

**IN THE NEWS**
**Major powers  
'close' on Iran**

World powers have made "substantial progress" in shaping nuclear-related sanctions against Iran and are close to a package, French officials said. Representatives of the five veto-wielding members of the U.N. Security Council — France, Britain, the United States, Russia and China — as well as Germany ended a series of meetings in Paris on Tuesday after making "substantive progress," according to a French Foreign Ministry statement.

The statement said the next meeting would be in New York but did not give a date. France, Britain, Germany and the United States favor tough sanctions unless Iran stops enriching uranium.

Russia and China have been resisting sanctions.

**Gates: Iranian  
nuclear strike unlikely**

Iran is unlikely to launch a nuclear attack on Israel, President Bush's nominee for defense secretary said.

Addressing the U.S. Senate in his confirmation hearings Tuesday, Robert Gates said he did not discount threats to Israel from Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but added that he believed that the religious establishment controlling Iran was less inclined to an attack.

**Pray for Darfur  
this weekend**

The Save Darfur Coalition is asking faith communities to use Dec. 8-10 as a "Weekend of Prayer for Darfur."

The organization's executive director, David Rubenstein, announced the project during a conference call Tuesday. According to some estimates, more than 400,000 people have been killed by government-allied Arab militias in Sudan. The coalition has enlisted some 1,300 religious congregations to hold prayer services.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Get 'em while they're young: Groups reach out to babies, parents

By JACOB BERKMAN

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — It wasn't long ago that the Jewish organizational world came to grips with the idea that the best way to reach unaffiliated families was by getting them to enroll their toddlers in Jewish early-childhood programs.

But a new study says it's even better to get to them as soon as their babies are born.

Released in November by Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, the study looked at programs in 10 Jewish communities aimed at engaging first-time Jewish parents.

Statistically, American Jews become parents later in life than the general population — often after both parents are professionally established — and new parenthood involves a certain amount of social isolation, according to Mark Rosen, who conducted the study.

Parents often need something to ground and assist them in the period of upheaval after childbirth, Rosen said, and if the Jewish community can provide proper programming, it can engage parents in the community long-term.

"It's at a point in their lives when you can seize the moment because their whole life turns upside down," Rosen told JTA. "It's a real opportunity, but it starts with giving them a sense of Jewish peoplehood, this sense that 'I belong.'"

Rosen conducted on-site interviews with some 100 professionals running programs such as Shalom Baby — through which federations give parents gift baskets shortly after their child is born — and Parents' Place, a

drop-in resource center of the Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco that serves about 30,000 people a year.

The most effective programs offer parents support from peers, Rosen said, since several sets of parents moving closer to Jewish involvement at the same time can provide momentum.

But much of the success is predicated on hiring a good professional who cares about the parents with whom he or she is working, Rosen said, adding that it's often best to run programs outside of synagogues because they can be intimidating for the unaffiliated.

The key is creating programming that's engaging not just for children but for parents, he said.

It's a technique employed by Chabad-Lubavitch. Chabad rabbis, who are charged with personally reaching out to every Jew in the vicinity of their outposts, typically set up discussion groups for young parents, according to Nachum Kaplan, director of Chabad's central education office.

Those meetings break the ice and help feed children into Chabad's 160 early-childhood programs, a number that has doubled in the past six years, Kaplan said.

"Whether it's reaching out to this group or reaching out to parents of early-childhood-program children, it's the same," Kaplan said. "It means reaching out to couples where they are."

Where young parents are tends to be centered on their children. Chabad has more than 7,000 children enrolled in early-education programs, which means it has some 5,000 families

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**FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES**

## ■ *The study can bring empirical evidence to a trend noted by some Jewish institutions*

*Continued from page 1*

it can reach through them, Kaplan said.

The eight volunteers working the Shalom Baby program of the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center in San Diego have contacted some 1,300 new parents since the program started five years ago, coordinator Judy Nemzer said.

Each year the volunteers distribute 270 to 300 baskets containing candlesticks, grape juice, toys, tzedakah boxes and a series of publications about raising Jewish children, along with information about JCC programming.

In a survey completed in September, the JCC found that 83 percent of those who received the baskets responded positively, 78 percent intended to enroll their children in Jewish preschools and 78 percent planned to join a synagogue.

Before the parents were contacted, only 29 percent had been affiliated, according to data from local gynecologists and word of mouth, Nemzer said.

