

IN THE NEWS
Meridor confirmed as Israeli envoy to U.S.

Israel's Cabinet approved the appointment of Sallai Meridor as the country's ambassador to the United States.

"The appointment will contribute significantly to Israel's ties with the United States and to the Jewish community in the United States, as part of Israel's efforts to strengthen its relations with this important nation," Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told his Cabinet on Sunday before Meridor was confirmed as successor to the current ambassador, Daniel Ayalon.

Though Ayalon is not expected to step down until January, Israel Radio reported that Olmert plans to take Meridor with him to next month's 75th General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities in Los Angeles.

Peres downplays Israeli threats on Iran

Israel is unlikely to attack Iran's nuclear sites, Shimon Peres said.

Asked over the weekend whether Israel might launch a pre-emptive strike to prevent its archenemy gaining the means to make nuclear weapons, the vice premier said in an interview with Israel's Channel 2 television: "I don't think we must be, or are capable of being, the ones to deal with this issue."

Egyptians nab Palestinian arms

Egyptian police intercepted a large shipment of arms last Friday headed for the Gaza Strip.

The shipment of some 200 crates of automatic weapons and ammunition raised concern that Palestinians may be planning to attack a kibbutz on the Gaza border, Ha'aretz reported.

Israel also destroyed a weapons-smuggling tunnel inside a home in Gaza last Friday.

The Israelis have found 13 of the tunnels, according to the army.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

Sisters doing it for themselves: Jewish women on rise in Congress

By JENNIFER JACOBSON

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Why are there so many women in the congressional Jewish caucus?

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) cuts to the chase. It's the Jewish-mother factor, she says: They get things done.

"Is it surprising that a Jewish mother would be in the U.S. Congress?" Schakowsky asks with a laugh. "We know how to do things. We state our minds. Often we come from educated and successful backgrounds."

Jewish women outpace their non-Jewish counterparts in the Congress, both in terms of the relative Jewish population in the United States — about 2 percent — and in terms of the male-to-female ratio in Congress.

Women hold 67 of the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, or about 15 percent. Of the 26-member Jewish contingent, seven are women, more than 25 percent.

They are Schakowsky; Susan Davis (D-Calif.); Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.); Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.); Jane Harman (D-Calif.); Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.); and Allyson Schwartz (D-Pa.).

There are two Jewish women in the Senate: Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.), among 14 women and 11 Jews.

A number of the female lawmakers have moved up the leadership ranks of the Democratic Party: Lowey served a term as chairwoman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Harman is the ranking member of the Intelligence Committee; and Schakowsky serves on the House Democratic leadership team as chief deputy whip.

Three more Jewish women are running in these midterm elections: Gabrielle Giffords, a Democrat, is a shoo-in in an open seat in southern Arizona; and Ellen Simon, a Democrat, is running a competitive race in central Arizona against incumbent Rep. Rick Renzi, a Republican. In northern Virginia, Democrat Judy Feder has an outside chance against incumbent Frank Wolf.

The increased visibility of women is a recent phenomenon. The number of women in the House doubled in the 1990s and increased in the Senate in the past decade.

"Inside that increase of women in general, there's been a strong representation of women from groups of the population that are minority groups," says Ruth Mandel, director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Some 25 percent of the women in Congress are women of color, she says.

As political office has become more accessible, Mandel contends that minority women, including Jewish women, "have taken advantage of the opportunity, have been inspired — almost doubly inspired — to be part of that progressive change."

Nowhere is this trend more apparent than in the Democratic Party.

"Without a doubt we are certainly the more welcoming of the two parties to women's rights issues" and "that includes a woman's right to choose," says David Goldenberg, deputy executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

He attributes the slew of Jewish Democratic women in Congress to the fact that the "Jewish community really has sought to em-

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2006**

Jewish women have come to outpace their non-Jewish counterparts in Congress

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power women." Also, he says, mainstream Jews are more likely to be Democrats than the rest of America.

Republican Jewish women have won leadership roles as well. Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, cites Linda Lingle, governor of Hawaii, and Florence Shapiro, a state senator in Texas, as rising stars within his party.

Brooks acknowledges that fewer Jewish women have ascended the ranks of the Republican leadership, but says that's because the goal is "to get more Jewish Republicans, period."

"It's not a gender thing," he says. "We're looking for the best people, men and women."

