

Gantz heads to Washington for security talks, \$1 billion request for Iron Dome



Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz (r) welcoming Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin (c) at a ceremony in Tel Aviv, April 11, 2021. (Flash90/Avshalom Sassoni)

Gantz is expected to request a \$1 billion budget for replenishing the Iron Dome following Operation Guardian of the Walls.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz was slated Wednesday to travel to the United States for a meeting with top U.S. security officials, including National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

Gantz's trip comes on the heels of statements by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel would continue working to thwart Iran's nuclear program, even at the cost of tensions with the United States.

During a farewell speech on Monday evening for departing Mossad head Yossi Cohen, Netanyahu said that while Israel respects the U.S.'s attempts to stop Iran's nuclear development through diplomacy, the Jewish State would use any

means necessary to protect Israel's security.

"If we have to choose, [and] I hope it does not happen, between friction with our great friend the United States and the elimination of the existential threat - the elimination of the existential threat prevails."

On his Twitter account, Gantz appeared to contradict Netanyahu's approach. "The U.S. has been and will continue to be Israel's most important ally, protecting Israel's security and its qualitative edge in the region," he wrote.

"The Biden Administration is a true friend of Israel, and Israel doesn't have nor will it ever have a greater partner than the United States," he added.

"Even if differences arise, they will be resolved through direct dialogue, behind closed doors, not through provocative statements that serve to harm Israeli security."

During Gantz's trip to the U.S., he is expected to submit a request for \$1 billion to replenish the Iron Dome, as many of its missiles were deployed during the 11-day clash between Israel and Hamas-based terror groups.

Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-NC), who is a longtime Israel advocate, said he believed the request would be granted.

"Iron Dome performed incredibly well, saving thousands of Israeli lives and tens of thousands of Palestinian lives," Graham said. "I would imagine that the administration would say yes to this request and it will sail through Congress."

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