

CUTTING EDGE

BY EDWIN BLACK

The Police Come To Israel

Seven leading American police chiefs and sheriffs came to Israel last week to exchange views and techniques with Israel's national police force. Each side came away feeling that as public servants, they were radically different. But as cops, they shared a common bond in the campaign against terrorism and lawbreakers.

The seven were part of an innovative Anti-Defamation League mission, which selected police chiefs from "major flashpoints in American law enforcement." They were Boston Metropolitan Police Superintendent William J. Bratton; San Francisco police chief Frank M. Jordan; Houston police chief Lee Brown; St. Louis County police superintendent Gilbert Kleinknecht; San Diego police chief William Kolender; and two sheriffs from Florida, Nick Navarro of Broward County and Gerry Coleman of Pinellas County.

"Each man comes from an area vulnerable to either racial tension, terrorist action, smuggling or politicized law enforcement -- all areas of Israeli police expertise," explained ADL associate Jerusalem director Roberta Fahn. "And each is an expert at tackling the problem from an American context."

Most of the police chiefs had never visited Israel before, and knew little of Middle East politics, yet serve in communities with sizable Jewish populations. But after eight intensive days of high level security briefings, police demonstrations and general exposure to Israeli society, all of them not only understood more about Israel, they began to understand how complex Mideast issues impact on their communities in America.

Most striking to the police chiefs was what Boston's Bill Bratton described as "a completely relaxed feeling in Israel, so different from the perceptions we get at home." Bratton had long believed that Israel was a tense society paralyzed by terrorism and violence. "But it's amazing how people have resigned to live with the threat of terrorism and their border situation. Life just goes on. While here, I had no fear of crime, even when I walked through Jerusalem late at night."

San Diego's Bill Kolender agreed, saying, "I expected a lot more fear, both in myself and the people I met. But everything is calm. It's nothing like the picture we get from the media."

INTEGRATED FORCES

Professionally, the chiefs saw Israel's police, security and criminal justice system as integrated, thorough and tough. "I expected more uniformed police here," comments San Francisco's Frank Jordan. "I was amazed to learn there are only eight marked cars for all of Jerusalem. They simply rely much more on the military and the Border Patrol, so far fewer police do the job."

"Israel's sense of survival is more acute," adds Broward Sheriff Nick Navarro, "so you see the military, intelligence and police in closely-knit coordination. Agencies share their information and cooperate operationally. In America, we have more of a proprietary interest among competing and even unrelated agencies, so often we can't get anything done, and don't get the information we need when we need it. For example, in our war against drug and gun smuggling in south Florida, we couldn't get any cooperation from the military until just recently."

Navarro is especially worried about terrorism.

"In my jurisdiction alone, I have an international airport, cruise ships and the largest repository of petroleum products in the southwest," explains Navarro. "Plus, my area is filled with temples and synagogues. What has taken place in Istanbul (a synagogue massacre), aboard the Achille Lauro (a hijacking) and the sabotage we read in the newspapers could take place in my community."

To prepare for the threat, Navarro is developing a special anti-terrorism intelligence unit comprised in part of former Secret Service and other federal intelligence agents. Plus, he is cultivating a special anti-terrorism SWAT team -- separate from his general crime SWAT team -- patterned in part after the Israeli anti-terrorism unit. Navarro hopes to send his anti-terrorism recruits to Israel for "training and interaction." "If we could develop some of Israel's approach," says Navarro, "we could counteract the kind of terrorism we may one day see."

Navarro is not alone. All the chiefs are worried about terrorism. Houston's Lee Brown explains, "Fighting terrorism was a main reason for coming here. We'd be naive to believe European-style terrorism could not come to our country. So we have to be ready. That means learning the secret of Israeli cooperation and preparedness."

THOROUGH FOLLOW-UP

Equally impressive was Israel's customary intensive investigation. "They are far ahead of the U.S. in terms of simple follow-up of crime scenes," remarks San Diego's Kolender. "These people go out and interview. And they exhibit great skill in evidence handling. The intensity with which they pursue routine crime is amazing."

Another chief adds, "I don't think American police departments are economically prepared to follow the Israeli model. We should, but we're just swamped. On the other hand, they (the Israelis) feel they have no choice. So much crime here is politicized. So solving a simple knifing or even vandalism can often lead to a terror cell also responsible for planting bombs. Maybe if some of America's departments were more motivated, we could solve a heckuva lot more crime."

