

Ynet-News, June 18, 2020 – Thursday

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06.18.20

Report: Putin nixed Obama initiative to create Palestinian state within 1948 borders

Phone call transcripts confirm Netanyahu lobbied both Kremlin and incoming Trump administration to curb initiative perceived as incompatible with Israel's long-term security needs

i24NEWS| Published: 06.18.20 , 22:23

In late 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin prevented former U.S. President Barack Obama's attempt to pass a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution demanding Israel relinquish the West Bank territories and accept a two-state resolution based on 1948 borders, freshly declassified documents appear to show.

The Jerusalem Post reported **Thursday** that phone conversations between U.S. President Donald Trump's former adviser Michael Flynn and former Russian UN Ambassador Sergey Kislyak **confirm** that Prime Minister Benjamin **Netanyahu** **lobbied** both the **Kremlin** and the **incoming Trump** administration **to curb the initiative** he perceived as **incompatible with Israel's** long-term security **needs**.

Israel, it appears, **learned of the planned move** while working against the Obama administration-coordinated UNSC Resolution 2334, the **first resolution since 1979 to condemn Israel** over its settlement **policy**. Memorably, the **U.S. abstained from voting**, enabling the resolution's passage, in **one of Obama's last acts as president**.

The **U.S. has traditionally served as Israel's diplomatic protector**, shielding it from resolutions it opposes; the abstention thus came as a shock, drawing harsh reactions from Israeli officials, who described it as an endorsement of **"an extreme anti-Israeli resolution** behind Israel's back which would be **a tailwind for terror and boycotts."**

Israel Hayom reported earlier this week that Netanyahu contacted Putin after learning about Obama's plan, saying such a development could destabilize the ever-fragile power equilibrium in the Middle East. The two leaders had been in close contact to coordinate military and security issues relating to Russia's presence in Syria.

Transcripts of the Kislyak-Flynn conversations cited by the Jerusalem Post quoted the Russian official as saying "we wanted to convey to you and through you to the president-elect that **we have significant reservations about the idea** of adopting now the **principles for the Middle East** that our **American** colleagues **are pushing for**."

Obama's Secretary of State John Kerry subsequently **realized** that **a Russia veto** spelled the **end to their hopes of passing the resolution**.

06.18.20 – Th - - -

Gantz hesitant to fast-track annexation of Palestinian areas of the West Bank

06.18.20

Report: Gantz opposes annexing areas 'largely populated by Palestinians'

Defense minister also said to tell security officials he is certain PM 'will not endanger peace deal with Jordan, strategic relations with the U.S. in an irresponsible move'

i24NEWS | Published: **06.18.20** , 18:18

Defense Minister Benny **Gantz will not support annexing parts of the West Bank** containing **"a large Palestinian population,"** according to Channel 12 citing unnamed defense ministry officials.

"Prior to any measure, we will make sure all professional ranks **voice their opinion,"** **Gantz said** during a recent security meeting.

"In any scenario, we will not support applying sovereignty to areas with a Palestinian population in order to prevent friction."

"I am sure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will not jeopardize the peace treaty with Jordan and the strategic relations of the State of Israel with the U.S. with an irresponsible move," he added.

Gantz has reportedly been hesitant to fast-track the annexation process, which the government is free to pursue after July 1 as per a coalition agreement between Gantz's Blue & White and Netanyahu's Likud parties.

According to reports, Gantz prefers a multi-lateral diplomatic initiative, with benefits given to Palestinians as well, as opposed to a unilateral move that could see up to 30% of the West Bank come under Israeli sovereignty.

Concerns over security issues have also given members of the government pause, especially after the Palestinian Authority, which rules over large areas of the West Bank, announced last month it would no longer coordinate with Israel on security matters in light of the potential move.

Ramallah has also warned that violent unrest may erupt if Israel goes through with its annexation plans, noting it would also mark the end of the two-state solution.

06.18.20 – Th - - -

EU and Israel airlines allowed to any point as tourism reopens August 1

06.18.20

EU ratifies 'open skies' agreement with Israel

The deal, initially agreed upon back in 2013, was approved by the European Parliament and allows any EU and Israel airlines to fly between any point in EU and Israel

Itamar Eichner ,Itay Blumenthal| Published: 06.18.20 , 11:36

The European Union on Thursday finally ratified the "open skies" deal with Israel, initially agreed upon seven years ago.

