

IN THE NEWS
Olmert rejects some peacekeepers

Ehud Olmert said Israel would not accept peacekeepers in southern Lebanon from countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel.

Three Muslim countries that are in that category — Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh — have offered troops for the expanded force.

U.N. criticizes weekend Israeli raid

Kofi Annan called Israel's weekend raid on southern Lebanon a violation of the U.N.-brokered cease-fire on the conflict.

The U.N. secretary-general's office issued a statement on the raid, in which an Israeli officer from an elite commando unit was killed and two others injured in a raid inside Lebanon. Israeli sources said Saturday's operation was aimed at preventing ammunition and rockets entering Lebanon. The covert mission was stymied when Hezbollah forces identified the commando unit.

A firefight ensued and four Hezbollah members were reportedly killed. The Lebanese government has threatened to stop the deployment of Lebanese forces to the South of the country if they do not receive satisfactory explanations for the raid.

An Israeli government official speaking on condition of anonymity told Israel Radio that neither UNIFIL nor the Lebanese army has shown any willingness to impose the embargo on supplying arms to Hezbollah.

Israeli soldier killed in attack

An Israeli soldier was killed when a Palestinian gunman opened fire at a West Bank checkpoint.

Ro'i Farjoun, 21, of Yehud, was killed in Saturday's attack at the checkpoint southeast of Nablus after the gunman, who was standing in line at the checkpoint for a security check, opened fire. Farjoun's fellow soldiers shot and killed the gunman.

WORLD REPORT

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To engage or not to engage? Groups mull approach to U.N.

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18 (JTA) — The United Nations is the elephant in the room, U.S. Jewish leaders agree. The question lurking behind a nasty public argument in recent weeks is whether it's an elephant you can ignore.

The Anti-Defamation League says the performance of the organization and its secretary-general, Kofi Annan, during the recent Lebanon crisis was so unconscionably anti-Israel that it no longer makes sense for Jews to deal with the United Nations.

"Our message should be, 'We have no business with you,'" said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director.

Other Jewish leaders agree that there is much to be criticized — which is precisely why cutting off the United Nations would be counterproductive, they say.

"The Jewish community has a legitimate set of strong grievances, but to deal yourself out of the game, to isolate yourself, does you no good vis-a-vis a body that now retains 192 states," said David Harris, the American Jewish Committee's executive director.

The debate culminated in an ADL ad in the Aug. 10 New York Times addressed to Annan: "How many more Israeli civilians must die before you condemn Hezbollah? And when will you extend condolences to Israeli victims?"

Annan and his defenders were outraged, saying he repeatedly had condemned the terrorist group and had extended condolences to both sides.

"It's painful to him when he sees an ad like the ADL's," said Edward Mortimer, Annan's spokesman. "The Anti-Defamation League has

printed something that is defamatory."

Annan condemned Hezbollah on multiple occasions during the war, but usually in conjunction with condemnations of Israel. He also extended condolences to Israelis, in the context of expressing sympathy for all civilian victims.

However, on two notable occasions — after four U.N. observers were killed July 25 and after a bombing killed at least 28 civilians five days later — he singled out Israel for harsh condemnation, even accusing the Jewish state of deliberately targeting the U.N. observers.

Foxman was furious when he learned that the co-chairmen of a U.N. reform committee of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations were to meet with Annan to address their concerns, three weeks after Hezbollah launched the war July 12.

"I asked, 'Why are we going? Who decided now is the time to go?'" Foxman said.

Insiders said Annan's office invited Joel Kaplan, president of B'nai B'rith International, and Robert Goodkind, the AJCommittee president, because the Presidents Conference committee they co-chair was preparing a report on U.N. reform, and Annan was eager to address mounting Jewish frustration.

Also attending was Harold Tanner, chairman of the Presidents Conference. Foxman was not invited, something others in attendance emphasized, though Foxman said that did not bother him.

The meeting was a disappointment, according to the Jewish leaders who attended — Annan especially balked at a request to describe Hezbollah as a "terrorist" group, as

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ Jewish groups are debating whether it's worth ignoring the U.N. altogether

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it is defined by Israel and the United States — but that didn't mean the meeting wasn't worthwhile, they said.

"You never know when your words will have immediate effect or will resonate at a later date," Kaplan said, adding that Foxman should have waited until the committee presented its recommendations on U.N. reform, in about two months.

Harris said the Jewish community inevitably must deal with the United Nations, with all its faults.

"The odds may be against us but we have no choice but to engage, and let's engage intelligently and skillfully and not shoot from the hip," he said.

■
The U.N. Security Council had a crucial role to play in the Lebanon war outcome — though Hezbollah immediately gutted the council's cease-fire resolution by refusing to disarm — and in forthcoming deliberations on Iran's nuclear policy, Harris noted.

