

Commentary...

Heroes Are Hard to Find

Jerusalem Post Editorial

Cpl. Oleg Shaikhet died a hero. He is a hero because when kidnapped he fought back, and because even in his darkest hour he showed the compassion of a son for his parents.

By throwing his personal items out the window of his assailants' vehicle, he ensured that his body would be found - thus denying the terrorists their weapon of emotional blackmail against his family, his government and his people.

Understanding the potency of emotional blackmail, Hizbullah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah threatened Israelis on Saturday with further kidnappings if the government does not move ahead with further prison releases. Speaking of Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum, who was kidnapped by Hizbullah in October 2000, Nasrallah shouted, "Today I say to Israelis that Tannenbaum's fate is... unknown. Who knows if he is still alive?" Not to be outdone, recently released "refrigerator bomber" Ahmed Jbarra called over the weekend for Palestinians to step up their attempts to kidnap Israelis.

Palestinians often describe Jbarra - who murdered 14 Israelis in 1975 - as their own Nelson Mandela. It's an interesting comparison. Upon his release from prison, Mandela began a process of reconciliation among all South Africans. This created the kind of trust needed for the apartheid regime to relinquish power, which it did in 1994.

Israel released Jbarra and 100 other Palestinian terrorists last month in the hope that doing so would engender trust and strengthen the hand of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. What happened? Days after his release, PA Chairman Yasser Arafat appointed the 68-year old Jbarra his "adviser" on prisoners. In this elevated capacity Jbarra has led mobs demanding Israel release the remaining prisoners. And the Israeli government has indulged this demand. Now another 540 Palestinians are set to be released. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority has yet to take any steps to clamp down on terror groups. Incitement continues. Moderation remains elusive.

The pattern here is a familiar one. Speaking to a crowd in Bethlehem over the weekend, Jbarra said, "I would like to remind all the national and Islamic factions that in return for three soldiers, Israel released 1,150 prisoners." Here Jbarra was referring to the prisoner swap with Ahmed Jibril's PFLP-GC in 1985. These prisoners released by Israel later took leadership positions in the Palestinian terrorist organizations that led to the first intifada. Far from becoming voices of moderation, they sowed the seeds of violence and hatred.

Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's decision in 1992 that the 417 Hamas terrorists deported to Lebanon would have to be allowed back home after two years had a similar effect. These men, who trained with Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces during their time away, introduced suicide bombings to the Palestinian arsenal upon their return. They established the now solid ties between Palestinian terrorist networks and the Iranian government. And as in the first intifada, the majority of the commanders of the current Palestinian war against Israel had previously been prisoners.

Israel's releases were all in the service of placating Palestinian public opinion, encouraging moderates, and laying the foundations for peace. But rather than learn the lesson, Israel continues to use goodwill gestures as a means of obtaining political capital, notwithstanding the heavy price of further concessions, the loss of credibility and, dismally, Israeli blood.

Beyond this, there is the fact that the Palestinian Authority has made prisoner releases one of its capital demands. Why? A regime committed to moderation - particularly one that supposedly has something to fear from extremists - would not be so quick to demand a return of those extremists to their midst. And a culture that sought peace would not lionize as heroes men like Jbarra, who belongs in prison still and at best should quietly have been put to pasture.

A society is rightly judged by its heroes. Oleg Shaikhet is an Israeli hero. Ahmed Jbarra and Hassan Nasrallah, not to mention Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, are Palestinian heroes. This is unpleasant, but it's a fact. And so long as it remains the case, the chances for a lasting peace are slim. Further prisoner releases will not help. (Jerusalem Post Jul 30)

ISRAEL NEWS

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Plain-Speaking Abbas

By Evelyn Gordon

At his meeting today with President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reportedly plans to talk about deeds: the Palestinian Authority's failure to begin dismantling terrorist organizations, the fact that these groups have been rearming and recruiting new members under cover of the truce.

No one would deny that these are important topics. But if there is one thing that the Oslo process proved, it is

that words are often no less important than deeds. Which is why, if I were setting the prime minister's White House agenda, three statements made last week would receive prominent billing.

