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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4315
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 03 JERUSALEM 002253

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PBTS, KWBG, PHUM, PREL, IS
SUBJECT: GUIDED TOUR OF KIRYAT ARBA AND THE DOWNTOWN
HEBRON SETTLEMENTS

REF: JERUSALEM 2026

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: POLOFF AND POLINTERN TOURED KIRYAT ARBA
AND THE DOWNTOWN HEBRON SETTLEMENTS JUNE 22, IN THE
COMPANY OF

IN GENERAL, LIFE APPEARS TO
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HAVE RETURNED TO NORMAL IN THE SETTLEMENTS, FOLLOWING
CHANGES IN SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE WAKE OF THE
FEBRUARY 25 HEBRON MASSACRE. IN KIRYAT ARBA, SECURITY
AT GATES SEEMED ALMOST LAX, ALTHOUGH A SUBSTANTIAL NEW
ARMY ENCAMPMENT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON LAND LYING
BETWEEN KIRYAT ARBA AND GIVAT HARSINA. IN DOWNTOWN
HEBRON, ROADBLOCKS ERECTED SINCE FEBRUARY 25 REMAIN IN
PLACE, AND PALESTINIAN TRAFFIC IS PROHIBITED NEAR
SETTLEMENT COMPOUNDS. A LARGE CEMENT WALL ERECTED IN
THE CENTER OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA HAS BEEN REMOVED. THE
PRODUCE MARKET ON THE EDGE OF THE JEWISH QUARTER
SETTLEMENT COMPOUND REMAINS CLOSED AND THE AREA IS
CLOSED OFF TO PALESTINIANS. END SUMMARY.

KIRYAT ARBA -- BUSINESS AS USUAL

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Daris, Senior Reviewer

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3. LIFE APPEARS TO HAVE RETURNED TO NORMAL IN KIRYAT ARBA, THE SETTLEMENT OF SOME 6000 PEOPLE (INCLUDING GIVAT HARSINA) ON THE EDGE OF HEBRON, AND STILL HOME TO BARUCH GOLDSTEIN'S WIFE AND PARENTS. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT, CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, PEOPLE STILL WANT TO MOVE INTO KIRYAT ARBA. HE COMPLAINED THAT THE GOI HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO COMPLETE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NEW UNITS LOCATED INSIDE KIRYAT ARBA (NOTE: THESE UNITS ARE BUILT ON THE EDGE OF AN ARAB NEIGHBORHOOD SANDWICHED BETWEEN KIRYAT ARBA AND GIVAT HARSINA), OR ON A LARGE NEW NEIGHBORHOOD ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE ENTRANCE TO KIRYAT ARBA. [REDACTED] CLAIMED THAT IN SOME CASES, SETTLERS HAVE BEGUN HOOKING UP UTILITIES THEMSELVES AND MOVING

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IN. [REDACTED] ALSO COMPLAINED THAT THE GOI HAS BEEN OFFERING INCENTIVES FOR OWNERS OF SMALL INDUSTRIAL AND MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS IN THE KIRYAT ARBA INDUSTRIAL AREA TO MOVE INSIDE THE GREEN LINE (COMMENT: WE HAVE NOT HEARD THIS REPORTED FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE. END COMMENT).

4. THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE POLOFF COULD SEE IN KIRYAT ARBA WAS A NEWLY-ESTABLISHED MILITARY CAMP LOCATED BETWEEN KIRYAT ARBA AND ITS SISTER SETTLEMENT, GIVAT HARSINA. KIRYAT ARBA AND GIVAT HARSINA ARE SEPARATED BY A SMALL VALLEY CONTAINING A NUMBER OF ARAB HOUSES AND CULTIVATED FIELDS. THE SETTLEMENTS ARE CONNECTED INTERNALLY BY A MAIN ROAD RUNNING THROUGH THIS VALLEY. THE NEW ARMY CAMP IS LOCATED IN THE AREA WHERE SETTLERS HAVE ATTEMPTED IN THE PAST TO BUILD NEW UNITS ALONG THE MAIN ROAD IN ORDER TO MAKE THE SETTLEMENTS CONTIGUOUS. THE CAMP CONSISTS OF APPROXIMATELY 40 LARGE TENTS AND A NUMBER OF IDF VEHICLES.

