

## Quote of the Week...

"You know the answer by yourself, and the whole world knows the answer. Israel is a small country with a small population. It is a democracy, but exists among neighbors who want to see her in the sea. Israel has made it clear that she does not want to be in the sea, and as a result, over several decades, has organized in such a manner so as not to be thrown into the sea." - United States' Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, when asked why the United States is silent when "Israel has more nuclear arms than any other nation in the region." (IsraelNationalNews.com Feb 11)

## News...

### Bush Sees Israeli Unilateral Exit as Hurting Iraq

President George Bush is said to be concerned that an Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip could destabilize the Middle East and harm the U.S.-led effort to reconstruct Iraq.

Administration sources said Bush has expressed concern to his aides that the plan drafted by the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would damage U.S. interests in the Middle East. They said the president was worried that a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip that would leave what he regards as a terror-ridden regime of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat could lead to a Palestinian and Hizbullah escalation that would threaten the region as well as bolster the Sunni insurgency war in Iraq.

"The Palestinians need to take action against terror, against the groups that foment terror, against the climate of violence," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said in a briefing on Wednesday. "They need to organize their security situation so that they can take control of the security situation, their security services, so they can take control of the security situation and really act responsibly, as a state will have to act when one is created."

The result is that the White House has so far refused to set a date for a summit between Bush and Sharon, the latter who is under police investigation related to a bribery case. Officials said Israel had pressed for such a meeting to take place in Washington in February, but that appears unlikely. (MENL Feb 7)

## Commentary...

### Sharon's Crisis of Legitimacy By Evelyn Gordon

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan for a unilateral pullout from Gaza has been justly criticized as a spur to terrorism: If three years of terrorist warfare are enough to make Israel flee Gaza without demanding anything in exchange, the terrorists have every reason to believe that more of the same will prompt additional Israeli retreats.

But an equally serious problem, which has received far less attention, is the crisis of legitimacy created by the plan's timing – namely, the proximity between Sharon's policy u-turn and the prosecution's impending decision on whether to indict him for bribery.

Were the proposed Gaza pullout a mere continuation of Sharon's previous policies, this proximity would be irrelevant, because the idea that the plan might be connected to his legal woes could never have arisen. The problem stems from the fact that the plan is a radical departure from Sharon's previous policies.

Lest anyone has forgotten, Sharon was twice elected prime minister by the largest margins in Israeli history on a platform of "no concessions under fire," and the policies he pursued during his first three years in office largely adhered to that platform.

Even more significant, last year's landslide victory was over an opponent whose signature policy plank was a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza – an idea Sharon lambasted at the time as a dangerous concession to terrorism. Now he is suddenly advocating the very policy he was elected only a year ago to prevent.

## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

The result is that Israelis of all political persuasions have been wondering whether this turnabout is not a desperate effort to deter prosecutors from indicting him (and thereby forcing his resignation) by making them fear that an indictment would be viewed as reckless interference with a major diplomatic move.

The question has been posed endlessly by politicians, media commentators and ordinary citizens; even the two diehard Sharon loyalists I know have admitted to niggling doubts about whether the new policy does not owe more to the soon-to-be-completed police investigation than to a sincere change in Sharon's view of the national welfare.

This is far from being a minor problem – because if a move as controversial as a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza is to be accomplished without causing a devastating crisis in Israeli society, it must enjoy unquestioned democratic legitimacy. And it will not enjoy such legitimacy if large segments of the public believe that Sharon has sacrificed the national interest to save his political and legal skin.

THE CONSEQUENCES of a lack of democratic legitimacy can be clearly seen in the corrosive hatred that marred 1995, which remains an open wound to this day. The shocking climax of that hatred – Yitzhak Rabin's murder in November 1995 – has led many to forget the event that drove it to a fever pitch: the Knesset vote on the Oslo-2 Accord a month earlier, which created Palestinian rule in the West Bank by mandating Israel's withdrawal from six major cities.

The agreement passed by a vote of 61-59, thanks to one of the most egregious cases of vote-buying in Israeli history: Rabin obtained the decisive two votes by bribing two MKs elected on the far-right Tsomet list to switch sides in exchange for a ministry and a deputy ministry – positions that offer not only power and prestige, but substantial financial benefits as well.