The first was made by Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas in a July 20 interview with The New York Times. Asked about Israel's refusal to release prisoners with "blood on their hands," Abbas replied that this was unacceptable. "We were in a war," he explained and in war, all prisoners are freed once hostilities end." Other members of the Palestinian leadership have clarified that they want some 3,000 prisoners released now including about 450 involved in terror attacks prior to Oslo plus a written promise that all the rest will be released when a final-status accord is signed.

Abbas's statement is tremendously important, because it means that even he the man who publicly denounced terrorism at Aqaba due to Bush's arm-twisting continues to believe that deliberately blowing up schoolbuses full of children, or elderly people attending a Passover seder is a legitimate form of warfare that entitles its practitioners to return home in triumph. Furthermore, he has no qualms about saying so, in English, to America's newspaper of record making him even more brazen than Yasser Arafat, who usually confined his defenses of terrorism to Arabic.

One thing Israelis learned from Oslo, however, is that when Arafat lauded terrorists as legitimate freedom fighters this was not mere idle talk; it played a major role in creating the climate that made the intifada possible one in which, according to repeated polls, an overwhelming majority of Palestinians not only support suicide bombings but view them as a legitimate accompaniment to peace talks.

Thus unless Abbas stops echoing Arafat's praises and starts educating his people to understand that terrorism is unacceptable, the next Israeli-Palestinian disagreement and there will be many over the course of negotiations will almost certainly result in yet another outbreak of lethal violence. Abbas may not even want it but having encouraged his people to consider it legitimate, he is unlikely to be able to stop it.

The second statement was made by Abbas at a Cairo press conference on July 22. There, asked by reporters whether he ever intends to fulfill his road map obligation of dismantling the terrorist organizations, he replied bluntly: "Cracking down on Hamas, Jihad and the Palestinian organizations is not an option at all."

Privately, of course, Abbas is telling Bush that he is simply not strong enough to act against the terrorists yet. But one lesson Israelis learned from Oslo is that when Palestinian leaders publicly declare that they have no intention of honoring certain sections of a signed agreement, they mean it. Indeed, such declarations tend to be self-fulfilling even if the leader changes his mind, because it is difficult to carry out an unpopular move if one has not prepared one's people for this necessity.

To add insult to injury, this public disavowal of Abbas's road map obligations comes as both he and Bush are demanding a series of Israeli concessions not even mentioned in that document that will make it easier for terrorists to strike from freezing construction of the separation fence to immediately releasing terrorist trainers and financiers (who, bizarrely, are defined as not having blood on their hands).

This behavior, like Abbas's praise of terrorists as honorable soldiers, does little to bolster Israeli confidence that a deal with him will be worth any more than a deal with Arafat. And without such confidence no deal will be possible at all.

The final noteworthy statement relates to Israel's decision to allow small groups of Jews to visit though not pray on the Temple Mount. Arafat informed the local diplomatic corps that this was "a crime;" Abbas, at his Cairo press conference, termed it "provocative." In both cases, the message was identical: In the eyes of the Palestinian leadership, Jews have no right even to visit their holiest site the focus of their prayers for more than 2,000 years.

One lesson that Israelis learned from Oslo, however, is that no agreement

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will ever be possible until Palestinian leaders are prepared to publicly acknowledge the legitimacy of Jewish interest in this site. Indeed, according to Shlomo Ben-Ami, foreign minister and senior negotiator in Ehud Barak's government, the two sides were unable to reach a deal on Jerusalem even after Barak conceded the entire mount to the Palestinians because Arafat was unwilling to make the minimal gesture of acknowledging in the agreement that "the site is sacred to the Jews."

Thus as long as Arafat and Abbas continue to tell their people that Jews have no right even to set foot on this site, it is difficult to believe that this "peace process" will be any different from the last one: a series of unilateral Israeli concessions culminating in an explosion of bloodshed when the moment of truth arrives.

Sharon's reluctance to point out that Bush's fair-haired boy has feet of clay is perhaps understandable: The president would undoubtedly dismiss such "trivialities" impatiently. But Oslo proved that such "trivialities" are precisely what bloody wars are made of and if Sharon does not want to be remembered as the man responsible for the third intifada, he must begin making this clear to Bush now. (Jerusalem Post Jul 29)

Beware the Wide-Winged Friend By Sarah Honig

As Native Americans learned from bitter experience, the benevolent posture of the Great White Father in Washington and his treaty promises could be misleading. That perhaps inspired the LacotaSioux admonition that "what looks true by the glow of the campfire isn't always true in sunlight."

