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# Israel Rejects Russian Offer to Rein in Iranian Forces in Syria

By Reuters

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**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Ronen Zvulun / POOL / EPA / TASS)**

Israel rebuffed on Monday a new Russian offer to keep Iranian forces in Syria away from the Golan Heights ceasefire line, an Israeli official said, complicating Moscow's bid to stabilize the country amid a waning civil war.

The latest disagreement arose in a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russia's top diplomat and top general, dispatched to Jerusalem as Syrian government forces routed rebels near the Golan.

Israel's vigilance was underscored by the launch of its latest, U.S.-backed missile shield against rockets that it said were fired from within Syria but which fell short of the Golan lines.

In Monday's meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Netanyahu said a Russian offer to keep Iranian forces 100 km from the border was not enough, according to an Israeli

official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The Russians are speaking about (the 100-km buffer zone) and are committed to it, but we said there are also long-range weapons beyond this zone, and all those forces must leave Syria," the official said.

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Israel had previously turned down a proposal by Russia, the big-power backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, that Iranian forces be kept 80 km from the frontier, according to Israeli officials.

The Russian embassy in Israel tweeted that Lavrov and armed forces chief General Valery Gerasimov discussed with Netanyahu Assad's advance in southwest Syria and "issues related to Israel border security."

Netanyahu held talks with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on July 11 amid Israeli concern that Assad, an old adversary, might defy a 1974 demilitarization deal on the Golan or allow his Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah allies to deploy there.

Russia has said it wants to see the separation of forces on the frontier preserved. Lavrov's deputy, Grigory Karasin, told Russian media the foreign minister's trip was "urgent and important."

Before the meeting, Netanyahu said he would tell the envoys that "Israel insists on the separation of forces agreement between us and Syria being honoured, as they were honoured for decades until the civil war in Syria broke out."

He also reaffirmed "Israel will continue to act against any attempt by Iran and its proxies to entrench militarily in Syria."

Earlier, Israel launched two David's Sling interceptor missiles at rockets which it said crashed inside Syrian territory and were part of the internal fighting there.

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