

## Strategic Partners: US, Israel Defense Ministers Discuss Anti-Iran Alliance

The talks on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Brussels follow increased military coordination directed against the Islamic Republic

By [The Cradle](#)

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*Israeli **Defense Minister Yoav Gallant** met with US **Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin** on 15 June at the NATO summit in Brussels to discuss Iran and other important aspects of the US-Israel relationship, the Jerusalem Post [reported](#).*

Gallant discussed with his Austin claims that "Iran stimulates attacks against Israel using proxies in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, and reiterated Israel's right to self-defense," the Israeli paper said.

Before departing for Belgium, Gallant said he would [discuss](#) with Austin "the implementation of the joint commitment of both our countries to make sure Iran will never possess nuclear military capabilities."

Israeli threats against Iran have intensified in recent months amid unconfirmed reports that Washington is close to reaching an interim or partial nuclear deal with Tehran through indirect talks in Oman.

Israel opposes a US nuclear deal with Iran, while Iranian officials have made clear they will only accept a full return to the nuclear deal signed with the Obama administration in 2015. The Trump administration withdrew from the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), unilaterally in 2018. The JCPOA placed limits on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Despite US negotiations with Iran, the US military has expanded military cooperation with Israel this year and carried out exercises viewed as veiled threats against Iran, such as the Juniper Oak exercise in January.

The exercise [involved](#) 7,900 personnel, 142 combat aircraft, twelve warships, and activities across all domains (sea, air, land, space, and cyber). The main goals of the exercise were to improve interoperability and to demonstrate the ability to surge forces into the region in the event of war with Iran.

Reports emerged that the exercise simulated strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, though US officials denied this.

In March, Austin [met](#) with Gallant in Israel. At the time, Austin said that although the Biden administration “continues to believe in diplomacy,” it would “not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.”

Despite ongoing political differences between the Biden administration and the Israeli government regarding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s proposed legislation to overhaul the Israeli judiciary, the military alliance between the two remains strong.

Austin said he “wanted to be here to make something very clear: America’s commitment to Israel’s security is ironclad, and it’s going to stay that way. As President [Joe] Biden said in his visit to Israel last year, ‘The connection between the Israeli people and the American people is bone deep.’ Israel is a major strategic partner for the US.”

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*Featured image: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin (L) and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant meet in Brussels on June 15, 2023. (Photo Credit Elad Malcha/Defense Ministry)*

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