It's something we would do well to keep in mind. Our own tribal myth, often repeated around our proverbial collective campfire, persistently portrays various White House residents as our best friends, who sometimes know better than we what is best for us.

Take the road map they drew up to lead us to peace. It demands certain Israeli concessions and others from the Palestinian Authority. But, paternally wise, the Americans counsel us not to be bound by specified map blueprints. In order to gain terrorist confidence we need to demand of the PA less than it undertook to give, while Israel must contribute far more than its agreed share.

By this exceptional logic, peace will be attained if terror's infrastructure isn't dismantled just yet, the security fence isn't erected to hinder free terrorist traffic, the PA doesn't imprison terrorists (contrary to its map obligations), and Israel is forced to release yet more terrorist reinforcements (nowhere stipulated by the map). These deviations from the map's plotted course are supposed to strengthen the new PA leadership by surrounding it with more of the terrorists it purportedly promised to fight.

Presumably this is why Washington pressured Israel to release terrorists that the map didn't require it to release, and to exceed its own egregious goodwill by increasing the numbers and variety of terrorists allowed to return to the crime scene. Thus imposed American map corrections demand more than setting free small fry who didn't quite manage to pull off their dastardly plans; they also seek liberty for homicidal conspirators from Islamic Jihad and Hamas, both organizations outlawed by Washington.

That's a bit surprising considering how difficult it is to free convicts from American penitentiaries, including nonviolent Jonathan Pollard. It's not even easy to set loose non-convicts like all those Afghans in Guantanamo.

It almost appears that sentences handed down by courts in democratic Israel aren't quite legitimate and that liberating terrorist malefactors would constitute a triumph for the forces of good and enlightenment. Arafat's No. 2, Abu Mazen, tells us they are soldiers in the Palestinian war of liberation, and that those longest behind bars especially deserve freedom.

PRESUMABLY those who 24 years ago broke into Smadar Haran's Nahariya apartment and murdered her family only did their soldierly duty. Still in Israeli custody is the courageous PLO freedom-fighter who pulled Danny Haran and his four-year-old daughter from their home, picked up the child, held her upside-down by her ankles, swung her hard, smashed her head against a seashore boulder and then killed her horrified father. He meets all Palestinian criteria for release. American too.

It could be that our best friends are indeed wise beyond our inferior comprehension. Or it might be that what looks like friendship isn't what it seems. If we examine the history of Israeli-American relations in the non-distorting sunlight we may conclude that the US has consistently deprived Israel of victory and indirectly encouraged Arab attacks. What is euphemistically labeled a peace process was always a process of divesting Israel of vital strategic assets. Israeli leaders, in effect, never negotiated with Arab interlocutors without intervention by America, on which Israel trusted it could rely.

But can it? Way back in 1948, despite hesitant US de-facto recognition of newborn Israel, America's arms embargo emboldened Arab invaders. When Dwight Eisenhower forced Israel out of the Sinai in 1957 he promised to keep the Tiran Straits open. Nasser closed them a decade later but America reneged on its assurances, signaling Egypt that its aggression would be tolerated.

Had the US kept its promise there would have been no Six Day War and no occupation for Washington to urgently seek to end.

The US-brokered 1970 Israeli-Egyptian truce hinged on American guarantees that no heavy weaponry would be advanced. On the cease-fire's first night, however, the Egyptians moved dozens of anti-aircraft missiles to the Suez Canal's bank, facilitating the eventual launch of the Yom Kippur War.

American silence was deafening. At the end of the 1973 war the US rescued the surrounded Egyptian Third Army from surrender, thereby robbing Israel of outright victory. The present hudna, just when Israel had begun inflicting pain on the terrorists, fits the pattern.

Ronald Reagan frequently noted that without Israel the Soviets would have occupied Saudi oilfields. This never prevented Washington from trying to push Israel to the precarious June 4, 1967 lines.

But what about American assistance? Today's White House guest Ariel Sharon used to stress that the equivalent of what Israel contributed to the US was far greater, even in monetary terms, than the sum total of what America gave Israel from the 1970s on (prior to that we got nothing). In return the US enjoyed access to Israeli intelligence, including information on Soviet weaponry, battlefield tryouts for American military hardware, their innovative improvement, etc.

