

## IN THE NEWS

## Israeli troops out of Lebanon

Israel completed its Lebanon troop withdrawal.

The last of Israel's soldiers and military vehicles left southern Lebanon on Sunday, completing a handover of former Hezbollah strongholds to the Lebanese army and U.N. peacekeepers.

The pullout was small in scale; some 90 percent of Israeli forces had already quit Lebanese territory since an Aug. 14 truce ended the summer war with Hezbollah.

## Congress extends sanctions on Iran

The U.S. Congress passed a bill extending Iran sanctions, but Democrats complained it was significantly watered down.

The Senate passed the Iran Freedom Support Act in a voice vote early Saturday morning after last-minute wrangling between the parties.

The House of Representatives had passed the act in a voice vote on Sept. 28.

## Palestinian act fails in Congress

A last-ditch effort to pass the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act failed.

Democrats in Congress and Jewish community leaders told JTA that pro-Israel lobbyists launched a lobbying effort early last week to pass the act, which would prohibit direct funding to the Palestinian Authority until it renounces terrorism.

Negotiations to resolve differences between versions of the bill in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate stalled passage this summer.

The act is not likely to come up again in Congress until well into 2007.

**Reminder:**  
The JTA World Report will not be published Tues., Oct. 3.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Democrats hit back after ads claim GOP is for Israel supporters

By RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Top Democrats are mounting a furious counterattack against claims by Jewish Republicans that the GOP is likelier to favor Israel.

"Say 'no' to this effort to somehow target Democrats as being opposed to Israel," Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), who is Jewish, said Sept. 28 in a hastily arranged conference call with the Jewish media.

The conference call, also addressed by Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.), the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a likely contender for the presidency in 2008, was the latest response to a series of hard-hitting advertisements placed by the Republican Jewish Coalition.

The effect of the ad campaign on Jewish voting patterns, which have favored Democrats by wide margins for decades, is likely only to be incremental. However, it could influence how major Jewish and pro-Israel donors spend their money, an area where Democrats acknowledge Republicans have made inroads in recent years.

The money question is especially critical six weeks ahead of a midterm congressional campaign that could see Republicans lose one or both houses of Congress.

The most recent RJC ad appearing in papers this week states bluntly, "There is a difference. Republicans are more likely to support Israel."

It cites two recent polls showing that Republicans are much likelier to say their sympathies are with Israel, while Demo-

crats are likelier to divide their responses between support for Israel and neutrality. In both cases, the percentage of those likely to favor the Arabs is minimal.

An earlier ad quoted former President Carter questioning the moral underpinnings of Israel's war this summer against Hezbollah in Lebanon — and saying, in the same interview, "I represent the vast majority of Democrats," though the latter statement referred to Carter's views against the Iraq war.

U.S. Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.), who is Jewish, slammed the ads in an opinion piece published last week in the *Forward*, a Jewish weekly. JTA has learned that other Jewish legislators also plan to attack the campaign.

The latest ad led senior Jewish Democrats to press the Israeli Embassy in Washington and pro-Israel groups to weigh in. Bipartisan support for Israel has always been considered critical to making Israel's case, and the Jewish Democrats told embassy and pro-Israel officials that the RJC campaign undermined that unity.

By the end of last week there were results, though spokesmen refrained from directly criticizing the RJC ads.

"Support for the U.S.-Israel relationship has always been bipartisan, with the strong support of both Democrats and Republicans, and that's not changing," said Josh Block, spokesman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The Israeli Embassy also was careful to keep above the partisan fray.

"There is a long-standing tradition of bi-

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ A counterattack against claims by Jewish Republicans that the GOP is likelier to favor Israel

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partisan support by both Democrats and Republicans for Israel, which we cherish and for which we are grateful," said David Siegel, the embassy spokesman. "The special relationship between Israel and the United States is deep and profound, based on shared values which transcend party lines in both countries."

Keeping out of local politics is a typical posture for any foreign nation, but one that Democrats, speaking off the record, said they found frustrating.

In the call with the Jewish media, Wyden worried that Republican sniping about a divide between Republicans and Democrats on Israel could be self-fulfilling.

"I think it really could hurt the traditional bulwark of bipartisan support in the Congress," he said.

Matt Brooks, the RJC's executive director, said Democrats would do better to examine whether something was going wrong within their party instead of blaming Republicans for pointing out the problem.

