

Obama, Netanyahu discuss Iran war options

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US President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a two-hour meeting at the White House Monday, including a half-hour one-on-one discussion with no aides present. Their talks focused on the joint US-Israeli drive to target Iran for economic warfare and military assault.

The meeting was held in the aftermath of Obama's appearance Sunday before the convention of the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the principal pro-Israel lobbying group, where he made an extraordinary pledge of support for Israel in any future military confrontation with Tehran.

Obama said that his administration was committed to "use all elements of American power to pressure Iran and prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon." This formulation has an ominously open-ended character. "All elements" necessarily include not only economic sanctions and terrorist attacks in the streets of Tehran—a feature of the past three years—but also special ops forces, air strikes, ground troops and even nuclear weapons.

In a statement responding to the speech to AIPAC, Netanyahu said he "very much appreciated" Obama's "position that Iran must not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons and that all options are on the table."

In an effort to minimize reported differences between the Obama administration and Netanyahu, the president and prime minister held a joint photo-op for the press and made brief statements before their meeting rather than going before the press corps afterwards and answering questions on their discussions.

Neither Obama nor Netanyahu varied from their scripts in their preliminary public remarks. Obama was

effusive, declaring, "I want to assure both the American people and the Israeli people that we are in constant and close consultation. I think the levels of coordination and consultation between our militaries and our intelligence—not just on this issue, but on a broad range of issues—has been unprecedented. And I intend to make sure that that continues during what will be a series of difficult months, I suspect, in 2012."

Netanyahu replied that "Israel and America stand together," while declaring that Israel "must reserve the right" to attack Iran regardless of US concerns. "When it comes to Israel's security, Israel has the right, the sovereign right, to make its own decisions," he said. He added that "my supreme responsibility as prime minister of Israel is to ensure that Israel remains the master of its fate."

There are tactical differences between Washington and Israel, although much of the public conflict may be more a "good cop, bad cop" routine aimed at exploiting fissures in the Iranian regime than actual policy conflicts.

Netanyahu has proposed as the "red line" for military action that Iran should be compelled to halt all nuclear enrichment and be deprived of the "capability" of building nuclear weapons—a demand that if taken literally would require the extermination of most Iranian physicists and ballistic missile engineers.

Obama has rejected this as an effort to prevent any negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 countries—the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, Britain and the US) plus Germany—and set as his own "red line" a verifiable decision by the Iranian government to build a nuclear weapon. Since this would be "verified" by US

intelligence agencies, it still gives considerable room for provocation and the manufacture of pretexts for war, should Washington decide to do so.

Israel lacks the military power to do more than incidental damage to Iranian targets, unless its leaders are prepared to murder tens of millions through the use of Israel's nuclear arsenal. Short of that, they must coordinate action with the United States, which has the forces in place in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere to carry out sustained and repeated attacks on Iranian nuclear reactors and enrichment facilities.

A full-scale war against Iran, a country with three times the population of Iraq and three times the land area, would require an all-out US military mobilization, including restoration of the draft and conscription of hundreds of thousands of new and unwilling soldiers.

What is striking is the degree to which both governments, the Israeli and the American, are acting in defiance of broad popular opposition to war in both their countries.

A poll of Israelis last month conducted by the University of Maryland found only 19 percent favoring a unilateral Israeli attack on Iran, and only 42 percent favoring military action even in conjunction with the United States.

Several polls in the United States have shown overwhelming popular opposition to yet another US war in the Middle East. A poll by the *Hill* newspaper conducted March 1 found only 21 percent very supportive of a US attack on Iran and 20 percent somewhat supportive, while 52 percent were somewhat or very much opposed. The poll also found 57 percent opposed to any US intervention in the civil war in Syria, Iran's principal ally.

Even more remarkable is the Pew Research Center poll in February that found a narrow majority believing the United States should remain neutral in a war between Iran and Israel. Less than 40 percent said the United States should side with Israel, an astonishing figure given that 100 percent of the corporate-controlled media and almost 100 percent of the

Democratic and Republican politicians would back the US joining Israel in such a war.

Obama's speech to AIPAC produced a telling response in the American media. The *Wall Street Journal*, normally a strident ultra-right critic of the White House, published an editorial hailing "Obama's Hawkish Iran Turn." It praised the speech, "whose strong talk on Iran kept the audience coming to its feet," while noting the ominous comment of one Israeli official that the Netanyahu-Obama meeting "will be the last time they can speak face-to-face before a decision is taken."

The liberal *Nation* magazine published a commentary by Robert Dreyfuss which declared: "Despite President Obama's election-inspired rhetoric about the US-Israeli alliance, which filled the president's speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, there's zero chance that Obama will endorse either an Israeli attack on Iran or an American one, either in 2012 or later."

The political voice of the super-rich nods approvingly that Obama is coming around on Iran. The liberal cheerleaders for Obama delude their audience with a guarantee that there will be no war. In different ways, both are preparing to back the American president in the event he initiates one of the greatest crimes in world history—an unprovoked war of aggression on a country of 80 million people.



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