

Parents to boycott Lebanon war ceremony if officials don't show

By Nir Hasson

Bereaved parents from the Second Lebanon War have announced they will boycott the official ceremony for the fallen in that war to protest the intention of the prime minister and other officials not to be present.

The group of parents, who led the bereaved-parents' protest after the war, received messages

from the bureaus of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres and Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi that they would not be at Wednesday's ceremony on Mount Herzl, but would send representatives.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak's bureau said the minister had not yet disclosed whether he would attend the ceremony.

The parents are planning to hold a commemoration of their own on Mount Herzl.

On Wednesday morning the families will travel to Mount Adir near the Lebanese border, where a lookout facing the main battlegrounds is to be built in memory of the fallen.

After the ceremony, organized by the Defense Ministry, the IDF and the Israel Nature and Parks

Authority, the parents will travel to Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

However, instead of participating in the state ceremony at the graves of former prime ministers and other leaders, they will go directly to the graves of their sons. Thus far, 15 families have said they will not take part in the official ceremony.

"I told the prime minister I'd make a deal with him. He'll send

a representative to Mount Herzl instead of my son, and Yehonatan will be with us," David Einhorn said yesterday. "It shows they've forgotten the war and there's nothing for us there."

The IDF said that while the army respects the memory of the fallen on Memorial Day and year-round, "naturally, the chief of staff cannot take part in every Memorial Day for ev-

ery war and operation but takes part in force-wide and brigade-wide memorial events The IDF will be represented at the memorial ceremony for the Second Lebanon War by the chief of staff's deputy, Maj. Gen. Dan Harel."

The President's Residence and the Prime Minister's Bureau did not respond by press time.

Israel seeks Arab response for settlement building freeze

By Barak Ravid

The Barack Obama administration is continuing its efforts to draft a comprehensive agreement for freezing West Bank settlement construction and normalizing relations between Israel and the Arab states.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials told U.S. envoy George Mitchell in recent weeks that Jerusalem is willing to temporarily freeze settlement construction, but that the move would be conditioned on substantive steps from the Arab side, as well as guarantees from the United States.

Yesterday Obama sent a letter to King Mohammed VI of Morocco expressing his hope and expectation the Arab states will take steps to end Israel's "isolation" in the Middle East, and that he hopes "Morocco will be a leader in bridging gaps between Israel and the Arab world."

Israeli officials said

yesterday they believe the United States is seeking to encourage Morocco and the Persian Gulf states to allow Israel to open diplomatic offices in their territory, and to send their own diplomatic delegations to Israel.

In his meeting with Mitchell, Barak encouraged the envoy to engage in "shuttle diplomacy" between Jerusalem and a number of Arab capitals to draft a regional peace plan. Another proposal that emerged in the talks was the convening of an international peace summit in the coming months on a "comprehensive regional agreement" that would lay out the steps ahead for both the Israeli and Arab sides.

Israeli officials said the thrust of the message delivered to Mitchell was "the length and breadth of the temporarily building freeze will be in proportion to the scope of the renewal of peace talks, and

signals received from the Arab states."

Tomorrow Barak and Mitchell will meet again in London to discuss solutions to the settlement issue and steps to be taken by Arab states in return. Barak will be joined by Yitzhak Molcho, a diplomatic adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

At the center of the meeting will be the fate of some 2,500 housing units currently being built in West Bank settlements. Israel is prepared to announce a temporary construction freeze of several months, but is seeking U.S. acquiescence to complete building projects that have already begun.

The talks are aimed at reaching an agreement on the majority of issues that remain points of conflict between Washington and Jerusalem, and to reach final understandings ahead of Netanyahu's meeting with Mitchell in Jerusalem in two weeks.



Palestinian, Israeli, and foreign demonstrators running away from tear gas fired by Israeli troops during a demonstration against the separation fence in the West Bank village Bilin near Ramallah on Friday.