Moreover, American aid coerces Israel to consume American-manufactured goods from arms to uniforms. These can be produced locally. The fact that they aren't contributes to unemployment here and stunts research and development. Our reduction to vassal state status was completed when the US nixed exports by Israel's potentially competitive defense and aviation industries.

America has its own interests and its basic diplomatic premise of considering Israel a pain in the backside hasn't changed since Harry Truman's day. If Sharon allows dim and flaring campfire illumination to obstruct this reality he'll continue duplicating most of his predecessors' fundamental misconceptions.

It's not that we have a better friend than America. We don't. In fact, we have no friends and this is the harsh daylight truth that should guide our policymakers. Pseudo-friends can be comforting and useful occasionally, on condition that we maintain a suspicious vigilance, as another bit of Sioux folk wisdom advises.

"Watch out," it enjoins, "for the friend who covers you with his wings, only to injure you with his beak." (Jerusalem Post Jul 29)

Evenhandedness Doesn't Work Jerusalem Post Editorial

On Friday, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas had a brief meeting with US President George W. Bush, the two made joint declarations in the Rose Garden, and then had an official lunch. On Tuesday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will receive exactly the same treatment. The new White House penchant for painstaking equality between the Palestinians and Israel is not limited to protocol, but extends to substance.

Bush has largely taken the Palestinian side regarding the security fence, which he derisively calls "a wall snaking through the West Bank." It is not clear whether the US would be opposed to a security fence roughly along the Green Line, but there is no doubting that the US is opposed to building that fence around the settlement blocs that Israel expects to keep under any final-status agreement.

Regarding prisoner releases and a settlement freeze, the US seems a bit less sympathetic to the Palestinians at the moment, arguing that the former is between Israel and the Palestinians, and the latter belongs in a later phase of the road map.

Some of these US positions could prove highly significant in the long run. For example, it is striking that in an interview with The Washington Post yesterday, Abbas stated that Bush gave his word, not only to achieving a Palestinian state, but that that Israel would "withdraw to the 1967 borders." No American president has ever publicly committed to such a thing. Even Bill Clinton, in his famous Parameters communicated to the parties in the last days of his administration, envisioned a border adjustment that would include 80 percent of the settlers inside Israel.

The adamant US position on the fence makes one wonder whether Bush has in fact made such a pledge to the Palestinians. No one, for example, imagines that Israel will dismantle the cities of Ariel or Ma'aleh Adumim. But if these cities will be part of Israel, why would the US be so upset about building a fence around them? The issue, however, is not the specifics of who's up and who's down at the moment, but the sudden US lurch toward "evenhandedness" between Israel and the Palestinians.

The logic of evenhandedness is straightforward: A peacemaker must be an honest broker who must be trusted by both sides; therefore, the deeper the US gets into peacemaking, the more evenhanded it must be. This logic is seductive. It is rarely noted, let alone questioned. But it is flawed, and has proven the downfall of every "peace process" that the Arab-Israeli conflict has known.

Oslo was a casualty of this exact same logic of evenhandedness. According to this logic, if Israel and the Palestinians are both complaining, they both must be right and wrong, roughly to the same degree. During the Oslo period, Israel complained that the Palestinians were not fulfilling the agreement regarding incitement, confiscation of weapons, and the size of their "police" force. The Palestinians, for their part, made demands that were never included in the agreement, such as a settlement freeze and the right to define the extent of Israeli interim withdrawals. To cap it off, the Palestinians used the threat of violence they had supposedly renounced to get their way.

Israel tried to enforce an agreement. The Palestinians not only ignored

their part of the bargain, but used illegal means to extort Israel into concessions beyond its part of the bargain. And the US went along with this in the name of "evenhandedness." It should not have been surprising that this was a recipe for failure. What is surprising is that a Republican president, who presumably recognizes the failures of his predecessor on exactly these shoals, would be steering his ship in exactly the same direction.

