



## IN THE NEWS

### Israeli operation over

Israel wrapped up a major military operation against Palestinian rocket crews in the northern Gaza Strip.

Troops and tanks withdrew Tuesday from Beit Hanoun after a weeklong sweep in which at least 55 Palestinians and an Israeli soldier were killed.

Military commanders described the operation, code-named Autumn Clouds, as a success, saying that most of the Palestinian casualties were members of terrorist groups that have fired rockets from Gaza into Israel.

But the salvos have not ceased, and Israeli forces remain in other areas of northern Gaza.

### Palestinian women held in terror ring

Israel announced the arrest of dozens of Palestinian women suspected of helping run a terror ring.

The Shin Bet this week lifted a gag order on the arrest over the summer of West Bank women who are accused of funneling funds from Syria to be used for attacks by Islamic Jihad.

According to the Shin Bet, the women were especially successful in their missions as they could pass Israeli military checkpoints more easily.

No trial date has yet been set.

### WJC meets with Chinese president

World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman met in Beijing with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

The two met Tuesday to discuss international affairs, including the Iranian threat to Israel and the rest of the world.

Bronfman and WJC Secretary-General Stephen Herbits also met with the Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs, according to a WJC news release.

The meeting was part of a weeklong mission to Asia and Europe.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Seeking Iraq exit strategy, U.S. pushes Israel toward peace talks

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — Ahead of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's upcoming visit to Washington, Israel and the United States are discussing ways to strengthen Palestinian moderates and jump-start a new peace process.

In a bid to bolster Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' more moderate Fatah party, the Americans would like to see Israel release the popular jailed Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti, and Israel is signaling readiness to make far-reaching moves toward a two-state solution. The tough ongoing Israeli military action in northern Gaza also is concentrating Palestinian minds.

Talk of concessions to the Palestinians and moves to bolster Palestinian moderates precede nearly every visit by an Israeli prime minister to Washington. But there are signs that this time, the carrot-and-stick policy may be working.

After a prolonged boycott of the P.A.'s radical Hamas-led government by Israel and most of the international community, the Palestinians are close to forming a new administration that could pave the way for peace talks.

The new American initiative coincides with talk about pulling U.S. forces out of Iraq. As they develop an exit strategy, the Americans seem to be showing greater urgency on other regional issues, like the Israeli-Palestinian question.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recently approached Olmert on the possibility of including Barghouti in a prisoner-

exchange deal involving abducted Israeli soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit.

Olmert rejected the idea, but Israeli officials believe the Barghouti issue could come up again in Olmert's meeting with President Bush, scheduled for Monday.

A second American proposal is that Israel allow the Palestinian paramilitary Badr Brigade, which is loyal to Abbas, to relocate from Jordan to Gaza. On this, the officials say, Olmert is likely to be forthcoming.

The officials believe the more the Americans develop their exit strategy from Iraq, the more they'll want to see movement on the Israeli-Palestinian track, which would enable them to claim a significant measure of success in their overall regional policy.

In this context, former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who has been working on the exit strategy, is expected to make proposals soon for a renewal of talks on both the Syrian and Palestinian tracks.

The Israelis also are taking a more proactive approach. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, anxious not to have new outside initiatives foisted on Israel, has sent messages to Palestinian moderates to the effect that Israel is ready to make rapid progress toward a two-state solution — but on condition that any new P.A. government accepts the international community's three conditions: recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence and acceptance of previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

"If a new Palestinian government accepts the international benchmarks and stops the Kassam rocket fire, Israel will be

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NEWS  
ANALYSIS

## ■ *The U.S. seems to be showing greater urgency on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*

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prepared to go a long way. But the Palestinian side will have to budge first," a senior official told JTA.

Israel, he said, would then be prepared to release prisoners, stop military operations, fast-track to an interim Palestinian mini-state and discuss the contours of a final peace deal.

"Until now Israel's foreign policy problem has been that, with the radical Hamas in power, the Palestinian moderates do not control the levers of power," the official explained. "Until recently, the main thrust of Israeli policy was to solve the conundrum through unilateral moves. Now the approach is to find ways of circumventing Hamas."

The Palestinians also are moving to create conditions for dialogue. Abbas, from Fatah, and P.A. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, of Hamas, met Monday in Gaza to finalize arrangements on the establishment of a new government.

Two proposals are on the table: a Hamas-Fatah national unity government or an apolitical government of experts. In both cases, the idea is to break out of international isolation by establishing a Palestinian administration acceptable to Israel and the international community.