IAF fighter jets and transport planes to get a workout at U.S. bases

By Amir Oren

The Israel Air Force fighter jet F-16C Barak is to take part later this month in a training exercise with the U.S. Air Force at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. At the same time, Israel Air Force C130 (Hercules) Karnaf transport planes will participate in Rodeo 2009, the annual competition hosted by the U.S. Air Force Mobility Command at McChord Air Force Base in the state of Washington.

The firing ranges and testing grounds at Nellis, whose area equals that of the entire State of Israel, are considered the most advanced in the world. During the training exercise, dubbed Red Flag, which takes place four times a year, dog fights and ground attacks are simulated. An American statement said that an undisclosed number of Israeli F-16Cs will be among the 62 planes taking part in the exercise. The Israeli aircraft will simu-

late preemptive strikes on advanced enemy forces together with F-16s belonging to the U.S. Air National Guard.

During the simulated dog fights the "reds" - F-16s and F-15s from Nellis - will face off against the "blues," F-15s from a base in Ohio. F-16s from another base, in South Carolina, will suppress air defenses. Refueling planes will also be involved in the exercise.

According to the American statement, it may be

understood that the IAF preferred this time to leave its most advanced aircraft at home, the F16I (Sufa) and F-15I (Ra'am), which practice the more challenging and distant tasks of the IAF.

Among the competitive events at Rodeo 2009 are supply drops and operating supply aircrafts in battle. Dozens of countries have been invited to Rodeo 2009, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Algeria.

Israel seeking to enter gunship into NATO Mediterranean operation

By Amos Harel and Barak Ravid

Israel is to issue a request shortly to allow it to join a NATO operation in the Mediterranean aimed to prevent the passage of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction as well as improve the security of the region's shipping industry.

The cabinet approved the recommendation made by the Israel Defense Forces and the navy to join the operation - dubbed Active Endeavour - last Wednesday when it was presented. Israel is not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; however, other non-members are taking part in the operation, including ships from Russia and Ukraine.

If the request is approved, Israel Navy gunships would join the operation within a few months. A solution would be found to avoid Is-



IDF navy gunships participating in a naval review.

raeli ships approaching the shores of Arab countries, particularly those with which Israel has no diplomatic relations - including Syria, Lebanon and certain North African countries.

The intent is for an Israeli gunboat to occasionally join one of the month-long operations of Active Endeavour, which has been underway

since 2001. Israel would not require major preparation to join the NATO operation, and its delegation would focus on control and monitoring procedures, as well as coordination of communications terminology.

Sources in the army view joining the operation as important both in terms of stepping up Israel's rela-

tions with NATO, as well as its image - as Israel is often accused of aggression in enforcing the siege on Gaza by sea.

Presently, an Israeli naval officer with the rank of major is stationed at NATO marine command in Napoli, Italy.

The IDF discussed the idea of joining Active Endeavour more than a year ago, and it was recently approved by Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi. Additionally, all legal objections, mainly pertaining to insurance and chain of command, were recently dismissed.

NATO began Active Endeavour in October 2001 following the September 11 attacks in the United States. In rare cases, NATO personnel board and search ships when intelligence information indicates suspected terror activity or weapons smuggling.

MK Ben-Simon says might quit Labor 'cuckoo's nest'



Daniel Ben-Simon

By Mazal Mualem

Labor whip Daniel Ben-Simon is considering leaving his party, disillusioned with internal splits that

have made parliamentary business almost impossible. "I was not born in the party and I might have to find myself a different way," he said.

Ben-Simon, a former Haaretz journalist, joined the party last year. After deciding not to join the so-called Labor rebels, the party's chairman, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, appointed him whip. One of his roles is to enforce parliamentary discipline.

"I joined the party that had built this country, but instead found myself in a cuckoo's nest. It's inconceivable that you can't even get the party's 13 MKs to sit together. It's crazy," said Ben-Simon.

"I find myself speaking in sessions for my own sake rather than for the Labor faction, because there is no Labor faction anymore. I've been con-

sulting myself alone for the past four months." Ben-Simon said he did not mean to place the blame on either side of the split, but that he has been asking himself some hard questions.

