

Israel presented U.S. with “red lines” for Saudi nuclear deal



Photo: Kobi Gideon/GPO via Getty Images

Israel has presented the Trump administration with its “red lines” for the nuclear deal the United States is currently negotiating with Saudi Arabia to build reactors in the kingdom.

The big picture: A senior Israeli official told me the Israeli government realized it will not be able to stop the deal — set to be worth billions of dollars for the U.S. — and decided instead to attempt to reach an understanding with the Trump administration regarding the parameters of the deal.

Last March, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu raised concerns about the deal during a meeting with President Trump and other senior U.S. officials. Netanyahu was concerned such a deal, especially if it also includes a “right” to enrich uranium, will lead to further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Trump and his advisers told Netanyahu that, if the U.S. does not sell the Saudis nuclear reactors, other countries like Russia or France will.

The senior Israeli official told me Netanyahu sent Yuval Steinitz, his energy

minister in charge of Israel's atomic energy committee, to Washington two weeks ago to meet with Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who is leading the negotiations with the Saudis over the nuclear deal.

What we're hearing: Steinitz presented Perry and other senior U.S. officials with this set of parameters:

- Israel asked the U.S. for a "no surprises policy" regarding the negotiations with the Saudis to ensure maximum transparency.

- Israel asked to know in advance what nuclear equipment the U.S. would sell the Saudis and asked to be consulted about the planned location of the nuclear reactors the U.S. would build in Saudi Arabia. The senior Israeli official told me the main reason for that demand is nuclear safety.

- Israel demanded that the deal will not give Saudi Arabia the capability or the legitimacy to enrich uranium on its soil. The Saudis want to get American permission to enrich uranium as part of the deal.

- Israel demanded that the U.S. will be the only nation to supply the Saudis with the nuclear fuel for its reactors.

- Israel demanded that the U.S. must remove all used nuclear fuel from Saudi Arabia so that the Saudis will not be able to reprocess it.

What's next: Perry told Steinitz the U.S. will take the Israeli concerns into consideration and will continue to provide updates regarding the negotiations with the Saudis, per the senior Israeli official. The talks are set to continue during Perry's planned October visit to Israel.

Source: <https://www.axios.com/israel-united-states-red-lines-demands-saudi-arabia-nuclear-deal-d010de3e-69ad-4de1-bc5e-0387dd5b91dc.html>

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