the Poconos has rented a bus and plans to bring 50 counselors and staff members.

Levin is survived by two siblings: his twin sister Dara, a counselor at Ramah Day Camp; and Elisa, 26, an artist. Harriet, his mother, is an administrative assistant in the United Synagogue Mid-Atlantic Region; and his father, Mark, is a partner in a business that distributes

'I never really experienced my heart breaking before. Now I know what that feels like.'

Rabbi Jeffery Schnitzer

motorcycle parts.

The family has asked that donations be made to American Friends of Magen David Adom and to the Israel Defense Forces. ■

The Katyusha rocket's musical origins

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Katyusha rockets that are raining down on Israel are named after a love song written by a Russian Jewish composer.

The song is about Katyusha, a diminutive of the Russian name Ekaterina or Katerina, who is longing for her beloved who is away on military service.

The music for the song was written in 1938 by Matvey Blanter, a Soviet composer of Jewish origin. The lyrics were penned by Mikhail Isakovsky.

The rocket launchers were first used by the Red Army in July 1941, weeks after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The Germans called the weapon Stalinorgel, or Stalin's Organ, because of its organ-like appearance and the sound of the rockets, which was like a pipe organ.

Known for its simple design, the weapon could be mounted on trucks and tanks — and even on tractors.

The wide use of Katyushas by the Red Army was due to the fact that the rockets were inexpensive to produce, though they were fragile. The launchers took a long time to reload but could deliver a devastating amount of explosives to a target area in a short period of time, although with poor accuracy.

The Soviet Union never used the original Katyushas after World War II, although upgraded versions of Soviet multiple launchers were introduced in the early 1960s.

This type of weapon has been widely used since the 1960s by various insurgent groups around the world, from the National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam to the Iraqi insurgency to the Taliban and Hezbollah.

The postwar version of the Katyusha made it to the Middle East through the extensive sale of Soviet-made weaponry to the Arab world after the 1967 Six-Day War. ■

Gibson's slurs meet with silence

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Hollywood's top guns have answered actor-director Mel Gibson's vicious anti-Semitic slurs — with deafening silence.

Gibson, director of the controversial "The Passion of the Christ," was pulled over in the early hours last Friday while speeding along the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, Calif. He was booked on suspicion of drunk driving.

In the original report filed by the arresting officer, Gibson was described as belligerent and cursing the "F*****g Jews. The Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world."

He then asked Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputy James Mee, "Are you a Jew?"

In an apology Tuesday to "everyone in the Jewish community," Gibson admitted to the anti-Semitic slur and asked to meet with Jewish leaders "with whom I can have a one-on-one discussion to discern

the appropriate path for healing."

Gibson added that "there is no excuse, nor should there be any tolerance, for anyone who thinks or expresses any kind of anti-Semitic remark. Please know from my heart that I am not an anti-Semite. I am not a bigot. Hatred of any kind goes against my faith."

Prior to Gibson's statement, attempts to elicit reactions from some 15 leading Jewish producers, directors, actors and writers proved fruitless. A remarkably large number were said to be on vacation or out of the country, while others did not return messages.

Even Alan Nierob, a Jewish man who is Gibson's official spokesman, was said to be on a two-week vacation at the height of his employer's crisis.

Well-connected entertainment industry journalists ran into the same reticence. Michael Speier, managing editor of the trade publication Variety, explained the reluctance to speak out in this way: "In Hollywood, you can never help yourself by saying something critical on the record. You don't want to piss anyone off because you never know when you might need him later on. Who knows, in a few years Gibson might be a changed man and give \$10 million to the Anti-Defamation League."

Bernie Brillstein, a veteran talent agent and manager, said, "Hollywood is a small company town and you figure everyone is entitled to his position. Anyway, everybody takes it for granted that Gibson is an anti-Semite, so people say, 'Well, he did it again.'"

However, he added, "if Gibson's statement, if true, had been anti-gay or anti-black, there would be an uprising in Hollywood like you've never seen before."