The two signed a memorandum of understanding on an open skies agreement back in 2013, which has resulted in ticket prices for passenger flights between EU and Israel being significantly reduced.

The agreement allows any airline of the EU and any airline of Israel to fly between any point in the EU and any point in Israel.

Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi praised the approval of the deal by the European Parliament and all its member states.

"Approval of the agreement is an important expression of the relationship between Israel and Europe, especially now that the State of Israel is facing an economic crisis following the coronavirus outbreak."

Ashkenazi thanked Israel's Ambassador to the European Union Roni Lashano-Ya'ar and the Foreign Ministry "for the professional and fundamental work that led to this important achievement."

Advertisement

While non-Israelis are currently banned from entering the country, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier announced the tourism industry will be gradually reopening starting August 1.

06.18.20 – Th - - -

Facebook targets Trump ads over red triangle symbol that Facebook uses in emoji

06.18.20

Facebook takes down Trump ads over 'organized hate' policy

Social network removes ads showing red inverted triangle, similar to one used in Nazi concentration camps, with text asking users to sign petition against Antifa after movement stirs unrest in U.S.

Reuters| Published: 06.18.20 , 22:56

Facebook Inc. said on Thursday it took down posts and ads run by the re-election campaign of U.S. President Donald Trump for violating its policy against organized hate.

The ads showed a red inverted triangle with a text asking Facebook users to sign a petition against Antifa, a loosely organized anti-fascist movement.

In a tweet on Thursday, the Anti-Defamation League's CEO, Jonathan Greenblatt, said of the symbol: "The Nazis used red triangles to identify their political victims in concentration camps. Using it to attack political opponents is highly offensive."

The Facebook ads were run on pages belonging to Trump and Vice President Mike Pence and also appeared in ads and organic posts on the "Team Trump" page.

"Our policy prohibits using a banned hate group's symbol to identify political prisoners without the context that condemns or discusses the symbol," said a Facebook company spokesperson.

"The inverted red triangle is a symbol used by Antifa, so it was included in an ad about Antifa," Tim Murtaugh, a spokesman for the Trump campaign, said in an email.

"We would note that Facebook still has an inverted red triangle emoji in use, which looks exactly the same, so it's curious that they would target only this ad. The image is also not included in the Anti-Defamation League's database of symbols of hate."

A spokesman for the ADL said its database was not one of historical Nazi symbols but of those commonly used by modern extremists and white supremacists in the United States."

He also said that there have been some Antifa who have used the red triangle, but that it was not a particularly common symbol used by the group.

06.18.20 – Th - - -

US Supreme Court protects immigrants & rejects Trump ending DACA

06.18.20

Court rejects Trump bid to end young undocumented immigrants' protections
Illegal aliens will retain protection from deportation, authorization to work in U.S.;
liberal judges say administration didn't pursue end of program properly, conservative
justices dissent

Associated Press | Published: 06.18.20, 18:18

The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday rejected President Donald Trump's effort to end legal protections for 650,000 young undocumented immigrants, a stunning rebuke to the president in the midst of his reelection campaign.

For now, those illegal immigrants retain their protection from deportation and their authorization to work in the United States.

The outcome seems certain to elevate the issue in Trump's campaign, given the anti-immigrant rhetoric of his first presidential run in 2016 and immigration restrictions his administration has imposed since then. It was the second big liberal victory at the court this week, following Monday's ruling that it's illegal to fire people because they're gay or transgender.

The justices rejected administration arguments that the 8-year-old Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program is illegal and that courts have no role to play in reviewing the decision to end DACA.

Chief Justice John Roberts, joined by his four liberal colleagues, wrote for the court that the administration did not pursue the end of the program properly.

"We do not decide whether DACA or its rescission are sound policies," Roberts wrote. "We address only whether the agency complied with the procedural requirement that it provide a reasoned explanation for its action. Here the agency failed to consider the conspicuous issues of whether to retain forbearance and what if anything to do about the hardship to DACA recipients."

The Department of Homeland Security can try again, he wrote.

