

## With US ties at risk, Israel makes no promise on Iran

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As the US and Israel feel their deep differences, Israel's prime minister says he did not make a promise to the US president not to launch a unilateral strike on Iran.

According to the Israeli Radio, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Barack Obama that Israel reserves the right to take action against Iran.

Sources close to the Israeli premier quoted him as saying that he did not make a promise to President Obama not to attack Iran.

The talks between President Obama and Netanyahu at the White House on Monday, which exposed a head-on collision between the two sides, have stoked fears in Israel that ties with its main ally may be at risk.

While Obama talked about the issue of stalled peace talks with the Palestinians and asked the premier to halt illegal construction in the occupied lands, Netanyahu focused its rage on Iran.

Tehran says its nuclear program is directed at the civilian applications of the technology.

However, Israel, the possessor of the sole Middle East nuclear arsenal, seeks to portray Iran as a regime hell-bent on starting an imminent nuclear war.

Israeli officials and military commanders have frequently threatened to militarily take out Iranian nuclear facilities — which Iran says are being run under its obligations to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

US officials, however, have moved to prevent the eventuality of an Israeli strike against Iran.

America's spy chief and CIA director, Leon Panetta, was sent on a secret mission to Israel in early May to warn its leaders against launching a unilateral attack.

Shedding light on his trip, Panetta said in remarks published Tuesday that US plans of "diplomatic engagement" with Iran mounts a great challenge to the Obama administration.

While insisting that the issue of Iran has the "full attention" of the White House, the CIA director claimed Israel understood that it could not pursue a unilateral agenda on Iran.

"[Netanyahu] understands that if Israel goes it alone, it will mean big trouble. He knows that for the sake of Israeli security, they have to work together with others," said the CIA chief.

In a turnabout from the policies of the Bush administration, the Obama White House says it

seeks to diplomatically engage Iran over its disputed nuclear program.

However, the emergence of the hawkish Israeli government has raised fears among officials in Washington that Netanyahu could drag President Obama into an unsought war with Iran.

The Israeli prime minister's remarks on Wednesday about Iran can be interpreted as a possible failure by the US president to avert an impending war.

Iran says it has no plans to attack any country but continues to beef up its military capabilities to deter threats such as those originating from Israel.

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