

Israel tests Palestinian cease fire amid grief

By Nicole Winfield
The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel buried the young victims of a suicide bombing and tested a Palestinian cease-fire on Sunday, hoping international diplomacy would pressure Yasser Arafat to rein in his troops and crack down on militants.

Amid continued Israeli restraint, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer held a second meeting with Arafat on Sunday night at Arafat's West Bank headquarters and urged the Palestinian leader to enforce a cease-fire.

"I hope that he understands that now is (the time) to implement security action plans within hours and to implement also the cease-fire within hours," Fischer said. "The next hours will be crucial."

Secretary of State Colin Powell, who canceled a trip to Costa Rica to deal with the situation, issued a similar warning to Arafat on Sunday, telling Cable News Network that "this is the time to bring the violence under control."

He wouldn't confirm Israeli radio and television reports that CIA Director George Tenet planned to visit the region, where the EU's special Middle East envoy, Miguel

Moratinos, was already shuttling between the two sides.

At a meeting of Israel's Cabinet on Sunday, Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said Israel would give Arafat more time to carry out the cease-fire, according to an official who requested anonymity. Ben-Eliezer said there had been a reduction in attacks against Israelis since Arafat's cease-fire order took effect at 10 p.m. Saturday.

"Even restraint is part of strength," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said at a hospital where many of the injured were being treated.

Senior Israeli officials, however, said they weren't yet convinced Arafat was willing to call off the eight-month conflict, and said they have chosen the targets for a possible offensive.

"We really want to get to the perpetrators," said Shlomo Dror, a spokesman for Ben-Eliezer, when asked about radio reports that the army was targeting leaders of the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

On Sunday, the military wing of Hamas, Izzedine al Qassam, claimed responsibility for the at-

tack and identified the bomber as Hassan Hussein Hotari, from the West Bank town of Qalqilya. His family members in Jordan, however, identified him as Saeed Hotary, 22.

The wing of Hamas called the 22-year-old a hero and a good friend of a suicide bomber who blew himself up on March 28, killing two Israeli children.

Hotari's father, Hassan, said his son left Jordan two years ago for the West Bank to look for a better job.

"I am very happy and proud of what my son did and I hope all the men of Palestine and Jordan would do the same," the father told The Associated Press at his home in Zarqa, Jordan with tears in his eyes.

Israel has demanded that as part of his cease-fire, Arafat arrest militants and stop incitement against Israel in Palestinian media.

However, Palestinian Cabinet minister Ziad Abu-Zayyad said, "We're not talking about arresting people or putting people in jail." He said the cease-fire applies to Palestinian police and security in areas under full Palestinian control.

Since assuming authority in Palestinian parts of Gaza and the West Bank in 1994, Arafat has hesitated to crack down on militant groups, fearing a civil war. From time to time, at Israel's insistence, Arafat's police have rounded up militants, but even then bombings have occurred.

Israel charges that Arafat has been working hand-in-hand with the militants, and that attacks tend to occur when Arafat signals that they would be tolerated.

Despite Arafat's call for a cease-fire, various Palestinian factions, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Arafat's Fatah, concluded after meeting Sunday that the intefadeh should continue, said a Fatah leader in Gaza, Ahmed Helaff.

That was reflected in Israeli pessimism as well. A senior security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Israel was "just about to launch a very severe airstrike" against the Palestinians which was called off after Arafat ordered the cease fire. But the official predicted the cease-fire would collapse and the plan would be revised: "I am sure that you will see it. It will happen."

Fourteen of the victims were

buried Sunday, most of them in a row in the same section of the Yarkon cemetery in Tel Aviv, where fresh dirt was piled up in mounds and tearful mourners moved under the sweltering sun from one plot to another to lay flowers.

Among those buried were teenage sisters Yulia and Yelena Nalimov, whose mother had to be held up as she wailed over their coffins, her hands clutching onto the Israeli flags draped over each one of them.

"Only hearts of stone could erase the smiles of Yelena and Yulia," Education Minister Limor Livnat said at their funeral.

Another child buried was 14-year-old Maria Tagilchev, who survived a car bomb attack last Wednesday outside her high-school in the northern seaside city of Netanya. Maariv said she had wanted to go out dancing Friday night to "release the stress" from the previous attack, which didn't injure anyone seriously.

Since fighting erupted last September, 484 people have been killed on the Palestinian side — including Friday's attacker — and 107 on the Israeli side.