The court's four conservative justices dissented. Justice Clarence Thomas, in a dissent joined by Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, wrote that DACA was illegal from the moment it was created under the Obama administration in 2012.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in a separate dissent that he was satisfied that the administration acted appropriately in trying to end the program.

DACA recipients were elated by the ruling.

"We'll keep living our lives in the meantime," said Cesar Espinosa, a DACA recipient who leads the Houston immigration advocacy group FIEL. "We're going to continue to work, continue to advocate."

Espinosa said he got little sleep overnight in anticipation of a possible decision Thursday. In the minutes since the decision was posted, he said his group has been "flooded with calls with Dreamers, happy, with that hope that they're going to at least be in this country for a while longer."

From the Senate floor, the Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said of the DACA decision, "I cried tears of joy."

"Wow," he went on, choking up. "These kids, these families, I feel for them, and I think all of America does."

President Trump took to Twitter to show his discontent with the decision, writing, "Do you get the impression that the Supreme Court doesn't like me?", implying that the Supreme Court is actively trying to thwart his legislation bids.

Do you get the impression that the Supreme Court doesn't like me?

DACA covers people who have been in the United States since they were children and are in the country illegally. In some cases, they have no memory of any home other than the U.S.

The program grew out of an impasse over a comprehensive immigration bill between Congress and the Obama administration in 2012. President Barack Obama decided to formally protect people from deportation while also allowing them to work legally in the U.S.

But Trump made tough talk on immigration a central part of his campaign and less than eight months after taking office, he announced in September 2017 that he would end DACA.

Immigrants, civil rights groups, universities, and Democratic-led states quickly sued, and courts put the administration's plan on hold.

The Department of Homeland Security has continued to process two-year DACA renewals so that hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients have protections stretching beyond the election and even into 2022.

The Supreme Court fight over DACA played out in a kind of legal slow motion. The administration first wanted the justices to hear and decide the case by June 2018. The justices said no. The Justice Department returned to the court later in 2018, but the justices did nothing for more than seven months before agreeing a year ago to hear arguments. Those took place in November and more than seven months elapsed before the court's decision.

Thursday's ruling was the second time in two years that Roberts and the liberal justices faulted the administration for the way it went about a policy change. Last year, the court forced the administration to back off a citizenship question on the 2020 census.

06.18.20 – Th - - -

UN arms embargo expires in November as Iran test cruise missiles to 170 miles

06.18.20

Report: Iran test-fires long range cruise missiles

Islamic Republic reports first drill since fatal training accident which left 19 Iranian sailors dead; missiles said to destroy targets at distance of 280 kilometers ()

Associated Press| Published: 06.18.20 , 17:13

Iran test-fired cruise missiles in a naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman and the northern Indian Ocean, state media reported Thursday.

The report by the official IRNA news agency said the missiles destroyed targets at a distance of 280 kilometers (170 miles). It said the tests took place during a naval drill by Iran's navy in the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

IRNA said the missiles' range can be extended but gave no details.

The news agency said two kinds of missiles were fired, without elaborating, and broadcast images of projectiles being launched from both a truck and a ship, hitting a buoyant target in the sea.

Iran's navy chief Adm. Hossein Khanzadi told state TV that the "homing" c-class cruise missiles have new warheads that can hit targets with high accuracy at a close distance. He said the missiles are capable of resisting "any kind of electronic war."

"The important point about these missiles is that they are fully equipped with homing," Khanzadi said. Homing is a missile guidance system in which the missile has all the necessary electronics for tracking and-hitting a target.

"It means they are of the fire-and-forget type. We fire the missile and the data is on the missile itself, it has various navigation systems built-in."

The report was the first of a drill since May, when a missile fired during an Iranian training exercise mistakenly struck an Iranian naval vessel instead of its intended target in waters near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, killing 19 sailors and wounding 15 others.

It also comes after a tense naval encounter between Iranian and U.S. forces in the nearby Persian Gulf.

In April, the U.S. accused Iran of conducting "dangerous and harassing" maneuvers near American warships in the northern Persian Gulf. Iran also was suspected of briefly seizing a Hong Kong-flagged oil tanker before that.

Iran regularly holds exercises in the Gulf of Oman, which is close to the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil trade passes. The U.S. has been actively campaigning to keep a United Nations arms embargo in place on Iran that is due to expire in November.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers two years ago, launching a maximum pressure campaign against Iran that has pushed the archrivals to the verge of conflict.