Jewish defense organizations, usually quick to respond to anti-Semitic slurs, were initially a bit muted. But Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League and a fierce critic

of Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," said, "We would hope that Hollywood now would realize the bigot in their midst and that they will distance themselves from this anti-Semite."

On Tuesday, after Gibson's specific apology to the Jewish community, Foxman said it "sounds sincere" and that after Gibson's "rehabilitation for alcohol abuse, we will be ready and willing to help him with his second rehabilitation to combat this disease of prejudice."

David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, also welcomed the apology and said that "we look forward" to "Gibson matching his contrition with his own deeds."

The one exception to the general silence in Hollywood was talent agent Ari Emanuel, the model for agent Ari Gold in the

HBO series "Entourage" and brother of Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.).

In a widely circulated statement to The Huffington Post blog, www.Huffingtonpost.com, Emanuel said, "At a time of escalating tensions in the world, the entertainment industry cannot idly stand by and allow Mel Gibson to get away with such tragically inflammatory statements. When 'The Passion of the Christ' came out, Gibson was quoted as categorically denying anti-Semitism attributed to him.

"Now we know the truth... People in the entertainment community, whether Jew or gentile, need to demonstrate that they understand how much is at stake in this by professionally shunning Mel Gibson and refusing to work with him, even if it means a sacrifice to their bottom line. There are times in history when standing up against bigotry and racism is more important than money."

While many in Hollywood have privately praised Emanuel's gutsiness, hardly any were willing to emulate him. It has been left largely to some outspoken bloggers to hold Gibson to account.

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

- Laurel Wolfson was elected president of the Association of Jewish Libraries.
- David Gordis, president of Hebrew College, announced that he will step down in 2009.
- Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life named Rabbi Batsheva Appel its director of rabbinic services.

HONORS

- Allan Chernoff, a CNN correspondent, won a television reporting award from Deadline Club for "Auschwitz Survivor," which was about his mother's time in the Nazi camp as a child.
- The American Jewish Committee's Washington chapter honored Italian Ambassador Gioovanni Castellaneta and Italian-American businessman Benjamin Palumbo with a "Celebration of Friendship" award.
- Dorot honored philanthropist Howard Kaye at a New York event.
- Ibrahim Abu Shindi and Hadas Kaplan, the co-founders of the Arab-Jewish Community Center in Jaffa, Israel, were given a peace award by the Institute for International Education.
- The Orthodox Union honored Gustave and Henriette Jacobs at a New York event.
- Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, honored Rabbi Irving and Blu Greenberg at the group's annual convention.

'Hollywood is a small company town and you figure everyone is entitled to his position. Anyway, everybody takes it for granted that Gibson is an anti-Semite.'

Bernie Brillstein

Hollywood talent agent

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

UJC sets goal for fund

The United Jewish Communities wants to raise at least \$300 million for Israel. UJC efforts, which have been ongoing for several weeks, have garnered \$84 million so far, a spokesman told JTA.

The revamped Israel Emergency Campaign is meant to usher in a new wave of fund-raising. Efforts will include fund-raising events in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, as well as a solidarity mission to Israel for major donors.

The drive will officially launch at 1 p.m. Monday, with a live video broadcast from Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem and Karnit Goldwasser, wife of captured Israeli soldier Ehud Goldwasser. The broadcast is available on the Web at <http://ujc.org>.

Senate urges 'cessation of hostilities'

The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution urging a cessation of hostilities in Lebanon.

The resolution was passed Thursday, a day before the Senate's August break. It says that "the United States government and the international community must work urgently with the governments of Israel and Lebanon to attain a cessation in the hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel."

It also calls for the disarmament of Hezbollah and the return of Israeli soldiers the group is holding hostage.

The resolution notes at length the suffering of Lebanese civilians during the fighting, after some senators had expressed concern that an earlier resolution supporting Israel did not adequately address the need to safeguard civilians on all sides.