I doubt that any other democracy would have allowed an agreement as fateful as Oslo-2 to be approved by such blatantly illegitimate means, and the degree to which the media and the legal system collaborated in whitewashing this act of political bribery is a mark of shame on Israel's democracy.

But it was precisely this illegitimacy that created a climate so conducive to Rabin's assassination – because when the normal rules of the democratic game have been thrown out the window, making it impossible for one side to compete on the democratic playing field, it is easy for violent extremists to convince themselves that they are equally justified in scrapping the ground rules of civilized behavior.

For Sharon, given the questions about his motives raised by the Gaza plan's timing, there are two ways to ensure that it nevertheless enjoys the necessary democratic legitimacy. One is to resign and call new elections: If he were to win reelection on a platform of unilateral withdrawal, he would clearly be justified in implementing such a policy.

But the simpler method is to do what his government should have done long since in any case – submit legislation to require a supermajority, either in the Knesset or in a referendum, for ratifying the cession of territory.

It is to the Likud's shame that the party, which has been quick to propose such initiatives whenever it is in the opposition and cannot get them passed, has always dropped the issue the minute it obtains power.

But most democracies do require a supermajority, either of the legislature or of voters in a referendum, to approve controversial and irrevocable measures such as territorial concessions, precisely because they believe that it is essential to accord such decisions unassailable legitimacy in order to ensure they will be peacefully accepted by the disappointed minority.

If Sharon's Gaza plan were approved by a supermajority of either the Knesset or the public – say, two-thirds of the Knesset, or 50 percent of eligible voters in a referendum – it would be impossible for even his harshest critics to question the legitimacy of the move.

But if he chooses to push it through the Knesset by the usual method – a narrow 61-59 majority – the crisis of legitimacy created by the suspicion that he has subordinated the country's interests to his own political survival is liable to create an irreparable rift in Israeli society. (Jerusalem Post Feb 10)

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## The Limits of Tolerance Jerusalem Post Editorial

The indictment of two senior Balad Party activists for seeking to establish a terrorist cell in Israel calls for Knesset action. We have been among those who have leaned toward allowing the wisdom of the voters to set the limits of participation in the political system.

This case shows, however, that the normal political checks and balances are insufficient. According to the charges, Gassan and Sirhan Atmala, Israeli Arab brothers living in Nazareth, received training, funding, and direction from Hizbullah with the aim of carrying out suicide bombings in Israel.

Gassan Atmala allegedly sent his brother to meet with Hizbullah in Turkey and then for training in Lebanon.

Gassan Atmala was a member of the Balad Party's central committee, despite having been detained three times for security-related offenses. Sirhan was also a Balad activist.

Balad Party chief MK Azmi Bishara responded to the charges: "This is the first time in the history of Balad that an indictment was filed against one of its members. Even if it turns out that the charges are true, it is an individual act that does not reflect upon the movement."

Well, not exactly. Bishara himself is under indictment for publicly expressing support for Hizbullah in speeches made in Syria, at a memorial for the late Syrian president Hafez Assad in June 2001, and at a rally in Umm el-Fahm the previous year.

Bishara has claimed in his own defense that, "We never called for violence, but we have political positions that are part of our political stance."

It is not possible to credibly argue, however, that support for terrorist organizations can be separated from support for terrorism and violence itself. And now we see what the consequences and implications of such "political" stances are: attempts to create a new terrorist organization.

How must Israel protect itself against a political party that not only supports a terrorist organization, but is allegedly incubating terrorists within its own ranks?

Our security services can be expected to root out such activities using the criminal investigatory tools at their disposal, and there are certainly sufficient legal tools to prosecute crimes involving violence and terrorism.

But criminal tools are not enough when it comes to organizations that help create a climate of association with, rather than rejection of, Israel's most violent enemies.

At the same time, our political system has patiently waited for the Israeli Arab electorate to punish radicalism in its midst, but politicians such as Bishara, Muhammad Barakei, and Ahmed Tibi seem to compete with each other over how closely they can identify with Israel's enemies without explicitly endorsing terrorism itself.

