

Hegseth secretly meets Netanyahu as US prepares to resume attacks on Iran

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US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday at Ovda air base in southern Israel, which hosts US fighter jets and refueling aircraft. Hegseth's visit, kept secret until the news site Axios reported it, took place eight days before Israel's October 27 election and one day after US President Donald Trump endorsed Netanyahu for reelection.

The United States and Israel are preparing to resume the war against Iran after Israel's election and the November 3 US midterm elections. The Israeli settler rampage in the occupied West Bank and the starvation of Gaza accompany the US-Israeli escalation against Iran.

Netanyahu's spokesman Doron Spielman confirmed the meeting Tuesday. Spielman said Hegseth and Netanyahu had discussed "the threats in the region" and how the United States and Israel would deal with them, offensively and defensively. Hegseth thanked Israel for hosting the thousands of American troops stationed there, Spielman said.

The American press has reported for two weeks on preparations to resume the war against Iran. Axios reported October 7, citing US and Israeli officials, that the Pentagon had ordered US forces in the Middle East to complete preparations for resuming major combat operations against Iran.

Trump told *Time* magazine in late September that it would be "possible" to step up the bombing of Iran after the elections. At the start of October the US military sent about 2,000 Marines and 7,000 sailors toward the Middle East, including the USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group.

The Roosevelt carrier strike group is due to arrive by the end of November, the *Jerusalem Post* reported Tuesday, citing Fox News, and the 13th Marine

Expeditionary Unit has sailed from San Diego aboard the USS Makin Island amphibious ready group. The carriers USS George H.W. Bush and USS George Washington are already in the region with hundreds of US aircraft. The new ships raise the US force in the region to about 20,000 troops, Al Jazeera reported October 9.

Fox News chief national security correspondent Jennifer Griffin wrote Tuesday that the Roosevelt deployment "will provide more options for the US as President [Donald] Trump is reportedly considering ramping up strikes on Iran after the [November 3] Midterms."

Netanyahu told reporters Sunday: "The regime must fall, and I will bring it down." On Tuesday, at Tel Hai University near the Lebanese border, Netanyahu said: "Finishing the job means bringing down the terrorist regime in Iran." Netanyahu said he had spoken with Trump about overthrowing the Iranian government "more than once, including the day before yesterday."

In his endorsement of Netanyahu, posted Sunday on Truth Social, Trump wrote that unless the Iranians "change their ways, rapidly, we will soon finish the job." Trump also wrote: "If Israel has the wrong Leader, which would be anyone other than Bibi, America will have to do this work ourselves, and I am not inclined to do so."

The United States and Israel began bombing Iran on February 28, and on April 13 the US military blockaded Iran's ports. Washington signed a "ceasefire" with Iran on June 17 and broke it on July 7 and 8, when US forces struck what the US military said were about 170 Iranian military sites and boats.

Israeli ministers are calling for war in the West Bank alongside the war against Iran. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich told a podcast of the Israeli news site

Ynet on September 27 that Israel should “go to war in Judea and Samaria,” the official Israeli term for the West Bank, “to dismantle the Palestinian Authority.”

About 80 settlers, many of them masked, attacked Palestinian olive harvesters on Friday at Abu Falah, a village northeast of Ramallah, beating the harvesters and a *Washington Post* photographer, Heidi Levine, while Israeli soldiers tear-gassed the harvesters. On Saturday settlers attacked Belgian, French and Polish diplomats in Taybeh, a Palestinian Christian village northeast of Ramallah. Netanyahu called the international condemnation of the settler attacks “a huge exaggeration” on Sunday.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said Saturday that Israel has killed 1,511 Palestinians there since the “ceasefire” began on October 10, 2025. On October 14, Israel cut off all commercial deliveries into Gaza. The UN World Food Programme, which has received less than half its usual funding for Gaza and the West Bank this year, said Monday that its food distributions in Gaza will reach 1.1 million people instead of 1.6 million.

Netanyahu’s coalition partners are demanding the annexation of Gaza and the expulsion of its population. Smotrich said at a Jerusalem conference on October 6: “I demand that the State of Israel permanently apply its sovereignty over the territories it currently holds, both in Gaza and in Lebanon.” On September 3, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who leads the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, presented a plan to push 1.86 million Palestinians, nearly the entire population of Gaza, out of the territory within seven years through what he calls “emigration.”



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