That's what voters look for, too, says Matt Dorf, managing partner of Rabinowitz/Dorf Communications and a Democratic Party consultant.

"Race after race, it's the views that matter, not the Jews," he said. "People are voting for good candidates with smart ideas."

Still, he says, that doesn't stop U.S. Jews from looking to their representatives with pride.

"It's always been a badge of pride how many Jewish members of Congress there are," Dorf says. "The Jews in America look to public figures for proof of their community's acceptance in mainstream America."

Berkley has been keenly aware of this throughout her political career. When she first ran for office in 1982, she says, some

elected officials in Nevada just happened to be Jewish. She wanted to reverse that equation.

"When I ran, I wanted to run as a Jewish woman who happened to be a public servant," she says. "My Jewish background is the essence of who I am. It's important for people to know and appreciate that."

It's also what propelled her into public service. Berkley says her mother, a homemaker, was active in her synagogue sisterhood and B'nai B'rith.

The people skills her mother used in those organizations are the same skills Berkley uses to campaign. She also took from her mother a commitment to social justice and equality.

"I took the values I got from my mother, and I'm able to translate that into legislative action," she says.

The Jewish value of "tikkun olam," or repairing the world, is a natural fit for Jewish women and the Democratic Party, Schakowsky says.

"A sense of justice is very much part of our Jewish upbringing," she says.

She describes her Jewish female colleagues as passionate and committed to the issues.

"Self-confidence certainly characterizes all of us," she says. "So it's not surprising that we'd seek leadership positions."

They also have similar agendas when it comes to supporting Israel, children and the elderly, she says.

Schakowsky attributes the recent suc-

cess of women candidates, and not just Jewish ones, to the fact that "voters think women are more honest and less likely to be swayed by special interest groups."

Wasserman Schultz agrees. The average

voter views women as being in politics "for the right reasons," she says, and sees them as "agents of change."

When public frustration over government corruption and scandals surface, women tend to do well in elections,

Wasserman Schultz says. She expects this November will be no different.

Female Jewish candidates tend to help each other out. Wasserman Schultz recently flew to Arizona to help Giffords' campaign. Berkley held a fund-raiser for Giffords at her home in Washington.

Giffords, 36, believes sending more Jewish women to Congress will push forward issues such as stem-cell research and ensure that women continue to have the right to abortion. Jewish women will also push education to the forefront, she says, and will advocate for greater U.S. involvement in Israeli-Arab peacemaking.

"This administration has not taken an active role in the peace process as it should," Giffords says, but contends that Jewish women could change that.

"In my family, if you want to get something done you take it to the Jewish women relatives," she says. "Jewish women, by and large, know how to get things done." ■

I took the values I got from my mother, and I'm able to translate that into legislative action.

Shelley Berkley

U.S. Representative, D-Nev.



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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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Jewish Dems don't love Huckabee

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish Democrats slammed Arkansas' governor for joking that he lost weight at a concentration camp. Mike Huckabee, a Republican, has advertised his diet as a health model for obese Americans, and he bantered Thursday with radio talk show host Don Imus about his weight loss.

Imus chided Huckabee that he looked "emaciated." "I have just come from six weeks at a concentration camp held by the Democrat Party of Arkansas in an undisclosed location, making a hostage tape," Huckabee replied. "That's why I look that

way." The National Jewish Democratic Council said Huckabee, a likely contender for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination, "ought to think about the people who he might offend with such insensitive words."

At the very least, he owes all of us an apology and explanation for his tasteless comments." In a response, Huckabee's office said the NJDC criticism was "far-reaching" and "laughable." "Having been a nine-time visitor to Israel and taken groups to Yad Vashem, I have a great deal of respect for the Jewish people," the statement said. ■

Kahane Chai's ties to terror law

By MICHAEL KRAFT

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A federal appeals court's unanimous decision upholding the State Department designation of Kahane Chai as a terrorist organization is a reminder that the U.S. government's anti-terror efforts aren't aimed only at Muslim groups, despite

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

- The Croatian city of Dubrovnik will host the next Holocaust education conference sponsored by the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe.

- "The Convergence Summit 2006, Claims and Challenges Facing Israel" takes place in Savannah, Ga.

- The American Israel Public Affairs Committee holds its national summit in Houston. Speakers include John McCain (R-Ariz.)

- Two Israeli Cabinet ministers, Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz and Immigration Minister Ze'ev Boim, arrive in Washington on official visits. Mofaz is scheduled to meet with Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of State.