"I didn't marry the Labor Party, and considering the pathological symptoms I've discovered there I might have to retire and find myself a different way. I may not be able to go on within the party."

Ben-Simon is the latest Labor MK considering his relationship with the party. He has not formally joined the rebels at this stage; these faction members are considered more leftist.

But if he does, this group will contain one-third of the party's MKs, enough to allow them to split and establish a new faction in parliament.

News Briefs

Palestinian, 17, shot after brandishing toy gun at soldiers

A 17-year-old Palestinian girl was shot and in moderately wounded after brandishing a toy pistol at soldiers manning a checkpoint in the Jordan Valley, the IDF Spokesman's Office confirmed yesterday. She was shot in her feet and was taken to Afula's Haemek Hospital. She told the soldiers she was a mother of a son and wished to commit suicide to escape the beatings she endured at home. The IDF is also investigating the death of a 17-year-old girl in the Gaza Strip, who was killed during a skirmish between Palestinians and a Nahal force. The army said that contrary to earlier findings, the teenager may have been killed by IDF fire. (Anshel Pfeffer)

Panel moves to legalize restroom break at work

The Ministerial Committee for Legislation will debate today a proposal from several MKs, led by MK Shelly Yachimovich to formally legalize restroom breaks at work. The proposal is an amendment to the Law of Work and Leisure Times, and states that any worker may visit the restroom during a work break "in accordance to his needs." The legislators stated in the accompanying notes that "more and more work places in Israel ignore this basic right, employing people for eight or nine hours straight without restroom breaks. This leads workers to seek "creative" and sometimes fatally dangerous solutions, such as not drinking any liquids while on duty. (Tomer Zarchin)

Education Ministry review reprimands manpower firms

A review by the Education Ministry found that three major human resources companies have violated the rights of matriculation exams supervisors, Haaretz learned. The companies in question are Manpower, Tigbur and ORS, each of them employing some 4,000 supervisors. The ministry estimated the companies have impinged on their workers' vacation pay rights and payment of traveling expenses to the amount of NIS 1.3 million. The sum was paid out to all the supervisors after protracted negotiations. The companies said there was no misdemeanor but rather a disagreement with the ministry on the interpretation of vacation pay terms. (Or Kashti)

Abutbul cousins to hear murder charge verdict

The Tel Aviv District Court will today hand down its verdict on Francois and Avi Abutbul, who are charged with murdering teenager Raanan Levi on December 18, 2004. According to the indictment, the two cousins took part in a fight with several teenagers and then chased them by car. Levi, who happened to be walking behind the teenagers when the vehicle approached, was forced into a blind alley, run over and stabbed by Francois Abutbul. The two deny the charges. (Ofra Edelstein)

Boy falls four stories as knot in sheets unravels

A 7-year-old boy from Eilat was only lightly injured after falling almost four stories at his home, police said. The boy's parents were sleeping when he tried descending from the window on a rope of sheets with the knot between two sheets unraveling as he was between the third and fourth floor. The child fell onto a pile of sand in the yard. He was taken to hospital, where it was found he had not sustained internal injuries. Police said there was no suspicion of negligence on part of the boy's parents, and that he may have been trying to recreate a scene from a film he'd watched recently. (Revital Levi-Stein)