The San Diego JCC has found that play groups are among its most successful infant programs. It now has 35 such groups, each with 15 to 20 mothers, Nemzer said.

In Denver, 50 out of the 200 children enrolled in the Robert E. Loup Jewish Community Center's preschool had been participants in Shalom Baby, according to Caron Blanke, who runs the program there.

Such programs can be cost-effective because they are volunteer-based, Rosen said, yet few communities use the programs and they are often underfunded.

Rosen's study is being examined by a

number of Jewish educational and outreach institutions as a way to bring empirical evidence — and attention — to a trend they've already noted.

The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, a foundation dedicated to improving Jewish day schools, has been working to develop "pipeline grants" to get day schools to form relationships with local early-childhood centers to feed children into the schools, executive director Rabbi Joshua Elkin said.

Doing so brings a Jewish child's potential entry point into the day-school system to about 2 years, 9 months, Elkin said. Rosen's research, though, brings the entry point down to birth.

"Mark's research points at a much bolder direction," Elkin said.

Still, the need to reach out to these families is greater than what the organized Jewish world may know.

The 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey

suggested that there were about 45,000 to 50,000 Jewish families with newborns, according to Len Saxe, director of the Cohen Center. Allowing for methodological errors in the study and for differing definitions of what it means to have a Jewish baby, Saxe said the actual number of such families could be twice as high.

Reaching out to new parents has become a key tactic in bringing interfaith families closer to the Jewish fold, according to Paul Golin, associate director of the Jewish Outreach Institute.

The interfaith outreach world has been

invigorated by the 2005 Greater Boston Jewish Community Study, conducted by Brandeis University's Steinhardt Social Research Institute. That survey showed that in Boston, where the community makes a point of reaching out to interfaith families, some 60 percent of intermarried families are raising their children Jewish.

The New York-based JOI administrates [www.themotherscircle.org](http://www.themotherscircle.org), an online community of 400 non-Jewish mothers who are raising their children Jewish. It's designed to give them peer support and connect them with educational resources, such as how to bring up a Jewish child, how to tell non-

Jewish grandparents that they are raising children Jewish and how to prepare for a brit milah.

"The Jewish community is now recognizing this opportunity," Golin said. "If the community is open to these young families, it can make a connection that can last lifetimes. It's an

opportunity we often miss."

But Donald Sylvan, president of the Jewish Education Service of North America, warns that the opportunity is valuable only if the community figures out not just how to bring in new parents, but how to guide them further into the community afterward.

"It's the best time if and only if there is an institutionalized follow-up to make sure the parents you are engaging have a road map to get to other engagements," he said. "Some communities have found that road map, and others have not." ■

**If the community is open to these young families, it can make a connection that can last lifetimes.**

**Paul Golin**

Associate director, Jewish Outreach Institute

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## Schoolbooks to show 'Green Line'

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's education minister ordered new schoolbooks to show the pre-1967 "Green Line" boundary with the West Bank. Yuli Tamir, a veteran of the Peace Now movement, said Tuesday she issued the directive to prevent pupils from becoming confused about the status of the West Bank, which Israel never formally annexed and is considered disputed territory.

"You cannot expect children to understand history if parts of it are excised from

school texts," Tamir told Israel's Army Radio.

Palestinians are seeking statehood in the West Bank, which was captured along with the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Six-Day War. Many right-wing Israelis, including tens of thousands of West Bank settlers, consider the land a Jewish birthright.

Several Israeli opposition lawmakers, and even one member of the governing centrist Kadima Party, accused Tamir of politicizing her mandate. ■

# Report doubts Israeli military readiness

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — If any more proof was needed after the Lebanon war of the problems in Israel's armed forces, it was provided this week by a long-awaited internal audit.

The State Comptroller's Report on the Israel Defense Forces drew on data that predated the summer conflict with Hezbollah, but its findings fit the current, heated debate on whether the Jewish state can continue to withstand the threats it faces.

According to Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss, Israel's top military brass suffers from insufficient training, with more than two-thirds of brigadier-generals and major-generals not having completed the required courses in the National Command College.

Lindenstrauss also rapped the military for not keeping proper logs of weapon stores, which proved to be a major liability during the 34-day campaign in Lebanon. He also said complaints by female conscripts of sexual harassment are not investigated with the required speed.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government, already under domestic scrutiny for its recent decision to declare a truce in the Gaza Strip with the Palestinian terrorist groups, pledged to address the issues raised in the report.

