

IN THE NEWS
Mossad: Iran bomb by 2009

Iran could produce its own nuclear weapons by 2009, an Israeli spymaster said.

Mossad chief Meir Dagan told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday that Iran would be capable of making a bomb by 2009 or 2010.

The prognosis by U.S. and European intelligence agencies is a little less pressing. They say Iran is not expected to have nuclear weapons before the next decade.

O.J. publisher fired over remarks

A HarperCollins publisher was fired for remarks interpreted as anti-Semitic. In the conversation last Friday that led to her termination, Judith Regan reportedly said a "Jewish cabal" at the firm was working against her.

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., which owns the publishing company and Regan's imprint, released notes this week from her conversation with firm lawyer Mark Jackson. Regan allegedly said that Murdoch canceled "If I Did It," her planned O.J. Simpson book and accompanying Fox television interview, because of opposition from Jewish staff members who "constitute a Jewish cabal against her."

A lawyer for Regan said the quotes were inaccurate and Regan is not anti-Semitic.

Bush hosts menorah lighting

President Bush joined Jewish members of his Cabinet in welcoming the fourth night of Chanukah.

"Today, by lighting the menorah, Jews around the world celebrate the victory of light over darkness and give thanks for the presence of a just and loving God," Bush said at a White House ceremony.

The traditional White House Chanukah party followed the lighting.

WORLD REPORT

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

Proposed travel limits on Congress don't faze Jewish nonprofit groups

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — New rules that are expected to pass the Democratic-ruled Congress would strip lobbyists of an essential lobbying tool — the onsite tour.

Top Democrats informed Jewish groups this week of proposed travel reform legislation that would ban lawmakers and their staffs from joining tours sponsored by organizations that employ registered lobbyists.

The consensus among Jewish groups is that the new legislation would be an inconvenience, but wouldn't seriously hamper the trips to Israel that are considered a critical component of congressional support for Israel.

Nonprofit groups that do not employ lobbyists still would be able to sponsor such tours, according to the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella body for Jewish federations, one of the groups briefed on the new legislation.

JTA confirmed the new rules with other Jewish groups briefed on the proposed legislation by the office of Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), incoming speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

William Daroff, the UJC's Washington director, said Jewish groups understood the need for lobbying reform in the wake of a number of scandals that helped end Republican control of Congress. Some lawmakers and their senior staffers are alleged to have taken bribes in the form of expensive junkets disguised as educational trips.

"We are very upbeat that they have come up with a mechanism for stopping junkets while at the same time maintaining bona fide

educational trips for members of Congress and their staff," Daroff said.

Lobbying reform is among the top items on the agenda for the new Congress' first 100 working hours as set out by Pelosi. The 100th Congress is expected to convene Jan. 4.

Until this week, the concern was that Pelosi would embrace an earlier version of the reform that would have banned trips by any group affiliated with a lobby, whether or not the group itself employed lobbyists.

Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.), incoming chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, was the author of the stricter version. It effectively would have killed trips sponsored by groups like the American Israel Education Foundation, affiliated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee; Project Interchange, affiliated with the American Jewish Committee; groups affiliated with the partisan Jewish lobbies, including the Republican Jewish Coalition and the National Jewish Democratic Council; and even local federations, which are affiliated with the UJC.

Together, those nonprofits sponsor trips for about 80 lawmakers or staff in non-election years.

The affiliate groups were established in the wake of similar lobbying-reform legislation a decade ago. The idea at the time was that making such trips the province of explicitly educational groups would help weed out junkets.

It didn't work: Lobbyists such as the recently jailed Jack Abramoff simply set up "educational" fronts to sponsor gift trips for

Continued on page 2

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ *The proposed legislation aims to reduce the opportunities for quid pro quos*

Continued from page 1

favored lawmakers.

The thinking behind the new legislation is that keeping lobbyists off the plane and out of the hotel altogether reduces opportunities for a quid pro quo.

However, it also would mean that lawmakers on legitimate tours will be deprived of insights from those Jewish community professionals who know them best and meet with them most frequently in the halls of Congress.

"You want those people on the trips to have an opportunity to be part of the discussions because they are going to be the people interacting with the lawmakers in the halls of Congress," said Matt Brooks, the Republican Jewish Committee's executive director. "It removes the personal element in terms of the relationship, and the opportunity to hear the same message, the same briefings, to have access to the same information."

Democrats who helped shape the legislation said they had to choose between writing the legislation to accommodate lobbyists or making an attempt at genuine reform.

