

IN THE NEWS
Israel bombs terrorists' homes

The Israeli air force bombed the homes of three Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip. Warplanes and combat helicopters attacked two buildings belonging to Hamas commanders and the home of a senior terrorist from another Palestinian faction late Wednesday, after warning occupants to evacuate.

Military officials said the buildings had been used to store weapons or plan attacks. The airstrikes appeared to be the beginning of Israel's retaliation for a Palestinian rocket salvo earlier Wednesday that killed an Israeli woman in Sderot and wounded several other people.

Close loss for Jewish Democrat in Wyoming

Wyoming electoral authorities certified a Jewish candidate's loss in the recent congressional election.

Gary Trauner, a Democrat, came from behind and almost unseated Rep. Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.) in a state that usually votes overwhelmingly Republican.

On Wednesday, the Wyoming Canvassing Board certified Cubin's win by 1,012 votes, Congressional Quarterly reported. Trauner, who has yet to concede, would have been the seventh new Jewish member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

UJC adopts Iran resolution

The United Jewish Communities adopted a resolution calling for action against Iran.

The resolution, passed Wednesday by the group's Board of Trustees and the Delegates Assembly at the UJC's General Assembly in Los Angeles, calls for education and media outreach to raise awareness about "the drumbeat of hostility against Israel and the Jewish people emanating from Iran" and the global threat posed by Iran's potential nuclear capability.

WORLD REPORT

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

Not just a pep rally this year, UJC assembly had higher stakes

By JACOB BERKMAN

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The United Jewish Communities' annual General Assembly usually is seen as something of a pep rally for the lay and professional leaders on the ground in the federation system.

But this year's G.A., which started Sunday at the Los Angeles Convention Center and wrapped up Wednesday, was a higher-stakes affair.

In the midst of an Israel Emergency Campaign that so far has raised roughly \$348 million to help rebuild Israel after the summer's war with Hezbollah in Lebanon — and coming off a couple of General Assemblies that by many accounts fell flat — the UJC saw this one as an important momentum builder.

The organization revamped its program only 10 weeks before the gathering, from one that would have highlighted major federation contributors and professionals to one that was primarily Israel-centric.

UJC President and CEO Howard Rieger told a news conference of Jewish journalists Monday that response to the original-program idea had been disappointing, but in the end, some 5,000 federation and Jewish communal professional and lay leaders turned up for the G.A.

"It was high stakes because you can't fail," Rieger told JTA of the Israel-themed event. "And at the same time, it feels a little intimidating."

The UJC might have abandoned its Hollywood theme, but its opening plenary still had plenty of showman's flair. The program was marked by interludes from Dan Gor-

don, who wrote the acclaimed 1999 film "The Hurricane" and decided to serve as a reservist in the Israeli army during its recent war in Lebanon.

It also featured a spoken-word and musical performance arranged by avant-garde Jewish musician Craig Taubman, performances by musician Debbie Friedman and a reading by actor Jon Voigt.

Theatrics aside, the plenary sessions offered a hardhitting array of speakers, among them six high-ranking Israeli government officials, highlighted by a Tuesday night address by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Olmert did mention that he'd be willing to sit down with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at any time, but he spent much of his time thanking UJC and its leaders for helping to rebuild Israel's North after the war.

"Our lives are interconnected," Olmert said. "Our fates are intertwined. Israel and the Jewish diaspora is one. Your success is our success. We may be separated by an ocean, but our hearts beat together always."

His sentiments may have quieted some of the waves made Monday by Zeev Bielski, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, who told a Jerusalem Post reporter that "One day the penny will drop for American Jews and they will realize they have no future as Jews in the U.S. due to assimilation and intermarriage."

Bielski later explained that the comment was intended to highlight the importance of aliyah.

Israeli opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu used one plenary to lay out what he calls Iran's "single-bomb theory" — taking

Continued on page 2

■ *At the last-minute, the G.A. changed its focus to Israel in wake of its war with Hezbollah*

Continued from page 1

care of its "Jewish problem" by attacking Israel with a nuclear weapon — as the first stage in a broader nuclear attack on the Western world.

"This is 1938, Iran is Germany. And Iran is racing to get atomic weapons," Netanyahu repeated almost as a mantra during his speech.

On Monday, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told reporters that the Israeli people are frustrated because many assumed that attacking Hezbollah would lead to the return of two soldiers Hezbollah captured in a July 12 cross-border raid that sparked the conflict.

But, she noted, "There are some things a military action cannot achieve, and it was clear from the first days that this military operation could not bring back our boys."