The mystery deepens further when one takes into account that Bush's most successful moment in this arena was precisely when he was least evenhanded. Bush's June 24, 2002 speech broke with decades of dogma by ditching Yasser Arafat and blaming the Palestinian predicament, not on Israel, but on Arafat's failed leadership. The speech was seen as a disaster in Europe and even by much of our Labor Party, but now is widely recognized to have jolted the system in the right direction by diluting somewhat Arafat's power and convincing the Palestinians that terrorism was a dead end.

The speech worked and demonstrated why it is a myth that evenhandedness is good for peace. All "evenhandedness" does is convince the Palestinians that agreements are meaningless; anything can be demanded, backed by the threat of force, and nothing must be complied with.

Abbas, for example, said point blank that both the fence and prisoner releases are included in the road map when neither can be found there. Meanwhile, what is in the road map, namely "sustained, targeted, and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure," is not being done.

It is obvious that Israel does not like being treated as a party equal to the Palestinians, as if the Palestinians had been entirely within their rights to attack Israel with a vicious terrorist war after spurning the state offered to them on a silver platter. But this not just a matter of Israeli sensibilities, or even justice, but of old-fashioned pragmatism.

Evenhandedness does not work. It has a proven record of failure. So why is Bush going down this road again? (Jerusalem Post Jul 28)

Happy Hudna! By Michael Freund

To give the Palestinians any credit in a month of 167 terrorist attacks is absurd

Today marks the one-month anniversary of the Palestinian terrorist organizations' decision to declare a temporary hudna, or cease-fire, in their ongoing campaign of murder and mayhem against Israel.

Reading the press, it would be easy to conclude that this is a date almost worthy of national celebration. Take, for example, a July 17 Associated Press dispatch, which asserted that "a temporary cease-fire declared by Palestinian militants on June 29 has brought a dramatic drop in violence."

And then there was Monday's issue of The Guardian, which declared that there has been "a sharp decline in terror since the end of June."

Dramatic drop in violence, sharp decline in terror - it almost makes you want to fling open your windows, sweep your arms through the air, and declare to the world: Happy Hudna!

But the reality, of course, is that there is very little to celebrate. For, despite the media's predictable attempts to cheerlead on behalf of the Palestinians, the fact is that anti-Israel terror has far from petered out.

According to statistics compiled by the IDF there have been a total of 167 Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel in the four weeks since the hudna went into effect. That averages out to about six Palestinian attacks per day, every day, over the past month.

A hundred and sixty-seven attacks. Think about that number for a second: 167 individual, separate attempts over a 30-day period to murder as many Jews as possible using knives, bullets, bombs and stones.

Is this really something to cheer about? After all, a cease-fire means that the Palestinians are supposed to cease the firing (hence the name). Does it really matter if instead of trying to kill Jews 300 times per month they have decided to temporarily "cut back" to just 167?

Others have cited the "relatively" low Israeli death toll in July as proof that the cease-fire is working, since "only" three Israelis and one foreign worker have been killed since the hudna went into effect.

Aside from the immoral nature of such a statement, which necessarily devalues the lives that were lost and the families that were destroyed, such an assertion is also patently false. It mistakenly assumes that the cease-fire is the primary reason why there has been a drop in the number of Israeli fatalities, ignoring the role played by the army's efforts to prevent attacks.

Thus, for example, in the second week of July the IDF captured three would-be suicide bombers in Hebron before they were able to carry out their attacks. On July 21 soldiers operating near Nablus found and dismantled a suicide belt containing 10 to 15 kilograms of explosives, while the day before a Palestinian near Jenin was killed when a bomb he was carrying exploded prematurely.

In other words, it is not that the Palestinians haven't been trying to kill Jews of late, it is just that they haven't been succeeding. If any one of the dozens of attacks thwarted by the army over the past month had not been stopped, the death toll for July might very well have been 40 instead of "just" four.

Hence, to give the Palestinians even a measure of credit in this regard is simply absurd.

Indeed, Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) has made it plain that he has no intention of disarming or disbanding the terrorist groups, who are now reportedly using the hudna to build over 1,000 Kassam rockets

with a range of up to 20 km. for use against major Israeli cities (The Jerusalem Post, July 22).

And so, even with the cease-fire in place, the violence continues and the Palestinian terrorist buildup proceeds apace. In effect, then, the only thing that has really changed during the past month is the level of gullibility demonstrated by our leaders, who are quick to forget that the country is still under attack.

