



Steven Pomerantz, former deputy director of the FBI, speaks at Congregation. Beth Sholom and Talmud Torah on Monday evening as Maryland state police officer Robert Maroney and Noa Shemesh, director of Social Services at Hadassah Hospital, Mt. Scopus, listen.

Photo courtesy of Aviva Tessler

Face of terror

Operation Embrace holds panel with victims, Maryland police

by Helen Mintz Belitsky
special to WJW

The new face of terror, its devastation and prevention, took shape at Beth Sholom and Talmud Torah Congregation in Potomac on Monday evening, as its victims and heroes in Israel and the United States told their stories.

The program featured Ronit Tubul, severely injured by an explosion, aboard the No. 32 Jerusalem bus on its way from Gilo to central Jerusalem bus on June 18, 2002; her husband Shlomo, a member of the Jerusalem Police Force; Noa Shemesh, director of social services at Hadassah Hospital, Mt. Scopus; two members of the Maryland State Police; and Steven Pomerantz, former assistant director of the FBI and former chief of its counterterrorism division. About 50 people attended the program.

The Tubuls and Shemesh were brought to this country on a fundraising and educational mission by Operation Embrace. They are among some 800 victims of terror helped by the project, founded in November 2001 by Beth Sholom's Aviva Tessler, Avivah Litan, Jocelyn Krifcher and Anne Clemons.

Shemesh and her department help connect victims with the project, which has enlisted the help of shuls and schools in the Washington area and other parts of the country write letters and contribute finds, games and equipment to terror victims and their families.

"I said goodbye to my daughter, boarded the bus," recalls Ronit Tubul, 31, "and awoke 12 days later in the Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem."

For months after the explosion, due to severe head injuries and uncontrolled bleeding, Tubul could not walk or talk or hold her daughter. Project Embrace presented her with a laptop computer during her recuperation to help her with communication and for physical therapy.

Speaking to school groups while on her visit here, she said she told students, "I will never leave Israel. If we do, we lose."

Her husband, 32, speaking through a translator, described in somber tones the intelligence police received on the bomber and the hour-by-hour operations before the explosion trying to track the terrorist.

"We sealed off entrances to the city and did house-to-house searches in north Jerusalem." In the end, they failed.

The bomber was in south Jerusalem. and as Shlomo Tubul and his colleagues met to plan a new strategy, his wife was boarding the No. 32 bus. At the beginning, she was believed among the dead, and was finally identified by her husband only through her jewelry.

Cpl. Robert A. Maroney and Sgt. Bryan K Davy of the Maryland State Police described stepped-up training since Sept. 11, 2001, more aggressive law enforcement, the establishment of a Homeland Defense Bureau which works with the FBI and other intelligence agencies, and a new Maryland tipline, 800-492-TIPS.

Davy presented the seal of the Maryland agency and a replica of the State Police badge to Shlomo Tubul as a symbol of cooperation between the United States and Israel.

Steven Pomerantz pointed out that new terrorism is perpetrated by Islamic fundamentals who kill for the sake of killing.

Stressing that the United States has much to learn from Israel, he noted that the United States is sending its police officers to Israel to learn about counterterrorism techniques. "Intelligence is the name of the game' he said.

He said the United States can make itself more safe by embracing Israel and its battle against terrorism, "In the end, their battle is ours."

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