

IN THE NEWS
15 Israeli soldiers killed

Fifteen Israeli soldiers were killed Wednesday in clashes in southern Lebanon. Nine infantry reservists died when Hezbollah fighters fired an anti-tank missile at the house where they were stationed in the village of Dbil.

In Ayta al-Shaab, four reservists died when Hezbollah combatants fired an anti-tank missile at their tank. One soldier died in a mortar attack in Kliya.

Another soldier died in Atayba, the victim of friendly fire.

Israel OKs wider Lebanon sweep

Israel's Security Cabinet approved an expansion of the Lebanon offensive. The plan could send thousands of Israeli troops deeper into Lebanon to fight Hezbollah, possibly all the way up to the Litani River.

Israel's armed forces currently control a 5-mile-deep strip of southern Lebanon, but that has not stopped Hezbollah crews farther north from firing rockets into Israel.

Don't give up on cease-fire, Chirac says

Jacques Chirac said giving up on efforts to secure an immediate cease-fire in the Middle East would be immoral.

The French president made the comments Wednesday as diplomats at the United Nations continued to work on a draft aimed at ending Israeli-Hezbollah violence.

McKinney loses her re-election bid

U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), known for her fierce criticism of Israel, lost her primary bid for re-election.

McKinney lost a runoff race to Hank Johnson, who won 59 percent of the vote. McKinney stirred anger among her constituents for controversies, including an altercation earlier this year with a Capitol police officer.

WORLD REPORT

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A Catch-22 for Jewish Democrats: Support Lieberman or their party?

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) has often been able to count on strong support from American Jewish voters. But now, when Lieberman arguably needs it most, Jewish voters will have to decide whether to stick with Lieberman.

Lieberman, who became the first Jew to run on a national ticket as the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2000 and then made his own presidential bid four years later, lost Connecticut's Democratic primary for re-election on Tuesday to Ned Lamont, a business executive whose campaign was based largely on what he viewed as Lieberman's support for the Bush administration and the Iraq war.

Lieberman has vowed to continue the race as an independent. But he is expected to face strong pressure from Democratic heavyweights to drop out.

If Lieberman chooses to go forward as an independent candidate, Democratic Jews will be left with a choice between their party and their elder statesman.

"It could be ugly," said one Jewish Democratic operative, who asked not to be identified. He predicted that most Democratic fund-raisers and party activists will side with Lamont.

"I think you will find a lot of Democrats basically saying: 'I like Joe, I've supported Joe, but we have to move on and we have to support the nominee because we need to make sure the seat stays Democratic,'" said Steve Grossman, a former Democratic National Committee chairman.

Grossman, also a former president of the

American Israel Public Affairs Committee, said several weeks ago that he would back Lieberman, but reversed course Wednesday, saying he would help Lamont if asked.

The question for party loyalists is more than academic. Because Lieberman is likely to garner strong support among Republicans

and independents in the state, he has a good chance of maintaining his seat as an independent candidate.

But at the same time, he will need more resources because he will be running without party

support against a self-financed, wealthy opponent.

So Democratic Jews will have to choose wisely, knowing that whichever way they go, they could end up angering the party or a sitting senator.

Although he became a Jewish celebrity as the 2000 vice presidential nominee, Lieberman learned in 2004 that his religion would not necessarily translate into votes or financial support from Jews.

During his presidential run, Lieberman heavily targeted Jewish donors, but did not get the depth of support from the community that many had assumed he would. Fund-raisers said that while Jewish donors were happy to see a Jew run, his politics were too conservative for some of them.

Indeed, even longtime Lieberman supporters chose to back the senator's presidential bid while also giving to other Democratic candidates, either because of historical relationships or a desire to support a candidate with more potential.

Officials in the Lieberman camp said it

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U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman's primary defeat leaves Jewish Democrats with a dilemma

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was too soon to tell whether he would actively court Jewish votes or money, but that they expect to garner support from his traditional base.

"At a moment like this, when it's a very difficult challenge, you learn who your friends are," said Dan Gerstein, a senior adviser to Lieberman. "The Jewish community has been very supportive of Joe Lieberman and we expect them to continue to be so."

That tug of war between support for a longtime friend and what is best for the party is likely to play out again this time around.

"I think it will split," said Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council. "This would be an easier question if Lamont was spouting anti-Israel rhetoric."

The conflict is heightened by the fact that Lieberman has become increasingly out of touch with mainstream Jewish political views. His support for faith-based initiatives and the Iraq war runs counter to the views of many liberal Jews, and Lamont's perspectives may be more appealing to some Jewish voters.