The first step toward emerging from this crisis is to return to our senses. Israel must remain firm in demanding zero tolerance of terror. And zero tolerance means zero attacks. Period.

Making excuses for the Palestinian leadership's failure to quash terror, or minimizing the extent of the violence itself, is merely a recipe for further bloodshed and carnage. For by doing so we come perilously close to accustoming ourselves to terrorism and even accepting it as part of our daily lives.

And that is something which no nation in the world should ever have to tolerate. Only by dismantling the Palestinian terrorist regime that has arisen alongside Israel - and removing the terrorist threat once and for all - can we possibly hope to enjoy true peace and security.

And only once Abu Mazen and his Hamas and Islamic Jihad accomplices are removed from the scene will we truly be able to say, with feeling and even a measure of joy: Happy hudna to all, and to all a good night.

The writer served as deputy director of communications & policy planning in the Prime Minister's Office under Binyamin Netanyahu. (Jerusalem Post Jul 30)

Lamentations for 2003 By Naomi Ragen

Friends, This coming Wednesday, July 30, 2003, begin the nine days that will culminate in the Ninth of Av on August 7, a fast day, and the worst day in the Jewish calendar; date of the destruction of both our Temples, and the beginning of our long years of exile and pain. Each year on the Ninth of Av, we read the Book of Lamentations. This year, considering what is happening around us, I have created a few new lamentations, and woven them together with the traditional ones. I hope you will join me in saying them. May God watch over us and save us. Naomi Ragen

How does the holy city sit solitary. Her enemies triumph, day after day, as her friends betray her, telling her: Break down your walls. Tear down your roadblocks. Let the weapons flow in from Egypt to Gaza, to find their way into your playgrounds and supermarkets. Open the jails and let hundreds of terrorists out to kill once more. Betray the young soldiers who gave their lives to capture murderers. Do it all in the name of a peace that has no legs, nor arms.

Those who see the future, weep sore in the night at the treachery of Zion's leaders, who spread a net for those they lead into the quagmire of death and destruction. The people are busy seeking bread. They are weary of fighting, their minds cannot hold the enormity of the how they have been betrayed. The false prophets of their newspapers delude them with lying visions, paint pictures of delusion to bring them back into captivity. They promise peace, even as they report the gathering of bombs; the arrest of bombers, who sit protected from all harm.

Let tears run down like a river, daughter of Zion, as they pull down the homes of your pioneers, throw the fathers of your slain babes into the pit, and let the murderers walk free.

Youth and old men; young girls and grandmothers were slain in the light of day, slaughtered unsparingly, and there is none to avenge them. Our leaders are yellow with cowardice; our leaders set us up for more slaughter.

There are terrors on every side, and none to help us. The head of our army and security forces sit with our enemies and speak kindly. They hand them towns and villages torn from the arms of terror, so they may replenish their arms. They will get used to peace. Enjoy peace, these men who are supposed to protect us say of our enemies, taking risks, risks, and more risks with our lives. Surrendering without a fight.

All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. Terror and the pit have come upon us. Desolation and destruction. They are my enemies without cause. We walk in darkness. Our strength is perished.

I have no hope in any Israeli leader. They are all deluded. All corrupt. All fools. I have no hope in any Western leader. They are all self-serving, selfish, short-sighted, without vision, or insight. They sacrifice us on the altar of expedience, giving terror new hope, because they think the terrorists will spare their land, if they consume ours.

I have no hope in the so-called righteous of the world. Their organizations for human rights are beacons of darkness, spreading hate. They have forgotten the Jews too are human. Their twisted lies betray all truth. There is no goodness in them.

In whom do I trust, then? My soul has remembrance that the Lord's mercies are not consumed. They are new every morning. Therefore I will hope in Him, as I hoped at the foot of the great Red Sea, the Egyptians at my back, their swords drawn. I will step into the water up to my nose, and still wait for His salvation to part the seas. I sit alone, in silence, and I wait, hoping that the Lord will not cast us off forever. Hoping that our leaders will disappear, and better ones take their place, and that the plans of our enemies

will not be fulfilled. That He may take away the cloud, and let our prayers pass through. Amen. (NaomiRagen.com Jul 29)

A Fallback Plan in the Mideast? By Tom Neumann

When Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visits with President Bush next week, he will ask a question on the minds of many Israelis: What if the "road map" for peace fails?