And there were some unlikely meetings of the minds, such as a plenary Monday at which Rabbi Norman Cohen, provost of the Reform Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute for Religion; Arnold Eisen, chancellor-elect of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary; and Richard Joel, president of Orthodox Yeshiva University, discussed how to engage young people.

Most in attendance, such as Avi Naiman, chairman of the UJA Federation of Northern New Jersey's Israel and Overseas Committee, felt the shift to a more Israel-centric program was important after the war.

"To focus on something aside from

Israel would have been inappropriate," he said.

Naiman felt the G.A. was informative, but should have provided more tools and workshops showcasing successful models for federations to take back to their own communities.

"Now we have to figure out what the next step is," he said. Making the G.A. less of a "one-way affair" is something that UJC "will have to work on," he said.

Still, the collection of people at the G.A. was "very valuable" he said, and it provided delegates from his federation with an opportunity to meet face-to-face with many of the professionals they have been working with to help his federation's sister city, Nahariya.

Each year, the G.A. is a place where Jews from all walks of the federation and Jewish communal system can come together — from those such as Scott-Martin Kosofsky, who came to meet with people involved in the production of his upcoming book, a reproduction of the 1940 Arthur Szyk Haggadah, that will sell for \$6,000-\$25,000 per copy; to those such as student Alex Friedman, president of the Hillel chapter at Washington University in St. Louis.

But the biggest business happens between the sessions and plenaries, where federation leaders and volunteers can bounce ideas off each other and where those looking for funding can schmooze with potential benefactors.

Take, for example, Mark Levenson, president of the UJA Federation of Clifton-Passaic in New Jersey. His small federation, which has an annual campaign of less than \$1 million, is on the verge of merging with a much larger federation, UJA Federation of MetroWest New Jersey.

The conversations that planted the seeds for the shidduch took place while walking in Jerusalem between sessions at the 2003 G.A., Levenson said.

"I almost did not want to come back to the G.A. because the first one I went to in Cleveland was so bad," said Marlene Lauwasser, campaign president of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation. But she said she was glad that she had decided to

attend this year's event with seven other members from Milwaukee because it had been invigorating.

"I'm just so proud to be Jewish, and to be in a room with 5,000 Jews is amazing," she said.

This year, for the first time, the UJC held a lunch for 250 federation executives, Rieger told JTA.

But the question now is what the federation representatives will do with the material the G.A. provided.

One goal is to continue the Israel Emergency Campaign. Though the G.A.'s goal isn't fund raising, the themes that delegates take from the meeting should play out in the work they do in their home communities, said Steve Nasatir, president of the Jewish United Fund/United Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

The G.A. "transcends just the raising of dollars," Nasatir said, but added that he hopes the emergency campaign can raise another \$100 million. The Chicago drive has raised \$40 million for the emergency campaign — \$32 million of which came in the first week — and it's pushing to raise more.

The key to keeping a strong campaign, said Steven Rakitt, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, is avoiding "inertia."

The trick will be getting delegates to the G.A. to carry that momentum home. Rieger admitted to JTA that the UJC sometimes has trouble making sure that "what we do on one level translates back into the next level."

The UJC faces two major challenges in the coming months, Rieger said.

The first is making as big an impact as possible in terms of getting out the message about important Jewish needs — and "that's not all about money," he said. The second is trying to figure out how to build a bigger donor base.

But all in all, he said, he was pleased with this year's G.A.

In the past, "there were some who advised us not to have a G.A., or to have it every two years," Rieger said. "But that would have been the easy solution." ■

I'm just so proud to be Jewish, and to be in a room with 5,000 Jews is amazing.

Marlene Lauwasser
Milwaukee Jewish Federation



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.

Skepticism over U.N.'s Iran talks

By BEN HARRIS

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish officials are expressing skepticism about the latest Security Council effort to impose sanctions on Iran, warning that even if an agreement can be reached it's likely to be too watered down to impact the mullahs' nuclear program.

The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany continued negotiating an Iran resolution this week even as a growing cohort of voices argue that the effort is deeply flawed.

Aaron Jacob, the American Jewish Committee's deputy director for international affairs, called the proposed measures "low-impact sanctions" that aren't stringent enough to divert Iran from its presumed drive for nuclear weapons.

"The resolution is not going to stop Iran from further enrichment and processing activities," Jacob said. "There will probably be a need to adopt yet another resolution providing for stronger sanctions."