TOUGH AND STRINGENT

But if any Israeli character drew a responsive chord, it was the country's tough criminal justice procedures. In Israel, bail is either denied or substantially delayed for eighty percent of defendants, even those accused of white collar crimes. What's more, although evidence is frequently acquired either illegally or improperly, it is still considered valid. And with trial by jury non-existent in Israel, tough judges give the police -- not the defendant -- the benefit of the doubt. Moreover, they mete out stiff punishments to the high percentage of defendants they convict.

"We love their system," exclaims San Diego's Kolender. Judges in Israel are judges! They just examine the evidence. Even if it is tainted, it's not thrown out."

Boston's Bratton adds, "It's very frustrating in America living with the exclusionary rule (which excludes all juridical impact arising from improperly acquired evidence). They don't have that problem here, and it's something we should think about as well."

"Plus," continues Kolender, "judges here are more concerned with the case itself. They try the person, not the system. It's something I wish we had in America, especially in San Diego, as we try to contend with thousands and thousands of illegal aliens coming across the border every month. That's all been turned into politics. But it would never happen here. Israel controls its borders."

THE ISRAELI DIFFERENCE

While the Americans were busy learning about Israeli techniques and philosophy, their Israeli hosts were eager to learn the latest in Yankee technology. "We know about laser fingerprint analysis," explained an Israeli police official, but we can't afford such machinery here -- especially

in the early stages of its development. So we monitor the equipment's improvement by monitoring its use in America. When the time is right, we'll buy one -- or develop our own."

The Israelis were also fascinated by the basic differences between American and Israeli police. At a private roundtable discussion at police headquarters, an Israeli police official explained, "The histories of our two police forces are very different. Your police forces are based in the community, responsible to the community. Ours is national, responsible to the government with less relation to the people. Ours is an outgrowth of the British Mandate police force whose task it was to impose government will onto the population."

The Israelis tried to suppress smiles and even bewilderment as the Americans responded by enumerating their many community relations programs, such as softball leagues and courtesy lectures. When Broward County Sheriff Nick Navarro said his department was now using a robot, the Israelis perked up, only to discover that the "robot" was not for bomb disposal but a comical character designed to gain the attention of children during lectures.

One Israeli official's eyes opened wide in amazement when St. Louis County superintendent Gilbert Kleinknecht explained, "Instead of us telling the public how we will patrol, we solicit their views, and they tell us via their input how they would like to see us patrol the area. Later the Israeli declared, "It's very nice to be so concerned about the public. But this is a luxury we can't afford in Israel. Much of our public -- 1.1 million Arabs -- hates us and wants to see the country fall apart. Community relations is not a priority for us, and won't be for many years."

At the same time, one assistant director-general of the National Police admitted he envied the Americans. "I think it would be wonderful to catch the criminals, fight terrorism, and be sweet to the public all at the same time. Life would be a pleasure. Unfortunately, the criminals, the terrorists and the public won't cooperate." But he quickly added, "That doesn't mean these chiefs don't know their business. They're tops. We have the same instincts. Only we must pursue them under different rules. Our rules may not be so pretty, but then again neither are our alternatives."

(Edwin Black is the author of The Transfer Agreement: The Untold Story of the Secret Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine (Macmillan), winner of the Carl Sanburg Award for the best nonfiction of 1984 and nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. His weekly syndicated column is published by Jewish newspapers in 45 cities throughout the United States and Canada.)

Soviet Jewish Emigration Dips To 790 In June

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union dipped in June, with 790 people leaving the USSR, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) reported.

"We had hoped that the June figure would follow the pattern of monthly increases in emigration visas granted during the first five months of 1987. But it appears that emigration has once again dropped," the NCSJ said.

A report from Tel Aviv said the "dropout" rate among Soviet Jewish emigres reached a record high of 85 percent last month. Of the 790 who arrived in Vienna, 121 went to Israel and 669 opted to go to other countries.

The Israeli daily Haaretz reported that of a total of 3,092 who left the Soviet Union since January, only 714 came to Israel.

The newspaper Davar reported that the deputy director of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Consular Division will head a delegation due to arrive in Israel in about three weeks.

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Three hundred sixty Jewish children from throughout Hungary were honored at a recent ceremony at the Anne Frank Gymnasium here for passing their Talmud Tora classes.