While Mr. Sharon will reaffirm his government's commitment to seeking ways to make the U.S.-backed plan work, the increasing evidence that the Palestinians are unable or unwilling to keep their end of the bargain is raising the obvious question of what to do if the peace efforts collapse.

This issue was raised during a recent visit to Washington by Israel's former minister of internal security, Uzi Landau.

To date, it seems, none of the four architects of the so-called road map - the United Nations, the European Union, Russia and the United States - has given much thought to the prospect of failure.

They appear more interested in meeting their own self-imposed road-map deadlines than in the realities on the ground. Yet it is the realities, not the deadlines, that will ultimately determine success or failure.

For example, the United States, which declared last year that it would no longer deal with Yasser Arafat, is turning a blind eye to the reality that Mr. Arafat is continuing to call the shots. And all four sponsors of the road map are ignoring the reality that the Palestinians have refused to disarm their terrorist organizations, one of the plan's most urgent requirements.

The Palestinian leadership claims it is powerless to disarm the terrorists or dismantle their infrastructure, as called for by the road map. Instead of insisting that they comply, the sponsors are taking the easier route: pressuring Israel to make even more concessions than called for in the plan.

So far, while the Palestinians have done little or nothing, Israel has withdrawn troops from parts of Gaza and the West Bank, dismantled dozens of unauthorized settlements, eased roadblocks and other travel restrictions, released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and offered to pay the Palestinian government millions of tax dollars.

Instead of reciprocating, the Palestinians say they can't move forward unless Israel does more. They are now calling for the release of all prisoners, including known terrorists and murderers, faster dismantling of Jewish settlements, further withdrawal of Israeli troops and removal of all restrictions on Yasser Arafat.

These demands are accompanied by threats from the Palestinian terrorist leaders that unless Israel complies, they will resume their suicide bombings against Israeli civilians.

This is not the way it was supposed to be. The demands go well beyond the road map. Yet incredibly, the other road map sponsors - the European Union, Russia and the United Nations - are providing the Palestinians with public support on these issues. Worse, they have declared that they intend to continue to deal directly with Mr. Arafat as the recognized leader of the Palestinians, regardless of the wishes of the United States and Israel and of the many Palestinian moderates who are sick of Mr. Arafat's corruption.

By conferring this recognition on Mr. Arafat, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia seriously undermine the authority of Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas to conduct further negotiations with Israel, thereby making the chances of success far less likely. In effect, they are torpedoing their own road map.

At the same time, they appear to be deliberately snubbing Mr. Bush, who has declared that the United States will not deal with Mr. Arafat and has demanded that the terrorists be disarmed and their infrastructure dismantled. They also insult Israel, without whom, needless to say, no progress can be made.

Ariel Sharon is well aware of the politics involved, and the desire of the United States to not only bring peace to the Middle East, but to improve its still strained relations with Europe. He will tell Mr. Bush that he will continue to do all he can to make the road map work.

But he will also remind the president that his primary responsibility is the security of the Israeli people. Neither he nor any other Israeli leader can compromise on this. They cannot be expected to make concession after concession without any indication that the Palestinians are willing or able to move against the terrorists, or seriously undertake any of the other obligations they undertook when they signed the road map. And he will make it clear that unless things change, the road map is as good as dead.

Does the United States have a fallback plan?

It should. As things are going, it will almost certainly need one.

The writer is Executive Director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. (The Washington Times Jul 26)

No Memorial, Not Even a Plaque... By Frimet Roth

Why has Jerusalem failed to erect a memorial to my 15-year-old daughter, Malki, and others murdered in the city?

Shortly after the 9/11 terror attack on the World Trade Center, debate over the size and character of the memorial to the victims became heated. Still unresolved, it has engaged parties ranging from politicians to local businessmen to the families of the victims.

A few weeks ago The Wall Street Journal published an article complaining

about one of the proposals, which would list the names of all the victims without distinguishing between those who were firefighters or rescue workers and "ordinary" victims. The writer of the opinion piece - whose brother, a fireman, died in the Twin Towers attack - challenged the argument that making a distinction of this kind will have the effect of "ranking" the rescuers and victims in some kind of hierarchy.