Foxman countered that Israel, as a sovereign nation, should be the one to deal with the United Nations. Jewish groups, whose power lies in their ability to confer legitimacy, should stay away, he said.

"All we do is give them cover, and I'm tired of it," he said.

Dan Gillerman, Israel's envoy to the United Nations, who is known to have a good relationship with Annan, did not return calls for comment.

Harris noted some U.N. successes under Annan, including Holocaust commemoration and condemnation of anti-Semitism.

Foxman said those were superficial.

"It's much easier for the Kofi Annans of this world to embrace, commemorate dead Jews," he said. "They have tremendous difficulty embracing and standing up for live Jews."

The remark by Annan that provoked the most outrage came July 26, a day after an Israeli warplane-bombed a U.N. truce observers' post, killing four of the observers.

"I am shocked and deeply distressed by the apparently deliberate targeting

by Israeli defense forces of a U.N. observer post in southern Lebanon," Annan said.

■
Mortimer said Annan was referring to the six alerts Israel got from the post prior to the bombing.

"He said 'apparently deliberate' based on the report he had from people on the spot, that there was no firing by Hezbollah," Mortimer said. "It was highly visible and very well known to the Israelis."

It was subsequently revealed that at least one of the dead observers had complained that Hezbollah men nearby were firing missiles. Israel said it was responding to that Hezbollah fire — but Annan never retracted his statement.

That was not Annan's only misstep, said Jewish leaders. He was unequivocal in condemning Israel for a July 30 bombing at Kana that killed at least 28 civilians, but failed to adequately address Hezbollah's responsibility for using civilian cover to fire its rockets on northern Israel.

"We must condemn this action in the strongest possible terms," Annan said. "This tragedy has, rightly, provoked moral outrage throughout the world."

Much further down in the statement, Annan noted: "Hezbollah has continued firing rockets indiscriminately into northern Israel, from positions apparently located in the midst of the civilian population. No one disputes Israel's right to defend itself. But by its manner of doing

so it has caused, and is causing, death and suffering on a wholly unacceptable scale."

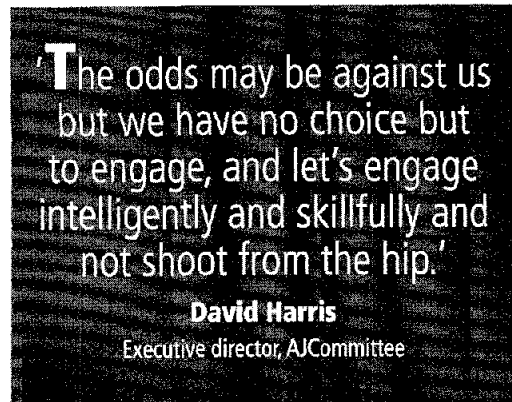
■
More than 700 Lebanese died in the 34-day war, most of them civilians, according to Lebanese counts. More than 160 Israelis died, most of them soldiers.

More broadly, Annan insisted on an immediate cease-fire, while Israel — with a U.S. nod — wanted the international community to hold back until it had substantially damaged Hezbollah's military capability.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference, said the relationship with the United Nations was a work in progress.

"We want to see the U.N. be a vehicle that's effective in dealing with world crises," he said.

To that end, he said, the Presidents Conference was meeting with likely successors to Annan, whose term finishes at the end of this year. ■



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Writer rebuked for Katyusha allegation

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The editor of The Washington Post rebuked a top staffer for suggesting Israel allowed Hezbollah to keep Katyusha rockets to earn sympathy.

Thomas Ricks had said on CNN on Aug. 6 that "U.S. military analysts" had told him "that Israel purposely has left pockets of Hezbollah rockets in Lebanon, because as long as they're being rocketed, they can continue to have a sort of moral equivalence in their operations in Lebanon."

In response to inquiries from the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, Leonard Downie, the Post's executive editor, said: "I have made clear to Tom Ricks that he should not have made those statements."

Ricks had already retreated from the remarks, telling JTA that all he was doing was repeating what analysts had told him. He learned later from other sources that the allegation was "bogus." ■

Costa Rica's decision to move embassy raises ire

By LARRY LUXNER

MIAMI (JTA) — The condominium along Diskin Street is rather upscale, with little distinguishing it from the other apartment buildings in Jerusalem's Kiryat Wolfson neighborhood, except for a few cars bearing diplomatic license plates parked out front.

Those cars belong to the Costa Rican Embassy. Along with El Salvador, the government of Costa Rica for years has been alone in the world in officially recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital by placing its embassy there, rather than in Tel Aviv.

But on Aug. 16 President Oscar Arias upset Israel and angered Costa Rica's 4,000 Jews with his announcement that he would close the embassy in Jerusalem and transfer Ambassador Noemi Baruch and her staff to Tel Aviv.