From a democratic perspective, there is no doubt that relying upon the usual political and legal constraints to protect against such radicalization is preferable.

But just as we have laws against incitement, and have even banned a Jewish party (Kach, the followers of Meir Kahane) for advocating racism, there must be limits to the arena of legitimate political activity.

It may well be that, before the next elections, the courts will decide that one or more Arab parties may not compete because they have crossed the recently tightened legal criteria for all political parties. The new law does prohibit support for terrorist groups. And it does not make sense to ban a party because of the actions of some of its members – unless that party maintains people it claims to disassociate itself from in its ranks, or fails to condemn illegal activities.

Given Balad's record of flirting with Hizbullah, it is not enough that Bishara continue with his "a few bad apples" defense. What we fail to hear from Balad and other Arab parties is a rejection of terrorism under any circumstances. As the Palestinian offensive became more vicious and deadly over the past three years, the Arab parties have, if anything, increased their identification with the Palestinian cause.

Parties such as Balad have increasingly dropped any modicum of loyalty they had as representatives of Israeli citizens, and openly reject the concept of a Jewish state. That such a stance harms their ability to advance the cause of their own electorate within Israeli society goes without saying. But the politics of Israeli Arab irredentism has gone beyond being detrimental to its own community to endanger Israeli society as a whole.

Democracy is not a suicide pact; tolerance must have its limits. (Jerusalem Post Feb 9)

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## Just the Facts By Eli Pollak and Yisrael Medad

For news correspondents especially it is important to know the facts. It is not at all good if the impression is made that... one forgot to review the sources and ended up depending on common gossip."

This prescient advice was given almost 70 years ago by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, himself a journalist. Sadly, little has changed. For some of our journalists and media personalities, knowing the facts seems a rather elusive goal.

On January 16, a Ma'ariv headline read "Fear: Violence may erupt between army service refusers and settlers."

Reporting on a demonstration at the Kissufim crossing to Gaza, Itai Asher quotes, "The Courage to Refuse" activist David Zonshein thus: "We have no fear of the soldiers but of the settlers since violence, including shooting, is not foreign to them." He is further quoted saying: "If there is violence, we won't come armed; but we aren't patsies. We won't flee when the local Levinger raises his

hand to us. He won't scare us."

Two days later, Gaza local council spokesman Eran Sternberg wrote in response to Ma'ariv editor Amnon Dankner that Zonshein had earlier tried, vainly, to interest other reporters with his "settler violence" spin, but only Asher had taken the bait. Moreover, Sternberg, who was at the demonstration, had heard Zonshein claiming that the passage about shooting was added by reporter Asher himself; he feared only an eruption of violence.

Ma'ariv editor Dankner responded rapidly, writing Sternberg the next day: "Your complaint is broadly justified. A review of the issues with the editor and the reporter led to the conclusion that the report was grossly in error. I have asked Avi Battelheim, my deputy, to make sure the error is corrected, and this was indeed done today. I hope that such cases will not repeat themselves."

In fact, that same day Battelheim published a correction as well as the settlers' response.

Ma'ariv was not the only newspaper recently addressed by Sternberg. On October 31, Yediot Aharonot carried a long article on the Jewish settlements in the Gaza strip, under the headline: "The bloody price of cherry tomatoes."

On December 8 Sternberg wrote Yediot editor Yael Admony asking her when, if ever, Yediot had used the headline "The bloody price of the Oslo Accords."

ON NOVEMBER 28 Yediot carried an article by Ofer Shelach on the residents of Kfar Darom. Among his assertions: "The settlers drive like crazy people"; their Thai agricultural workers "would be told by their employers to clamber onto the army jeeps"; and two Kfar Darom residents "have agricultural lands outside the settlement – cultivated, naturally, by Palestinian laborers."

Sternberg notes that all these claims were false. Sternberg pointed out that despite thousands of rockets and bombs and deadly shootings, Kfar Darom has managed to create an internationally acclaimed agricultural industry, all without using Palestinian laborers. Most of the workers are Jewish; only a minority are foreigners.