Letter asks Bush to enforce Syria legislation

A letter signed by 115 U.S. lawmakers urged President Bush to intensify sanctions on Syria. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), who initiated the 2003 Syria Accountability Act, sent the letter Thursday.

The Bush administration has enacted only some measures of the law, including a ban on exports to Syria and on Syrian travel to the United States. Additional available measures include a total ban on U.S. business with Syria and limits on the movement of Syrian diplomats in the United States.

"Syria has refused to heed calls to be a responsible international actor," the letter states, saying the country houses Hamas and Hezbollah leaders. It also says Syria has helped arm Hezbollah in the current war. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee praised the letter.

Kidnapped soldier's wife issues plea

The wife of a kidnapped Israeli soldier pleaded for his return. Speaking Thursday at the Israeli Consulate in New York, Karnit Goldwasser called her husband, Ehud, "the love of my life."

The couple married less than a year ago after dating for nine years.

Goldwasser said her husband, a 31-year-old environmental engineer, was "a husband, a student. He was not a soldier." She added, "I know that he's alive."

I can feel it in my heart." Goldwasser was joined by Israel's consul general in New York, Arye Meikel, and U.S. Reps. Peter King (R-N.Y.) and Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), as well as Karnit's mother and father-in-law.

U.S. providing Israel with intelligence?

The United States reportedly is providing Israel with sensitive intelligence on Syria and Iran.

The U.S. National Security Agency is providing Israel with information on whether Hezbollah's two backers are running arms to the terrorist group during its war with Israel, Salon reported Thursday.

The NSA routinely provides Israel with some intelligence, but this is an expansion directed by Vice President Dick Cheney and Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security adviser, and approved by President Bush, Salon said.

A National Security Council official had no comment.

Gaza withdrawal marked

Dozens of synagogues across the United States held rallies and ceremonies this week to mark the first anniversary of Israel's Gaza withdrawal.

A New York rally organized by Americans for a Safe Israel attracted about 300 people and was aimed at "responding to the humanitarian needs of our brothers and sisters in Israel by providing moral and financial support," the group said.

Some 8,500 Israelis were uprooted from Gaza Strip settlements in the withdrawal.

MIDDLE EAST

Eight die in Gaza raid

Israeli forces killed eight Palestinians during a raid on the Gaza Strip. At least five of the fatalities from Thursday morning's operation in Rafah were gunmen, with Palestinians describing the remainder as civilians. Backed by helicopter gunships, troops pushed into the southern Gaza town and searched homes.

Military officials had no immediate comment on the objective, but it appeared to be connected to the abduction last month of an Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit. As part of their response to that incident, Israeli forces retook areas of the Gaza Strip in an effort to prevent the hostage from being smuggled to Egypt.

WORLD

France blasts Ahmadinejad

France criticized Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's latest call to destroy Israel. France's foreign minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, said the Iranian president's comments, in which he said the solution to the Middle East crisis was to destroy Israel, were "absolutely unacceptable on anyone's part, especially from a head of state."

That came days after France had lauded Iran as a force for stability in the Middle East. The American Jewish Committee called on the United Nations to condemn Iran for Ahmadinejad's comments.

Rights group presses Iran on Hezbollah

A leading human rights group asked Iran's president to press Hezbollah to follow international law.

Human Rights Watch said Mahmoud Ahmadinejad should call for an end to Hezbollah's repeated rocket attacks on civilians in northern Israel, seek assurances that Hezbollah is not locating fighters or weapons in civilian areas and stress that Hezbollah should treat two Israelis soldiers it kidnapped well.

Hungary extends claims deadline

Hungary announced it would extend by five months the deadline to file claims for a recently re-opened Holocaust compensation program.

The Hungarian government's decision Monday, which will extend the deadline to Dec. 31, came in response to pressure from U.S. officials, Jewish organizations and survivor groups, as well as the Claims Conference.