

IN THE NEWS
**Yisrael Beiteinu
joins Olmert coalition**

A right-wing faction officially joined Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's coalition.

Israel's Cabinet voted 22-1 Monday to accept Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu, a party that has called for the annexation of some West Bank land and has suggested that Israel's borders be redrawn to put some Arab towns on the Palestinian Authority side.

The party's 11 members will bring Olmert's coalition to 78 seats.

**Judge dismisses
U.S. Air Force suit**

A U.S. judge dismissed a lawsuit charging the Air Force with violating the constitutional rights of its troops through the promotion of evangelism. In ruling last Friday, federal Judge James Parker of the U.S. District Court in New Mexico said the plaintiffs did not have standing to sue the Air Force.

However, he left open the possibility that they could sue the Air Force secretary, Michael Wynne. The lead plaintiff, Mikey Weinstein, a former Air Force officer who helped publicize allegations that evangelists at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., were coercing cadets into attending services, said he would refile the case.

**Katsav
stands firm**

Israel's president resisted calls to step down amid a sex scandal.

President Moshe Katsav said Monday that he had no intention of suspending himself or resigning unless indicted over allegations that he raped and sexually harassed several former female employees.

On Sunday, Attorney General Menachem Mazuz said Katsav should consider stepping down until the investigation runs its course.

WORLD REPORT

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

Stung by Republican ads on Israel, Democrats defend part in online chat

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — An online Israel chat hosted by top Democrats in the U.S. Congress outlined sharp differences with the Bush administration and suggested that an aggressive GOP campaign portraying Democrats as cool on the Jewish state has made inroads.

Major differences between the parties that arose in the chat with the Democrats' Israel Working Group included Iraq's danger to Israel and Syria's role in peace talks.

The willingness to highlight those differences reflects a broader Democratic strategy this election of vigorously confronting President Bush on foreign policy, an area the Democratic Party more or less conceded in the last midterm elections in 2002.

But the consistent message relayed last Friday by the six members of Congress on the chat was that the Democrats' support for Israel is unwavering.

"Republicans have recently attempted to put a partisan spin on an issue that has always been able to rise above party lines," Rep. Alcee Hastings (Fla.) said to Gordon from West Bloomfield, Mich., who said he was "uncomfortable with some of the party's fringes, mainly those who blindly take the Palestinian side in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

Hastings continued, "For Israel's sake, this issue must continue to receive unwavering support from majorities on both sides of the aisle."

In the weeks before midterm elections

that could cost Republicans control of one or both houses of Congress, the Republican Jewish Coalition has blitzed Jewish media with ads focusing on two polls that show that a plurality of Democrats favor neutrality in the Middle East.

The ads, which ignore a third poll that shows that a solid majority of Democrats favor Israel, also highlight statements by former President Carter questioning Israel's moral authority.

"The fact that they had to have this call is a testament to the impact our ads have had and underscores the importance of the issues we've been raising," said Matt Brooks, the RJC's executive director.

Dore from East Northport, N.Y., asked whether the Democrats, "trying to portray yourself as friends of Israel," would unequivocally say Carter was wrong for describing Israel's settlement policies as "apartheid" in a forthcoming book.

That question drew the biggest gun: Rep. Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), the minority leader poised to become speaker of the House and third in line to the presidency if the Democrats win control of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"With all due respect to former President Carter, he does not speak for the Democratic Party on Israel," she replied. "It is wrong to suggest that the Jewish people would support a government in Israel or anywhere else that institutionalizes ethnically based oppression, and Democrats reject that allegation vigorously."

Another sign of how seriously Demo-

Continued on page 2

U.S.
ELECTIONS
2006

■ Democrats tried to counter Republican ads in an online chat about Israel policy

Continued from page 1

crats were taking the RJC onslaught as a Democratic National Committee ad appearing this weekend in Jewish newspapers citing an American Jewish Committee poll that shows that U.S. Jews trust Democrats more on Iraq, Iran and terrorism.

Still, doubts crept into the online chat. Gary from Riverdale, N.Y., said "many members of my community, myself included, are afraid of committee chairmanships getting into the wrong hands, i.e. anti-Israel hands, should the Democrats take back the House. Is there truth to the rumors?"

That apparently referred to an RJC ad targeting Rep. John Dingell (Mich.), who would chair the House's Energy and Commerce Committee if the Democrats win. In a television interview during Israel's war with Hezbollah this summer, Dingell said he favored neither Israel nor Hezbollah, then immediately backtracked, saying he opposed Hezbollah. The RJC ad highlighted only the first part of the quote.