Sternberg accused Yediot of not attempting to obtain the settlers' response and not checking the facts in depth. After two months Sternberg is still awaiting an answer from Yediot, and Kfar Darom has decided to press its own libel case.

In the wake of reports that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon intends to evacuate the Gush Katif bloc, Oshrat Kotler of Channel 2 TV interviewed, on January 14, a resident of Nitzanit, who claimed he would be willing to leave his home for suitable restitution.

The indefatigable Sternberg turned to Reshet Bet and TV Authority complaints commissioner Giora Rozen. Nitzanit is not in the Katif settlement bloc. It lies in the northern region of the Gaza Strip and was not included in the reports about Prime Minister Sharon's intentions.

Sternberg accused Channel 2 of intentionally attempting to mislead the public, presenting a false picture of settlers who are willing to leave their homes. Finally, he noted that this was the second time in a period of weeks that Kotler's program had dealt unfairly with the settlers. Sternberg is still awaiting an answer from Channel 2.

We can only commend Sternberg for his hard work and perseverance and hope that Yediot and Channel 2 TV learn from Ma'ariv that (a) answers can be given promptly and, (b) if you make a mistake, it is no shame to admit it and take the necessary steps to correct it. That's ethical journalism.

(Jerusalem Post Feb 8)

*Prof. Eli Pollak and Yisrael Medad are, respectively, chairman and vice-chairman of Israel's Media Watch ([www.imw.org.il](http://www.imw.org.il)).*

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## Expose 'Anti-Israelism' for What it Is... By Fiamma Nirenstein

There is something unhealthy about Jewish political delusions. Instead of confronting our enemies, we compete in blaming ourselves. First Israel thought it had a partner for peace.

But on discovering this was not the case, Jews and Israelis didn't blame the Arabs; they invented non-existent interlocutors, promoted them, and thereby diminished their own self-esteem.

Instead of confronting the frightening rebirth of Islamic and European anti-Semitism, we Jews delude ourselves by allowing anti-Semitism in the guise of legitimate criticism of Israeli policies.

But as Minister-without-Portfolio Natan Sharansky made clear, where Israel is criticized illegitimately, that is anti-Semitism. Where Israel is criminalized, judged by a double standard or its very existence is delegitimized, that is anti-Semitism.

Without doubt, the same phenomenon that lies behind Diaspora assaults on Jews, synagogue bombings and arson attacks on Jewish schools is directed against Israel.

Indeed, Israel faces an enemy whose battle cry is: "Kill the Jews wherever they are."

Nevertheless, we are overly cautious in drawing a line between anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism. By doing so we forget a basic truth: Today's conflict was generated by Yasser Arafat. He refused to accept the

concessions offered by Ehud Barak and launched a bloodbath against innocents. Israel responded by defending itself, though, doubtless, some of its actions are open to criticism.

Israelis have difficulty understanding the nature of the polemical attacks used against the Jewish state. By being tarred as an apartheid, colonial, racist state, the enemy is merely employing anti-Semitic canards against Israel.

What good does it do for European states to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day if their newspapers think it legitimate to employ anti-Jewish caricatures in their cartoons? I am thinking of the recent Independent (London) cartoon showing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon naked, blood-spattered, and grinning as he chews on Palestinian babies. The cartoon invokes the memory of similar caricatures of the Jew which appeared in the Nazi-era newspaper *Der Stürmer*.

Instead of confronting our enemies, we compete in blaming ourselves. Recall the deceit which surrounded the charge that IDF operations in Jenin constituted "the biggest massacre of postwar history." Was this not a modern version of the blood libel?

Conversely, viewing photos of Jewish children killed by terrorists brings back the memory of an earlier generation of children killed by the Nazis.

Can it be that all the efforts to facilitate remembrance have been relegated to museums and have no dynamic, practical consequences? When we say that studying the Shoah helps fight anti-Semitism, aren't we deceiving ourselves?

COMMEMORATING the Holocaust has failed. Politicians pay homage at Yad Vashem, attend Diaspora memorials for the Six Million, and feel themselves inoculated as philo-Semites. This enables them, the morning after, to say Israel practices apartheid, or declare themselves able to understand the motivation of suicide bombers. Would not Theodorakis gladly visit Yad Vashem?