"There will be some need to come up with new methods," one Democrat told JTA. "The Jewish community will have to evolve."

One immediate result would be a reworking of salary arrangements. Registered lobbyists employed in part by the nonprofits would now be employed entirely by the lobby.

Organizations must register with

Congress if, among other conditions, they employ individuals who spend more than 20 percent of their time lobbying or if the organization spends more than \$24,000 a year on lobbying-related expenses for a client.

Daroff, a registered lobbyist, suggested that the inconvenience from any changes would be minimal.

"Separating lobbyists from the trips is something the federation system can live with," he said. "We applaud Speaker-elect Pelosi and her staff and the Democratic leadership for crafting a reasonable policy that will promote good government and good policymaking."

Richard Foltin, an American Jewish Committee lobbyist, said the organization would conduct an internal review, but anticipated that the trips would continue even if the reform legislation passes.

"We will run kosher trips," he said.

Insiders said the impact would likely be minimal. In Israel trips, the key relationship is not between the lawmaker and the lobbyist but between the lawmaker and the Jewish constituent who gives money to the lawmaker's campaign and who often is present on the trip.

There's still some residual concern that the legislation might be made stricter through an amendment introduced on the

floor by a maverick. Pelosi has vowed to reopen the House floor to amendments, a process that had been squashed by Republicans.

Pro-Israel groups said they weren't overly worried. A blanket ban would alienate a broad coalition of groups, including inter-

est groups that pay for lawmakers to attend conventions or tour areas that need immediate attention. One recent example is the relief groups that have sponsored tours of areas hit during the 2005 storm season.

In any case, it's broadly understood

that the Israel trips, grueling 6:30 a.m.-11 p.m. affairs, are hardly junkets.

Testifying earlier this year, Brad Gordon — one of AIPAC's top lobbyists — welcomed greater transparency, but also suggested that AIPAC's affiliate did not have much to prove when it came to educational value.

"A typical AIEF trip will include meetings with the top political leadership of Israel, with opposition political leaders, with senior military officials, academics, journalists and senior Palestinian officials," he said. "The trips also include visits to important historic, cultural and religious sites that help explain Israel's unique history and provide a necessary context for both the continuing conflict there and the national psyche of Israel." ■

Separating lobbyists from the [lawmakers'] trips is something the federation system can live with.

William Daroff

Washington director, United Jewish Communities

JTA 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.

Virtual forum explores anti-Semitism

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel's Foreign Ministry convened a video conference with Jewish leaders to discuss renewing Israel's global forum on anti-Semitism. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni brought together top officials from across the Israeli and Diaspora spectrums Tuesday to revive an initiative launched in 2003 by Natan Sharansky, who was then a Cabinet minister responsible for Diaspora matters.

The initiative lapsed after Sharansky's departure from government last year, but Iran's Holocaust denial conference last week and other anti-Semitic phenomena led Livni to reconvene the principals. They agreed to convene a fuller forum in

February. "We see a phenomenon where radical leftist groups, radical Muslim groups and radical right groups, without an ideological common denominator, combine together against the State of Israel," said Aviva Raz Shechter, who heads the Foreign Ministry department for anti-Semitism and Holocaust remembrance.

Among those online were Sharansky; Tommy Lapid, a former Israeli Cabinet minister who now heads the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial; Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; and Abe Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. ■

Controversy over left-wing student programs

By BEN HARRIS

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Zionist Organization of America is spearheading an effort to have a left-wing group expelled from a pro-Israel consortium for its sponsorship of a program that brings Israeli army veterans to college campuses to speak about alleged army abuses.

In a letter sent last week to the executive director of the Israel on Campus Coalition, ZOA National President Morton Klein said the program, Breaking the Silence, “promotes outright falsehoods” and is at odds with the coalition’s mission of promoting a positive image of Israel on college campuses.

Klein told JTA he has no firsthand knowledge of the accuracy of Breaking the Silence’s presentation. But according to reports he has received, the program does not provide the necessary context for understanding the conflict, instead portraying a few isolated incidents of Israeli misconduct as indicative of a military culture that brutalizes Palestinians.

Breaking the Silence was sponsored on several campuses by the Union for Progressive Zionists, a liberal member of the ICC, a coalition of 31 pro-Israel organizations founded to promote an Israel-friendly environment on campus.

In a radio interview last month, Yehuda Shaul, a co-founder of Breaking the Silence, explained the group’s purpose as ensuring that Israelis take responsibility for the army’s actions. He also wanted the American people, whose government gives billions of dollars in aid to Israel each year, to know what the Israeli army is doing.

