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Israel to US: Talk of Avoiding War Helps Iran

By John Glaser

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Israeli officials on Monday complained that U.S. officials speaking publicly about their reluctance to start a war with Iran "served Iran's interests."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and other senior officials lambasted U.S. national security adviser Tom Donilon, who has been in Israel this week, saying any criticism of Israel's impending attack on Iran basically helps the Ayatollahs.

Specifically, Netanyahu and Barak expressed resentment over an interview given by Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, to CNN. In it, Dempsey said "I don't think a wise thing at this moment is for Israel to launch a military attack on Iran," and a strike "would be destabilizing" and "not prudent." He also said that U.S. efforts to dissuade Israel from attacking Iran have failed.

The Israeli condemnation of the rather sober comments from Dempsey came dangerously close to equating public nonconformity with Israeli policy traitorous.

"We made it clear to Donilon that all those statements and briefings only served the Iranians," a senior Israeli official said. "The Iranians see there's controversy between the United States and Israel, and that the Americans object to a military act. That reduces the pressure on them."

Israeli officials, also including National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidror, Mossad chief Tamir Pardo, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz and Military Intelligence head Aviv Kochavi, told Donilon that in order to avoid an Israeli attack on Iran, increased pressure and economic sanctions on Iran must intensify.

But the U.S.-led sanctions against Iran are already unprecedented in their scale and have already begun to [cripple the economy](#), [fuel inflation](#), interrupt trade flows, [cut off supplies of food](#), and destabilize oil markets. Columbia University Professor Gary Sick [has called this effort](#) “the equivalent of a blockade. It’s an act of war.”

The Israelis are not only demanding these aggressive efforts be intensified, but they’re trying to prohibit U.S. officials from denouncing unnecessary war. All this, despite a broad consensus throughout the military and intelligence community that [Iran is not developing nuclear weapons](#) and [has not demonstrated any intention of doing so](#).