On December 6, 2003 the Calusca Library in Milan, a center of extreme Left activism, organized the presentation of a text denying the Holocaust. An angry – albeit extreme – comrade explained that the revolution has to take place now, and in order to find new allies it is necessary to deny the murder of European Jewry. It is the price to be paid for solidarity.

But even in less extremist circles, the Star of David transformed into a swastika does not constitute a problem for left-wing newspapers and their readers.

So what to do, Jews ask themselves, when traditional allies transform into an anti-Semitic enemy?

For many, the first reaction is to negate reality. Most of the damage to Jewish life in modern history has come from the political Right.

Jews, in large measure, feel themselves naturally allied to the Left. More than that, even now Jews perceive themselves as receiving legitimacy from the Left.

Paradoxically, our real weapon is that very legitimacy – which we must turn around and use to deny the anti-Semites.

Jews must stop making excuses for anti-Semitism, regardless of its source. With the moral force of old allies who have become enemies, we must challenge what has happened to the Left.

Liberal criticism of the recent visit to Israel by the right-wing Gianfranco Fini, vice president of the Italian Council of Ministers, is hypocritical; all the while Diaspora Jews absolve the Left and forgive its anti-Semitism as legitimate criticism of Israeli policies.

This is a suicidal approach, destroying the unity of the Jewish world and undermining the unity of the concept of anti-Semitism.

There are neither two types of anti-Semitism, nor two kinds of struggles against anti-Semitism. (Jerusalem Post Feb 9)

*The writer is a correspondent for La Stampa and an author.*

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### Save the Bush Doctrine By Saul Singer

"The Bush Doctrine is dead," a friend and triumphant fan of the Democratic party pronounced in my office, upon the news that David Kay could find no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. He said this with some ambivalence, wishing, at least for Israel's sake, that Bush hadn't bungled, while savoring the chance for his party's victory.

There is, indeed, a sense that since his lightning victory in Iraq, and despite the capture of Saddam Hussein, Bush's foreign policy balloon has been popped. America went to war to disarm an unarmed dictator. Bush will never, my friend says, be able to play the WMD card again. Ergo, his doctrine is dead.

I don't think so. Partly because, as former CIA chief James Woolsey pointed out, the 8,500 liters of anthrax that Iraq admitted it had, if reduced to powder, could have fit into a number of suitcases.

"Saddam's 'stockpile' of biological agent wasn't in his spider hole with him," says Woolsey, "But it could have been." We also don't know what he stashed away in Syria.

But let's say for a moment that Saddam's entire WMD program was an elaborate bluff and that all the West's intelligence services - including those of France, Germany and Israel - were utterly taken in. Even then, the Bush Doctrine is not dead.

The current debate confuses an extension of the Bush Doctrine with its essence, which is that support for terrorism is punishable by regime change. As Bush put it on September 25, 2001, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you aid a terrorist, if you hide terrorists, you're just as guilty as the terrorists." This was a fundamental shift from the pre-9/11 world, in which the price for supporting terrorism was at most a tit-for-tat via cruise missiles, not threats to regimes.

Woolsey argues that the justification for the war in Iraq should have been a three-legged stool: liberation of the Iraqi people, draining a corner of the swamp of terror, and preempting the threat from WMD.

How can Bush save his doctrine? The main effort seems to be dedicated toward turning Iraq into more of a success story by election day. Elections are supposed to be held there in June, and the hope is that Iraq's new leadership, with American help, will be able to stabilize and democratize the country.

But short-term success in Iraq is a thin reed on which to build. The number of American casualties there could be reduced, but it could also rise. Even if there were quiet, the bar has been set so high in Iraq that there could be any number of ways to claim that America's policy is failing.

Iraq is a must-win challenge, and will remain the centerpiece of the transformation of the Arab world that America is leading. But Iraq symbolizes the solution, not the problem, and Bush cannot win the hearts and minds battle without restating the context that Iraq fits into.

In his recent State of the Union address, Bush succinctly stated the choice he stands for: "We can go forward with confidence and resolve, or we can turn back to the dangerous illusion that terrorists are not plotting and outlaw regimes are no threat to us." The problem is that Bush's own overly Iraq-centric policy contradicts his message.

