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WorldNetDaily Exclusive

Israeli government 'under assault' from U.S. Top minister claims aim is to replace right-wing coalition in Jerusalem

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WorldNetDaily



Avigdor Lieberman

TEL AVIV – The composition of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is "under assault" by the U.S. and Europe, says a top minister in the Israeli government.

"It seems there is a coordinated assault between the U.S. and some European countries to remove Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and his party and to replace them with the Kadima party," the minister said.

The minister spoke on condition his name be withheld due to possible political fallout from his comments. He said he was expressing his belief and does not have any proof of possible U.S.-European collusion to influence the composition of the Israeli government.

Kadima, headed by opposition leader Tzipi Livni, is considered a "centrist" party politically, although in reality its politics are leftist. Kadima, which led the government until earlier this year, supports a Palestinian state and under Prime Minister Ehud Olmert engaged in negotiations with the Palestinians that reportedly included the willingness to relinquish sections of Jerusalem and 94 percent of the West Bank. Livni led all negotiations.

(Story continues below)

Kadima's policies are more aligned with the policies of the Obama administration and Europe than Netanyahu's Likud party, which states it stands against giving up Jerusalem. Likud officials also say they are against halting Jewish construction in the strategic West Bank.

Currently, there is no place in the Israeli government for Kadima since all senior positions are filled.

In the last few days, witnesses have reported assaults on Lieberman, whose Yisroel Beitanu party is a senior coalition partner in Netanyahu's government. Lieberman holds the foreign minister post. His politics are more aligned with Likud and at odds with the Obama administration and Europe regarding the Middle East.

Yesterday, Israel's Channel Two television reported that in a meeting last week with Netanyahu, French President Nicolas Sarkozy told the Israeli leader to "get rid" of Lieberman.

According to the report, Sarkozy said that while he usually scheduled talks with Israel's top foreign envoys on their visits to Paris, he could not bring himself to meet with Lieberman. Channel Two claimed Sarkozy's statements were accompanied by disparaging hand gestures.

Sarkozy then advised Netanyahu to fire Lieberman and bring Livni back into the coalition as foreign minister, according to the report. Netanyahu reportedly told Sarkozy that Lieberman came across differently in private than his public appearances would suggest.

Lieberman's office responded with a strong condemnation:

"If the words attributed to the president of France are correct, the interference of a president of a respected democratic state in the matters of another democratic state is a grave and intolerable thing. We expect that that regardless of political stance, every political body in Israel will condemn this callous attack by a foreign state in our domestic affairs."

Yesterday, in a meeting with a group of over 20 European ambassadors at Jerusalem's King David hotel, Netanyahu defended Lieberman as an important part of the Israeli government.

"[He] is fully committed to peace and security," said Netanyahu. "Lieberman constitutes an important part of the elected government of the democratic state of Israel."

According to political sources in Jerusalem speaking to WND, France is not the only foreign country to express a negative attitude toward Lieberman and a wish for Livni to replace him.

Lieberman has played a minor role in the Israeli relationship with the U.S. Just yesterday, Defense Minister Ehud Barak was in New York to meet with U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell in an effort to agree on a compromise formula on settlement construction. Such a meeting normally would have been led by the foreign minister and not the defense minister.



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