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*From the Los Angeles Times*

## Top airport security expert in Israel to inspect LAX anti-terror measures

**During a visit to Israel by Mayor Villaraigosa, a pact is signed that will bring the official and two colleagues to L.A. for periodic inspections as \$1,000-a-day consultants starting in the fall.**

By Richard Boudreaux

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LOD, ISRAEL — Israel's top airport security official will make periodic reviews of anti-terrorist measures at Los Angeles International Airport under an agreement signed Friday during a visit here by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

The pact, formalizing an arrangement begun nearly two years ago, will send the Israeli official, Nahum Liss, and two colleagues to Los Angeles for regular inspections as \$1,000-per-day consultants. The officials work for the authority that operates Ben-Gurion International Airport.

Calling Ben-Gurion the world's safest airport, Villaraigosa said the agreement "is going to put us in a position to learn . . . to implement state-of-the-art technology and other measures to help us secure our airport."

Starting in the fall, Liss and his team will visit LAX about twice a year and provide additional consulting by e-mail, officials on both sides said. The team made a preliminary examination of LAX in October 2006.

The deal is part of an effort by city officials to upgrade security at LAX, which is considered the state's No. 1 terrorist target and has been singled out by the Al Qaeda network.

City Councilman Jack Weiss, who arranged the Israelis' 2006 visit, said the agreement is believed to be the first between a U.S. airport authority and a foreign government agency.

In the United States, federal authorities are responsible for security inside airport terminals.

But Gina Marie Lindsey, who signed the agreement as executive director of Los Angeles World Airports, said her agency wants to learn from Israel how to fortify the perimeter of LAX and how to incorporate anti-terrorist strategies into plans for expanding the Tom Bradley International Terminal.

In particular, she said, she wants to learn to apply Israel's system of electronic scanning of automobile license plates to identify terrorist suspects as they approach the airport.

During a walking tour of Ben-Gurion's 4-year-old international terminal, Liss pointed out to Villaraigosa and a large Los Angeles delegation the security features of its design. Bollards protect the building from wayward vehicles and its tempered, shatter-resistant glass facade is reinforced by vertical cables about a foot apart.

The terminal handles 55,000 passengers a day, about the same as the Bradley terminal.

"There's a recommendation they gave us," Villaraigosa said, pointing to one of the \$2,000 trash cans placed along the curb outside the terminal. The cans, made of reinforced steel, serve as emergency receptacles for any explosives the police might find; from inside the can, the force of any blast would go only upward.

In 1973, when Ben-Gurion was called Lod Airport, three suicide attackers gunned down 26 passengers in the terminal. Three years later, a suitcase bomb killed a passenger and wounded five others.

A hush fell over the mayor's delegation as Zeev Sarig, the airport authority's managing director, told of witnessing those terrorist acts and of Israel's decades of work to make its airport security the gold standard.

"To have Israeli eyes on LAX on a constant basis, it's a huge deal," Weiss said.

Several Los Angeles officials said they were impressed by the unobtrusive character of Israel's airport security and said they want to replicate it.

"You don't see a lot of guards walking around with machine guns," Lindsey said. "And we certainly don't want that either."

While security was high on the mayor's agenda for his six-day visit, he couldn't escape the blow of the Lakers' humiliation back home in Game 4 of the NBA playoffs. The game was in progress when he awoke here Friday, 10 hours ahead of Pacific time.

More than an hour later, during a meeting at the airport, El Al airlines Chairman Israel Borovich received a written note from an aide, turned to the mayor and announced: "You know what it says here? The Lakers lost."

"Trust me," Villaraigosa replied, rolling his eyes. "You think I didn't know that?"

The defeat followed him to Sderot. The town has been battered for years by Palestinian rocket attacks from nearby Gaza Strip, and Villaraigosa went to show solidarity.

He brought 15 basketballs for the Tornai Madaim elementary school and a Lakers' shirt bearing the number 24 and Kobe Bryant's name for Sderot Mayor Eli Moyal, who greeted him in the schoolyard.

"Let me tell you this, my friends in Boston will hate me for this," Moyal said, declaring himself a Celtics' fan.

The two men laughed.

"Tell them you've got a good friend in Los Angeles," Villaraigosa said.

In February, Villaraigosa supported a "Live for Sderot" concert in Los Angeles that raised \$300,000 for the town's schools, which the Israeli government matched. On Friday he visited Alon High School to see one of the benefits, a classroom computer with a wireless Internet connection and projected onto a large "smart board" screen.

At both schools, Villaraigosa stood with Moyal and praised his bravery in the face of the rockets.

"That courage of his comes from the courage he sees in all of you, the young people of Sderot," the mayor said. "In Los Angeles, we are aware of your courage."

"We love your mayor," he added, "even though he's a Celtics fan."

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