THE JERUSALEM POST

Ex-Mossad chief: Return to US, Iran nuclear deal will happen regardless

Pardo said that Jerusalem needs to recognize its place among larger powers, given the size of the state.

By Yonah Jeremy Bob / March 11, 2021

Former Mossad chief Tamir Pardo said on Wednesday that the US and Iran will likely return to a nuclear deal regardless of the current Israeli government's opposition.

Speaking at a joint Commanders for Israel's Security and Haaretz conference, when asked if there would be a deal, Pardo said, "It is very hard to know for sure. I assume yes, and the question is when, and how many variations will it undergo until we get there."

The former Mossad director also said that "I assume Israel will act like it should... [according to] its size... it can get to cooperative levels with" the US, but added that Jerusalem should not play games with the larger powers, given that it "has capabilities, but [they are] the capabilities of a small state – and at the end... it needs to recognize its place."

Without mentioning Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by name, but clearly referring to him, he warned that if Israeli leaders yell at the world that they will act on their own against everyone, then Israel will not get anywhere in terms of influencing developments.

Regarding Israeli threats to attack Iran's nuclear program, he said, "Because everyone understands that blowing up one nuclear site will not end this situation, anyone attempting to handle this along the same lines as the Iraqi nuclear reactor [which Israel attacked in 1981] or the Syrian nuclear reactor [which Israel attacked in 2007] is dreaming and lacks a minimal understanding of the capabilities of who we are confronting, and their ability to deal with a situation like this."

Moreover, Pardo said that after the US-Iraq war in 2003, America heavily leans more toward diplomacy and has a much stronger aversion to using force globally, saying the US "is not structured for using extensive force."

Again he emphasized the need for Israel to dovetail its public actions with the US, given that Washington provides Israel with much of its advanced weaponry.

FORMER NETANYAHU national security council chief Jacob Nagel took issue with Pardo's statements, saying that regarding "returning to the old deal, I am concerned that we are nonstop galloping toward it... This will be a disaster if it happens.

“If I estimate who could thwart this, it would be the Iranians. If I estimate who is pushing to make this happen with all of their energy, it would be some Israelis – not those in official positions – and obviously the new US government,” he said.

“If there is a deal, it will be the last” and will lead to great harm, Nagel said.

The former national security council chief also warned that if the US returns to the nuclear deal, “there won’t be any motivation for the US” to snap back sanctions if Iran violates the deal.

In addition, he said, “I would rather that if they are going to race to a nuclear weapon, that it be now and not in six more years. I would rather that if there is going to be a conflict,” it be sooner, implying there are advantages to confronting Tehran while it is weakened by sanctions and while the world is more concerned with its nuclear violations.

Staking out a middle, more analytical path, former Mossad Iran desk chief **Sima Shine** said: “I think both sides are interested in getting to an agreement. Since they are interested, it seems they will get there. But there are quite a few obstacles along the road... but in the end, they both want to get a deal.”

Shine also confirmed the likelihood of an interim partial deal of “less for less” – partial reduction of US sanctions for partial reduction of Iranian nuclear violations.

But she said that despite any possible interim deal, the end point would be full removal of sanctions for a full return to nuclear limitations.

However, later Shine and Nagel argued over whether the US could be convinced to accept Israel’s maximal positions on the Islamic Republic or whether that was unrealistic.

Shine said she had heard from US contacts that Washington would not give Iran more than 12-18 months to agree to a longer and stronger improved nuclear deal before snapping back sanctions – which Nagel expressed doubts about.

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