GORMAN REAL ESTATE
OPERA TOWER - THE SIGN OF SUCCESS
 LUXURY SEASIDE LIVING AND TEL-AVIV CENTER!
FOR RENT: OPERA TOWER - 2 rooms, 80 sq.m., FULLY RENOVATED, parking, sea water pool. ONLY \$2,000!
FOR SALE: LEV HA'IR PROJECT - 2 rooms, HIGH FLOOR WITH AMAZING SEA VIEW, 2 parking spaces, storage.
FOR RENT: OPERA TOWER - 3 rooms, high floor, balcony, magnificent sea/jaffa view, 2 bathrooms. COMPLETELY RENOVATED!
FOR SALE: OPERA TOWER - 4 ROOMS WITH FABULOUS PANORAMIC SEA VIEW, 173 sq.m., 2 balconies, 2 bathrooms, parking, health club.
FOR RENT: ZEDEF PROJECT - 3 rooms, 113 sq.m., renovated and furnished, pool, 35 sq.m. BALCONY TO THE SEA & SUNSETS!
FOR SALE: YOO PROJECT - NEW! 4 rooms + 5 BALCONIES WITH SEA VIEWS! High ceilings and fabulous open space, pool, gym.
FOR RENT: OPERA TOWER - 3 rooms, incredible sea view, furnished, high floor, jacuzzi. PERFECT FOR SUMMER!
FOR RENT: OPERA TOWER - 2 ROOMS, SEA VIEW, FULLY FURNISHED, WONDERFUL BALCONY. AVAILABLE NOW!
WE WISH YOU A HAPPY WEEKEND!
 Call Dafna
 972-54-653-6687 | 972-3-549-8498
 Fax: 972-3-549-8961 | gormand@zahav.net.il

REINS

Continued from page 1

cabinet and decide important issues in this area, including the state budget. The team's recommendations also did not state that the prime minister would have a supreme economic adviser (Uri Yosev), who would dictate his policy to the treasury.

The 52-page report contains a number of recommendations necessitated by reality such as the major recommendation to prepare and approve the state budget for 2009 together with that of 2010, and to postpone debate and approval on the two-year budget in the cabinet and the Knesset. By law, the new government must pass the 2009 budget within 45 days of taking office. Because some six months of 2009 have gone by since the new government was sworn in, and because in ordinary years debate on the budget for the next year, 2010, would have begun in June, the decision on a two-year

budget was logical. It was clear that a serious discussion could not take place on two budgets within 45 days. That is why the committee recommended, and the Knesset accepted, postponement of the legal date for approving the budget from 45 days after the establishment of the new government to 106 days, that is, to July 15, 2009.

In addition to this recommendation, there were other logical proposals that will probably not get off the ground. They include "a comprehensive program to rehabilitate income tax from the point of view of management, morale, lack of human resources and increased collection as a means of stopping the decline in state revenues and reducing the deficit in the coming years."

In contrast, it is difficult to understand where some of the committee's as yet unimplemented recommendations came from, such as "consideration of quick legislation to prevent the release of pedophiles who have served their sentence un-

less they accept continuous monitoring and long-term preventive treatment."

Another unrealistic proposal was that the government "launch within 200 days a pilot plan for municipal police departments under the operational aegis of mayors in 10 to 15 big and medium-size cities."

There were other recommendations that have been making the rounds in extreme right-wing circles for some time, which undermine the democratic system; these, too, have not been implemented. They include "preventing the dispersal of the Knesset during its term except for rare occurrences stemming from unprecedented exigencies," or the proposal to allow Israelis who have left the country for good to vote in Knesset elections.

Who is the finance minister?

Netanyahu wanted to be prime minister and finance minister. Steinitz rejected his proposal that Steinitz be a minister in the Finance



Steinitz, left, with Netanyahu in March.

Ministry. He wanted the whole job. While Steinitz has the title of finance minister, even the most junior backbencher knows that Netanyahu is the supreme economic minister. Netanyahu led the cabinet's approval of agreements with the defense establishment over the heads of the finance minister and his leading officials. And Netanyahu decided the debate on who will supervise the salaries at the Bank of Israel, damaging the status of the supervisor of salaries in the Finance Ministry.

The prime minister also led the move to lower income tax for the upper deciles from January 1, 2010, over the opposition of Finance Ministry experts.

For these reasons, Steinitz has been unable to function as a senior cabinet minister. Months will pass until he learns, if he does, how to stand on his own two feet. Until that time, Netanyahu will continue to function as the supreme overseer of Israel's economy, and even a program for the first 100, 200 or 1,000 days will not change that.