

# Quibbling About Killing: Netanyahu Is Unhappy with Washington

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*Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is unhappy. Not so much with the Palestinians, whom he sees as terroristic, dispensable and a threat to Israeli security. Not with the Persians, who, he swears, will never acquire a nuclear weapon capacity on his watch. His recent lack of happiness has been directed against the fatty hand that feeds him and his country's war making capabilities.*

On June 18, the Israeli PM released a [video](#) decrying Washington's recent conduct towards his government in terms of military aid. It was "inconceivable that in the past few months, the administration has been withholding weapons and ammunitions to Israel." Having claimed such an idea to be inconceivable, Netanyahu proceeded to conceive. He stated that US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken had "assured" him "that the administration is working day and night to remove these bottlenecks. I certainly hope that's the case. It should be the case."

Give us the tools and we'll finish the job. [pic.twitter.com/eQHpyd9q0X](https://pic.twitter.com/eQHpyd9q0X)

— Benjamin Netanyahu - בנימין נתניהו (@netanyahu) [June 18, 2024](#)

The release coincided with efforts made by President Joe Biden's envoy, Amos Hochstein, to cool matters concerning Israel-Hezbollah hostilities, a matter that threatens to move beyond daily border skirmishes. It was also a pointed reference to the halt in a single shipment of 2000 pound (900kg) bombs to Israel regarding concerns about massive civilian casualties over any planned IDF assault on Rafah.

The White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was uncharacteristically unadorned in frankness. “We genuinely do not know what he is talking about.” Discussions between US and Israeli officials were continuing. “There are no other pauses – none.” It fell to the White House National Security Communications advisor, John Kirby, to field more substantive questions on the matter.

On June 20, Kirby [admitted](#) to being perplexed and disappointed at Netanyahu’s remarks, “especially given that no other country is doing more to help Israel defend itself against the threat by Hamas”. As he was at pains to point out, the US military industrial complex had enthusiastically furnished “material assistance to Israel” despite the pause on the provision of 2,000-pound bombs. The notion “that we had somehow stopped helping Israel with their self-defense needs is absolutely not accurate”. Netanyahu, in other words, was quibbling about the means of inflicting death, a matter of form over substance.

Blinken [confirmed as much](#), stating that the administration was “continuing to review one shipment that President Biden has talked about with regard to 2000-pound bombs because of our concerns about their use in densely populated areas like Rafah.” All other matters were “moving as it normally would move.”

These remarks are unequivocally true. Annual military assistance to Israel from US coffers totals \$3.8 billion. In April, President Joe Biden [approved](#) the provision of \$17 billion in additional assistance to Israel amidst the continued pummelling of Gaza and the starvation of its thinning population. The Biden administration has also badgered Democratic lawmakers to give their blessing to the sale of 50 F-15 fighters to Israel in a contract amounting to \$18 billion. But this, [according to accounts](#) from Israel’s Channel 12 and the German paper *Bild*, has been less than satisfactory for Israel’s blood lusting prime minister.

The disgruntled video precipitated much agitation among officials in the Biden administration. In an *Axios* [report](#), three, inevitably anonymised, offer their views. One found it “hard to fathom” how the video “helps with deterrence. There is nothing like telling Hezbollah that the US is withholding weapons from Israel, which is false, to make them feel emboldened.”

The interviewed officials all admitted to Netanyahu’s inscrutability.

A half-plausible line was ventured: running up points on the domestic front ahead of a visit to Washington from Israel’s defence minister, Yoav Gallant. Not that the strategy was working for opposition leader, Yair Lapid, [who found](#) Netanyahu’s effort damaging in its reverberating potential. From Moscow to Tokyo, “everyone is reaching the same conclusion: Israel is no longer the closest ally of the US. This is the damage Netanyahu is causing us.”

Kirby’s remarks deserve scrutiny on another level. For one, they suggest a rationale that would have done much in flattening Israeli egos. “The president put fighter aircrafts up in the air in the middle of April to help shoot down several hundred drones and missiles, including ballistic missiles that were fired from Iran proper at Israel.”

Here arises an important omission: the intervention by the US was part of a coordinated, choreographed plan enabling Iran to show force in response to the April 1 Israeli strike on its ambassadorial compound in Damascus while minimising the prospect of casualties. Accordingly, Tehran and Washington found themselves in an odd, unacknowledged embrace that had one unintended consequence: revealing Israeli vulnerability. No longer could Israel

be seen to be self-sufficiently impregnable, its defences firmly holding against all adversaries. In a perverse twist on that dilemma, a strong ally providing support is bound to be resented. Nothing supplied will ever be, or can be, enough.

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