

Trump Bibi-sits Netanyahu... again

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate discuss the upcoming visit of Benjamin Netanyahu to Trump in Florida and Washington, and what the Israeli Prime Minister wants this time, from Gaza to Iran to the US. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

The Israeli control of the Trump administration—Netanyahu is set to visit the White House on Monday. I think there's actually a lot of trepidation about this visit among members of Trump's inner circle; they're sick of Netanyahu. I think Netanyahu is getting a little desperate and upset about all the overtures Trump is making to the Gulf monarchs. Not that the Gulf monarchs are necessarily presenting some alternative structure to the Zionist transatlantic axis, but that Trump may have committed to certain policies that contravene Israel's, in places like Syria—where MBS, during his meeting with Trump, pushed him to be more friendly to the al-Assad government—and Saudi Arabia wants to make a lot of investments in Syria.

And in exchange, Saudi Arabia will pump tons of money into Trump Incorporated from its sovereign wealth fund through World Liberty Financial, which is the crypto scheme set up by Trump's sons—basically a channel for legal bribery and corruption. That seems to be making Netanyahu nervous, along with the fact that Saudi Arabia could be getting the F-35, and Turkey has already signed up for the F-35 program. Netanyahu has now announced that no one but Israel in the region should have F-35s, and that Israel will actually act against it. So he's taking aim directly at Trump. That's what I think part of this visit is about. In addition to Iran and Gaza, what do you think we should look for, Aaron?

#Aaron

Yeah, Netanyahu does not want to move on to phase two. He wants to use the fact that Hamas won't disarm—because Hamas is part of the liberation struggle—as a pretext to resume the full-scale genocide, which he needs Trump's support for. That's what he's going to push for. But as you said, there are people around Trump who find him kind of a nuisance. And, you know, Trump's name is on the so-called peace plan that was even codified at the UN. So for Trump to now take Netanyahu's side would be to undermine, to whatever extent he cares about it, his own so-called peace plan that he put a lot of effort into pushing through, including at the UN, where he got everyone to stand down under the threat of violence—basically saying that if violence does resume in Gaza, then it's

your fault. Well, given that they approved the so-called peace plan at the UN Security Council, which basically puts Trump in charge of Gaza, he loses a lot of credibility if he lets Netanyahu blow it up.

So, Netanyahu is a supremacist fanatic who doesn't want to grant Hamas any real legitimacy. He'll be pushing, I think, for Trump's support—along with Trump's support for bombing Iran once again, which he wants to do because Iran is rebuilding its air defenses. But yeah, the fact that Trump has now forged closer economic ties to the Gulf, and that his name is on the so-called peace plan, I think puts him in a tough position. And again, so much comes down to which way he wants to go—and who knows what's inside his head. There are people like Lindsey Graham who, of course, would let him. Lindsey Graham recently went on *Meet the Press* and said that the gloves should come off and Israel should have free rein to attack Hamas once again.

#Max

Well, let's play this clip, and then I want to come back to the Gaza ceasefire deal, which is obviously being shattered every day. After that, we can talk about whether there are any plans for Iran. But this is Lindsey Graham—Trump's golfing buddy—who has enormous influence within the White House and is pushing for renewed aggression in Gaza.

#Speaker 03

I want to start with the Middle East, since you're there in Tel Aviv. You just met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—we have some video of that, and our viewers are seeing it now. It's been two months since President Trump brokered that peace plan for Gaza, and Prime Minister Netanyahu says Israel could move to phase two of the plan as soon as the end of this month. But as you know, Senator, that involves the disarmament of Hamas and transferring control of Gaza to an international security force. Do you believe Hamas is ready to disarm?