More than its composition, though, the question is whether the new government accepts the three benchmarks. If it does, the way for negotiations with Israel will be open. But it's not easy to see how Hamas, which won an overwhelming victory in last January's general election, will allow this to happen.

Hamas' policy until now has been to offer a long-term cease-fire, or hudna, without having to recognize the Jewish state. Israel suspects that without a wider agreement, the Palestinians would simply use the cease-fire to build up their military power in order to attack more effectively at a later date.

Abbas, on the other hand, dismisses the hudna idea and says he wants a full-fledged peace treaty with Israel. In an early November meeting with rabbis and Muslim

clerics, Abbas said a cease-fire would not hold, and that what he wanted was a lasting peace on the Israeli-Egyptian model.

Time was running out, he warned, noting that he had just two years left in his term.

The moves to jump-start peace talks will be high on the agenda when Olmert and Bush meet in Washington next week. Israeli officials say Olmert will want to

discuss the implications for the region and for Israel of an American pullout from Iraq. But the main priority is likely to be the threat posed to Israel and the West by Iran's nuclear weapons drive.

In advance of the Bush-Olmert meeting, U.S. National Intelligence Director John Negroponte came to Israel in early November to discuss ways of weakening Iran's fundamentalist regime. Negroponte reportedly was particularly interested in Israeli assessments of the degree to which disaffected minorities in Iran could destabilize

the mullahs' rule.

Israel and the United States see Iran as the major threat to their security in coming years, and Olmert will use his meeting with Bush to exchange assessments and coordinate future moves. Israeli officials note that although both sides prefer a diplomatic solution, neither is ruling out a military option. ■

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## Germany debates traveling Shoah exhibit

BERLIN (JTA) — Pressure is mounting on Germany's national railway to approve a traveling exhibit about the deportation of Jewish children during World War II — but it may take an act of the German Parliament to make it happen.

Those who favor the proposed traveling exhibit suggest that too many Germans would avoid the truth if given the choice.

But "it's the duty of the younger generation to preserve the memory of these events, including the fate of deported children throughout Europe," Transportation Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee said in an e-mail interview with JTA.

Tiefensee, of the Social Democratic Party, is leading supporters of the traveling exhibit, and he has taken on Deutsche Bahn chief Hartmut Mehdorn, who opposes the concept and refuses to back down.

Tiefensee said crimes that took place in front of people daily in Nazi Germany should be documented and presented in a place where people pass daily now.

The exhibit, called "11,000 Jewish Children — With The Reichsbahn to Death,"

was seen in 18 French rail stations. Its creator, journalist and Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld of Paris, hopes to see it open in Germany early in 2007.

The exhibit details the fate of children who from 1942-44 were deported from France to Auschwitz via the Reichsbahn. It includes 150 photos.

The Deutsche Bahn, successor to the Reichsbahn, has acknowledged the role the railway played in the genocide, and there are memorials to that effect, including one at a commuter rail station in Berlin. The Nazi government paid the Reichsbahn a fee for every person transported as cargo.

Mehdorn reportedly has cited "technical, organizational and financial reasons" why the exhibit should not be installed as a traveling exhibit, but rather should be placed in one central location. He also has said it would be undignified to have people "chewing on rolls" while looking at such an exhibit.

Mehdorn's views have generated little political support. ■



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# Baltimore grant may set day school trend

By JACOB BERKMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish day school officials are looking at a recent \$15 million tuition-relief grant from the Baltimore-based Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore as a trend-setting move to alleviate one of the biggest challenges facing Jewish education.

The private Weinberg Foundation, which has more than \$2 billion in assets, announced Monday that it will contribute \$2 million a year for the next five years to the Baltimore area's 12 Jewish day schools. The federation will contribute \$1 million per year.

The grants will start in 2007, but the foundation also announced that it would immediately give an additional \$1 million to the schools.

There are more than 200,000 students in 750 Jewish day schools across the country, and Baltimore — with some 6,000 students in a community of roughly 100,000 — has one of the highest concentrations in the country, according to Lawrence Ziffer, executive vice president of the city's Center for Jewish Education, which worked with the foundation and the federation to write the grant.

In the past, the foundation had made individual grants to 10 area schools, foundation trustee Barry Schloss told JTA.

"But we said, 'This doesn't meet the needs of our community,'" Schloss said. "We all realized there needed to be more."