Connecticut Jews make up some 111,000 of the state's 3.4 million people, or a little more than 3 percent of the population, according to the Jewish Virtual Library. Democratic fund-raisers and supporters said Lieberman's primary loss was his own fault because he was slow to acknowledge discontent among his constituents over the war,

and did not put enough effort into the primary campaign until it was too late.

"Joe mishandled this badly," Grossman said. "He did not see this coming and he did not heed the warnings that he should take this seriously. He was not a catalyst for community conversation."

Lieberman faced similar criticism in 2004 when he made a bid for the presidency. Party players then said he did not work hard enough for their vote, assuming it was his for the taking after being the party's vice-presidential nominee four years earlier.

Grossman said Lamont's support for Israel in recent weeks showed he could take tough positions against his own base of liberal activists and bloggers, many of whom have called for Israeli restraint and an immediate cease-fire in the war with Lebanon.

Lamont said last month in a campaign statement that "it is not for the United States to dictate to Israel how it defends itself." He said the Bush administration should be more engaged in the Middle East, while not imposing a resolution on Israel.

At the same time, Lamont's campaign has been almost singularly focused on Iraq, and some Connecticut Jewish voters have said they do not know enough about his views to effectively weigh him against Lieberman.

The Democratic Party establishment will have to support Lamont, its nominee, party officials said. And unlike some, who will try not to choose sides, party elders will have to actively campaign for him.

Since the seat is unlikely to fall to a Republican — Lieberman has said he will continue to caucus with the Democrats if elected as an independent — the Democratic Party is not likely to shell out major dollars on the race.

"It's clear that all of the Democratic Party leaders are going to endorse and

work for the Democratic nominee," said party official who did not want to be identified.

"Yet at the same time, because it's a safe Democratic seat, how hard they work and whether any money goes into this race is yet to be decided."

Lieberman, who is religiously observant, is likely to be able to rely on some small Jewish constituencies, including Republican Jews, the Orthodox and voters

who rate Israel as a primary issue.

Republican Jews and the Orthodox are likely to back Lieberman in part because of some of his social policies, which are seen as more conservative than most Democrats. Even some partisan Republicans may back Lieberman, because the race lacks a strong Republican challenger.

"If he runs as an independent, I think you'll find that even committed Republicans like myself will do everything in their power to support him," said Jeff Ballabon, an Orthodox Republican political activist.

Lieberman's support of Israel will likely help him as well, especially since many pro-Israel voters, including supporters of AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby, tend to back incumbents who support Israel, and Lieberman has been an outspoken backer of the Jewish state.

Some are also likely to rally around Lieberman because of his faith, and the desire to support a fellow Jew when he is on the ropes.

But in the end, most Jewish voters, and out-of-state donors, will be left with a political version of Sophie's choice.

"As a Democrat who believes that the political process has rules, and if you submit yourself to the electorate, you should accept the wishes of the electorate, that's what creates a huge conflict in my mind," Grossman said. "My guess is many Jewish activists will be equally conflicted."

Matthew E. Berger is a reporter for Congressional Quarterly.

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Steve Grossman

Former chairman, Democratic National Committee

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Israelis find refuge in tent city

NITZANIM, Israel (JTA) — On the sand dunes of Israel's southern coast, a tent city rises like a desert mirage — blue-and-white flags flapping along a shimmering sea, massive white tents housing 5,000 people, outdoor dining halls, a synagogue, soccer fields and children bobbing in the waves.

The tent city has become the refuge of last — and for some, the only — resort for some 5,000 Israelis who have flocked here from their homes in the North. Some fled bomb shelters with only a small bundle of clothes and belongings carried in plastic bags, their exit punctuated by falling rockets.

"We hear about the Katyushas and the news but at least here we can move around freely," says Eti Elul, 48, who came here from Nahariya about two weeks ago, together with her husband and two of her daughters.

"But it is not easy," she says, adjusting her black T-shirt, one of the only items of clothing she took with her after rocket fire struck all sides of her neighborhood.

Shiran, her 17-year-old daughter, complains of sweating in the relentless heat — and the sand that sticks to her skin.

The Elul family has a row of foam mattresses lined up in a corner of a huge, white tent that houses some 500 people.

Their 10-year-old daughter lies next to a fan on the edge of one of the mattresses, fighting off a fever and a stomach virus that has plagued her during much of her time here.

