

Israeli Cabinet agrees on troop removal

Former allies criticize Netanyahu's deal

BY KARIN LAUB
Associated Press

JERUSALEM—A divided Israeli Cabinet agreed Wednesday to pull troops from most of Hebron and rural West Bank areas.

During the tumultuous, daylong session, former hard-line allies bitterly denounced Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"The prime minister committed himself to give away sections of the Jewish homeland. He gets zero from Arafat," said Science Minister Benny Begin, who resigned in angry protest of the 11-7 vote.

The Hebron accord—wrapped up in a predawn session Wednesday after 3½ months of tortuous negotiations—sailed through the Palestinian Cabinet and PLO executive committee, with Palestinian government ministers passing it by a large majority.

Despite the revolt of the hard-liners—including legislators from Netanyahu's ruling coalition—parliament approval is all-but guaranteed because of the support of the peace-favoring opposition parties for the peace agreements.

The Israeli withdrawal from four-fifths of Hebron was expected to begin as soon as parliament approves the pact, Israel TV said.

Hours into the tumultuous Israeli

“There was no trust, but gradually it has started to grow.”

MAHMOUD ABBAS
Yasser Arafat's deputy

Cabinet session, Netanyahu had to call a recess amid sudden confusion over U.S. guarantees to Israel.

The crisis was sparked by an Israel TV report that quoted an unidentified senior American official in Washington as saying Israel could not unilaterally decide how much of the West Bank it would turn over to the Palestinians.

The report reached the Cabinet, and ministers immediately demanded an explanation from Netanyahu. He had cited Israel's ability to determine the size of the pullback as his biggest achievement in the accord.

Netanyahu aides demanded a clarification from the Americans.

In response, the U.S. State Department issued a new statement saying "further redeployment phases are issues for implementation by Israel rather than issues for negotiation with the Palestinians."

The accord initiated Wednesday says Israeli troops should pull out of West Bank rural areas in three stages, starting in the first week of March and ending no later than mid-1998. It says Israel should withdraw to Jewish settlements and military locations, but does not stipulate their exact dimensions.

The agreement was accompanied by separate letters of assurance to Israel and the Palestinians, written by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Christopher's letter to Israel implies that it would be up to Israel to decide how far to pull back in each of three stages.

However, several Cabinet ministers said they were still suspicious and demanded to see the content of the Christopher letter to the Palestinians. Netanyahu said he had not seen that letter, only a draft, according to Israel TV. The Palestinians refused to publish the Christopher letter.

"Trust me," Netanyahu was quoted as telling the ministers.

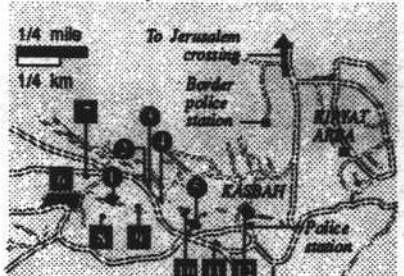
Netanyahu is now for the first time personally committed to the peace agreements he had once denounced as a foolish gamble with Israeli security, and the Palestinians said they could do business.

"There was no trust, but gradually it has started to grow," said Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat's deputy.

Hebron agreement



REDEPLOYMENT: The Israeli army will pull troops out of 80 percent of the city. Troops will remain in the city center where about 15,000 to 20,000 Palestinians live next to the Israeli settlers. Originally scheduled for March 1996, the redeployment was postponed after a series of suicide bombings killed 63 people in Israel. Netanyahu delayed it further, seeking negotiations to increase security for the settlers.



- Jewish enclaves**
- Admot Yitzhak Tel Romsida
 - Beit Hadassah
 - Beit Schmeerson
 - Beit Romano Shavel Hebron Yeshiva
 - Avraham Avinu Quarter
- Religious sites**
- Ancient Jewish cemetery
 - Tomb of Odaniel Ben Knaaz
 - Tombs of Ruth and Jesse
 - Abraham's Spring
 - Minorot Archway
 - Sarah's Pool
 - Tomb of the Patriarchs (Cave of the Machpelah)
- Other designated sites are Jewish community centers, schools and businesses.*

AP/WHM, J. Castello

Affirmative action speech marks Rev. King birthday

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Attorney General Janet Reno observed the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Wednesday with a promise to push a civil rights agenda that includes strong support of affirmative action.

"I recognize that there are those who believe that affirmative action is unfair," Reno said. "However, the fact that many minorities and women are still struggling at the bottom of the economic ladder suggests that this criticism misses the mark."

Speaking at a church where four black girls were killed in a 1963 racist bombing, Reno recalled the civil rights violence of that year in Birmingham and King's role in leading protests that ended legal segregation in the city.