"The decision is consistent with the obligations of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations, which for 24 years Costa Rica has disregarded by maintaining its diplomatic representation in Jerusalem," said a communique issued Aug. 16 in San Jose by Costa Rica's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It further states that "Costa Rica, as a peace-loving country, hopes that this decision will contribute to the reinforcement of its customary willingness to abide by international norms and to the coherence of its external foreign policy. We are attempting to amend our historical responsibility and ratify our commitment to international norms."

In fulfilling a promise he made before being elected president earlier this year, Arias said that moving the embassy to Tel Aviv "would rectify an historic error that has hurt our reputation on an international level and has deprived us of friendship with the Arab world and Islamic civiliza-

tion, which shares our values of liberty, democracy and human rights."

Veteran Costa Rican diplomat Jaime Daremblum said he was deeply saddened.

"As a Costa Rican of the Jewish faith, I think there is much more at stake here than just moving an embassy," Daremblum told JTA on Wednesday. "There is a big struggle in the world, in which Israel has been the victim of international terrorism, and the timing of this decision by the Costa Rican government was really deplorable."

The decision came less than 48 hours after the cease-fire

between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon took effect, and barely a week after Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez threatened to break diplomatic relations with Israel in the wake of its monthlong conflict in Lebanon.

Daremblum, Costa Rica's ambassador in Washington from 1998 to 2004, said the move should come as no surprise for those who have followed the speeches of Arias, who won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for his efforts to bring peace to war-torn Central America.

"About five years ago, some news agencies reported that President Arias had indicated to audiences in the Middle East that if he became president again, he would move the embassy out of Jerusalem," said Daremblum, now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. "What he wants is anybody's guess. Apparently he wants to push for a Costa Rican seat in the U.N. Security Council."

Reaction from Jewish organizations in the United States was swift and angry.

"We are profoundly disappointed by Costa Rica's decision to move its embassy in Israel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv," said a statement issued by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "Costa Rica and Israel are sister democracies with a long history of good bilateral relations, a fact which only deepens our disappointment. To make such an announcement after Israel has spent a month in intense combat with Hezbollah, when democracies must stand together against Islamic terror, sends the

wrong signal to the world."

The American Jewish Committee also registered its anger.

At one time, 12 Latin American countries and the Netherlands had their embassies in Jerusalem. In 1980, the United Nations passed Resolution 478, calling for the removal of all embassies in Jerusalem. Costa Rica's Foreign Affairs Ministry complied, but the ambassador at the time

procrastinated for a year and a half.

For a six-month period, Costa Rica maintained a phantom embassy in Tel Aviv. But after Luis Alberto

Monge was inaugurated as president in May 1982, his first official act was to move the embassy back to Jerusalem.

"It happened that the president's wife was Jewish. Everybody thought that was the reason, but actually this had nothing to do with it," Rodrigo Carrera, Costa Rica's former envoy to Israel, said in an interview several years ago.

"I have never seen it written that a capital has to be recognized by the world," said Carrera, who has since been transferred back home. "Where an ambassador lives has nothing to do with where the capital is. Most ambassadors in Costa Rica don't actually live in San Jose. Every ambassador who comes to Israel has presented his credentials in Jerusalem."

Two other countries — Paraguay and Bolivia — have maintained embassies in Mevasseret Zion, a suburb of Jerusalem, but only Costa Rica and El Salvador had embassies in the city itself.

Despite Costa Rica's pending departure, El Salvador says it won't follow its neighbor's example for the moment — even though the country's president, Antonio Saca, is of Palestinian descent.

"The decision of the government of Costa Rica merits the respect of all members of the international community," a government decree said. "For its part, El Salvador considers that any decision on the location of its embassy must support efforts towards peace in the Middle East and must not affect the fragile and delicate equilibrium that is being established in the region."

Costa Rica's move leaves El Salvador as the only country in the world with an embassy in Jerusalem.

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ Kofi Annan, the U.N. secretary-general, arrives in Lebanon on a tour aimed at consolidating the Israel-Hezbollah cease-fire. He will also visit Israel, Syria and Iran.

SUNDAY

■ The New York Mets hold their annual Jewish Heritage Day during a game against the Philadelphia Phillies. Jewish music and dancing will precede the game.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Lebanese army reaches border

Lebanese troops reached the Israeli border for the first time since the 1960s. A jeep with two Lebanese soldiers toured the fence last Friday in Kafr Kila, on the eastern portion of the Lebanon-Israel border. A condition of the U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolution ending Israel's monthlong war with Hezbollah was the deployment of Lebanese troops throughout the South, in place of the Hezbollah terrorist army that launched the war.

Lebanese troops also deployed in Khiam, a Hezbollah stronghold. However, Hezbollah fighters remained with their arms throughout southern Lebanon, in violation of the resolution.