It is simply a sign of respect that is their due, he maintains.

Here in Jerusalem our adroit municipality has entirely avoided conflicts of this kind. It simply excludes bereaved families from all aspects of the decision-making process affecting memorials. And sometimes it dispenses with memorializing them at all.

My 15 year-old daughter, Malki, was murdered in the terror massacre at Jerusalem's Sbarro restaurant almost two years ago. So far, at least, city officials have seen fit to do nothing in the nature of a memorial or plaque with the names of the 15 people killed in the Sbarro suicide bombing.

The practice of erecting plaques to honor terror victims at the site of their murder is a well-established one in Jerusalem, having been in effect since long before the state was established. One year into the second intifada the municipality dispatched this time-honored policy to the scrap-heap. When I asked why, I was told by city officials that Jerusalem was faced with the need to erect more than 30 memorial plaques. Doing this, they said, would "interfere with the city's character and appeal" and chase away the tourists.

Several bereaved parents, myself among them, voiced anger over this decision through an attorney's letter. The officials beat a hasty retreat and in a meeting in November 2002 announced the restoration of the city's original policy. Plans were also under way to erect a central memorial at the Mahaneh Allenby site on Derech Hevron, they said, on the south side of the city. Most importantly, they assured us that representatives of the families of terror victims would henceforth be active partners in all relevant decisions by the municipality. We waited for results. Since that meeting at Safra Square nine months ago there have been none. When I visited the Mahaneh Allenby site last week the litter had proliferated and the weeds had grown taller, but no other changes were evident. There wasn't even a sign announcing the designated use of the site anywhere in its vicinity.

The site of this intended central memorial stands today pretty much the same way it has stood since it was originally landscaped and terraced about four years ago. It was actually allocated then, long before the outbreak of this war, for use as a municipal park but proved inappropriate for that purpose.

When the terror victim tally started rising exponentially city bureaucrats recognized the hidden potential of the place as a bone to throw at the families of terror victims.

Now, whenever it is questioned about plans for a central memorial to Jerusalem's victims, the city responds by trotting out this site. It is clear that any hope of a memorial ever arising there is futile. A manager in the City Engineer's office recently conceded to us that the project is headed nowhere because it lacks a ba'al habayit - an internal champion - who will promote it, raise the necessary funding and ensure it goes somewhere.

Still, like many other families in this war-ravaged city, we want to see the memory of our child respected in an appropriate way by the authorities. At the very least we feel she deserves to have her name engraved on a plaque like those that have been erected at most other terror attack sites.

Moreover, these plaques document and publicize the history of this city to all who live or visit here. We cannot rewrite our painful past by dispensing with them.

For over a year now we have been reduced to the humiliation of begging for a gesture that should by right have been automatically given us - some mention of our daughter's name and age.

Toward that end we have made scores of phone calls. We have received innumerable empty promises. We have been fed lame excuses - for example, that the owner of the building refuses permission to erect a plaque on his property. Surely his consent is not necessary to erect one on the adjacent sidewalk. We have even endured criticism of our impatience and annoyance.

Despite this neglect of our own victims, the Jerusalem municipality has treated those of the New York World Trade Center attack very differently. A privately funded memorial park will soon be erected at the entrance to Jerusalem in memory of the victims of the New York terror attacks of 9/11. Shortly after those attacks an anonymous American donor enlisted mayor Rudolph Guiliani's help in negotiating with Jerusalem's mayor Ehud Olmert for a site. Guiliani rejected several of Olmert's offers, insisting on the prestigious site at the city's entrance, to which Olmert finally acquiesced. Completion of the park is expected in time for the second anniversary of those attacks.

Guiliani was looking out for the interests of his constituents, and that is understandable. He has also been an outspoken critic of the present plan for the reconstruction of the World Trade Center site because, as he said in a recent Time interview, "the memorial has been the secondary thought, and the replacement of the office space has been the primary thought."

And he has warned New York memorial designers: "I'm very, very afraid that future generations are going to be very angry that we did not appropriately, on a grand enough scale, remind people of what happened."

Jerusalem protocol and memorial planners would be wise to heed his words.

The writer is a New York-born freelancer. (Jerusalem Post Jul 30)