

US to warn Israel: China ties are a joint national security risk

Remaining consistent with the administration's message, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will warn of China's investments in Israel.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken plans to warn Israel against continued Chinese investments in the country's infrastructure and hi-tech industry when he meets with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid in Washington on Wednesday.

"We will be candid with our Israeli friends over risks to our shared national security interests that come with close cooperation with China," a senior State Department official told reporters during a briefing ahead of the meeting.

Blinken is also expected to meet with Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Wednesday.

The US has been concerned about the UAE's use of Chinese Huawei Technologies in its communication system in light of its pending sale of advanced F-35 fighter jets to the Emirates, but when speaking of China it focused only on its concern with Israel.

The highlight of the day is expected to be a trilateral meeting Blinken will host with the two foreign ministers that is designed to highlight the success of the Abraham Accords, brokered by the former administration.

The accords allowed for Israel to normalize ties with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan last year, of which ties with the Emirates are the most advanced.

At the trilateral, Israel and the UAE are expected to announce two new working groups, one on religious coexistence and another that would focus on water and energy.

But the range of the topics that will be brought up in all meetings are fairly wide and include China, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Gaza and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Lapid, in his public comments in Washington on Tuesday, will focus on the strong

US-Israel bilateral ties and the special relationship Israel has with America and the Biden administration.

Though US officials echoed those same sentiments at the briefing, they also discussed topics of discord in the relationship.

Biden administration officials had spoken about China with National Security Advisor Eyal Hulata when he was in Washington earlier this month.

But State Department senior officials remained vague on Tuesday with respect to their specific concerns on China.

“The US views China as a competitor that challenges the existing international rules-based order; our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be,” the official stated.

ON IRAN, a senior State Department official said that Washington’s main objective at this time is the revival of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known as the Iran deal, which Israel has traditionally opposed.

Both the US and Israel are joined in their opposition to a nuclear Iran but have differed about how best to achieve that objective.

Lapid said on Tuesday that Iran was one of the major focal points of his Washington trip.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the senior State Department officials said that at Wednesday’s meetings, Blinken will “reaffirm our belief” in the benefits of a two-state solution. He will also express his appreciation for “Minister Lapid’s recent, strong statement condemning settler violence in the West Bank.”

The Israeli government is split on how best to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett opposing a two-state resolution to the conflict while Lapid has supported it.

But Lapid’s visions of the borders of those two states differ from those envisioned by the Biden administration, which has not advanced a peace process. The senior State Department officials did not mention any movement on that front, except for stating that “we seek to advance it when we can, as best as we can.”

An official said that the accords are not a substitute for the two-state solutions and suggested that they could be used to push for progress toward a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“We hope that normalization can be leveraged to advance progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track,” the official said.

An official also spoke of the Biden administration’s commitment to maintaining Israel’s qualitative edge and its support for supplemental funding for the defensive Iron Dome system it provides Israel to protect Israeli citizens against Hamas rockets.

The officials repeated their opposition to Israeli settlement activity and the Palestinian Authority’s monthly stipends to terrorists and their families.

Separately, during Lapid’s trip, Foreign Ministry Director-General Alon Ushpiz will meet with Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman.

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