"Their attention is misplaced. We're doing nothing other than illuminating a very sad and disturbing trend taking place," he said. "What the senators should be focusing on is why the grassroots are moving away from the Democratic Party."

Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.), who is Jewish, echoed Brooks. Coleman told JTA that his message to Democratic colleagues was, "Don't shoot the messenger."

"I would hope that my colleagues on

the other side of the aisle would be looking inward and doing what they can to restore that strong bipartisan unanimity," he said.

Reed said the poll questions were overly general, and that Jewish voters should pay attention to the solid pro-Israel record of congressional Democrats, who have pressed President Bush to cut off the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and isolate Iran.

"You have to look at what's happening" in Congress, Reed said. He also repeated what has become a theme in the Democratic campaign for Jewish votes — that President Bush, while well intentioned, has endangered Israel because the Iraq war has emboldened Iran.

"When it comes to what this administration is doing, that's where the concern should be," he said. "That is much more central to the security concerns of Israel."

Biden, who at times has criticized Israel — particularly when it expands settlements — said Democrats' differences with Israel over tactics did not indicate an erosion in support.

"There's nothing to break Democratic support for Israel, nothing, even if every Jew in the country votes Republican," Biden said.

Biden said that his differences often were with some in the pro-Israel community, rather than with Israel itself.

He said former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon urged him to bolster President Mahmoud Abbas, a relative moderate, with assistance, but that colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives who opposed such initiatives stymied his efforts.

Legislation backed by some pro-Israel groups "may be totally divorced from what I'm speaking to the foreign minister about, or my discussions with Sharon before he had his stroke," Biden said.

**'There's nothing to break Democratic support for Israel, nothing, even if every Jew in the country votes Republican.'**

**Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.)**

## Alleged McGreevey lover pipes up

By PETER EPHROSS

NEW YORK (JTA) — The boxing match between former New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey and his alleged gay Israeli lover has gone another round.

Golan Cipel has come out swinging after McGreevey gave his side of their alleged sexual relationship in his new memoir, "The Confession."

"All of the encounters are twisted," said Cipel, who maintains that he's not gay and that McGreevey sexually assaulted him. "He took the cases I have against him and completely twisted and changed the facts."

The counterpunching between the two men is the latest twist in a public battle that has involved a lawsuit and threats — and which brought McGreevey down in 2004 when, under intense public scrutiny, he publicly admitted that he was gay.

McGreevey's book details the rise and fall of a modern American politician, one who became governor of New Jersey in his

40s, only to resign two years later mired in scandal.

In his mea culpa, McGreevey explained that he knew since his childhood that he had gay leanings, but he hid them early on because of his Irish Catholic upbringing — and later because of his belief that admitting them would harm his political career.

Soon after McGreevey's August 20 speech, Cipel, then 35, returned to Israel.

"I wanted to be with my family. My parents' apartment was surrounded by journalists. I went back to Israel to manage my situation," he told JTA in a phone interview.

Cipel had difficulty finding work at first but in the two years since, he says he has been able to put his life back together.

Reluctant to talk about his private life, Cipel said he lives on his own and works as a consultant, but did not elaborate. He also said he's not married or dating anyone.

"I'm just waiting to find the right one," he said.

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# Israel takes fresh look at Golan

By **URIEL HEILMAN**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With criticism of the handling of this summer's war in Lebanon continuing to mount, Israel's military elite is struggling to deal both with the war's political fallout and its implications for military strategy.

As they ponder the threats to northern Israel, these strategists are thinking not only about Hezbollah, but about the questions this war raises for Israel's other northern front: Syria.

Specifically, does the rocket-based strategy Hezbollah adopted in the war make the Golan Heights more indispensable than ever in a potential conflict with Syria? Or does the enemy's reliance on missile technology detract from the importance of territorial buffer zones?

"There are those who claim that because of the long-range weaponry, the importance of the Golan is diminished. It is not annulled, but it is diminished," said David Hacham, an Arab affairs adviser in Israel's Defense Ministry. "And there are those — also experts, both sides are experts — who say that the importance of the Golan, as a base of departure for attack, is unparalleled."

"Personally, I believe the Golan is something that cannot be relinquished," Hacham said. "Even if there is a war and they use long-range weaponry, and they hit Tiberias and even Tel Aviv, this does not convey the importance of the Golan. Because if you want to launch a counterattack, it is a lot easier to go from the Golan into Syrian territory than if you are in Lebanon."

