

A Russian-American-Israeli Meeting of National Security Advisors in Jerusalem: Syria and Iran on the Table

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*This month of June, the National Security Advisors of Russia, the US, and Israel, **Nikolay Patrushev**, **John Bolton** and **Meir Ben-Shabbat**, respectively, are expected to meet in Jerusalem to talk about Iran and Syria and what Israel considers the “threat to its security” in the Levant.*

Well-informed sources believe the meeting will bring nothing new, mainly due to continued Israeli violations of Syrian sovereignty and its bombing of Iranian targets far from the borders. Israel cannot expect any support from Russia in this regard, and this is why. The Kremlin’s hands are tied, and it is unwilling to take a stand against the wishes of the Syrian **President Bashar al-Assad** and his allies.

However, this meeting is significant only because it has no precedent and is a concession to a request by Netanyahu to **President Vladimir Putin** last February during the Israeli Prime Minister’s visit to the Kremlin. Also, it shows US compliance with Netanyahu’s request to **President Donald Trump** during the visit to the White House last March.

High-ranking sources among decision-makers say this:

“Netanyahu runs to his allies to cry on their shoulders when he is the aggressor, as in every single problem in the Levant, particularly when the Israeli military exceeds the limits and crosses red lines. Last year, Russia agreed with Iran to create a kind of safety perimeter for the Russian military to take control along the Quneitra-Golan Heights front. That would have made it possible to ease the situation on the borders and allow President Assad and his allies to concentrate on other fronts. Iran responded positively to the Russian request, following the approval of President Assad”.



“It is important to point out that Russia is not part of and doesn’t adopt the objectives of the “Axis of the Resistance”. It has excellent relations with Israel, Iran and Hezbollah, and considers Syria a strategic ally. Moscow tries to keep a balance in its relations with the countries of the Middle East. Nevertheless, Russia has rushed to support the integrity of Syria, its government and army. It has acted as a second Syrian Air Force, bombing all Syria’s enemies and helping the Syrian government recover the control of its territory. Of course, the situation in the north-east under US occupation and the north-west under al-Qaeda-like groups and pro-Turkish militants is more complicated and confusing. The destiny of these two areas is connected and mature political and diplomatic efforts at coordination will be necessary before moving towards a military option to liberate the north”, said the decision-maker.

Concernant the Iranian deployment in Syria, the source said:

“Israel took advantage of Russian efforts and bombed Iranian positions in the heart of Syria and on the coast. These positions are valuable and linked to the organisation of the Syrian army’s strategic armaments (missile production industrial objectives and strategic military warehouses). Thus, it was Israel’s choice to change the Rule of Engagement (ROE), triggering the return of Syrian allies, i.e. Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), to the borders with the occupied Golan Heights annexed by Israel. Russia found itself in no position to intervene and prevent their return because it was Israel which dismantled what Russia had tried to achieve on these borders”.

As to why Syria and its allies did not respond to Israel’s aggressive violations of Syrian sovereignty and its bombing of hundreds of objectives in Syria, the source answered:

“Iran’s National Security responsible **Admiral Ali Shamkhani** has said his country and President Assad will respond by bombing objectives (in Israel) if the Israeli Air Force bombs Syria. Nothing has happened, true. The late Secretary General of Hezbollah **Sayyed Abbas al-Moussawi** (assassinated by Israel in 1992) used to say that it is important to concentrate on the main objectives and avoid wasting time and energy, regardless of what Israel might do. Israel’s objective is to divert attention from Syria’s main strategic goals. Today Hezbollah and the IRGC have returned to the borders and Russia is no longer in a position to ask for another withdrawal. The destiny and the front of the Shebaa Farms (a Lebanese area occupied by Israel) and the Golan Heights

are intertwined, and Syria and its allies are actively working on these objectives”.

Today in Syria there are priorities which take precedence over a battle with Israel. Fighting Israel is not an option for the Syrian President even if several high-value targets have been destroyed. Israel is conscious of the situation and feels disoriented and angry even though it is aware that Syria and its allies are not willing to open a wide military front during this critical period in the Middle East. What is also highly probable is that Israel cannot expect Hezbollah and Iran to remain silent for very long.

To any ordinary observer, it looks like Israel is mocking the Syrian leadership and its allies, enjoying an unstoppable free ride in Syria with no accountability for its actions. Nevertheless, it is President Assad who believes there is no compelling reason for Syria and its allies to bomb Israel. Idlib has priority, as does the reconstruction of Syria and the delivery of fundamental necessities to its inhabitants (energy, schooling, rebuilding societies and cities). The war with Israel can wait and is going nowhere, President Assad believes.

Russia is not in a position to offer Israel what it needs, simply because Netanyahu is unreliable. Netanyahu had his opportunity and has decided to throw it out of the window, prioritising the bombing of Iranian objectives in the country. This may well reduce the Russian-American-Israeli meeting to a picture-taking opportunity. The Israeli Prime Minister will have the opportunity to take credit for staging an unprecedented meeting and will temporarily benefit from this propaganda. However, he will definitely come away empty handed.

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