#US1

Absolutely not. One of the reasons I came here is to answer that question. The Trump administration deserves a lot of credit for getting a ceasefire—it's been 90 days now. What did I learn on this trip? That Hamas is not disarming; they're rearming. Hamas is not abandoning power; they're consolidating power. That's what the military intelligence people in Israel told me. That's what the IDF told me. That's what our own people told me. So I'm all for a stabilizing force. I'm all for a border of peace. But you can't have a border of peace, you can't have a stabilizing force in Gaza, until Hamas is disarmed. They're not being disarmed. There's nobody coming over the horizon to disarm them. So I would urge President Trump to meet with Prime Minister Bibi next week and come up with a plan—put Hamas on a time clock. If they don't turn over their weapons and stop rearming by a certain date, I would unleash Israel on them.

#Max

See, I would unleash Israel... We hear Tom Barak saying, "We will unleash Israel on Lebanon if they don't do what we want." So they're using Israel—they're portraying Israel—as an extension of U.S. power. But the Trump administration, I think they know it would be extremely politically perilous, just thinking from Trump's point of view, to renew the genocide in Gaza all out. They're not going to be using or unleashing Israel. Israel would be unleashing the U.S., or Israel would be unleashing itself on the U.S. political system again. Everything we were talking about with TPUSA, this massive split that's taking place within the right—the podcaster wars, Trump's lowered popularity, why Kamala Harris lost—it all goes back to the Gaza genocide.

And Trump's people know that. They also know Hamas can't just be easily disarmed. If they could be, why didn't it happen when the equivalent of five nuclear bombs were dropped on the Gaza Strip, which is basically the size of the greater Las Vegas area? It didn't happen. It won't happen. Aaron, you interviewed Bassem Naeem, a senior negotiator for Hamas, when you were in Doha, where you were invited to speak at the Doha Forum. What did he say about Hamas disarmament and about the possibility of moving from stage one to stage two in the supposed ceasefire process—the so-called ceasefire process?

#Aaron

What he said was that they're a national liberation movement fighting for their freedom. So unless they're granted a path to that freedom, they're not going to disarm. It's their right to resist a military occupation, and they're not going to abandon that. But then he said, you know, if they're not going to be given a path to self-determination, what they'd be willing to do is at least have a long-term truce in which they could store their weapons. And during that time, they could discuss a path to self-determination. But they're not just going to voluntarily disarm, because voluntarily disarming would mean voluntarily abandoning their fight for freedom and their right to resist a belligerent military occupation.

And the problem with interviews like Lindsey Graham's, and pretty much all the discussions of this throughout the media, is that there's no recognition that this is a fight for freedom—that Palestinians are under a belligerent military occupation that, in the last three years, has turned genocidal. They're not just going to abandon their right—their internationally recognized right—to resist that. But that concept is still foreign across the spectrum, from the Trump White House to Democrats to the media. That's the fundamental divide, I think, when it comes to Hamas. They're not just going to give up, just as freeing Palestinian political prisoners was a paramount goal of October 7th, because political prisoners represent the struggle against Israeli occupation. The right to resist is simply a right they insist on, because they're under military occupation.

They're not simply going to give that up. What the U.S. and Israel want to do is disarm Hamas without granting them any path to self-determination. Unfortunately, that's what the recent UN Security Council resolution codified—it endorsed Trump's call for Hamas to disarm without affirming

that Palestinians have the right to self-determination, and it repeated Trump's meaningless, conditional line that maybe one day they'll be put on the path to self-determination. For any Palestinian across the spectrum, that's meaningless, and it's not enough. Therefore, Hamas is not simply going to disarm. Now, what people like Lindsey Graham do is conflate disarming with giving up power, because Hamas has said, "We will give up power." They're fine with that; in fact, they've offered to do it repeatedly. What they won't do is give up the right to resist military occupation.

#Max

Well said. And it was said throughout the genocide that if Hamas would just give up their weapons and let the so-called hostages go—many of whom were prisoners of war—then the killing would end. Well, they've signed a ceasefire deal. They've given up everyone. I think there might be the remains of one Israeli, but they gave them all up. And 350 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed, and over 1,000 injured. Israel continues to bomb civilian sites every day. It's back to this kind of "mowing the lawn" policy, as they call it. So there is no ceasefire.

