



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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EIGHT KILLED IN TERRORIST ATTACK AT JERUSALEM YESHIVA

Israel Begins Overhaul of Relations with European Union

The Israeli Foreign Ministry has begun a strategic overhaul of relations with the E.U. As reported by The Jerusalem Post, diplomatic officials believe it is time to reassess Israel's traditional reliance on "two pillars" for survival: a strong IDF and an unbreakable alliance with America. Given the growing importance of the European Union in world events, and in the Middle East particularly, it believes a third pillar has become necessary: deepening ties to Europe.

Jerusalem's new strategy is to enhance cooperation with Europe in a variety of fields and to demonstrate that Israel can help with some of the E.U.'s many interests in the region. It has sent a proposal for Israeli involvement with Europe in nine fields, including finance, education, environment, youth development, law enforcement, security cooperation and scientific research collaboration.

Currently, the U.S., Israel and the Palestinians are working on a plan under which NATO peacekeepers could be deployed in the West Bank. Europe would likely be asked to fill the ranks should such a deployment materialize.

Israel also believes stronger ties with Europe are important to mobilize economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran to thwart its nuclear drive. European politicians, especially those in Germany, Austria and Italy, were having a difficult time convincing their businessmen and industrialists to sever or downgrade their economic ties with Teheran, Israeli diplomatic source said. France and Britain were leading the diplomatic campaign against Iran, the official added.

Eight teenage students were killed and nine others were wounded when a terrorist entered a crowded Jerusalem yeshiva and opened fire on March 6th. The head of the Zaka emergency service described the scene after the shooting as "like a slaughterhouse."



Three of the wounded in the attack at the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva were in serious condition while the other six were slightly hurt.

The Jerusalem District police chief said the terrorist entered the religious school, pulled out an automatic weapon and began firing in

every direction. The gunman was shot twice by a student at the yeshiva who crawled out onto an adjacent roof, before being killed by an Israel Defense Forces soldier. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by a senior official of Hamas.

Security officials said the terrorist was a resident of East Jerusalem. An organization calling itself "Galilee Freedom Battalions - the Martyrs of Imad Mughniyeh" took responsibility for the attack, according to Hezbollah's Al-Manar television station. Hezbollah had vowed to avenge the February assassination of its terror chief, Imad Mughniyeh, in Damascus. The organization blamed Israel for his death, but Israel denied any role in the killing.

President Bush led an international chorus of outrage stating "the United States stands with Israel after the barbaric and vicious attack." Russia's foreign ministry joined in the condemnations by saying, "Israel has the right, as with every other state, to defend the lives and the security of its citizens" and that the attack by the Palestinian gunman was a "clear-cut individual act of terrorism." The UN Security Council, however, failed to agree on its condemnation as a "terrorist attack" largely because of Libyan opposition.

Hamas hailed the attack as "heroic" as hundreds of people poured into the streets of Gaza to celebrate the shootings. The White House denounced the Gaza celebrations as "fairly disgusting."

Israel said the attack was intended to end the chances for peace in the region and vowed to defend itself. "Israel will maintain its policy of talking to moderates ... and at the same time fight the radicals of Hamas," stated a senior government official.

Israeli Wines Featured in the Wall Street Journal

According to a recent special section in the Wall Street Journal, a small group of Israeli wineries are creating world-class red and white wines that are gaining increasing recognition from critics both at home and abroad. The article noted that Israelis are demanding better drinking choices, while connoisseurs in the U.S. and Europe in search of something different are intrigued enough to taste these "new" world wines from an ancient land. This new generation of wineries and winemakers has emerged to satisfy Israelis' appreciation for quality wines. Before 1980, Israel had only about 20 wineries. Today, more than 200 smaller wineries are spread across the country, from the Golan Heights in the far north to the Negev Desert in the far south. The Judean hillsides — where olive groves also flourish — benefit from relatively cool summers, making them suited to quality winemaking.

When German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Israel last year, Prime Minister Olmert served her an Israeli wine, Domaine du Castel. Liking it, she placed an order for several cases.

The article also recommended the Margalit, Tzora, Chateau Golan, Clos de Gat, Ramat Daltan, Zichron and Yatir brands.

Egypt Starts Controversial Gas Exports to Israel

Egypt has started exporting gas to Israel in accordance with a 2005 agreement with the move set to raise the ire of the country's powerful Islamist opposition. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood opposition, which controls a fifth of the seats in the Egyptian parliament, is opposed to exporting gas to Israel because of what it calls the country's punishing blockade of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Brotherhood MPs have said that the Egyptian government is committing a "crime" against the Palestinian people by supplying Israel with gas.

"Egyptian gas has been flowing to Israel ... but it had not yet been integrated into the Israeli network for procedural reasons," an Israeli source said. The new underwater pipeline runs 100 kilometers (63 miles) from the Egyptian Mediterranean city of El-Arish to the Israeli port of Ashkelon, supplying gas pumped from a field in the north of the Sinai peninsula.

An Egyptian-Israeli consortium, East Mediterranean Gas (EMG), is to provide 1.7 billion cubic meters (60 billion cubic feet) of gas a year over 15 years for a total of 2.5 billion dollars.

Syria, Iran Vow to Bolster Ties to Confront US and Israel

Regional allies Syria and Iran recently expressed determination to bolster their economic and political ties to overcome their common foes, Israel and the United States. "We will continue to reinforce strategic cooperation in all sectors with our brothers in Iran because we are in the same trench, confronted to an abject and greedy enemy," the Syrian Prime Minister said in reference to Israel and the United States.

The Iranian First Vice President described ties between Tehran and Damascus as "strategic, warm and privileged" and said his country was "working hard to develop ties with Syria" which he said could serve as an example for relations between Iran and Arab countries. Talks were also held with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on bilateral cooperation and regional developments. The United States has repeatedly accused Syria and Iran of fueling insecurity in Iraq and meddling in Lebanon's presidential crisis -- charges the two allies have firmly denied.

Indian Government Allies Want Military Ties with Israel Cut

Allies of India's coalition government have demanded an end to military ties with Israel over its actions in the Gaza Strip and military strikes against the territory. Several smaller regional parties joined India's Communists, who prop up Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's minority government, in calling for a return to New Delhi's "principled stand of support" for the Palestinians. Prakash Karat, India's main Marxist leader said India's "parliament should be able to demand that the government stop military collaboration with Israel." In keeping ties with Israel, "India is betraying one of its most principled positions," he said.

India, which was a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, and ties have dramatically warmed since then. Israel is India's second biggest weapons supplier.

A spokesman for the Nationalist Congress Party said his party was "completely committed to the human rights and the dignity of the Palestinian people." He also slammed New Delhi for launching an Israeli spy satellite in January. He said the government has plans to launch another two satellites. Israel's arch-rival Iran, which has traditionally had close ties to India and is a major energy supplier to the energy-hungry nation, has complained to New Delhi about the launch.

We hope you continue to enjoy reading *Israel Matters!* We look forward to your comments. Send them by email to Ed and Randy Berns, Co-chairs of the TBS Israel Affairs Committee, at: redberns@sbcglobal.net