Responding to Iran's failure to comply with international demands to stop enriching uranium, France, Britain and Germany presented a draft resolution two weeks ago requiring states "to prevent the supply, sale or transfer" to Iran of material that could benefit its nuclear program, and to prohibit Iranians abroad from conducting specialized training in subjects related to nuclear activity.

Russia, which has a significant commercial interest in Iran's nuclear program, is leading the opposition. Axel Cruau, a spokesman for France's U.N. delegation, told JTA that Russia is trying to reduce the scope of sanctions, in contrast to the United States, which favors sweeping measures.

"The name of the game is to find this point of balance," said Cruau, who expressed confidence that the council ultimately would reach an agreement but declined to speculate how long it might take.

Even if the council does succeed in bridging the gap, it likely will do little to silence critics who argue that Iran is merely playing for time, cooperating with the international community just enough to avoid crippling sanctions while it continues to develop a weapons capability in secret.

"The Iranian strategy all along has been to drag out the negotiating process on this, to buy time for them to go nuclear," said

Ilan Berman, vice president for policy at the American Foreign Policy Council. "They have been remarkably successful at that."

Berman says nuclear technology satisfies multiple objectives for Iran — enhancing its prestige in the region, serving as a deterrent to attack and solidifying the clerical regime's grip on power.

Sanctions might be successful in delaying Iran's progress toward a weapon, but they won't force the country's leaders to abandon the pursuit altogether — and certainly not the minimal sanctions that could result from a Russian-European compromise, he says.

Instead, Berman supports a broader strategy against the Islamic republic, laid out in a paper released last week by the Working Group on Iran's Global Influence, which he co-chairs. The paper calls for the United States to undertake a range of coercive measures against Iran, including economic pressure, plans for military action and support for regime change.

"The problem with our strategy writ large with regard to Iran is we're not differentiating between nuclear technology and the regime that's going to wield it," he said. "That's where the rubber meets the road."

Iran claims it's the victim of an international campaign to deny it access to peaceful nuclear technology. But few in the West believe that oil-rich Iran is genuinely interested in nuclear energy.

That was the message delivered by former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in New York last week. Speaking at

a daylong conference on the U.N. role in the Middle East, Fischer said Iran's frequent brandishing of its missile technology and its calls for the destruction of Israel make it difficult to believe it won't use nuclear technology for aggressive purposes.

"It's not a question of the right" to nuclear technology, "it's a question of trust," Fischer said. "I don't buy, to be very frank, that this program is designed for civilian purposes."

Responding to Fischer's remarks, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Javad Zarif, repeated his government's denial that it was seeking a weapons capability to intimidate other countries.

"Iran has not threatened, nor will it threaten, to use force against any other country," Zarif said, claiming that Iran itself has been threatened — by Israel.

The Israeli dimension looms large over the Iran debate. Israel long has warned about the threat of a nuclear Iran, a warning made more salient by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's frequent state-

ments denying the Holocaust and his calls to wipe Israel off the map.

Many worry that Israel could act alone if it thinks the United States is progressing too slowly to contain Tehran. His menu of policy recommendations to the United States notwithstanding, Berman said he believes Israel will feel forced to strike within the year.

"I think we're quite clearly entering a season of hard choices on the part of the Israelis," he said.

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

The Iranian strategy all along has been to drag out the negotiating process on this, to buy time for them to go nuclear.

Ilan Berman

American Foreign Policy Council

Israelis barred from U.N. conference

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israeli delegates were prevented from attending an international conference in Dubai.

The Associated Press reported that the four-member delegation traveled Monday to the capital of the United Arab Emirates for a conference of the Universal Postal Union, an affiliate of the United Nations,

and were turned back at the airport for not having the proper visas.

After the UPU lodged a formal protest with the Emirates government, the Israelis were invited to return, but a spokesperson for the Switzerland-based union said it was unclear if they would, since the conference ends Thursday.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

UJC elects new lay leadership

The United Jewish Communities elected a new lay leadership board.

The group's Board of Trustees made the decision at the UJC's annual meeting Wednesday.

Joseph Kanfer, CEO of GOJO Industries, based in Akron, Ohio, which makes Purell hand sanitizer, was elected chairman of the Board of Trustees. Kanfer previously was the chairman of UJC's Jewish Renaissance and Renewal Pillar.

He also is a past chairman of the Jewish Educational Service of North America and serves on the boards of Jewish Family and Life and the Covenant Foundation. Kathy Manning was elected chairwoman of UJC's executive committee and vice chairwoman of the board.

Manning was UJC treasurer on its Budget and Finance Committee, and chairwoman of the General Assembly Redesign Committee. She's the immediate past president of the Greensboro Jewish Federation in North Carolina.