I don't know how phase two can be accomplished when phase one has never been achieved, and there's no pressure from Trump to achieve it. Part of Netanyahu's visit will be to make sure there's no pressure to move to a phase two, which would mandate Israeli withdrawal. Israel is trying to take 53% of the Gaza Strip, and they've drawn this new yellow line. Every few days, people from Gaza are killed trying to move beyond that line to reach their homes. Last night, Israel was blowing up homes across the yellow line. Again, that's 53% of Gaza.

#Aaron

And the defense minister, Israel Katz, just said that Israel will never leave Gaza and will establish permanent civilian-military units there, which is a euphemism for settlements. They want to bring back the settlements they dismantled in 2005. So that's the Israeli vision. That's what they want Trump to endorse. And if Trump goes along with that, he's once again showing himself to be a complete tool of "Israel first."

#Max

We're deep in Gaza. We're there to defend, to prevent what happened. We will never leave Gaza. We're standing firm. We trust in the Rock of Israel. This is Israel Katz, the defense minister, and the Israeli army defending Israel in a fierce battle between jihadi enemies and Israeli forces. With God's help, in the north of Gaza, we will build a civilian-military unit instead of the settlements that were uprooted. And then, you know, blah, blah, blah.

#Aaron

Yeah, this isn't just some fringe Israeli politician. This is the defense minister saying that. And yet, you know, the Trump administration wants us to think this is a reliable partner. I mean, they're fine with continuing to humiliate Trump because all they can think about is their fanaticism as Jewish supremacists. They don't care how many times they ignore Trump's own so-called peace plan, because the peace plan says Israel will not permanently occupy Gaza. It does say that. So there's supposed to be a withdrawal. Anyway, yeah.

#Max

So here's what Netanyahu wants to get out of the meeting as well—or at least that's what he's saying. He seems to be signaling it. He tweeted an image, or his office posted on social media, an image of himself in a stealth bomber with Trump. I don't know if the Drake beat was—well, I think that was their Drake beat. And he seems to think that AI slop resonates with Donald Trump. But what does the B-2 bomber symbolize? It symbolizes attacking Iran. And that's clearly where he wants to go with this. Israel's been panicking for a week about supposed Iranian ballistic missile exercises. At the same time, they're putting out misinformation about Iran possessing only a thousand ballistic missiles, probably to try to reassure Trump that he can support them. I don't think Israel has any answer to Iran's ballistic missile capacity without massive U.S. reinforcement, support, and direct involvement. So that's probably on the table.

#Aaron

Well, let's go back to—what did you call him, Mike Pompeo?

#Max

Yeah, I think that's Wyatt Reed's characterization.

#Aaron

Pretty good, Wyatt. So, listen to what he says.

#Max

I mean, he's—

#US2

None of us should be surprised that the Islamists, the theocrats in Tehran, haven't changed their stripes. This is who they are—it's embedded in their DNA. In the same way Hamas isn't going to go peacefully and give up its weapons, the regime in Iran isn't going to give up its desire to build out a nuclear weapons program. Yeah, if they're rebuilding, we should do what's necessary—go take it

out. We're capable of doing that. We can't let them rebuild their air defenses; that would make it more difficult to achieve that mission. So time will be critical in making sure the air defense systems in Iran aren't capable of taking down Western aircraft. If we do that, we should continue to go after their program every time.

#Aaron

That's an extraordinary statement. We can't let a sovereign country rebuild its own air defenses—air defenses that could take down our aircraft when we invade their airspace. I mean, it's just unbelievable how brazen he is in his imperialism. It's like saying we can't let a country defend itself, and before they even have the ability to defend themselves, we have to take them out. Because notice there, he conflates a nuclear program with air defenses, which are two totally different things. And again, even in describing Iran's nuclear program, it's disingenuous, because they don't have a nuclear weapons program.