## THIS WEEK

### MONDAY

■ Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, arrives in the Middle East for talks with Israeli, Palestinian, Egyptian and Saudi leaders about reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

■ President Bush welcomes Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the White House. Stabilizing Lebanon and reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace talks will be on their agenda.

### WEDNESDAY

■ Prince Turki al-Faisal, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, outlines the state of U.S.-Saudi relations in a talk at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The United States wants Saudi Arabia to increase its profile in Middle East peacemaking.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

Captured from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War, the Golan is widely considered vital to the security of northern Israel. The plateau overlooks most of the country's North — which southern Lebanon does not — and between 1948 and 1967 Syrian gunners used their perch on the heights to shell the kibbutzim and small towns of the Upper Galilee.

Israel's conquest of the Golan pushed hostile Syrian forces back behind a United Nations-patrolled cease-fire line, brought valuable water sources under Israeli control and gave Israel a place from which to monitor the Syrians. At its highest point, the Israeli part of the Golan is more than 7,000 feet, with the Syrian capital within view.

The threat of missiles from nearby enemy states is not new to Israelis. Saddam Hussein famously deployed Scud missiles against Israel during the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, to little material effect. But the thousands of Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah during this latest war — and the physical and psychological damage they wreaked — has many Israelis reassessing the state of their security.

Israel Defense Forces officials refused to be interviewed for this story. But a former chief of the military's Northern Command, retired Maj. Gen. Amiram Levin, told JTA that the war in Lebanon had made the Golan more important than ever.

"You have to get faster to the heart of the threat, which in this case would be Damascus," Levin said. The war, he explained, "strengthens the idea that you have to be in a position where you can inflict significant damage on the threatening state as quickly as possible."

A former deputy head of the Mossad spy agency, Levin now is an executive at an Israeli security company called Suspect Detection Systems.

Faced with a future in which missiles may be the primary medium of attack, some Israelis say the key to security is

not holding onto the Golan but ceding it to Syria in exchange for a guarantee of peace.

On Aug. 21, just after the end of the war in Lebanon, Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter announced, "In exchange for peace with Syria, Israel can leave the Golan Heights."

That assessment elicited outrage from many in Israel.

Last week, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert weighed in on the matter after Syrian government officials said they were willing to restart talks over the Golan Heights.

"As long as I am prime minister, the Golan will remain forever in our hands because it is an inseparable part of the State of Israel," Olmert told the fervently Orthodox Israeli newspaper Mishpachah.

Israel annexed the Golan in 1981.

Many Israelis are reluctant to part with the Golan not only because of its strategic value, but because it's home to nearly 20,000 residents and contains precious water resources, valuable agricultural land, Israel's only ski resort,

prized wineries, miles of beautiful hiking trails and scenic vacation villages.

Moreover, the area now has been in Israeli hands for nearly as long as it was controlled by Syria. And as long as Syria represents even a minimal threat to the Jewish state, Israel sees no reason to seek a change in the status quo.

Meanwhile, Syria's position as an international pariah state and terrorist sponsor keeps the pressure off Israel to cede the Golan. The regime in Damascus still supports Hezbollah, hosts the leadership of Palestinian terrorist groups, ignores demands that it allow inspections of possible weapons of mass destruction programs and is on America's list of terrorist-sponsoring regimes.

That's why Olmert was able to deride both Syrian President Bashar Assad's recent calls for peace and his threats of war.

Olmert called Syria's pronouncements "public relations tricks."

For now, it appears, Israel has no interest in putting the Golan on the market. ■

**"If you want to launch a counterattack, it is a lot easier to go from the Golan into Syrian territory than if you are in Lebanon."**

**David Hacham**

Israeli Defense Ministry official

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Israel weighs deeper Gaza offensive

Israel's military chief said a major sweep of the Gaza Strip is under consideration. Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz said Sunday that continued cross-border rocket fire by Palestinian terrorists in Gaza since Israel quit the territory last year could warrant a major offensive.

"We will have to find a means to reduce the rocket fire on Sderot militarily," Halutz told Israel Radio, referring to a border town that has suffered frequent salvos.

"This could require, for example, a more sustained and deeper ground action," he said. "We are holding consultations on this."

Overnight, an Israeli air strike killed two Al-Aksa Brigade terrorists in the southern Gazan town of Rafah.

On the internal Palestinian front, gunmen from the governing Hamas and the formerly dominant Fatah factions clashed in Gaza, causing several casualties.

#### U.N. probe on Lebanon killing inconclusive

A U.N. probe into Israel's killing of four peacekeeping observers was inconclusive because Israel refused to cooperate.