- The American Jewish Committee releases its annual survey of the views of U.S. Jews on elections and on domestic and foreign policy.

WEDNESDAY

- Representatives of liberal Jewish groups meet in New York with Jewish philanthropists, among them George Soros, to discuss setting up a network to press the United States into greater Israel-Palestinian engagement.

- The Council for the National Interest, a group that contends that the pro-Israel lobby wields disproportionate control in Washington, hosts a Capitol Hill briefing on "Christian Zionists and the midterm elections."

- The Arab American Institute releases a survey of Arab Americans ahead of Midterm elections.

THURSDAY

- The Anti-Defamation League holds its national meeting in Atlanta.

FRIDAY

- Dalia Itzik, the Knesset's speaker, arrives in Washington for talks with U.S. officials.

- The Union for Reform Judaism's Keshet College Department lead a three-day convention at the University of Florida.

SUNDAY

- A three-day conference on conversions opens in Boston.

frequent complaints by some American and other Arab groups.

Indeed, it was the 1994 attack on Palestinians in Hebron by a supporter of Kahane Chai, a militant Jewish group based in the West Bank, as well as Hamas bus bombings the same year against Israeli civilians, that helped prompt a major U.S. law against fundraising for foreign terrorist organizations.

The three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia acted unanimously Tuesday in supporting the State Department's 2004 redesignation of Kahane Chai as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. The group is an offshoot of the Jewish Defense League founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was assassinated by an Arab man in New York in 1990.

Chief Judge Douglas Ginsburg said that then-Secretary of State Colin Powell acted reasonably in reaffirming the designation because of Kahane Chai's links to death threats against Israeli police officers and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The designations were made under provisions of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. The law makes it illegal to knowingly provide funding or other forms of material support to groups the secretary of state designates as terrorist groups. The initial designation was made in 1997 but, under a sunset provision, designations had to be renewed every two years.

Currently, 42 groups are designated following the State Department's preparation of detailed administrative records that have to be approved by the Justice and Treasury Departments. The list includes Middle Eastern groups such as Al-Qaida, Hamas, Hezbollah and half a dozen other Palestinian groups, as well as Kahane Chai and its predecessor Kach, and various organizations in Asia,

Latin America, Africa and Europe.

These 1996 provisions were a major step in the effort to curb terrorism funding. U.S. counterterrorism laws previously focused primarily on state sponsors of terrorism, but beginning in the early 1990s there was a growing awareness that terrorist groups were increasingly turning to front companies and fund raising among sympathizers

instead of depending for financial support on terrorist-supporting countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

The law to curb fund raising for terrorist organizations was precipitated

by two series of terrorist attacks in the Middle East, one by Dr. Baruch Goldstein who shot and killed 29 Arabs at a Hebron mosque in February 1994 before being beaten to death. He was believed to have been affiliated with Kahane Chai or Kach, small groups of right-wing Jewish

BACKGROUNDER

U.S. counterterrorism laws previously focused on state sponsors, but in the 1990s began to look at front companies and fund raising among terrorist sympathizers.

extremists.

The second event was a series of deadly bus bombings in Israel later that year by Hamas, the group that won Palestinian Authority parliamentary elections earlier this year.

Administration teams drafted new legislation that was introduced for the 1995 congressional session. That bill was enacted after modifications and lengthy hearings more than a year later as the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996.

At the same time, the Clinton administration took a stop-gap measure, issuing an executive order in January 1995 freezing the assets of 12 Middle Eastern terrorist groups. The "dirty dozen" included 10 Palestinian groups and two Jewish groups — Kahane Chai and Kach — that have since merged. ■

(The writer is a Washington-based counterterrorism consultant and a former senior adviser in the State Department Counterterrorism Office.)

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Israelis coming to D.C.

Top Israeli officials are visiting Washington ahead of a meeting between the U.S. and Israeli leaders.

Israeli Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz will meet Monday with Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state.

Also meeting with officials this week is Ze'ev Boim, Israel's immigration minister, and Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik.

Israeli Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter met this week with Stephen Hadley, the White House's national security adviser. President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert meet Nov. 13; the Bush administration hopes to announce by then an advance in efforts to revive Israel-Palestinian talks.

Poll: Jewish support for Iran strike declining

U.S. Jewish support for a military strike against Iran is declining, according to a new study.