"There will be some Democratic chairmen who may not share all my views or have as clear a perspective on Israel as I do," replied Rep. Henry Waxman (Calif.), who is Jewish and who would chair the Government Reform Committee in a Democratic-controlled Congress. "But they will not be chairing committees dealing with Israel and the Middle East."

Differences with Republicans were

sharpest on how U.S. action in Iraq would affect Israel.

Pelosi pointed to the Democrats' "Real Security" plan, which emphasizes a "significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty" and the "responsible redeployment of U.S. forces" before the end of the year.

"The war in Iraq has made both America and Israel less safe," she said. "Democrats are united in implementing a plan, whereas Republicans want to continue 'staying the course.'"

Republicans in recent days have shown greater flexibility in discussing time lines for leaving Iraq, but also say that leaving too soon would endanger Israel — a point made by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) in a speech last week to an American Israel Public Affairs Committee gathering in Houston.

Nathan from Washington asked whether Democrats would support the Bush administration's repudiation of some leading Israeli voices calling for an exploration of contacts with Syria.

"I would never support removing Syria from the list of state sponsors of terrorism until its policies change dramatically, but that does not mean Israel cannot enter peaceful negotiations with any of its neighbors in the meantime," answered Rep. Loretta Sanchez (Calif.). "If Israel believes such a process would lead Syria to abandon support for terrorism and instead embrace peace, then I

would welcome such a move."

On the Palestinian front, Hastings said, "Democrats will continue to remain active to encourage the Israelis and the Palestinians to reach a peaceful two-state solution," a jibe at the perception — strongly denied by the Bush administration — that it has neglected the peace process.

Two questioners berated the Democrats for backing a cutoff in assistance to the Palestinian Authority since the terrorist group Hamas assumed power in March.

"We support the right of people to elect the government of their choice," Sanchez replied. "We do not, however, have to support the government that they

With all due respect to former President Carter, he does not speak for the Democratic Party on Israel.

U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)

choose."

The congresswoman noted that the bulk of U.S. aid went to nongovernmental organizations.

There were areas of agreement with the Bush administration, principally on the need to contain Iran's nuclear program, although Democrats accused Bush of stoking the problem by diverting attention and resources to Iraq.

"Israel has become less secure as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hezbollah and Hamas have gained popular support for their extremist agendas," Waxman said. "At the same time, the administration's conduct has damaged our standing in the world and our ability to be effective in diplomatic efforts." ■



WORLD REPORT

Daniel J. Krifcher

President

Mark J. Joffe

Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein

Editor

Michael S. Arnold

Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein

Finance and Administration Director

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.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Fans to philharmonic: Denounce occupation

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A petition is circulating among fans of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra asking the institution to denounce Israel's West Bank presence on the eve of a U.S. tour.

"Some of us are Israelis now living in the U.S.," said the letter initiated by Women in Black, an anti-occupation group started in Israel during the first intifada. "We grew up attending concerts of the orchestra, and remember the experience with so much joy.

We have the deepest appreciation for

artists, musicians in this instance, and see you as being on the leading edge of Israeli society and as powerful opinion leaders in your communities."

The letter argues that a statement by the orchestra against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and parts of Jerusalem will have a snowball effect. "Imagine that the Israel Philharmonic's denouncement of the occupation and call for peace and justice will have a huge positive ripple effect on Israeli society," it says. The orchestra is coming in February. ■

Israel plays key role in Lieberman race

By BEN HARRIS

NEW YORK (JTA) — Like many Jewish voters in Connecticut, June Neal has taken a particular interest in this year's U.S. Senate race, in which three-term incumbent Joseph Lieberman is facing his stiffest re-election fight since entering Congress in 1988.

Running as an independent after losing the Democratic primary to businessman Ned Lamont, Lieberman's name will be on the bottom of the ballot Nov. 7 — and Neal plans to volunteer at a polling station on Election Day, helping voters locate the lever to pull for the senator.

A writer who describes herself as very involved in Jewish causes, Neal, 62, says she's working for Lieberman because the race is so competitive and because his commitment to persevere in Iraq and his support for Israel are crucial to America's national security.

"It would be tragic to lose a man who is so well respected on both sides of the political aisle, and who has such access to the White House," Neal said. "It's not often that you'll get someone from the Democratic Party with such access to a Republican administration."