5. [REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT THE IDF PRESENCE IN KIRYAT ARBA CONSISTS OF TROOPS FORMERLY POSTED IN DOWNTOWN HEBRON, MOVED TO KIRYAT ARBA AS PART OF AN IDF DRAW-DOWN IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY. [REDACTED] COULD NOT CLARIFY WHERE THE TROOPS WERE DRAWN FROM IN HEBRON. (COMMENT: POLOFF COULD SEE NO SIGNS OF A LARGE DRAW-DOWN OF TROOPS IN HEBRON CENTER. END COMMENT).

THE IBRAHIMI MOSQUE/TOMB OF THE PATRIARCHS

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6. MOST OF THE COMPLICATED SECURITY AND TRAFFIC
ARRANGEMENTS IMPOSED IN DOWNTOWN HEBRON AFTER THE
FEBRUARY 25 MASSACRE REMAIN IN PLACE. TRAVELLING
THROUGH DOWNTOWN FROM THE IBRAHIMI MOSQUE/TOMB OF THE
PATRIARCHS, CARS MUST PASS THROUGH NUMEROUS IDF
CHECKPOINTS THAT BAR PALESTINIAN VEHICLE TRAFFIC FROM
ENTERING THE CITY CENTER (CONGEN CAR WAS ONLY ABLE TO
PASS AFTER [] ASSURED SOLDIERS THAT IT WAS ALL
RIGHT). [] COMPLAINED TO POLOFF THAT ISRAELI POLICE
WERE BRUTALIZING SETTLERS WHO TRIED TO COME TO THE HOLY
SITE TO PRAY AT THE STEPS, INCLUDING WOMEN AND
CHILDREN. "WHEN WE SEE THE BLUE-UNIFORMED POLICE, WE
KNOW THEY'VE COME TO BEAT UP JEWS" (REFTEL).

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THE JEWISH QUARTER

7. TOURING THE JEWISH QUARTER/AVRAHAM AVINU SYNAGOGUE
SETTLEMENT COMPLEX, POLOFF CONFIRMED THAT THE PRODUCE
MARKET AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SETTLEMENT (SOME 25
STORES) REMAINS SHUT DOWN AND LARGE BARRIERS BLOCK ENTRY
TO THE AREA FROM SIDE-STREETS. AN IDF UNIT APPEARS TO
HAVE TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN A SHOP AT THE MOUTH OF THE
SETTLEMENT COMPLEX, AND VISITORS MUST NOW PASS THROUGH A

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NARROW IDF-GUARDED ENTRANCE TO GET TO THE MAIN
COURTYARD. IDF SOLDIERS ALSO STAND GUARD ON THE
ROOFTOPS SURROUNDING THE SETTLEMENT AND AT SEVERAL POSTS
IN THE EMPTY STREETS IN FRONT. POLOFF SAW ARMED
SETTLERS, AS WELL AS YOUNG SETTLER CHILDREN, WANDERING
THROUGH THE STREETS OUTSIDE THE SETTLEMENT AREA (WHERE
SHOPS ARE OPEN). PALESTINIAN VEHICLE TRAFFIC IS
PROHIBITED IN THE AREA AND PALESTINIAN PEDESTRIANS AVOID
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THE AREA. PALESTINIANS ARE NONETHELESS STILL LIVING IN
HOMES ABOVE THE CLOSED SHOPS.