Bush believes that the war against terrorism is about driving every rogue regime out of the terror business, and that this is what the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are really about. The Democrats in the race (sans Lieberman) either don't agree with confronting regimes or have not put forward a plausible alternative for doing so. But Bush's problem is that neither has he.

As long as Bush's actions, rather than his words, project that the war against terror ended in Iraq, he is not offering voters a real choice and is draining his own policy of credibility. Bush seems to want to have it both ways: not scaring voters that he is gearing up for another war, while promising he will not let America's guard down.

But how can Bush explain that the people of Iran, the most dangerous terror-supporting state in the world, are dying to rid themselves of their regime and he is not lifting a finger to help them? Worse, he allows an internal administration debate to continue over whether to isolate or engage the mullahs - and those pressing for isolation don't seem to be winning.

Bush has not shown what his model for regime change is, short of invasion. Until he does, it will be hard to argue that he is continuing the war against terrorism, while the Democrats will not. The WMD-based, invasion-dominated phase of the Bush Doctrine may indeed be over, but it is up to Bush to show that the war against jihad-backing states is alive and taking on new forms. (Jerusalem Post Feb 9)

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### Zion Investments, Inc. By Sarah Honig

Israel isn't a commonplace, run-of-the-mill, normal nation state - of the sort that have no special agenda or purpose for their existence. Other states are where they are because ancestral tribal thugs or robber barons managed to wrest a certain territorial base. No one doubts ordinary nations' prospects or their continued tenure in their various grabbed real estate holdings.

Israel, in contrast, was established to fulfill a very distinct destiny - to secure the fragile future of the Jewish people. It's not another entry in the roll call of nations, but Zion Futures Investments Inc.

That's why its every move is calculated not according to immediate cost and return, but with a view to intangible long-term yields. That isn't how any other country does business. Elsewhere the reasoning is straightforward: what's in it for us now? No one questions whether specific decisions will facilitate the survival of artificially concocted Belgium, whether they'll jeopardize French claims to Corsica and Martinique, or if they'll render Sweden more lovable.

Israel alone is plagued with concerns that transcend immediate benefit.

Normal nations wouldn't consider releasing hundreds of terrorists for three bodies and one dubious middle-aged speculator. For Israel the logic of the trade-off is to let soldiers, liable to be kidnapped in future, know that their nation will spare nothing to get their remains back. Ditto for shifty wheeler-dealers who get into serious scrapes. No price is too high.

Nasrallah's got our number and will try to get his hands on more Israelis as replacement commodities, which guarantees more future transactions.

LIKEWISE WE'VE let the Arafat conglomerate know that no price is too high to secure a respite from terror. We're willing to pay with land for a brief breather for the sake of the future safety of our populace. It's the same compassionate business sense which impelled Israel to flee in the dead of night from Lebanon in order to thereby invest in the future peace of the Galilee.

We signaled Nasrallah that no sacrifice is exorbitant and he interpreted our gesture in his simplistic, non-convoluted manner, as befits a man with no Western erudition or sophistication. Message received loud and clear and not only by him.

It produced a total reversal of strategy for Arafat's venture. He rejected the lucrative Camp David offer and opted instead for a hostile takeover bid, popularly dubbed "the intifada."

It was an astute maneuver, which already promises impressive profits, according to the Lebanese pullback pattern. Israeli CEO Sharon, exasperated by ungentlemanly Arafat's dirty dodges, now insists on paying unilaterally with the Gaza settlements coin, while forgoing delivery of any goods.

The less trusting amongst Sharon's shaken shareholders question the CEO's wisdom, but he assures them that from his high office he can see things they can't. He knows better than they do what's good for their futures.

And thus he sets free not POWs but sadists. Even the continued incarceration of savages like Samir Kuntar becomes quasi-illegitimate in the world's eyes and negotiable for the CEO. In 1979 intrepid Kuntar and fellow freedom fighters invaded the Haran family's Nahariya apartment. They led Danny and his four-year-old daughter Einat at gunpoint to the seashore. Before the horrified father, Kuntar held the child upside down by her ankles, swung her hard, and bashed her brains against the rocks. He then shot Danny.

