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From: sbwhoeop [redacted]
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Netanyahu pleased: I didn't capitulate

Ben Caspit, Maariv, May 27 2010 [page 2 with front page lead; Hebrew original [here](#) and at bottom of post]

In the course of intimate conversations over the past few weeks with top political officials and civil servants, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has said, according to his interlocutors, that he managed to defeat the US administration.

Netanyahu is pleased by the fact that the Americans failed, so he said, to twist his arm and that ultimately, in the duel between him and the Obama administration, he was the one who emerged with the upper hand. We did not make concessions on our red lines and they failed to make us fold and to drag us to places we didn't want to go, said Netanyahu, according to people who heard him speak.

Netanyahu is convinced that he is not going to be forced to extend the settlement construction freeze, which is due to expire in September. According to senior officials in Jerusalem, an agreement has already been reached with the administration that the Israeli government will not announce an extension of the construction freeze in the territories, and the Americans will "make sure" that the Palestinians do not withdraw from the talks. Israel, however, will not take "aggressive" action and construction will be resumed only in areas that are clearly within the consensus inside the settlement blocs.

The Prime Minister's Bureau vigorously denied the above report. "The statements attributed to the prime minister are incorrect," said a spokesman in the Prime Minister's Bureau. "They were not said by Netanyahu in any forum. The reason is simple: the prime minister does not think that, Prime Minister Netanyahu holds in great esteem the commitment by President Obama and the administration to Israel's security and their efforts to renew the peace process in our region."

Eli Bardenstein adds: The formal invitation that Netanyahu received yesterday to meet with President Obama next week might attest to a radical change in the White House's attitude towards him. Political sources in Israel described the planned meeting as "the peak of the campaign for Israel and the Jews that has been pursued by the Obama administration in the past number of weeks." The sources said that the meeting was geared to put an end to the grave crisis that erupted some two months ago between the Obama administration and Netanyahu over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and particularly over the continued construction in East Jerusalem, and to mend the mistaken impression that was received as if Israel was "no longer an absolute ally of the United States."

*That crisis, which was initiated by the Americans, elicited fierce criticism in the United States, and sparked a desire among members of the Obama administration to rectify the situation. **Another reason for the administration's desire to end the crisis is the fear of failure in the upcoming Congressional elections in November. "The Democratic Party's coffers are empty. Many Democrat members of Congress and Senators have complained that if the hazing of Israel were to continue, they would be unable to obtain donations from Jews and were liable to lose the elections," said one source in Washington.***

The prevalent assessment is that Netanyahu will be received far more warmly in Washington next week than he was two months ago. This time the meeting will be covered by the media and the two leaders are expected to have their picture taken together and to give statements to the media.

That said, sources in Washington noted that "Netanyahu is leery of the meeting with Obama and of walking into a trap once again. He knows that the smiles notwithstanding, behind closed doors he is going to have to give answers to very difficult questions, like 'how do you envision the end of the negotiations with the Palestinians.'"

Netanyahu is to begin his political travels today in Paris, where he is to attend the ceremony in honor of Israel's acceptance into the OECD. The prime minister will be arriving in a city that is on strike, which is liable to impede his movement through the city streets to the center of Paris for his meetings.