BEIT HADASSAH, BEIT ROMANO AND THE BUS STATION

8. [] TOLD POLOFF THAT BEIT ROMANO IS CURRENTLY UNDER
RENOVATION. IN THE MEANTIME, THE YESHIVA HAS BEEN MOVED
TO THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE SETTLER'S GIFT SHOP (NEXT TO
THE IBRAHIMI MOSQUE COMPLEX). THE AREA ADJOINING BEIT
ROMANO, THE OLD BUS STATION, ALSO APPEARS TO BE UNDER
SOME SORT RENOVATION. ACCORDING TO [], THE DEED FOR
THE PROPERTY BELONGED TO THE RECENTLY-DECEASED RABBI
SCHNEERSON, AND NOW APPARENTLY BELONGS TO THE
LUBAVITCHER MOVEMENT, WHICH STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE HEBRON
SETTLERS. IDF SOLDIERS WERE POSTED ON THE STREET
OUTSIDE THE BEIT ROMANO/BUS STATION COMPLEX AND ON
ROOFTOPS OF SURROUNDING BUILDINGS. (NOTE: ARAB
HEBRONITES CONSISTENTLY CHARGE THAT THE RENOVATION AT
THE BUS STATION, WHICH APPARENTLY INVOLVES EXTENSIVE
EXCAVATIONS, IS ACTUALLY NEW SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION.
END NOTE).

9. LIKE THE JEWISH QUARTER, LOCATED SOME THREE
KILOMETERS AWAY, SECURITY AT BEIT HADASSAH HAS BEEN
STEPPED-UP OVER THE PAST MONTHS. A PERMANENT IDF
OUTPOST HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE
BUILDING AND CHECKPOINTS HAVE BEEN ERECTED ON THE ROAD
RUNNING PAST. IN ADDITION, SOLDIERS ARE POSTED ON THE
ROOFS OF SEVERAL BUILDINGS ADJOINING OR FACING BEIT
HADASSAH. POLOFF SAW A GROUP OF SOLDIERS ALSO
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PATROLLING THE STREETS OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA ON FOOT.

TEL RUMEIDA

10. POLOFF AND POLINTERN WERE ALSO TAKEN TO TEL RUMEIDA, A CARAVAN OUTPOST LOCATED ON THE EDGE OF THE OLD JEWISH CEMETERY, APPROXIMATELY TWO KILOMETERS FROM BEIT HADASSAH. THE ROAD LEADING TO TEL RUMEIDA HAS BEEN COMPLETELY BLOCKED OFF (SOLDIERS AT THE CHECKPOINT HAD A LIST OF LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS OF CARS ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE AREA), RESTRICTING ACCESS NOT ONLY TO THE SETTLEMENT, BUT ALSO TO SEVERAL ARAB HOMES LOCATED ON THE SAME STREET. AN ARMY UNIT APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN THE BACKYARD OF ONE ARAB HOUSE OVERLOOKING THE SETTLEMENT, AND POLOFF SAW IDF SOLDIERS PATROLLING THE AREA AROUND THE CARAVANS.

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11. TOURING TEL RUMEIDA, [] POINTED OUT THE HOME OF BARUCH MARZAL, THE HEAD OF THE KACH PARTY, CURRENTLY IN ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION. EXPLAINING THE "WELCOME FATHER" SIGN ON THE MARZAL DOOR, [] DECRIED GOI TREATMENT OF MARZAL, CLAIMING THAT PRISON AUTHORITIES PROMISE MARZAL WEEKLY THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO VISIT HIS WIFE AND NEW BABY, THEN, AT THE LAST MINUTE, REFUSE.