Officials of the camp acknowledge that sanitation is a real problem at the camp, and many of the residents complain of the quick spread of viruses that comes from living in such close quarters.

The camp, set up about three weeks ago on the coast between the southern Israeli towns of Ashdod and Ashkelon, is funded entirely by one man — Arkady Gaydamak, a Russian-Israeli billionaire. Wanted in France on charges of illegal arms dealing in Angola, he is well known in Israel and Russia for his philanthropic projects.

Gaydamak hired several production companies, which usually organize festivals and concerts, to build and run the camp, which his staff says, is costing him about a half a million dollars a day.

The 5,000 residents are drawn from all segments of society in northern Israel. They are from Moroccan communities.

They are Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, Arab Israelis and even Christian Lebanese, who formerly fought for the South Lebanon Army alongside Israel during the first war in Lebanon 20 years ago and who now live in Israel.

There are almost 800 workers on site, including activity counselors for the children, a medical staff, social workers and security guards. Three meals and two snacks a day are provided every day for free. In fact, everything is free.

Among the services provided are telephones booths, laundry, sheets and mattresses. The staff has run

out of towels, but provides free diapers, sunscreen and hats.

Large screens have been erected so residents can watch the news every night. For those who have brought pet dogs, a kennel has been set up where the animals are fed and walked twice a day on the beach.

"This is something people have never done in this country — we built a refugee camp in a day," says Ilan Facktor, who is running activities at the camp.

Facktor, whose production company is among those hired by Gaydamak, says the organizers are now working to provide more community services. They have set up a day-care center, army preparation courses for teenagers and a medical clinic.

Many of those at the camp were struggling financially even before the war, and organizers say this is the first time some of the children are being fed three full meals a day.

The children can be seen running together on sandy soccer fields, shooting pool and playing ping-pong. Some spend long days at the sea.

There is an odd sense of a beach vacation coupled with real human distress.

"For the children, it is like a festival. For the parents, it is much more frustrating; they are not working, they feel useless," says Yoni Cohen, 33, a social worker from Kiryat Shmona who started as a volunteer

and has since been hired as a staff member at the camp.

Cohen says that he and other social workers are on the lookout for signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and have detected some among many of the adults, symptoms that include difficulty breathing, hysteria and weeping. Among the children, they have seen bed-wetting and regression.

"Some people saw their houses destroyed, some spent weeks in shelters," he says.

Organizers said the government will soon have to help out with the running of the camp, including the possibility of setting up temporary schools should the war run into the beginning of the school year in September.

Sami Lazarof, 46, of Nahariya, arrived at the camp last week with his wife and three children.

They had spent two weeks with his sister in a suburb of Tel Aviv but realized they had to move on.

Being away from home is not easy.

"You want your privacy, you want

your home," says Lazarof, his young son leaning against his shoulder as he sits near a fan at the entrance to one of the large tents.

He trusts the Israeli army, he says, and is willing to stay on longer if military action can make real achievements.

At Tent No. 10, Louis, a former fighter with the South Lebanon Army, passes the days napping, talking to his family and new neighbors and smoking cigarettes.

Louis, who asked that his last name not be used to protect his family in Lebanon, came to Israel in 2000 with several thousand other SLA soldiers when Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon after 18 years in the country.

Louis, who lives in the northern town of Ma'alot, supports Israel's actions but also worries for his parents who live in a Christian village in southern Lebanon.

"Once we would say, 'If only we could go back to Lebanon.' And now we say, 'If only we could go back to Ma'alot'. It's not just we who are suffering, it is all citizens in Israel." ■

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

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NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israel kills Hezbollah official

A Hezbollah official and at least four of his relatives died in an Israeli airstrike. Israel Radio named the target of Wednesday morning's bombing run in the Bekaa Valley town of Masrara as Hassan Sadir, a member of the Lebanese militia's politburo.

Several other people in Sadir's house, including his wife and children, also were killed.

Airstrikes kill five Palestinians

Israeli airstrikes killed five Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The air force struck two houses in the Jenin refugee camp Wednesday, killing two members of Islamic Jihad.

It was not immediately clear what they were doing in Jenin or whether the airstrikes were an attempt to prevent impending terror attacks. An Israeli helicopter gunship also struck a terrorist training camp in Gaza City, killing two members of the Popular Resistance Committees. A Palestinian girl suffered fatal wounds.