Over the past 10 years, the federation's allocation for Jewish day schools has grown from \$900,000 a year to more than \$3 million as the school system has blossomed, federation President Marc Terrill said.

Still, more than \$300,000 of needs went unfunded, Terrill said. The schools cost between \$6,000 and \$12,000 per year, according to the Center for Jewish Education, and the new grant will double the amount they get through the federation.

"The need is rather pronounced," Terrill said. "There are people that are unfortunately victims of harsh economic times. There are also those who are relatively affluent, but when you factor in two, three, four or five kids for which they're paying full tuition for day schools, it's not the prettiest of pictures. It's almost like self-im-

posed poverty — although it's poverty with an enlightened purpose."

Just more than half of the students at Baltimore day schools receive some kind of financial aid, Ziffer said. The money from the new grant is to be used only for scholarships.

Recipients must demonstrate need, and the foundation has required that schools still maintain their current levels of scholarship giving, Schloss said.

He added that over the next five years the foundation would like to see the community create an endowment fund to subsidize Jewish education.

There are no official plans to do so yet, but continuing to subsidize the school system at about \$3 million per year would take a \$65 million fund.

The Weinberg Foundation and the Baltimore federation are not the first to tackle the day school tuition issue. The Avi Chai Foundation, a private New York- and Jerusalem-based foundation aimed at increasing Jewish learning, ran a program that gave \$3,000 vouchers to students at four day schools in Atlanta and Cleveland between 1999 and 2000. Numerous family foundations across the country have started funds either to cap tuition or provide tuition relief at local Jewish schools.

The largest individual gift came from a group of anonymous families who made a \$45 million donation to three schools in

Boston, \$15 million of which was to be used for tuition relief.

In Milwaukee, the Helen Bader Foundation set up a similar fund — though on a much smaller scale, at \$500,000 per year for three years — to help the area's 600 Jewish day school students, according to Tobey Libber, the foundation's program director.

Other Jewish communities, such as Los Angeles, Chicago and MetroWest New Jersey, are in the process of deciding how to tackle the tuition problem with similar

grants, according to Rabbi Joshua Elkin, executive director of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education.

But the Weinberg grant is an important one, he said.

"I believe that there is momentum building, and I believe that this grant is not only part of a trend, but this is a pace-setting decision that Weinberg has made," Elkin said. "It's not sim-

ply the size of the grant; it's the fact that it's partnered with the federation and is intended to be spent over the next five years. It provides an immediate infusion."

The Baltimore grant "hopefully will become a model," said Yossi Prager, Avi Chai's North American executive director. "Affordability already is the single largest concern of the day school community, and the crunch is likely to get worse since budgets for schools, Jewish and non-Jewish, are rising faster than inflation. This is a tremendous start in tackling a very serious problem."

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

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Marc Terrill

President, Baltimore federation

## Judge allows Picasso sale

NEW YORK (JTA) — A U.S. judge will allow the sale of a Picasso painting despite a claim by the heir of a Holocaust victim.

The judge had temporarily blocked the sale Monday of British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Portrait of Angel Fernandez de Soto," from Picasso's Blue Period. It was due to be auctioned at Christie's in New York on Wednesday, at a value of an es-

timated \$60 million. The judge had stopped the sale because Julius Schoeps, the heir of a Jewish banker from Berlin, sued Webber's foundation.

He claimed the banker was forced by the Nazi persecution to sell the painting in 1934. Judge Jed Rakoff ruled the sale could go through on Wednesday, The Associated Press reported.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### U.N. clears Israel on arms

The United Nations cleared Israel of allegations that it used uranium weapons during the Lebanon war.

The U.N. Environment Program said Tuesday that its investigators had found no evidence that Israel used uranium-based radioactive weaponry during the conflict with Hezbollah over the summer.

Britain's Independent newspaper suggested in an investigative report last month that Israeli forces had used such weaponry at two attack sites, a charge rejected by military officials.

### Wolfensohn warns of sagging Israel interest

A former Middle East troubleshooter predicted that the United States will lose interest in its strategic alliance with Israel. Yediot Achronot on Tuesday quoted James Wolfensohn, a former World Bank president and envoy for the Quartet of international mediators in Israeli-Palestinian relations, as saying he fears that the Jewish state "will be pushed to the sidelines of the American administration's interest within two years."