Legislature aims to cut kicker by \$106 million

SALEM — The Legislature in the coming week is to take up the hottest of its budget issues, dipping into and spending money that otherwise would go back to the taxpayers.

The Senate will vote first, probably by Tuesday, on whether to decrease by about 30 percent the refunds due later this year under the state's so-called kicker law.

The refund requirement "kicks in" when revenue tops an official estimate by 2 percent or more.

Revenue in the two-year budget period ending June 30 is above the threshold so that under current

projections, \$355 million would be refunded. But the Legislature and Gov. John Kitzhaber have designs on \$106 million of that.

The bill due a Senate vote would shift into the next budget federal Medicaid funds that through a loophole can end up in the state general fund.

That maneuver would reduce revenue in the current budget, thus cutting kicker refunds by \$106 million and allowing lawmakers to spend the money on education, social programs or other uses.

Returning the full kicker amount would give an average refund of

\$137 to taxpayers with annual incomes of \$30,000 to \$40,000. Re-

the Legislative Revenue Office.

At the \$40,000 to \$50,000 income range, the average refund would drop from \$187 to \$133 under the bill. In the \$50,000 to \$60,000 range, the average refund would decline from \$238 to \$170 under the shrunken kicker.

Despite a few expected cries of foul, legislative leaders expect the kicker change to pass both houses.

"That will establish the pot of money" that's left to close final budget deals, said Senate Majority Leader Dave Nelson, R-Pendleton.

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senate majority leader
R-Pendleton

ducing the kicker with the Medicaid shift tactic decreases their average refund to \$98, according to

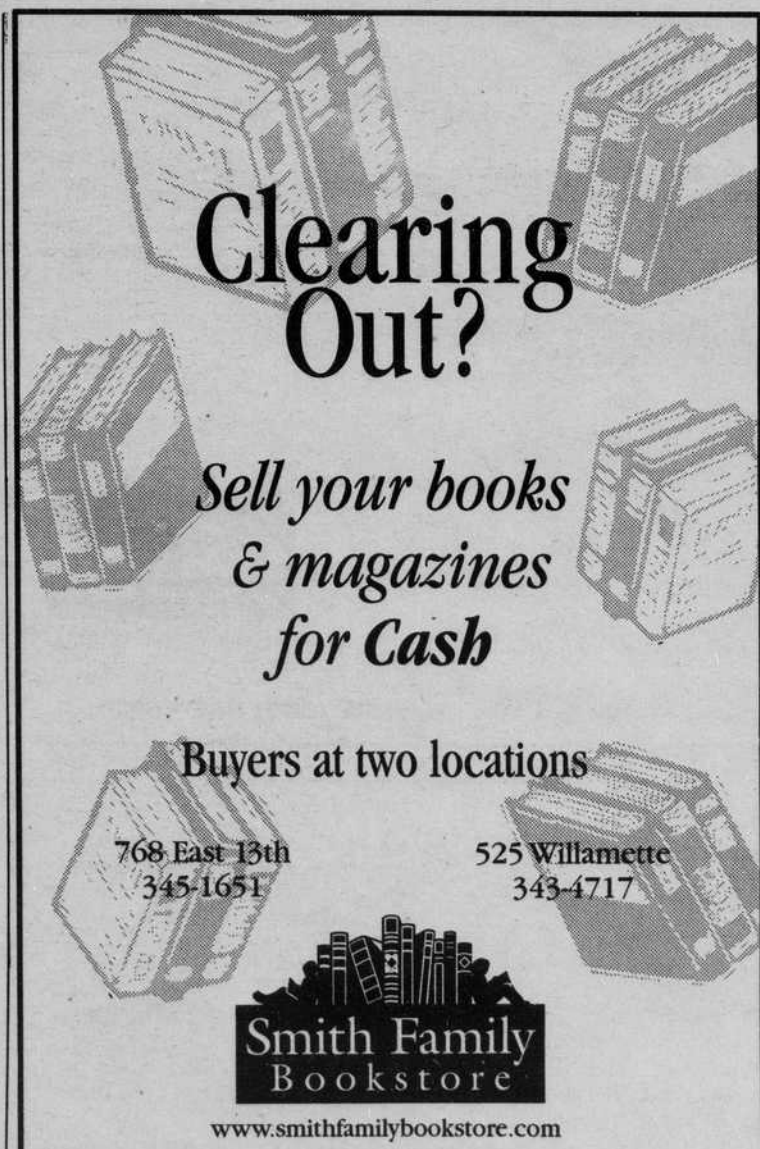
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