That anyone can contemplate letting Kuntar loose, for whatever investment in our future, desecrates our past and makes mockery of our justice. This could never happen in America, where Jonathan Pollard, who never hurt a fly, continues to rot in prison. But in our inscrutable futures market, nothing's sacred. Einat Haran doesn't matter anymore.

Neither do last week's Jerusalem bus blast victims. You and I are expendable too. Our skepticism mustn't get in the way of the CEO's vision of a future Palestine. He could've reconsidered the Oslo investment in our futures, whose rewards abound in cemeteries and rehabilitation wards throughout this land. Instead, he persists in throwing more good money after bad by relinquishing stretches of homeland as if ditching distant empires overseas.

This reckless gamble is promoted as an investment in our future security.

More likely it'll inspire future bloodshed. And what will happen when we've no assets left to barter? Will Greater Tel Aviv become our last-stand fortress, or will we retreat from its barricades too for the future's sake?

Our national business administration isn't normal. That's why the international community doesn't treat us normally. It knows that unlike all other nations, we can be humiliated and demonized. We will rationalize away anything as advantageous to future investments. No pain, no gain.

Except that in our case it's all pain and no gain. With such lousy risk management, we'd better pray that Zion Investments Inc. doesn't go under. (Jerusalem Post Feb 9)

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### **It's UN-believable** By Liat Collins

Israel certainly pays a price for being a member of the United Nations. Not the cost of condemnations. The real cost: \$15.8 million a year.

Of course, some of that goes to the noble cause of peace-keeping - in places like Sierra Leone, East Timor, the Congo, and Eritrea.

According to a special report by Yediot Aharonot's Eitan Amit, last year Israel's contribution to the upkeep of UN forces in Sierra Leone amounted to nearly \$2m.

And Sierra Leone is not alone. Keeping peace in the Congo came with a \$2.5m. price tag for Israel, while East Timor cost us "just" \$1m.

As Amit noted, the massive funding by Israel of the UN comes at a time when the Foreign Ministry is closing consulates and embassies for lack of money. Only last month, Transportation Minister Avigdor Lieberman succeeded at the last moment in persuading the Foreign Ministry to find the \$3m. a year necessary to keep the embassy open in Belarus, a country with a large aliya potential.

While he was seeking a way to save the embassy, Lieberman was probably unaware that in 2003 Israel paid \$8.4m. for UN peace-keeping efforts. And the sum is likely to go up this year, unless miraculously world peace breaks out.

The \$8.4m. is only half the story. The UN's ongoing biannual budget for 2004-2005 is a little over \$3 billion; Israel's part in this is \$14,757,200m. for the two years (\$7.4m. for each year). So UN membership certainly adds up.

Given that in an average year, the UN General Assembly passes some 17 or 18 openly anti-Israel motions, it turns out that Israel is, in effect, "paying" close to \$1m. per motion. We certainly get our money's worth.

If this doesn't make you see red, consider this: Israel this year is paying \$2m. more than it did in 2003 (a hike of some 32%).

Among the 22 countries that are members of both the Arab League and the UN, only oil-rich Saudi Arabia pays more than Israel. We pay three times as much as petroleum producers Iran and Kuwait; four times as much as Egypt; 12 times as much as Syria, and 20 times what Lebanon has to pay.

The 22 Arab League states together contribute just 1.773% of the UN budget. (The Palestinians, with observer status, don't pay a cent.)

Until about two years ago, Israel paid less than \$2m. a year and the US funded more than 25% of the UN's budget. When the US revolted and decided to pay only 22%, Madeleine Albright asked some of the US's friends to split the cost. Israel was among those who paid the price of friendship.

But how could it refuse? After all, other than Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, the US is the only friend we have at the "dear" old UN. (Jerusalem Post Feb 9)

### **World War III is Flickering While the World Sleeps** By Mary Jane Skala

Right after Christmas, the Italian prime minister confirmed that terrorists had planned to attack the Vatican on Christmas Eve. I wasn't surprised. It confirmed what I'd learned during my trip to Israel in November: Islamic fundamentalists have declared war on the western world. "Someday they will hit the Eiffel Tower," one Israeli had told me. "Then maybe Europe will wake up."