"Martin Luther King was a man who saw injustice and felt the weight of oppression but refused to be broken by it," she said. "His life embodied and helped to define the true spirit of America—the quest for justice."

She told the standing-room-only crowd that there is disagreement in America today about what the term "civil rights" even means.

"Some Americans, including some minorities, now question by

“We must talk openly about race relations in this country and try to leave the angry rhetoric behind.”

JANET RENO
Attorney General

word or by deed whether integration is still a valid goal," she said. "I fear that what national consensus we have on civil rights may be at risk of unraveling. We must talk openly about race relations in this country and try to leave the angry rhetoric behind."

She called efforts in Congress to curtail affirmative action "misguided and counterproductive" and said California's Proposition 209 ban on it was "both unconstitutional and bad policy."

School-choice plan struck down

MADISON, Wis. (AP)—A state judge Wednesday struck down Gov. Tommy Thompson's plan to use taxpayer money to send poor Milwaukee children to religious schools.

The school-choice case is expected to reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

Judge Paul Higginbotham also blocked the state from expanding its first-in-the-nation program of giving tuition vouchers to Milwaukee youngsters to attend private, nonreligious schools. The state wanted to expand it from 1,650 students to 15,000.

That ruling could force some students back into public schools next fall unless a higher court acts otherwise before then.

The Republican governor has promoted the tuition voucher program as a national model.

"School choice" may in fact be sound public policy, especially considering the sad plight of the Milwaukee Public Schools system," Higginbotham wrote.

But he said the plan to expand the idea to parochial schools violates the Wisconsin Constitution because it "compels Wisconsin citizens of varying religious faiths to support schools with their tax dollars that proselytize students and attempt to inculcate them with beliefs contrary to their own."

Higginbotham already had temporarily blocked the vouchers for reli-

gious schools.

Since 1990, Wisconsin has allowed some poor children to attend private schools in Milwaukee at state expense. But Thompson proposed and the Legislature approved expanding the program to cover more students and include religious schools—an idea the American Civil Liberties Union challenged as violating the constitutional separation of church and state.

The expansion's defenders, including Whitewater prosecutor Kenneth Starr, have argued that it is constitutional because the primary purpose is to give parents freedom to choose schools for their children.

Marijuana legal in reopened club

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—The Cannabis Cultivators Club opened its doors Wednesday, enabling customers to smoke marijuana, drink it or sprinkle it on spaghetti under protection of state law for the first time since the 1930s.

Protected by California's recently passed Proposition 215 and a San Francisco judge's order, the club reopened to sell to patients with prescriptions.

It has already received 200 prescriptions from doctors.

On Tuesday, club founder Dennis

Peron showed off marijuana plants beginning to grow in the club basement and said the room would eventually be "a sea of green."

The club offers smokable pot from \$5 to \$60 for 3.5 grams, depending on the quality, Peron said.

Many of the club's patients can't smoke or don't want to smoke, so it offers alternatives. These include high-grade, pulverized marijuana in gel capsules, tinctures of marijuana soaked in 151-proof rum, pot-spiced pesto sauce and marijuana brownies.

Peron ran the club's predecessor

organization, the Cannabis Buyers' Club, until it was raided and shut down by California Attorney General Dan Lungren during last fall's campaign over Proposition 215, the referendum that legalized medical marijuana use. Arizona voters approved a similar referendum.

Last week, a San Francisco judge said the club could reopen, saying it was protected under the new law.

Lungren reluctantly acknowledged he was bound by 215, but vowed to monitor the club's activities closely to prevent abuses.

Death undercuts man's assisted suicide intent

LINCOLN, R.I. (AP)—A man with Lou Gehrig's disease died Wednesday before he could carry out his plan to kill himself in protest to Rhode Island's ban on assisted suicides.

Heavily sedated on morphine, Noel Earley, 48, had been hovering between a deep sleep and unconsciousness since Sunday.

Friends such as Steven Ames kept a vigil at Earley's bedside in his basement apartment. Ames said Earley thought he would know when to kill himself before the disease left him too weak, but he miscalculated.

"Now he's going to die just the way he didn't want to," Ames said hours before Earley's death.

In September, Earley announced he would inject himself with a lethal mix of drugs on Dec. 4 to defy Rhode Island's new law. The

law makes assisting a suicide punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

People around the country pleaded with Earley to reconsider. He refused.

"I always try to say thank you for the thoughts and the prayers, then I suggest they expand their reading to more than just the Bible, to the Koran, the Talmud," Earley said last month.

Earley put off his suicide, however, saying the disease was progressing more slowly than expected. He said he would wait until he lost his voice.

On Friday, he tapped out the message, "I want to die," but did not refuse food and water through a tube in his stomach. He said he was hanging on because of "my work."

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