Thirty-eight percent of American Jews would support U.S. military action against Iran, according to the American Jewish Committee's annual survey of U.S. Jewish opinion, down from 49 percent last year.

The survey also found that 81 percent of respondents think the Arabs' goal is the destruction of Israel, 62 percent disapproved of American handling of the war on terror and 66 percent believe Iraq will never become a stable democracy.

Addressing this summer's conflict between Israel and Lebanon, 55 percent said they approve of Israel's handling of the war, but less than a quarter said Israel emerged as the winner.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel defiant on overflights

Israel said it would continue air force flights over Lebanon despite a rebuke from France.

Defense Minister Amir Peretz said Sunday the surveillance flights over Lebanon were needed to track arms shipments to Hezbollah combatants from neighboring Syria.

"As long as attempts to smuggle arms into Lebanon persist, the legitimacy of Israeli overflights increases," he told the Cabinet.

Israeli debate about the overflight policy was stirred up by French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, who said last Friday that violations of Lebanese airspace threatened to undermine the Aug. 14 truce that ended Israel's war with Hezbollah.

She also hinted that French and other troops making up the bolstered U.N. peacekeeper force in southern Lebanon could perceive the Israeli overflights as a threat and fire on the planes in self-defense.

Peretz called Alliot-Marie's remarks "inappropriate."

He said international peacekeepers stationed in Lebanon "should act against Hezbollah and not against Israel."

Hamas threatens more kidnappings

A Hamas official threatened the abduction of more Israeli soldiers.

"We will abduct more soldiers if Israel does not release Palestinian prisoners," Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar, a senior Hamas member, told supporters at a Gaza Strip rally over the weekend.

Hamas was the main actor in a June 25 raid across the Gaza border in which two Israeli soldiers were killed and a third, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, captured.

The Palestinian Authority has demanded that Israel release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Shalit.

While Israel has formally ruled this out, a Hamas aide was quoted as saying over the weekend that it could relent soon.

"Soon we will find a solution to the matter of the captive soldier," said Ahmed Youssef, an adviser to P.A. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

"Israel has voiced readiness to accept the Palestinian terms, which include the release of Palestinian prisoners."

Report: Spy heading U.N. hostage efforts

The United Nations reportedly appointed a German spy to help secure the release of two Israeli soldiers captured and held hostage by Hezbollah.

The German news magazine Der Spiegel reported Saturday that U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan made the appointment in September during a secret meeting with the unnamed BND intelligence agent in Madrid.

According to Der Spiegel, the spy will lead behind-the-scenes efforts to secure the release of Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, whose abduction by Hezbollah in a July 12 border raid triggered the Lebanon war.

The BND, Germany's foreign spy service, was integral to brokering a 2004 deal in which Hezbollah repatriated a captured Israeli businessman and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers in exchange for Israel's release of hundreds of Arab security prisoners.

Neither the BND nor the United Nations commented on the report.

WORLD

Ambassador alarmed for German Jews

Israel's ambassador to Berlin voiced alarm at growing anti-Semitism in Germany. "German Jews feel unsafe," Ambassador Shimon Stein said in an interview published over the weekend by Germany's Neue Osnabruecker newspaper.

"I have the strong feeling that Jews in this country simply do not feel safe. They are not always able to practice their religion freely."

He cited the growing power and visibility of neo-Nazi groups in Germany, which has prompted the Jewish community to boost security measures.

Campaign to compensate Jewish refugees

A campaign to gain restitution for Jews expelled from Arab countries in the mid-20th century was launched.

The "International Rights and Redress Campaign" opened with a one-day summit in Jerusalem on Sunday attended by representatives of Jewish communities from 10 countries.

Participants called for a campaign to document properties lost by an estimated 900,000 Jews who were driven out of Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen after Israel's founding in 1948.

Most of the refugees ended up in the nascent Jewish state, while others immigrated to the West.

One group, the World Organization of Jews From Arab Countries, has valued the refugees' lost property at \$100 billion, and wants a concerted effort to sue for reparations.

Germans to use ADL expertise

The German government said that it would utilize the Anti-Defamation League to help battle rising anti-Semitism in Germany.

The national director of the ADL, Abraham Foxman, met Oct. 19 with German government and security officials, including Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble, to discuss the problem.

Schauble agreed to work with the ADL on training and education programs for law enforcement.