The dispute highlights the often contentious nature of discourse about Israel at American universities and exposes the fractures within the Jewish community, with some groups presenting a more critical view of the Jewish state.

Right-wing groups like the ZOA argue that Jewish money should not be spent on programming that provides fodder for Israel’s most virulent critics. The Union for Progressive Zionists and its supporters say any criticism is offered out of love for Israel and concern for its moral rectitude.

Both sides claim to be acting in Israel’s best interests and believe that their viewpoints are marginalized on campuses.

“Israel is condemned every day in

newspapers around the world, by Arab groups around the world, by left-wing groups around the world,” Klein said. “[The Union for Progressive Zionists and its supporters are] implying that it’s not happening and this is a new breakthrough. But they’re just adding to the already loud chorus of condemnation of Israel that we’ve been experiencing for many, many years.”

But Tammy Shapiro, the union’s executive director, argues that Breaking the Silence fills an important gap, particularly for Jewish participants in Hillel, who she says

rarely hear about how Israel’s actions in the territories hurt both Palestinians and Israel itself.

“There isn’t that conversation happening in Hillel because the Jewish community is so reactionary and so defensive we become deaf,” she said. “We are breaking the silence and we’re venturing into territory that people are afraid to talk about.”

Despite the claims of falsehoods and distortions, critics like the ZOA and Stand With Us, another Israel advocacy group that complained to the campus coalition, are hard-pressed to provide examples of untruths presented by Breaking the Silence.

Klein says the falsehood lies in the implication that a few individual cases of abuse are suggestive of the whole Israeli military.

Roz Rothstein, national director of Stand With Us, says the fact that the program’s rhetoric matches with Israel’s harshest critics belies the claims that these individuals are motivated by their love for Israel.

Like Klein, Rothstein has not seen the Breaking the Silence presentation, but says her group has received several complaints from students who have. She says her group ends up having to expend resources to undo the damage caused by another group in the campus coalition.

The core problem, Rothstein says, is one of context: Israeli military excesses are detailed with no mention of the terror-

ism, suicide bombings and rocket attacks that make them necessary.

“The pattern is that there’s fact woven in with fiction,” she said.

Rothstein declined to say whether she supported Klein’s push to expel the union from the ICC.

Shapiro says that far from demonizing Israel, her group presents a more honest picture of Israeli society that is more cred-

ible than efforts to portray Israel as a moral exemplar.

“We think that we create a much less hostile environment to Israel because UPZ students are engaging the people who would otherwise turn

toward a more anti-Zionist perspective,” Shapiro said. “It’s extremely important that there’s that voice on campus because that’s the only way they’re going to change their mind.”

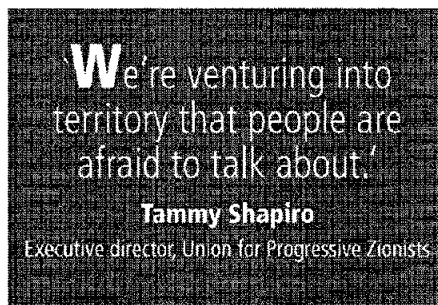
The ICC, which is funded by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life and the Charles and Lynne Schusterman Family Foundation, a major donor to Jewish causes, is committed to the notion of a “big tent” in which a diversity of Jewish views of Israel can find expression.

But the Breaking the Silence program has severely tested that commitment and forced the ICC’s executive director, David Harris, to navigate a controversy the 4-year-old coalition has never faced.

“It is not the place of ICC to govern the content that individual member organizations move forward with,” Harris told JTA. “It is within the purview of the ICC to know that members’ stated purpose and goals match our collective goals.”

Harris said he is in the midst of a fact-finding process and expects the organization’s steering committee to take up the issue at its January meeting. He hopes the coalition ultimately will hold together.

“The strongest role that the ICC can play, our greatest value to the Jewish community, is working together on areas of commonality, not the discrete issues that divide us,” Harris said. “It’s these areas of commonality where we all see eye to eye and can work together that are the greatest strength of our coalition.” ■



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Woman accuses Orthodox men of bus attack

A woman who said she was attacked on a Jerusalem bus by an ad-hoc "modesty patrol" is gathering support for a reaction.

Miriam Shear said she was on her way to the Western Wall on a gender-segregated bus in late November when a group of fervently Orthodox men slapped, kicked, punched and pushed her after she refused to sit in the back of the bus with other women.

The bus driver, who Shear said did nothing throughout the attack, denied that it took place.

