

Netanyahu: Israel prepared to act in Syria after US withdrawal



If needed, Israel is prepared to expand the scope of its military operations in Syria following the withdrawal of US troops, said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as reported by the Jerusalem Post.

According to Netanyahu, Israel's policy is intended to weaken Iran's influence on its neighbor, Syria. "The decision to remove the 2,000 American soldiers from Syria will not change our consistent policy: we will continue to oppose Iran's attempts to establish military bases in Syria, and if needed we will even expand our own operations there," he said.

The Israeli prime minister stressed that Israel would continue to collaborate with Washington on matters of security. "I want to assure those concerned: our cooperation with the United States continues in full force, and is carried out in many areas: in the operational, intelligence and other security fields," Netanyahu said.

As an example of successful IDF activity on the Syrian border, Netanyahu mentioned the tunnels used by the pro-Iranian group Hezbollah to transfer weapons and ammunition. On December 20, the IDF destroyed one such tunnel and blocked another.

"These tunnels were built by Hezbollah with direct support and funding from Iran. This is Iran's aggression network in the Middle East, which also terrorizes Europe and the entire world. Israel is continuing its operation against the terrorists' tunnels, and will bring it to successful completion," Netanyahu said on December 21.

US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of US forces from Syria on Wednesday, December 19, claiming that Islamic State has been defeated, and that there is no reason to continue the military operation.

The US's allies have not been supportive of Trump's decision. The UK and France have both pledged to maintain a military presence in Syria. According to

the Jerusalem Post, Paris has 1,100 troops providing training and support to local opposition groups.

Shortly after Trump officially announced his plans, US Defense Secretary James Mattis resigned. He was followed on December 22 by Brett McGurk, the Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.

Source: <http://uawire.org/netanyahu-israel-prepared-to-act-in-syria-following-us-withdrawal>

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