Abramoff starts sentence

Lobbyist Jack Abramoff started his prison sentence. Abramoff pleaded guilty in January to multiple bribery charges, but his sentence was delayed until Wednesday so he could continue to assist federal authorities investigating lawmakers and administration officials alleged to have taken his bribes.

The investigations ended several congressional careers and contributed to last week's Republican defeats in the midterm election.

Abramoff will serve his nearly six-year sentence in western Maryland, where he will still be available to investigators.

An Orthodox Jew who allegedly diverted fraudulently obtained funds to favored Jewish charities, Abramoff sent his final e-mail to friends before dawn, when he left home to report to the prison.

"I have learned more lessons in the past three years than I have my whole life," he wrote, "and I am hoping that my family and I can see the good in G-d's plan for us during these times, and gain strength from it."

MIDDLE EAST

Report: Somalis helped Hezbollah

More than 700 Somali fighters helped Hezbollah in its war with Israel over the summer, a U.N. report said.

Reuters reported Monday on the confidential U.N. document, which said that Islamic militants traveled from Somalia to fight alongside Hezbollah during the monthlong conflict, for which they were repaid with training and weapons from Syria and Iran.

The report, whose primary focus is violations of the arms embargo on Somalia, is to be discussed at a U.N. meeting Friday.

Diskin: Prepare for Gaza sweep

An Israeli security chief called for the military to prepare a major Gaza Strip sweep.

Shin Bet director Yuval Diskin told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in a briefing Tuesday that unless the relatively moderate Palestinian faction Fatah is bolstered in Gaza to offset the power of the governing terrorist group Hamas, Israel may have to strike strongly and pre-emptively against Hamas arms stockpiling.

Asked about the frontrunner to succeed Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in a future "technocrat" Cabinet, Diskin said Israel does not consider Mohammad Shbair to have been personally involved in terrorism.

Olmert: Israel will challenge Iran

Israel "will not shy away from challenging Iran's development of nuclear weapons," Ehud Olmert told the annual gathering of the North American Jewish federation system.

A day after meeting President Bush in Washington, the Israeli prime minister told some 5,000 delegates at the United Jewish Communities' General Assembly in Los Angeles on Tuesday that "we cannot tolerate, we will not tolerate those who challenge Israel's right to exist, while actively seeking to develop the catastrophic weapons to fulfill their goals... We did not choose this responsibility.

"But the burden is ours and we cannot, we will not shy away from confronting this challenge," he added.

Olmert also held out an olive branch to the Palestinian Authority, offering to meet P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss ways to ease tensions.

"We must stop this spiraling conflict and the fight between us, and bring peace to our battered region," Olmert said.

Cash carried to Gaza

Two Palestinian Authority lawmakers carried millions of dollars into the Gaza Strip.

Egyptian authorities said Wednesday that they allowed the two Hamas legislators to enter Gaza with \$4 million.

One of the men had been detained Tuesday when the cash was found at the border.

The Hamas-led Palestinian Authority government, which is staggering under an aid embargo imposed by Western donor nations, often has resorted to smuggling in cash.

Security sources estimate that hundreds of millions of dollars have come through.

Israel accused over WWI graveyard

Israel's armed forces are accused of damaging a British graveyard in the Gaza Strip from World War I.

The allegations concerning the Commonwealth military cemetery in Gaza City, where some 3,700 Allied servicemen were laid to rest, emerged this month during Armistice Day.

According to British authorities who run the site, an Israeli army bulldozer damaged several headstones and part of the perimeter wall during an operation in July against Palestinian terrorists.

Another section of the graveyard allegedly was damaged by fire from a helicopter gunship during another Israeli operation this month.

Military officials said they were looking into the allegations, but added in a statement, "There is no intention whatsoever to harm or damage sacred places, including cemeteries.

"The Israel Defense Forces target only infrastructures which are used for terror activities."

The cemetery was vandalized by Palestinians in 2004 in revenge for reports of American and British forces abusing prisoners in Iraq.

U.N. to dispatch mission to Gaza

The U.N. Human Rights Council established a fact-finding mission to assess the situation in an area of the Gaza Strip where 19 Palestinians were killed last week by Israeli artillery.

The council took the decision concerning Beit Hanoun on Wednesday during its third special session in Geneva.

Adopted by a vote of 32-8 with six abstentions, the resolution also condemned the killing of Palestinian civilians by Israel and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Itzhak Levanon, Israel's envoy in Geneva, denounced the resolution and said it encouraged terrorism.