06.17.20 – We - - -

Turkey launched an air offensive against Kurdish rebels in north Iraq

06.17.20

Turkey begins offensive against Kurdish rebels in north Iraq

Ankara says it airlifted troops for a cross-border operation against the PKK in Iraq's Haftanin region, following 'intense' artillery fire into the area
Associated Press | Published: 06.17.20, 22:25

Turkey said Wednesday it has airlifted troops into northern Iraq for a cross-border ground operation against Turkey's Kurdish rebels.

The airborne-and-land offensive into the border region of Haftanin, some 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the Turkey-Iraq border, was launched following intense artillery fire into the area, said the Defense Ministry in Ankara.

The operation by commando forces is being supported by warplanes, attack helicopters, artillery and armed and unarmed drones, according to the ministry's statement posted on Twitter. It did not say how many troops are involved.

Turkey regularly carries out air and ground attacks against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which it says maintains bases in northern Iraq.

Turkey has defended its past operations into northern Iraq, saying neither the Iraqi government nor the regional Iraqi Kurdish administration have acted to remove PKK insurgents who allegedly use Iraq's territory to stage attacks on Turkey.

The ministry said Wednesday's operation, dubbed Operation Claw-Tiger, follows "increasing harassment and attempts to attack" military outposts or bases in Turkey. It said the Turkish forces would target other "terror" groups in the region, but did not name them, and shared videos of Defense Minister Hulusi Akar overseeing the mission at a command center in Ankara.

The development came days after Turkey launched an air operation in the region, which the Defense Ministry said hit suspected PKK targets in several locations in Iraq's north, including Sinjar, and targeted 81 rebel hideouts.

A Turkish military official said the operation began with artillery units targeting some 150 suspected PKK positions and was followed by an aerial attack involving F-16s, drones, and attack helicopters.

Some of the commandos crossed the border by land while other units were transported by helicopters. The troops had begun to enter PKK hideouts in Haftanin, the official said, providing the information on condition of anonymity in line with government rules.

It was not clear if the latest offensive would target the Sinjar region, which the Turkish government says has become a new base for PKK commanders. A video provided by the Turkish Defense Ministry showed Akar addressing the commandos, saying they “will make history once again.”

"Turkey continues its fight against terrorists using the rights based on international law," said Omer Celik, deputy chairman of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party. Delsheer Abdulsata, the mayor of Batifa village in the Haftanin area of Dohuk province, said Turkish forces entered the villages of Keshani, Shilan, Menira, Belbla, Mezuri, Awlayi and Reesha. **Bombings began Tuesday night** and continued throughout the day Wednesday, he said.

Residents of the villages **refused to leave their farmlands** because it is their **only source of livelihood**, he said.

Zagros Hiwa, a spokesperson for the military wing of the PKK, said fighting was continuing in the Haftanin area along a 200-kilometer (125-mile) front line.

“These operations are part of Turkey’s plan to expand in the area as they did in Libya and Syria,” he said.

Baghdad summoned Ankara’s ambassador to Iraq, Fatih Yildiz, on Tuesday to protest Turkey's offensive against PKK targets in northern Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

The PKK has led a decades-long insurgency in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast region. It is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. The **conflict** has led to the loss of tens of thousands lives since it **started in 1984**. Turkey began expanding its military footprint in Iraq last summer in an intense operation against PKK targets following the July 17 assassination of Osman Kose in the northern Iraqi Kurdish city of Irbil. Kose worked for the Turkish Consulate there and Ankara has blamed the PKK for his killing.

Turkish officials have said the operations have focused on **cutting supply lines and transport routes** connecting the PKK **in Turkey and Iraq**.

The presence of PKK rebels has brought discomfort to senior Iraqi Kurdish officials, with one official saying the areas where PKK functions are a “no man’s land.” He spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the operations.

Kawa Sheikmous, a PKK official who was in Iraq's northern Kurdish region Tuesday, criticized the Iraqi government for not **taking a stronger stance against Turkish incursions**.

“We condemn this act and consider it against the interests of the people,” he said. “Our message to the Iraqi government is that it should not tolerate this interference in the sovereignty of Iraq.”