If Europe is sleeping, so is America. I arrived home from Israel to find America agog over Michael Jackson. I'd been in a hot spot where terrorists lurk, where fences are rising in self-defense, where my life was at risk, and I came home to find a nation hypnotized by an aging, freaky pop star. It confirmed what I'd sensed after two weeks in South Africa last March: America is dangerously isolated and strangely naive.

I keep waiting for the Democrats to address these issues before the Iowa caucuses, but they don't. They're bickering over race and the economy. Sure, Dennis Kucinich has proposed a Department of Peace, but what the heck is that? Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, giddy Islamic fundamentalists are plotting attacks on the West. I came home afraid for the world.

I thought I'd seen the real world in South Africa, which is still floundering after apartheid and collectively dying of AIDS. South Africans pleaded with me to ask President Bush to save neighboring Zimbabwe from its dictator, who is murdering whites, confiscating farms and letting citizens starve. That was eye-opening enough; but then I went to Israel.

The crisis in Israel extends far beyond Yasir Arafat. Not only is Israel's future at stake, but that intifada is part of a larger explosion in the Middle East, where free-wheeling western values are colliding with rigid Arab ones. Israel is a lonely democracy adrift in a furious sea of dictatorships.

In Israel, several people, all independent of each other, warned me of an approaching apocalypse. They see it coming.

One of them was Itamar Marcus, founder of Palestinian Media Watch, which monitors TV and Internet broadcasts inside Arab nations. Marcus, a native New Yorker who has testified before the U.S. Senate, bluntly told me that Islamic fundamentalists are preparing for war with the West.

The fundamentalists hate "the triumvirate" of the U.S., Great Britain and Israel, he said. They remind their people that Napoleon fell, Rome fell, and that the U.S. will fall, too. Marcus said these zealots are evil at the core.

"They are too evil to realize that most Americans are basically good people, that we don't have evil intentions," Marcus said. "This is a culture that raises its young to be suicide bombers."

That theme picked up a few days later during a three-day Negev Desert sojourn with Alfonso Nussbaumer. Nussbaumer, 64, is not only a tough desert guide; he also trains snipers for the Israeli military. He teaches desert survival to soldiers from all over the world, including Americans. He has assisted on dangerous search-and-rescue missions in Zimbabwe, Colombia and China.

"Weapons of mass destruction? Of course Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction!" Nussbaumer insisted, stretching his arms out as if embracing the empty Negev Desert. "Look at this vast land! There is so much room to hide them! Nobody will ever find them! Then he slaughtered all the people who had anything to do with making them."

Nussbaumer also said that President George Bush should have taken out Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War because after that war, Hussein slaughtered all pro-American Iraqis.

Nussbaumer warned that a global conflict with Islamic fundamentalists is brewing: "They don't care if they take us all back to the 16th century."

He also said that terrorism has made the conventional Army obsolete. "How do we fight it?" I asked?

"Counter-terrorism," he replied.

In speaking with Marcus, I'd asked him why the Islam world doesn't rise up against its militant brethren. He said, "They are afraid."

A chill went through me. If militant Christians hijacked a jet and slammed it into one of the world's landmarks and slaughtered thousands, I would hope the rest of the Christian world stand up. Ditto for Jews if one of theirs had demolished the WTC in the name of religion. If the rest of the Muslim world is afraid to speak up, the implications are terrifying.

Nussbaumer doesn't fear that a global conflict is coming. He knows it is. He pointed out that France is now 20 percent Muslim. Muslim numbers are up in Britain. Most Muslims, of course, simply want to live quiet lives; but if they can't control their radicals, the West is in trouble.

"Bush and Tony Blair are the only world leaders who get it," Nussbaumer said. Yet the week I was overseas, thousands of Britons protested the two of them in London.

"Britain is asleep," Nussbaumer said, shaking his head. "The world is asleep."

I don't want to know what Howard Dean and John Kerry are going to do to save Social Security. I want to know what they're going to do about America in the post-9/11 world. (Sun Press Jan 15)