

Russia understands Israel won't tolerate Iran on border, Liberman says

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Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a tour of Mt. Hermon and Golan IDF positions.. (photo credit: DEFENSE MINISTRY)

Russia understands Israel's security concern about Iran in Syria, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman said on Thursday after meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoygu in Moscow.

"Israel appreciates Russia's understanding of our security needs, especially with regard to the situation on our northern border," Liberman said.

"It is important to continue the dialogue and to keep an open line between the IDF and the Russian army," Liberman added.

Prior to the meeting, Shoygu said the two men would discuss the de-escalation zone in southern Syria.

Prior to Liberman's visit, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on non-Syrian forces to withdraw the country's southern border as soon as possible.

Israel wants to push Iran and its proxy armies out of Syria, but has focused for the moment on a deal that push them out of its border region in the southern Syria.

In exchange, government forces would regain control of the area where rebel troops have been based.

The complex deal would also involve agreements with Jordan and the United States.

On Wednesday, prior to Liberman's trip, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held

telephone conversations with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Lavrov.

The Moscow meeting was also attended by of Military Intelligence Directorate's head Maj. Gen. Tamir Heiman and the head of the Defense Ministry's diplomatic-security division Zohar Palti.

In an interview with *Russia Today*, Syrian President Bashar Assad said that there were no Iranian troops in his country.

Separately, in Brussels the EU foreign Policy chief Federica Mogherini met with a delegation from the Syrian opposition headed by Secretary-General of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces Naser Al-Hariri.

Reuters contributed to this report.

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