As Election Day approaches, Jewish support for Lieberman, who became the first Jew to run on a realistic national ticket in 2000, appears to be gathering momentum as he calls into question Lamont's commitment to Israel.

Lieberman lashed out at his opponent, a *first-time candidate*, following Lamont's appearances with the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, both of whom have rocky relationships with the Jewish community, and with Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), who refused to back a Senate resolution this summer condemning Hezbollah's attack on Israel.

The Lamont campaign counters that Lieberman also has reached out to those figures.

Lieberman's 18-year record in the Senate, which the pro-Israel community routinely describes as impeccable on Israel issues, has been a challenge for Lamont, who has argued that the Iraq war, which Lieberman supported, hurt Israel's security and emboldened its enemies.

"We've had a strong bipartisan tradi-

tion in this country of strong support for Israel," Lamont told JTA. "I'm going to be a leader of that coalition."

The National Jewish Democratic Council, which has not endorsed either candidate, says Lamont would be just as firm a supporter of Israel as is Lieberman.

But few in the state, even among those who support Lamont, are buying it. Some point to particular statements indicating Lamont would place greater pressure on Israel to make concessions, while others simply feel the challenger won't back Israel as strongly as he claims — but the bottom line is that Lieberman is widely seen as a better friend to the Jewish state.

"Most Jews that I observe certainly think that Lieberman's support for Israel will be less equivocal than Lamont's," said Rabbi Stephen Fuchs of Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford, the state's largest Reform congregation.

Though no hard data exists, many believe that with Republicans and independents factored in for the general election, Lieberman will command the overwhelming majority of Jewish votes.

The latest poll from Douglas Schwartz, the state's leading pollster, gives Lieberman a 17-point edge over Lamont.

A CBS/New York Times poll found that 61 percent of Jews supported Lieberman in the August primary. Mark Silk, director of the Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College in Hartford, calls that figure "a bit soft" considering Lieberman's often public displays of religious faith.

Silk's analysis of survey data found that Lamont did exceptionally well in the primary among voters who describe themselves as having no religion, racking up a 3-to-1 advantage. Among voters who

aren't of Judeo-Christian background — a group that includes Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim voters — the margin was 2-to-1.

Lieberman's position on intervening in the Terry Schiavo case, his sympathy for school vouchers and his outspokenness on so-called moral issues makes him something of an anomaly in generally liberal Connecticut, Silk said.

"For the secular wing of the Democratic Party, and the people who were not Jews and Christians, Lieberman looked more like a Republican than what they wanted," he said.

Silk's data appears to confirm a common view that more traditional Connecticut Jews, for whom Israel is of paramount importance, are far more likely to support Lieberman. Jews who identify less strongly with Jewish causes tend to side with Lamont.

Indeed, the Jewish vote appears to have split along the Israel axis.

For Jewish voters for whom being pro-Israel isn't the main factor, Lamont's position on Israel isn't fatal. In the primary, Lieberman's record

on Israel failed to deliver West Hartford and the Westville section of New Haven, home to two of the state's largest Jewish communities.

Cheryl Greenberg, a history professor at Trinity, says she's supporting Lamont not despite her religious faith but because of it. Though she concedes Lamont has not been sufficiently detailed about his foreign-policy positions — and even describes her support for him as a "risk" — she's forging ahead because of her profound opposition to Republican policies Lieberman has supported.

"When I prioritize my issues, at this point I have to say that Bush's behavior, and the Republican Party that is standing behind him, is so reprehensible and antithetical to everything I think America ought to be," Greenberg said. "To reverse the way we're going is more important to me than absolutely anything else." ■

U.S.
ELECTIONS
2006

'For the secular wing of the Democratic Party, and the people who were not Jews and Christians, Lieberman looked more like a Republican than what they wanted.'

Mark Silk
Trinity College

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Labor votes to stay in power

Israel's Labor Party decided to stay in the coalition government despite the recent inclusion of a right-wing faction.

Labor's Central Committee voted Sunday against a motion to quit the government to protest Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's decision to bring aboard Yisrael Beiteinu.

Labor leader Amir Peretz vowed to campaign within the Cabinet against the more extreme ideas of Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman.

The vote cleared the way for a Cabinet vote Monday at which Yisrael Beiteinu's membership was ratified.

A veteran politician, Pines-Paz said he would run against Labor chief Amir Peretz in party primaries next year.