They have a nuclear program that they've developed to give themselves, maybe, the capacity to one day have nuclear weapons, but they're not actually working on a nuclear weapon. So he's confusing a lot of different things, but he's openly saying there that Iran doesn't have the right to defend itself. And before they even build the ability to defend themselves, we have to bomb them. That's why Netanyahu took the opportunity he did back in June to bomb Iran—because Iran was doing exactly that, rebuilding its air defenses. And that's what he doesn't want, because he claims the self-professed right to strike Iran and commit aggression against it whenever he wants.

#Max

No one's allowed to have air defenses except for the countries in the region that pay the U.S. for the extortion racket of protecting their oil fields in exchange for giving the U.S. cheap oil. That's Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar—which hosts the Al Udeid Air Base that was used to attack Iran. But any country that tries to invest in its own military the way Israel does—Netanyahu just announced a \$100 billion investment in domestic military platforms outside of the U.S. military—won't benefit the U.S. military industry the way the "special relationship" has in the past. No other country is allowed to do that except Israel.

There's literally no benefit to the U.S. for Israel to do that and develop its own platforms. But they're the only ones allowed to do it. Why? Because they have this vast lobby that dominates U.S. politics. There's only one reason they're allowed to do that, while other countries aren't allowed to have air defenses. In fact, they have to disarm. They can't even have AK-47s in Gaza or Lebanon anymore, which is where all the pressure on Lebanon is coming from. Hezbollah cannot have arms, so Lebanon will be continuously attacked. And Mike Pompeo—every time I see him, he gets skinnier. It's like, if you shoot enough of his Ozempic, do you eventually just disappear into thin air?

He looks kind of squeezed, and I don't know if that affects his mentality. I also don't know what kind of influence he has in the Trump administration at this point, or if he's just speaking for himself. But he's clearly—he and Lindsey Graham are the most unhinged figures out there. They're clearly conduits for Israeli influence, but I don't think Trump wants to get involved in Iran, especially since he's dropped below the 40% approval rating mark. The polls show Democrats sweeping the midterms at this point. I don't know if those polls will turn out to be accurate, but I think Trump's very focused on domestic politics and avoiding that kind of scenario.

#Aaron

But he still surrounds himself with all these Israel-firsters. And you mentioned Mike Pompeo looking squeezed—well, watch how Trump gets literally squeezed here by Israel-firster Mark Levin.

#US3

I said, this is our first Jewish president. Now he's the first Jewish president to serve two years—not consecutive terms. We thank you for everything. Bad things happened in the second one—namely, the election was rigged. And we found out, and you see that happening. You are the greatest president. Thank you very much. God bless you.

#Aaron

I don't know—I mean, I've never seen a president be physically touched like that, especially at a podium. Just the fact that Mark Levin put his arm around him and squeezed him, handled him like a doll a little bit—that was so symbolic of the way these Israel-firsters treat Trump as their puppet. And he's gone along with it so far. But yeah, maybe even Trump has his limits.

#Max

That's a great point. I wonder who else Trump would have tolerated that from, because Levin is clearly a representative of Netanyahu inside the United States. It was like Netanyahu handling him like a father with his son. And there was an element of aggression to it. Trump seemed uncomfortable, and he just suddenly diverted—blurting out a non sequitur about a stolen election and being called the first Jewish president.

#Aaron

Yeah, and at that same ceremony—whatever gathering that was, like a White House Hanukkah thing—Miriam Adelson was there, and Trump talked again about how she gave him \$250 million and that earned her the right to speak. So she got up and said a few words. But, by the way, one irony in all this is that all these Israel-first people, like Mark Levin, used to be devout Never Trumpers.

Same with Ben Shapiro. And the people who've been with Trump since the beginning—people like Marjorie Taylor Greene—they're the ones being pushed out.

#Max

Or Tucker.

#Aaron

Or Tucker, because they criticize Israel.

#Max

Yeah, because they criticize Israel, because they're just too anti-war in general. There's no loyalty there. And I don't even think Trump knows what kind of blowback he's set up for himself from within his own movement. But he might experience that, or understand it better, after the midterms. There's just such a lack of enthusiasm in Trump's base right now.