

Israel Deepens Support for Ukraine Despite Claims of Balancing Its Relations with Russia

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Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who claimed he acted as an intermediary between Russia and Ukraine at the start of the special operation, said in a video that Russian President Vladimir Putin assured him that he would not kill his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky. This revelation comes as Benjamin Netanyahu is back in power and is driving Israel even closer to Ukraine and further away from Russia.

"He gave me two great concessions," Bennett said on February 4 of his March 5, 2022 meeting with Putin. It is recalled that Bennet flew to Moscow in an effort to mediate only weeks after the special military operation began in February 2022. "I knew Zelensky was under threat, in a bunker... I said to [Putin], 'Do you intend to kill Zelensky?' He said, 'I won't kill Zelensky'."

The former Israeli Prime Minister said he immediately contacted the Ukrainian president after this revelation and told him, "I've just come out of a meeting — [Putin] is not going to kill you.

"[Zelensky] asked me, 'Are you sure?' I said 100 percent. [Putin's] not going to kill you."

Bennett recalled:

"Two hours later, Zelensky went to his office, and did a video selfie in the office, [in which the Ukrainian president said,] 'I'm not afraid.'"

According to Bennett, Putin agreed not to demand the disarming of Ukraine. In fact, that same weekend, Zelensky dropped Ukraine's demand to become a NATO member. However, as recalled, Zelensky once again demanded for Ukraine to be fast-tracked into NATO after Russia announced the inclusion of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts into the Russian Federation in September 2022.

Bennett also said that “everything I did [in the mediation effort] was coordinated with the US.”

This is an unsurprising detail since Kiev refuses to negotiate with Moscow because of Zelensky’s desire to carry out orders from Washington and London. The Anglo alliance effectively controls Kiev, proving that Zelensky is not a political actor but a puppet. Despite this, the West still continues to allude that Russia is refusing to negotiate.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the argument that Russia refuses to negotiate on the Ukraine issue is a lie, which Moscow will continue to refute.

“Our diplomacy has a job to do, on a daily basis, to explain what’s going on, to expose the lies, especially the current lies about our denial to negotiate,” he said.

Although Bennet attempted to portray himself as a mediator that is balancing between Kiev and Moscow, his actions have led to direct military support for Ukraine, and this policy will certainly not relax under Netanyahu.

Axios revealed on February 1 that the new Israeli government is conducting a policy review on its position on the Ukraine War. The report said, citing three unnamed Israeli officials, that Netanyahu ordered the policy review after returning to office in late December and discussed the matter with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken when they met in Jerusalem on January 30.

Netanyahu reportedly stressed to Blinken that Israel will not reduce humanitarian aid and support for Ukraine, with a senior Israeli official claiming that the Biden administration knows that Jerusalem will not shift Israel’s position closer to Moscow.

Blinken none-the-less urged Israel to provide more support for Kiev, saying that “Russia’s ongoing atrocities only underscore the importance of providing support for all of Ukraine’s needs – humanitarian, economic, and security.”

When meeting with Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, Blinken said: “We appreciate Israel’s humanitarian assistance,” adding that “we look forward to discussing what more can we do.”

Confirming the Axios report, Netanyahu hinted at a policy shift in an interview with CNN on January 31, saying he was “looking into” providing Kiev with “other kinds of aid” besides humanitarian.

Russia warned Israel against arming Ukraine following the CNN interview.

“We say that all countries that supply weapons [to Ukraine] should understand that we will consider these [weapons] to be legitimate targets for Russia’s armed forces,” Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned.

“Any attempts — implemented or even unrealized but announced for the supply of additional, new or some other weapons — will lead to an escalation of this crisis. And everyone should be aware of this,” she added.

Although Israeli officials and media have attempted to downplay their country’s support for Ukraine, stressing that it does not extend beyond humanitarian support, The New York

Times reported last month that the US military was shipping hundreds of thousands of artillery shells to Ukraine from a massive stockpile in Israel.

Senior European officials told Haaretz last month that “Israel agreed to underwrite the purchase of millions of dollars of ‘strategic materials’ for Ukraine” because of American pressure. The materials were transferred via a NATO country and Jerusalem allowed the transfer of Israeli-made weapons, including electro-optical and fire-control systems, by NATO countries to Ukraine.

In addition, it was revealed by Haaretz that Israel has stepped up its intelligence assistance to Ukraine in recent weeks by providing intel on Iranian drones.

In this way, Israel is playing a major role in attempting to limit the success of the Russian military operation in Ukraine despite continuous claims that it is balancing its interests and relations between the two warring parties. Israel, for its part, now faces the risk of Russia no longer tolerating its uncontested airstrikes in Syria and could deepen its military and intelligence ties with Iran.

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