Israeli Arab woman held in terror case

An Israeli Arab woman was charged with conspiring to aid Palestinian terrorists.

The 20-year-old Tira resident recently was indicted in Tel Aviv District Court after confessing to being a member of the Al-Aksa Brigades, the Shin Bet security service announced this week after a gag order on the case was lifted.

According to the Shin Bet, the woman traveled to the West Bank during the summer to plan how to smuggle a bomb into Israel and plant it at a restaurant in Ra'anana.

She was remanded in custody for two weeks.

The suspect's attorney said her confession was forced, but it was not immediately clear how she would plead to the charges.

Israeli Arab lawmaker raps Ahmadinejad

A leading Israeli Arab lawmaker came out against the anti-Jewish statements of Iran's president.

Ahmed Tibi, whose United Arab List is openly anti-Zionist, said in an interview published Monday that he was opposed to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's call for Israel to be eliminated.

"I am opposed to his statement," Tibi told Ha'aretz. "I am even more opposed to his Holocaust denial.

I don't understand his need and his obsession in repeating these things. There is no reason to deny the Holocaust, which was the worst crime in human history."

Tibi has often courted controversy in Israel by serving as confidant to the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and more recently by criticizing Israel's war against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Olmert hints at wider Gaza operation

Ehud Olmert hinted that Israel could soon expand its military operations in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli prime minister told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday that air and ground missions launched in Gaza after an Israeli soldier was abducted in late June would be reviewed given the failure to retrieve Cpl. Gilad Shalit or stem cross-border rocket fire and arms smuggling.

Political sources said the Security Cabinet would convene Wednesday to decide on a change in tactics in Gaza, which could include retaking control of the southern border with Egypt to stop arms smuggling.

Olmert told the parliamentary panel that in the past three months Israeli forces have killed 300 Hamas combatants in Gaza.

Gender segregation challenged

A leading Israeli rabbi challenged the long-standing fervently Orthodox insistence on gender segregation at social celebrations.

Ma'ariv on Monday quoted Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual mentor to the Sephardi political movement Shas, as saying that the mechitza, or partition used to separate men and women at events like weddings, should not be insisted upon if it causes family strife.

"Sometimes a family is not so pious, does not want a mechitza, and prefers that everyone sit together at one table.

This is not something to fight over.

If a mechitza is possible, then it should be erected, but if it is not, it can be done away with," Yosef was quoted as saying in a weekly sermon.

WORLD

Auschwitz director: Time for change

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum has a new director after 50 years.

Piotr Cywinski, appointed in September, replaced longtime director Jerzy Wroblewski.

Fresh from a visit to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the new director, who took over last week, said the Auschwitz museum is in need of a makeover.

"I want to renew the main exhibition, which is about 50 years old. It's time to speak differently about this history," said Cywinski, 34, a Pole active in Polish-Jewish dialogue who was a member of the Auschwitz International Council before taking the museum job.

Foxman: No moderate Muslims

There are no moderate Muslims with whom to dialogue, Abraham Foxman said.

The Anti-Defamation League's national director made the comment last Friday at the group's National Commission meeting in Atlanta in response to a call by Seymour Reich, president of the Israel Policy Forum, for ADL to focus on dialogue with moderate Muslims.

"There's always someone to dialogue with," Reich, an ADL lay leader, told JTA.

Foxman responded that since Muslim groups refuse to issue a blanket statement rejecting terrorism, "I don't know what there is to dialogue about."

NORTH AMERICA

Auerbach, legendary Celtics coach, dies

Legendary basketball coach Arnold "Red" Auerbach died over the weekend at age 89.

Auerbach led the Boston Celtics to nine NBA titles between 1956 and 1966.

Born to Jewish parents in Brooklyn, Auerbach was an innovator on both offense and defense.

In 1954, the NBA introduced the 24-second shot clock to counter Auerbach's tactic of having point guard Bob Cousy dribble out the game clock if the Celtics had a lead with under three minutes left.

Newsweek cites Israeli hospital

An Israeli medical center made a Newsweek list of leading foreign hospitals.

Sourasky Medical Center in Tel Aviv ranked seventh in the "world leaders" top 10 hospital list assembled in the magazine's recent edition.

"Sourasky is one of the leading centers for treatment of patients suffering paralysis of the face as a result of neurological disorders, which often leave the corners of the mouth frozen," Newsweek said. Sourasky is part of the Tel Aviv Medical Center.