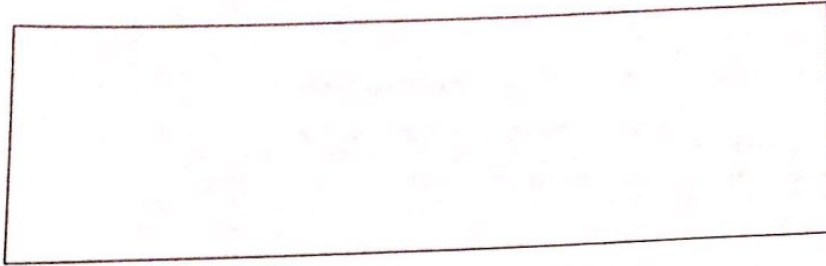
SETTLERS SPEAK

12. AT BEIT HADASSAH, POLOFF AND POLINTERN WERE WELCOMED INTO THE HOME OF A YEMENITE JEW [] AND HIS
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FAMILY. JEWS, HE SAID, HAD COME BACK TO HEBRON, AND WERE NEVER GOING TO LEAVE. HE SAID THAT HE TALKS TO LOCAL ARABS, HAMAS SUPPORTERS, WHO SAY THEY UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT THIS (EVEN IF THEY DON'T AGREE). WHAT THE HAMAS SUPPORTERS DON'T UNDERSTAND, HE SAYS, ARE LEFT-WING JEWS WHO WANT TO GIVE UP CLAIMS TO THE LAND. REGARDING THE HEBRON MASSACRE, HE SAID THAT THE COMMUNITY WAS STILL "IN SHOCK." "YOU HAD TO KNOW GOLDSTEIN. HE WAS A VERY SPECIAL MAN. HE DID EVERYTHING PERFECTLY." [] REFUSED TO CONDEMN THE MASSACRE, ARGUING THAT NO ONE CONDEMNED ATTACKS ON JEWS. (NOTE: IN REFERRING TO THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 25, FEW SETTLERS ACTUALLY USE THE TERM "MASSACRE." MOSTLY THEY REFER TO THE EVENT AS "LAST PURIM." END NOTE).

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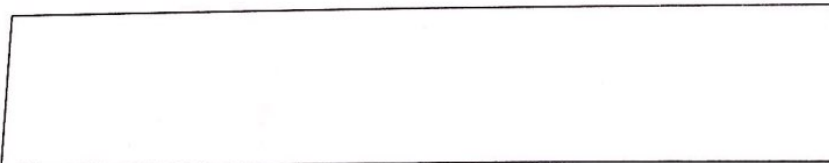
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COMMENT

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14. HEBRON SETTLERS HAVE LONG BEEN AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF IDEOLOGICAL ZEAL AND COMMITMENT IN THE WEST BANK SETTLER MOVEMENT. THEY SEEM TO THRIVE ON BOTH THE RISKS AND CONTROVERSY THAT DEFINE THEIR DAILY EXISTENCE. NOW, SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE HEBRON MASSACRE -- IN WHICH THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS THE PRIMARY VICTIMS, SINCE IT CREATED NEGATIVE PUBLICITY FOR AND POLITICAL BACKLASH AGAINST THE SETTLER MOVEMENT -- THE SETTLERS APPEAR TO HAVE RETURNED TO SOMETHING OF A NORMAL DAILY ROUTINE IN HEBRON (INCLUDING PROVOCATIVE ACTIVITIES LIKE PARADING THROUGH THE CITY WITH WEAPONS AND HEIGHTENING TENSIONS AT THE IBRAHIMI MOSQUE/TOMB OF THE PROPHETS).

15. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT HEBRON SETTLERS PLAN TO LEAVE THE AREA, AND POLOFF HAS HEARD FROM MANY SOURCES THAT IDEOLOGICAL SETTLERS FROM OTHER SETTLEMENTS ARE PRESSING TO MOVE INTO THE AREA TO SHOW SOLIDARITY AND INCREASE THE POPULATION. FOR NOW, SUCH EXPANSION IS LIMITED BY THE FACT THAT MOST OF THE SETTLEMENT COMPLEXES ARE FILLED TO CAPACITY. SHOULD PALESTINIAN SUSPICIONS REGARDING CONSTRUCTION AT THE BUS STATION BE TRUE, UNITS COULD BECOME AVAILABLE. IN ADDITION, SETTLERS HOPE THAT THE FOUR-MONTH OLD CLOSURE OF THE DOWNTOWN PRODUCE MARKET -- LOCATED IN AN AREA THEY HAVE LONG-HOPED TO MAKE PART OF THE JEWISH QUARTER -- WILL BECOME PERMANENT.

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