Israel freezes West Bank plans

Israel's government froze plans to pull out from parts of the West Bank. Israeli officials confirmed a report in last Friday's Ha'aretz that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert for now has shelved the plan to unilaterally set Israel's borders by pulling out troops and dismantling West Bank settlements.

The plan lost favor in the wake of Israel's war in Lebanon. Israel's unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and the Gaza Strip last year did not stop rocket attacks and cross-border raids, but only brought the attackers closer.

Israeli calls Hezbollah war a victory

The Israeli army's chief of staff declared Israel's war with Lebanon a victory. But Cabinet members suggested the results were murky at best. Lt. Gen Dan Halutz told the Cabinet on Sunday that Israel had won the war on "points" even if there had been no "knockout."

Halutz pointed to Israel's damage to the Hezbollah infrastructure as evidence of victory. Cabinet ministers, however, pointed out that Hezbollah's prestige within the Arab world had soared and that Iran and Syria remained committed supporters of the group. Also, Israel failed to win the release of two soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah, the ministers said.

Israel: Hezbollah used Russian weapons

Israel complained to Russia that Russian-made anti-tank missiles reached Hezbollah fighters, who used them with devastating effect against Israeli troops. An Israeli delegation traveled to Moscow earlier this week to deliver the complaint, Ha'aretz reported. The anti-tank missiles proved to be one of Hezbollah's most effective weapons in the monthlong war in Lebanon, responsible for the deaths of at least 50 of the 118 Israeli soldiers killed in the fighting.

Israel protested in recent years when Russia sold advanced weapons to Syria, warning that they would be forwarded to Hezbollah, but Russia dismissed the concerns. A Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said it was "impossible" that Russian weapons could have reached Hezbollah.

Minister resigns to face trial

Israel's justice minister resigned in the wake of sexual-harassment charges.

Haim Ramon announced his resignation Sunday. Israel's attorney general said he plans to indict Ramon on charges that he forcibly kissed an 18-year-old soldier at an office party July 12, the day the war started between Israel and Hezbollah.

Diaspora money heads North

World Jewry is expected to contribute about \$344 million to rehabilitating Israel's northern towns and cities. The money, according to an Israeli government plan announced Sunday, would contribute

to the overall cost of repairing damage and providing assistance to northern residents, estimated at about \$1 billion.

Money would go to financial aid for residents and businesses, repairs, psychological counseling, rebuilding schools and other projects run by a newly formed Israeli government committee. An emergency campaign in the United States has already raised \$220 million for assistance to the North.

Israel arrests two Hamas lawmakers

Israel arrested two Palestinian Authority lawmakers over the weekend. Israeli forces arrested Mahmoud al-Ramahi, the secretary-general of the Parliament, on Sunday, a day after it arrested Nasser al-Sa'her, the Palestinian Authority's deputy prime minister.

Israel has arrested an estimated two dozen Hamas lawmakers since an Israeli soldier was kidnapped in the Gaza Strip in late June.

WORLD

Annan criticizes Europe

Kofi Annan criticized European member states for not sending troops to southern Lebanon. The United Nations' secretary-general made the statements Saturday.

The Europeans were expected to send delegations to help expand the U.N. interim force in Lebanon as part of the cease-fire deal brokered to end fighting between Israel and Hezbollah. The leading European countries who have the best-equipped armies have been sluggish in responding to the U.N. request for additional troops.

NORTH AMERICA

Bush frustrated with France

President Bush expressed frustration with inconsistencies in France's commitment to a multinational force in Lebanon.

"There's been different signals coming out of France," Bush said last Friday. "Yesterday they had a statement. Today they had a statement. We're working with France." France previously said it would lead an expanded UNIFIL force to help maintain the cease-fire that ended the Israel-Hezbollah war, but in recent days French leaders have said they want to clarify the force's rules of engagement before they move in.

Officials: U.S. helped stop Iranian shipment

The United States reportedly blocked an Iranian cargo plane's flight to Syria last month because it was carrying weapons for Hezbollah.

Officials from two different U.S. intelligence agencies confirmed to USA Today that U.S. diplomats persuaded Turkey and Iraq to deny an Iranian plane laden with sophisticated missiles and launchers access to their airspace en route to Syria.

Young quits after 'hurtful' remarks

Andrew Young resigned as a Wal-Mart advocate after disparaging Jewish, Arab and Korean shop owners. A former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and mayor of Atlanta, Young resigned as head of "Working Families for Wal-Mart," and apologized. The Los Angeles Sentinel, a black newspaper, asked Young how he could advocate for an organization that displaces "mom and pop" outfits.

Young, who is black, said he was pleased when those stores were "run out" of his neighborhood. "Those are the people who have been overcharging us — selling us stale bread, and bad meat and wilted vegetables," he said. "And they sold out and moved to Florida. I think they've ripped off our communities enough. First it was Jews, then it was Koreans and now it's Arabs, very few black people own these stores."