Wolfensohn, who was speaking at a Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago dinner, cited the ascendancy of Iran, the disarray in Iraq, the fallout of the Lebanon war and the resilience of the Palestinian Hamas regime as having changed the strategic realities in the Middle East, as far as the United States is concerned.

### Abbas to Hamas: Hand over hostage

Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas to hand over to P.A. custody an Israeli soldier held hostage.

The Palestinian Authority president said in an interview with the London-based newspaper Asharq al-Awsat published Tuesday that he wants to be able to negotiate directly with Israel on the return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, and therefore needs to have the soldier under his control.

He said Shalit's release is a condition for the formation of a unity government between Fatah and Hamas, which took over the government in March.

### Olmert seeks Lebanon talks

Ehud Olmert said foreign emissaries are trying to arrange peace talks between Israel and Lebanon. "Things are going to happen in Lebanon," the Israeli prime minister said in a Channel 2 television interview aired late Monday.

"Two senior world leaders are working at my behest to try to create the conditions for my meeting Siniora, and I am personally in touch with them."

Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, while favored by the United States, has rebuffed several public peace overtures by Jerusalem since Israel's recent war with Hezbollah.

### 'Chained' women speak out

Jewish women whose husbands refused them a divorce gathered to tell their stories in Jerusalem. The testimonies, given at a Tuesday gathering, were originally scheduled to coincide with a major rabbinical conference on the subject of agunot in Jerusalem. But when the conference was canceled, due to pressure from within the fervently Orthodox world, the organizers of the shadow conference went ahead with their gathering anyway. The women who spoke out are being assisted by Mevo Satum, an Israeli group that advocates for agunot. In recent years, rabbinical courts in Israel have made it increasingly difficult for women to get gets, or Jewish divorces, said Rachel Azaria, director of Mevo Satum.

### Rights group: Palestinian women abused

The Palestinian Authority has no effective framework to respond to violence against women and girls, a rights group reported.

The Human Rights Watch on Tuesday released "A Question of Security: Violence Against Palestinian Women and Girls." The group said it interviewed dozens of victims of violence in the West Bank and Gaza, often at the hands of a family member.

"Their accounts confirm the seriousness and scope of the problem, on issues ranging from spousal and child abuse to rape, incest, and 'honor' crimes," the report summary stated.

The group concluded that the blame lay in "discriminatory laws that condone and perpetuate such violence and the virtual absence of institutionalized policies to prevent violence, assist victims, and hold perpetrators accountable."

Media quoted Palestinian spokesmen as blaming the chaos in Palestinian-ruled areas for the violence.

The report says that Israeli attacks on Palestinian areas during the intifada weakened Palestinian institutions, but adds: "This is no excuse for inaction."

## NORTH AMERICA

### U.S. election jabs continue

Democrats called on the Republican candidate for Florida's governor to stop associating his opponent with Yasser Arafat.

Charlie Crist's campaign has run commercials featuring a 2002 photograph of U.S. Rep. Jim Davis (D-Fla.) meeting with the late Palestinian leader as part of a congressional delegation. Rudy Giuliani, a Republican star and the former mayor of New York, chided Davis for the meeting while stumping for Crist this weekend.

The meeting took place at a time when President Bush refused to allow Arafat to visit the White House, but before the Bush administration decided to totally isolate him because of his backing for terrorism during the second intifada.

Colin Powell, then the secretary of state, met with Arafat in April 2002, two months after Davis did.

## WORLD

### Argentine group chooses leader

Argentine Jews elected a new president for the DAIA Jewish political umbrella organization.

With just over half of the votes, Aldo Donzis was elected president on Monday for a three-year term. He replaces Jorge Kirszenbaum. Donzis had been part of the DAIA executive committee between 1999 and 2003.

Donzis had the support of local sport groups such as Maccabi and the Conservative and progressive contingents.

Many DAIA leaders were not re-elected because they were perceived as too close to the government of Carlos Menem, which was suspected of covering up the 1994 AMIA terrorist attack.

### Interfaith summit in S. Africa

Jewish and Catholic leaders discussed reaching out to Muslim moderates at a Cape Town summit.

The interfaith conference Sunday through Tuesday, organized by the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations and the Vatican's Commission of Religious Relations with Jewry, brought together some 50 Jewish and Catholic leaders, including Rabbi David Rosen president of IJCIC and the American Jewish Committee's head of interreligious affairs and Cardinal Kasper of the Vatican.

The leaders also discussed ways to stem the AIDS pandemic.