Nasrallah still defiant

Hezbollah's leader challenged Israel to press its Lebanon offensive and rejected U.N. cease-fire efforts. Lebanese television broadcast a video statement Wednesday in which Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, speaking from a hiding place, said Hezbollah's fighting capabilities had not been impaired by a month of fighting Israeli forces.

"Israel has not undermined Hezbollah's ability to fire rockets," he said — and, in a signal that the bombardment of northern Israeli towns could intensify, called on the Israeli Arab community of Haifa to leave. Referring to Israel's decision to expand its Lebanon offensive, Nasrallah said his country would become a "graveyard" for Israeli soldiers.

Rockets fall in northern Israel again

An estimated 160 Hezbollah rockets fell Wednesday in northern Israel.

Nearly half of the rockets fell in Kiryat Shmona, while others fell in Safed, Beit Shean and Haifa. No serious injuries were reported.

Israel reshuffles top brass

Israel reshuffled its top army generals overseeing the offensive in Lebanon. Military officials announced late Tuesday that the deputy chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinski, would be posted to Northern Command alongside its head, Maj. Gen. Udi Adam.

The move was widely interpreted as a snub of Adam, whose performance has been called into question given the slow progress in the fight against Hezbollah. But the army insisted that Kaplinski, a former field commander in southern Lebanon, was assigned merely to help Adam with his workload and to keep the chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, apprised of the campaign.

Showdown in Jerusalem over gay protest

Police in Jerusalem said they would bar a gay protest at a city park.

But organizers of Thursday evening's event near Liberty Bell Park said they would go ahead with the demonstration, which was a protest against an earlier police decision to ban an international gay march because of Israel's war with Hezbollah.

Gadhafi's son seeks to sue Israelis

A Libyan state charity demanded that Israeli leaders be tried in connection with the Lebanon offensive.

The Gadhafi Foundation, run by Libyan leader Moammar

Gadhafi's son Saif al-Islam, announced Wednesday that it had asked the International Criminal Court to prosecute Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, and defense minister, Amir Peretz, for last month's airstrike on the southern Lebanese village of Kana, which killed at least two dozen civilians.

Israel rejected the Libyan appeal, saying its war on Hezbollah conformed to international norms.

NORTH AMERICA

Pat Robertson reports from Israel

The Rev. Pat Robertson reported from northern Israel. The evangelical Christian leader and strong backer of Israel told his "700 Club" audience Wednesday that he traveled to northern Israel in a show of support for the Jewish state.

But he denied that the war signified the Armageddon that some Christians believe will precede the Second Coming of Jesus. Robertson also met with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Alleged spy's target 'not Israel'

The "foreign nation" cited in espionage charges against a U.S. Navy sailor is "definitely not Israel," a Navy official said.

The official told JTA on Wednesday that the country named in a charge recommended against Ariel Joseph Weinmann, a 3rd class petty officer, is not Israel. CNN named the country as Russia.

The Navy concluded its investigation against Weinmann on July 26, and its Judge Advocate General is considering what, if any, of its recommended charges to bring against Weinmann, 21.

The Navy concluded that Weinmann, who allegedly deserted in July 2005, attempted to sell sensitive information to a foreign nation.

The maximum penalty is death. Once papers in Norfolk, Va., reported the case, which is being treated with unusual secrecy, Arab media reports and conspiracy theory blogs immediately speculated that the target nation was Israel, apparently because of Weinmann's name.

However, Jewish officials in Salem, Ore., where Weinmann graduated from high school in 2003, said they had never heard of Weinmann or his family.

WORLD

Jewish youth assaulted in France

French police are holding three young men suspected of attacking a 16-year-old Jewish youth. According to witnesses, several groups of teenagers were hanging out in a parking lot near the Anney Lake between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. after attending a fireworks show.

Hearing a young girl call her friend "Abraham," four young men of North African origin allegedly approached, said "You're Jewish?" and then beat up the boy, kicking him in the stomach and jaw. Abraham, who is of Venezuelan nationality, was taken to the hospital, treated and released.

When interrogated by police, the four young men denied beating Abraham up because he was Jewish. One of the four was released; the other three are being held pending a hearing.

European Jewish student site hacked

The European Union of Jewish Students' Web site was hacked and shut down, apparently by a radical anti-Israel group.

Hackers identifying themselves as "Team-Evil Arab Hackerz" had inserted a burning Israeli flag on the site of EUJS, a Brussels-based group that represents Jewish students in 34 countries.

The site then was shut down, EUJS Chairwoman Olga Israel told JTA.