

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, July 17, 2011 1:12 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Haaretz story on apology

Fyi

From: Ricciardone, Francis J
Sent: Sunday, July 17, 2011 12:39 PM
To: Gordon, Phillip H; 'esherwood-[redacted]; Feltman, Jeffrey D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Cc: Kim, Yuri J; Kaidanow, Tina S; Rubin, Eric S
Subject: FW: Haaretz story on apology

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In case you've not seen yet.
Holding breath for Lieberman's reaction ...

From: Yuri Kim [mailto:[redacted]]
Sent: Sunday, July 17, 2011 7:31 PM
To: Ricciardone, Francis J
Cc: Howard, Jeremiah "Jerry"
Subject: Haaretz story on apology

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Looks like Israelis trying to prep their public or an apology:

Home Print Edition News

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Defense officials: Israel considering apology to Turkey over deadly Gaza flotilla raid

Cautious apology could stop possible lawsuits by Turkish organizations against Israel Defense Forces officers and bring the affair to an end.

By Amos Harel

Tags: Turkey Israel Turkey Gaza flotilla

The defense establishment is showing increased support for resolving the crisis between Israel and Turkey following the Mavi Marmara affair, even at the price of an apology to Ankara by Jerusalem.

Internal discussions between defense officials and Justice Ministry officials over the past few weeks have suggested that a cautious apology could stop possible lawsuits by Turkish organizations against Israel Defense Forces officers and bring the affair to an end.

A report by the UN-sponsored Palmer Committee on the incident, of which Israel received a draft earlier this month, is scheduled to be released in a few weeks. The report focuses on the events of May 31, 2010, when nine Turkish nationals were killed and dozens of participants were wounded after Israeli commandos took over the ship, which was part of a flotilla to Gaza.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been trying to reach a compromise between Turkey and Israel.

The committee has accepted Israel's claim - as has the Turkel committee which investigated the incident (where there were two foreign observers) - that Israel's maritime closure of the Gaza Strip is legal, and that Israel acted lawfully in deciding to stop the flotilla.

However, the report harshly criticized the way Israel acted in doing so; these actions led to the deaths of nine Turks, members of the radical Islamic group IHH, who were shot by Israeli naval commandos aboard the Mavi Marmara.

The committee determined that Israel used excessive force and said deaths could have been prevented in several cases - although participants armed with clubs and iron rods attacked the commanders as they descended from a helicopter to the ship.

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman has recently come out publicly against an apology, which he said would humiliate Israel and serve as a blow to national pride. Defense officials counter that an apology now will prevent legal problems later for officers and soldiers.

Photographs of several IDF personnel involved in the raid have been posted on the Internet and are now in the hands of leftist and Islamic groups in Europe. Defense and justice officials have expressed concern that these groups will take steps similar to those of British pro-Palestinian groups, which have prevented senior Israeli officials from entering Britain for quite some time.

In this case, however, a ban would extend to young soldiers who took part in the raid, many of whom are about to be released from the army and are planning trips abroad.

Senior defense officials told Haaretz that Israel has a major stake in improving relations with Turkey in light of Turkey's standing in the region, its past economic relationship with Israel and the opportunity to renew defense-related export to Turkey.

Although these views do not represent the Defense Ministry's official stance, Defense Minister Ehud Barak intimated as much in an interview last week on Channel 1: "From a strategic point of view, we have an interest in smoothing things over with Turkey," Barak said. "National pride is important [but] in the end, we have to understand that we have other interests here ... Turkey can have an important role in issues relating to Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Hamas."

This story is by:

Amos Harel