Shear, 50, an Orthodox American Israeli, is in contact with several legal advocacy and women's organizations, and may be included in a lawsuit against the Egged bus company over the legality of gender-segregated buses.

Olmert hints at prisoner swap

Ehud Olmert hinted Israel could free Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a soldier held in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli prime minister said after meeting Monday with his visiting British counterpart, Tony Blair, that talks on a prisoner amnesty would be held with the Palestinian Authority.

"In the coming days we intend to set up a joint committee with the Palestinians to discuss the issue of prisoners," he told reporters.

Olmert at first ruled out negotiations for the return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, who was abducted by Palestinian gunmen June 25, but he softened his position after several major Israeli military sweeps of Gaza failed to recover the hostage.

Olmert visits Jordan

Ehud Olmert visited Jordan. The Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem announced Tuesday that Olmert had made an unpublicized visit to Jordan for talks with King Abdullah II, a key regional power-broker. The two leaders discussed bilateral issues and developments in the Palestinian Authority as well as the wider regional situation, the office said in a statement.

Abdullah backs Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas against his Hamas rivals, even allowing a militia loyal to Abbas to be garrisoned in Jordan.

Fatah, Hamas agree on new truce

Mahmoud Abbas said that his Fatah faction and Hamas had reached another truce.

Following Egyptian mediation, the Palestinian Authority president said Tuesday that the cease-fire was scheduled to go into effect at 11 p.m.

Abbas and P.A. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas called on their gunmen to leave the streets, leaving only P.A. policemen.

Fourteen Palestinians have died in the past week of internecine conflict.

Two Al-Aksa chiefs killed

Israeli commandos killed two Al-Aksa Brigades terrorists in the West Bank.

The first fugitive was killed in Nablus when he tried to evade arrest.

One of his comrades, also from the terrorist arm of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah faction, was arrested.

In Tulkarm, undercover commandos intercepted a car driven by a local Al-Aksa Brigades commander and three comrades.

The commander was shot dead after he drew a pistol, and the rest were arrested.

The troops found two bombs in the vehicle.

NORTH AMERICA

Muslims make Holocaust museum appearance

Washington-area Muslim leaders are meeting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to encourage people to learn its lessons. "Muslim leaders will call for remembrance of the victims of the horrific Holocaust and commemoration of the struggles endured by the brave survivors," said a statement from the All-Dulles Area Muslim Society announcing the appearance, which is to take place Wednesday.

"They will encourage humanity to take the lessons of this tragedy to reaffirm our commitment to preserving human dignity and life for all times."

The appearance comes in reaction to last week's Holocaust denial conference in Tehran.

U.S. sanctions Iranian banks

The United States has instituted sanctions against Iranian banks.

The United States has "taken certain steps to cut off the ability of some Iranian banks to use the U.S. financial system for some very basic international financial transactions," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Tuesday, calling for the U.N. Security Council to come to a decision on Iran sanctions. He did not elaborate, but suggested the U.S. sanctions were related to existing laws that punish entities that facilitate Iran's attempts to acquire a nuclear-weapon capability.

Beliefs pledge required to join campus clubs

The University of Wisconsin is allowing campus clubs to require students to endorse specific sets of beliefs.

The policy, which went into effect last Friday, came after a pair of Christian organizations sued when they were denied the right to impose religious-membership requirements for student organizations, according to CampusJ.com.

WORLD

U.K. Jews in more danger than Muslims

Jews in Britain are four times more likely to suffer hate crimes than are Muslims, according to police figures.

The Sunday Telegraph reported this week on data collected from July to September. Crimes recorded ranged from assault and verbal abuse to vandalism and other criminal damage at places of worship.

The Association of Chief Police Officers requested the statistics for the first time in 2006 following reports of Muslims being attacked after the Sept. 11 and July 2005 terrorist attacks in the United States and London, respectively. However, the results show that one in 1,700 Muslims, as compared to one in 400 Jews, is likely to be the victim of a hate crime.

Muslim leader: British are like Nazis

The British treat Muslims like the Nazis treated the Jews, a U.K. Muslim leader said. Muhammed Abdul Bari, head of the Muslim Council of Britain, said the government targets Muslims, blaming extremism on "a small, largely deprived community," which leads to a "deterioration of community cohesion and fuels xenophobia."

He went on to ask, during a presentation to members of Parliament, "What is the degree of xenophobia that tipped Germany in the 1930s towards a murderous ethnic and cultural racism?"

Jon Benjamin, chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, called Bari's statements "offensive and disingenuous" and warned that making comparisons to Nazi Germany would further alienate the Muslim community in Britain.