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# Putin Tells Netanyahu Russia Found Remains of Missing Israeli Soldier

By Reuters

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**Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday that Russian special forces troops in Syria had found the remains of a U.S.-born Israeli soldier missing since 1982, allowing him to be finally buried.

The disappearance of Zachary Baumel, who was 21 when he fought in Israel's invasion of Lebanon and was declared missing in action along with two other soldiers in the Battle of Sultan Yacoub, has long troubled Israel.

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Speaking at talks in Moscow with Netanyahu who is campaigning for a new term ahead of elections next week, Putin said Russian and Syrian forces had located Baumel's remains, but

that it had been a difficult task.

"We are very happy that they will be able to give him the necessary military honors at home and most importantly... that his close relatives will be able to bring flowers to his grave," Putin said in comments published by the Kremlin.

Russia handed over a casket containing Baumel's personal effects, including his combat uniform, on Thursday.

Baumel immigrated to Israel with his parents from New York in 1970. Over the years, there had been unverified reports that Baumel and two other soldiers who went missing at Sultan Yacoub might have survived the fighting and been captured.

The precise location of his remains was not disclosed, but Netanyahu said Russian soldiers had risked their lives to get them.

The recovery was welcomed by the United States, Baumel's birthplace.

"For many years we prayed for the safe return of Zachary Baumel," U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman said on Twitter on Wednesday. "Welcome home, Zachary, and Rest in Peace."

Netanyahu said he had asked Putin to help Israel find Baumel's remains two years ago, that he was grateful to the Russian leader for his help, and that Baumel would be buried in Israel later on Thursday.

"We are again deeply grateful to you Mr. President for your personal friendship, for your position, and for the fact that Russia shares these common values with Israel," said Netanyahu.

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