The four peacekeepers, from Austria, Canada, China and Finland died July 25, at the midpoint of the 34-day Israel-Hezbollah war, when an Israeli combat plane dropped an 1,100-pound bomb on their bunker after repeated U.N. warnings to Israel about their presence.

Israel accepted full responsibility for their deaths, saying it was an "operational blunder," and expressed regret, but refused to allow its officers to cooperate with the U.N. inquiry board.

"The board did not have access to operational or tactical level IDF commanders involved in the incident, and was, therefore, unable to determine why the attacks on the U.N. position were not halted, despite repeated demarches to the Israeli authorities from U.N. personnel, both in the field and at headquarters," said a statement issued last Friday by the office of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

#### Israeli minister wants Nasrallah assassinated

An Israeli Cabinet minister called for Hezbollah's leader to be assassinated.

"He's bad for the Jews, he's bad for the Arabs, he's bad for the Christians," Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said Saturday. "We should wait for the right opportunity and not leave him alive," he told Army Radio.

But Ben-Eliezer, a former defense minister, said Israel should hold off on any assassination attempt until it can be sure of not causing a large number of innocent casualties.

#### Iranian TV calls Disney Jewish

A report on Iranian TV claimed that Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie is a tool of the Israel lobby, a watchdog group said. Referring to Zionism, the July 27 report said, "Cinema is considered another, subtle weapon in the hands of those who support this corrupt ideology," the Middle East Media Research Institute reported.

The report gave as evidence of this claim the fact that "7.7 percent of Disney's board of directors" are Jewish.

A report earlier in the year aired similar comments about the "Tom and Jerry" cartoon.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Bush issues Yom Kippur greetings

In holiday greetings, President Bush said Jewish observance of Yom Kippur makes the world a more peaceful place. "Yom Kippur is a solemn time to express thanksgiving that the Almighty remembers

the names of all His children," said a White House statement issued in the name of the president and the first lady.

"During this blessed Day of Atonement, Jewish people gather in synagogues, consider their deeds and actions and celebrate as the sound of the Shofar proclaims the forgiveness and mercy shown by the Creator of life.

As the High Holy Days come to an end, the Jewish people in America and around the world remind us of the gift of religious freedom and the blessings of God's steadfast love.

On Yom Kippur and throughout the year, your deep commitment to faith helps make the world a more hopeful and peaceful place."

#### NORCs go federal

A Jewish federation model to facilitate care for the elderly in their home communities will be included in federal grant legislation.

The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella body for North American federations, launched the "Aging in Place" initiative in 2002, helping 40 communities in 25 states obtain federal dollars for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, or NORCs.

The models were featured in a U.S. Senate hearing this year to consider reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

As a result, a federal grant program for NORCs is included in language agreed to by conferees from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

#### Cleveland voting place upsets some

Some Jewish voters in Cleveland are objecting to being asked to vote in a church. Some local Jewish officials say some voters in the heavily Orthodox neighborhood in Cuyahoga County might not feel comfortable casting their ballot in the church in the November election, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported.

The elections director in the county, Michael Vu, said the county has polling places in 149 churches and one synagogue.

### WORLD

#### Swiss rally for Israel

Some 3,000 demonstrators held a pro-Israeli rally in the Swiss capital. Saturday's rally in Bern called for the Swiss government to support Israel's right to exist and show solidarity with the Jewish state's fight against terrorism.

Twenty organizations signed a resolution urging the government to refuse negotiations with terrorist groups that reject the existence of the Israeli state.

#### British lawmaker scrutinized for remarks

A member of Britain's House of Lords will be investigated by her party for comments about the "pro-Israel lobby."

Liberal Democrat party members have announced that Baroness Jenny Tonge's position in the party will be reviewed in response to her public remarks. In a speech that recently aired on BBC radio, Tonge said, "The pro-Israeli lobby has got its [financial] grips on the Western World.

I think they've probably got a certain grip on our party."

More than 20 of her peers in the House of Lords wrote a letter to the Times condemning Tonge's comments, stating, "Baroness Tonge evoked a classic anti-Jewish conspiracy theory" and that her language "as a member of the House of Lords, was irresponsible and inappropriate."

In early 2004, she was fired from her position as Liberal Democrat spokeswoman on international development for saying she could understand why a Palestinian would become a suicide bomber and also that she would consider becoming one were she a Palestinian.