Separately, a private think tank with close ties to the Israeli military released a report Tuesday using declassified military materials to document Hezbollah's use of civilians as human shields, among other war crimes, during this summer's war. The American Jewish Congress helped the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Institute for Special Studies prepare and translate the report.

Seen as a semi-official Israeli response to charges that Israel committed war crimes by attacking civilian areas of Lebanon, the report shows how Hezbollah fighters deliberately operated from within populated areas and exploited civilian cover during the war with Israel, in violation of international law. Israel hopes the report will help deter war-crimes suits against Israel threatened by Lebanese and foreign activist groups.

Among the evidence offered are aerial

photographs shot by the Israeli air force and photos taken by Israeli soldiers of Hezbollah military bases in civilian areas.

The report said weapons were stockpiled in private residences and public institutions, including mosques, in population centers such as south Beirut, south Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley.

The report includes the testimonies of Hezbollah detainees from Israeli interrogations, who noted that Hezbollah was well aware of the dangers to civilians of placing military operations in population centers.

Indeed, the report said, the Israeli army often warned civilians of the dangers inherent in staying in those areas, while Hezbollah perceived their presence as an "operative advantage" — the civilians acted as shields — and as propaganda.

Many in south Lebanon left their villages for safety reasons because of the Israeli army warnings, but in some cases Hezbollah attempted to convince or force civilians not to leave their villages.

The comptroller's report, on the other hand, dealt with Israel's own shortcomings. For Defense Minister Amir Peretz, who has been fending off charges that his lack of military pedigree makes him unfit for the job, it was an opportunity to point out that his predecessors who were former generals also weren't blameless.

"There are big gaps between our needs and our capabilities, and we must tackle these problems," Peretz said Tuesday. "We pass the buck to those who were meant to have done the work before us."

But Israeli defense experts called for an outside investigation into the state of the military, noting that Olmert's decision to appoint a semi-official probe into the government's handling of the Lebanon war did little to mollify critics. Many smelled a whitewash.

"The unequivocal conclusion that cries out from the State Comptroller's

Report about the defense establishment is that we need to remove most of the inquiries and investigations from the responsibility of the military and of the Defense Ministry," analyst Amir Rappaport wrote in Ma'ariv. "After the blow it took in Lebanon, it is difficult to avoid the thought that if the defense establishment's upper echelons had taken previous criticism seriously, it is

likely that some of the military's sicknesses would have been cured in time."

Benjamin Netanyahu, head of the Israeli political opposition and a former prime minister — who makes no secret of his ambition to retake top office — predicted that the armed forces might not be able

to prevail in a future war. In some right-wing circles, that's code for the end of Israel.

"I have come to this conclusion in light of the way the Lebanon war was handled, as well as the aftermath," Netanyahu told Israel Radio.

"The government is conducting a policy of weakness, restraint and concessions to terrorism."

He was referring to the Gaza truce, which Olmert has cast as an opportunity to bolster the relatively moderate Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, in the face of Hamas Islamists who run the government, and negotiate the release of a captured Israeli soldier.

Netanyahu, who says Gaza is on its way to becoming "a second Lebanon," called on Olmert to launch a massive military sweep in the territory and topple the Hamas-led government.

But Olmert has said time is still on Israel's side. "We will always have the time, capability and might to weigh our response and decide how to act," the prime minister told reporters Monday. "At the same time, Israel is not closing the door on the possibility of a diplomatic move that could promote relations between us and the Palestinians." ■

There are big gaps between our needs and our capabilities, and we must tackle these problems.

Amir Peretz  
Israeli defense minister

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Hamas: Violence, governing go together

Hamas can run a violent intifada even while in power and will not act against armed Palestinian groups, its leaders said.

The terrorist group's supreme leader, Khaled Meshaal, told Lebanese media Tuesday that Hamas can continue to direct violence against Israel and that the current cease-fire in the Gaza Strip is merely a tactic. He added that even if a two-state solution to the conflict is implemented, Palestinian violence will continue as long as Israel sits on "occupied" land.

Speaking separately Tuesday at a refugee camp in Syria, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said the Hamas-led government encourages Palestinian violence against Israel and would never act against terrorist groups that attack Israel.

