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Amidror: Israel will stand alone against Iran

US is irreplaceable ally, but 'you need to be prepared to do things by yourself,' says security head

• By HERB KEINON

If push comes to shove, Israel will need to stand alone to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapon capabilities, former National Security Council head Yaakov Amidror said Sunday.

Amidror's comments came during a speech he gave at the annual Herzliya Conference in which he laid out the main strategic threats facing Israel. Saying that for the foreseeable future Israel did not have to worry about the "classic threats" of Arab armies attacking from all sides, its first and foremost threat was Iran's desire to have nuclear weapons.

"The Iranians understand that now is not the time to do this clearly, and they are working to create among the Americans the illusion that it will be possible to stop them at the last moment," he said. "But the truth must be told: they want nuclear weapons no less [than in the past]. Everything else is tactics in negotiations that were imposed on them."

The second threat he said was the 50,000 rockets and missiles in Hezbollah's possession in Lebanon that can hit all parts of Israel. Amidror said Israel had no magic way to remove that threat, and must seriously prepare to face it, includ-

ing using ground forces to destroy Hezbollah's infrastructure.

If this were done now, he said, it would be much more difficult for Hezbollah to rebuild, considering Iran's dire economic condition, and the situation in Syria, which used to be the conduit for arms from Iran.

And the third threat is Sunni terrorism from Sinai, Syria – especially on the Golan Heights – and in Gaza. This terror, he said, could possibly return to Judea and Samaria. He said Israel's success in combating this terrorism in the West Bank was very impressive, as was the country's success in keeping terrorist elements from infiltrating Israel from Sinai.

"But these are not things that last forever," he said, and necessitate "Sisyphean" efforts to maintain.

Amidror said that facing these three threats, Israel will stand "more or less alone."

The US, he said, will remain Israel's irreplaceable ally.

"I suggest to all Israelis who talk about all kinds of things not to even think that we have an alternative to our alliance with the US. The US is the one that prevents difficult situations for us in the international arena, supports us econom-



NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL head Yaakov Amidror speaks at the Herzliya Conference yesterday. (Courtesy)

ically and with advanced weaponry. But not the US, nor anyone else, will replace

Israel if there is a need to use force."

Amidror said ties with the US are vital, but not enough.

"You need to be prepared to do things by yourself," he said, in a clear reference to military action against Iran. "The unwillingness of many in the world to use force is the reason that many people, including in the US, are willing to accept almost any agreement with Iran. For them the agreement itself is more important than the content, because it will do away with the need to use force. Using force for them is almost a sin. These people will never acknowledge that an agreement with Iran is bad, because then they would have to discuss a military option, which they are not really willing to use."

US Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, who spoke after Amidror on the same panel, said regarding Iran that the US believes like Israel that "no deal is better than a bad deal."

Shapiro, quoting US President Barack Obama, said the "odds of success are still long, and we preserve all options to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

Shapiro devoted most of his words not to Iran, but to the Palestinian track, calling on both sides – during this period of "pause" following the breakdown of the US-brokered talks – to refrain from unhelpful steps.

"We're calling on both parties to avoid future provocations," Shapiro said. "For Israel that means restraint on settlements and not taking punitive measures against the Palestinians. For the Palestinians it means not trying to accede to additional international treaties and UN organizations, and assuring that the recently formed interim government adheres to the Quartet principles." Those principles include recognizing Israel, forswearing violence, and accepting all previous agreements.

Shapiro was careful to apportion blame for unhelpful steps equally on both Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. He also said the last nine months of negotiations were not a "waste of time," and "important work" was done planning for Israel's security needs, planning for Palestinian economic growth, and on closing gaps on key issues.

He urged the sides to use the current pause to consider the benefits of peace, and the potential costs of "failing to capitalize on this opportunity."