



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 20, 2018

Israel's Netanyahu and Iran's Foreign Minister Spar at Munich Conference

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on February 18, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel could act against Iran itself, if necessary, not just its “proxies” in the Middle East. The remarks were in reaction to an Iranian drone that flew into Israeli airspace this month. Netanyahu held up a piece of what he said was an Iranian drone during his statement.



Netanyahu laid out a list of charges against the Iranians during his address: “Through its proxies, Shiite militias in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, Iran is devouring huge swaths of the Middle East.”

He also expressed optimism about reaching a peace agreement with Israel’s Arab neighbors. (The Iranians are not Arabs but are descended from the Persians.)

Netanyahu summarized that objective by stating:

Now, there has been one positive consequence of Iran’s growing aggression in the region. It’s brought Arabs and Israelis closer together as never before. In a paradoxical way, this may pave the way for a broader peace and ultimately also for a Palestinian-Israeli peace. This could happen. But it will not happen if Iran’s aggression continues to grow, and nowhere are Iran’s belligerent ambitions clearer than in Syria. Israel will not allow Iran’s regime to put a noose of terror around our neck. We will act without hesitation to defend ourselves. And we will act, if necessary, not just against Iran’s proxies that are attacking us, but against Iran itself.

Netanyahu continued:

Israel will continue to act to prevent Iran from establishing another terror base from which to threaten Israel. But Iran continues to try to cross those red lines. Last week its brazenness reached new heights, literally new heights. It sent a drone into Israeli territory, violating Israel’s sovereignty, threatening our security. We destroyed that drone and the control center that operated it from Syria, and when our places were fired upon, Israel destroyed Syrian anti-aircraft batteries. Israel will not allow Iran’s regime to put a noose of terror around our neck. We will act without hesitation to defend ourselves. And we will act, if necessary, not just against Iran’s proxies that are attacking us, but against Iran itself.

In response to Netanyahu’s remarks, Iran’s foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, who also addressed the conference, called the Israeli prime minister’s presentation “a cartoonish circus which does not even deserve a response.”

Zarif also taunted the Israelis by referring to the downing of an Israeli F-16, which crashed in northern Israel after a strike on Syrian air defenses. “Once the Syrians have the guts to down one of its planes it’s as if a disaster has happened,” Zarif said. He accused Israel of using “aggression as a policy against



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its neighbors” by regularly carrying out incursions into Syria and Lebanon.

Zarif also accused the U.S. government of using the conference to revive hysteria against Iran, and denied that Tehran was seeking a dominant position in the Middle East.

Reuters reported that Israel has accused Tehran of seeking a permanent military foothold in Syria, where Iranian-backed forces have supported Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the ongoing civil war there.

Netanyahu said that as ISIS had lost ground in Syria, Iran and its allies were occupying the territory they abandoned, “trying to establish this continuous empire surrounding the Middle East from the south in Yemen but also trying to create a land bridge from Iran to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Gaza.”

It is natural for Americans to be sympathetic to the Israelis, who have a long history as our leading allies in the Middle East and who have had close ties to Americans since the beginning of their nation in 1948. It is just as easy for Americans to be wary of the Iranians, who have been rabidly anti-American since the hostage crisis that occurred during the Iranian Revolution, when Iran held hostage 52 American diplomats and citizens for 444 days from November 4, 1979, to January 20, 1981. Since then, there has been little interaction between the United States and Iran that has not been adversarial.

That said, neither Iran nor any other nation in the Middle East, including the deposed regime of former Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein nor the government of Syria’s present President Bashar Assad, has presented any threat to the United States.

There is not any reason, therefore, for the United States ever to intervene militarily in that troubled region of the world, nor has there ever been. Former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) drove home that point in an article (“President Trump Beats War Drums for Iran”) published by the Ron Paul Institute and posted at [LewRockwell.com](#) last November. Perhaps the most important point of that article is:

Let’s be clear here: President Trump did not just announce that he was “de-certifying” Iran’s compliance with the nuclear deal. He announced that Iran was from now on going to be in the bullseye of the US military. Will Americans allow themselves to be lied into another Middle East war?

It is tempting to accept Netanyahu’s assessment of the Iranians. He lived in the Philadelphia area for years and is very much American in his mannerisms. Likewise, it might be tempting to accept the advice given to President Trump by UN Ambassador Nikki Haley. But listen to what Ron Paul had to say about her advice:

How could [Trump] be so wrong on so many basic facts about Iran? Here’s a clue: the media reports that his number one advisor on Iran is his Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley. Ambassador Haley is a “diplomat” who believes war is the best, first option rather than the last, worst option. She has no prior foreign policy experience, but her closest mentor is John Bolton — the neocon who lied us into the Iraq war. How do these people live with themselves when they look around at the death and destruction their policies have caused?

It is fine to show sympathy for Netanyahu and the Israelis if they believe they are threatened by Iran, so long as that sympathy does not morph into sending either U.S. troops or U.S. aid to any other nations. If Israel wants to purchase the best weaponry available from the United States to defend herself, then our private military contractors should be free to make such sales. But that should be the end of our



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involvement in the Middle East. We have seen far too many Americans come home from places such as Afghanistan and Iraq with missing limbs or in body bags.

Photo of Benjamin Netanyahu with President Trump: [U.S. embassy via wikipedia](#)

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