#### Netanyahu: Can Israel still win wars?

Benjamin Netanyahu voiced doubt in Israel's ability to prevail in a future war. The Israeli opposition leader made the remark Tuesday when asked about mounting reports of incompetence in the government and military around the recent war with Hezbollah.

"I have come to this conclusion in light of the way the Lebanon war was handled, as well as the aftermath," Netanyahu told Israel Radio. "The government is conducting a policy of weakness, restraint and concessions to terrorism."

#### Acre yeshiva vandalized

An Israeli yeshiva was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti. The fervently Orthodox institution in Acre probably was attacked last Friday night, police said.

Ha'aretz reported that the vandals broke into the building, destroyed computer equipment and spray-painted the walls with swastikas and praise for Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas.

#### Israeli Arabs more educated

Israeli Arabs increasingly are enrolling in higher education, a study found. Ha'aretz reported that the percentage of Israeli Arabs in higher education increased from 11 percent in 1991 to 19 percent in 2002, according to a report released last week by the Council for Higher Education.

That's still lower than the figure for their Jewish counterparts, 40 percent of whom attend college or university.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### U.S. asking Qatar about P.A. aid offer

The United States is querying Qatar about its plans to pay the salaries of Palestinian Authority teachers.

The international community has banned virtually all funding for the Palestinian Authority as long as its government is led by Hamas.

Qatar recently offered to subsidize the salaries of 40,000 P.A. teachers. "We're talking to them about exactly what is the mechanism through which this assistance would flow and what exactly is the intended end use," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Tuesday.

#### Israeli envoy: Protect Lebanon

The world ignores the threat to Lebanon's government at its peril, Israel's new ambassador to the United States said.

"It should be the world's challenge to make sure that Lebanon does not fall into the hands of Iran and Syria," Sallai Meridor said Monday at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, his first

public appearance since his appointment three weeks ago. Meridor said that if Hezbollah succeeds in toppling the pro-Western government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, it would be a victory in Iran's plans to dominate the region and its oil supply.

"This Lebanese theater is being watched by the entire region," he said.

#### Biden: Don't link Iraq with Palestinian conflict

U.S. Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.) said it would be "dangerously naive" to link the revival of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks with progress on Iraq.

Speaking Monday to a gathering of the Israel Policy Forum in New York, the incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee responded to news reports that the Baker-Hamilton Commission is set to recommend reinvigorating American involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian track as a means to win moderate Arab support for stabilizing Iraq.

"Israeli-Palestinian peace should be pursued aggressively on its own merits, period, not as some sort of diplomatic price to make the Arab states feel good so they will help us in Iraq," Biden said.

#### Canadian election set for Jewish holiday

Canada's next provincial election has been scheduled for Shemini Atzeret. The Ontario Election Act fixes voting day every four years on the first Thursday in October, with the next vote set for Oct. 4, 2007.

Besides notifying the chief electoral officer of the problem, Stephen Adler, director of public policy for the Canadian Jewish Congress' Ontario region, advised some 200 Jewish organizations to fill in an Elections Ontario questionnaire to let the province know of their concerns.

Heather Bussey, an official at Elections Canada, said the chief election officer will study the matter in January and may choose to advise provincial officials to change the date.

### WORLD

#### E.U. group sparks anti-Semitism concerns

A new European Union agency has raised concern among Jewish groups about the fight against anti-Semitism.

At the start of 2007, Vienna will become the headquarters of the European Union's Agency for Basic Rights, taking over from the Office against Racism and Xenophobia, or EUMC.

The new agency will examine freedom of movement within E.U. member states along with general human-rights issues, potentially spending less time on combating anti-Semitism.

"In recent years the EUMC has taken on the problem of anti-Semitism," said Andrew Baker, director of international Jewish affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

"We don't know if this focus will be maintained when it is subsumed under a larger agency."

#### One-third of Ukrainians don't want Jews — poll

One in three Ukrainians do not want Jews to be citizens of their country, a survey found.

Conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, the survey found that 36 percent of respondents do not want to see Jews as citizens of Ukraine, compared to 26 percent in a similar survey conducted in 1994.

Researchers also found that anti-Semitic attitudes were especially widespread among younger respondents.

The survey of 2,000 respondents in 24 regions of Ukraine was conducted Oct. 13-24 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.