‘US Won’t Veto UN Vote on Settlements if Israel Builds Anew’

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By [Ilan Ben Zion](http://www.timesofisrael.com/writers/ilan-ben-zion/) and [Raphael Ahren](http://www.timesofisrael.com/writers/raphael-ahren/)

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The United States reportedly issued Israel an ultimatum this week: announce new settlement construction and Washington won’t veto a Security Council resolution declaring West Bank settlements illegal.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected calls by senior ministers for construction in Jewish settlements in the West Bank in response to an increase in Palestinian terrorism, at a meeting of his security cabinet on Monday.

That was because the Obama administration had warned Netanyahu against announcing new construction over the Green Line in response to the uptick in terrorism, Channel 2 reported Tuesday.

The report cited senior sources in the Israeli government as saying that the White House told Netanyahu that the US wouldn’t necessarily veto a French-sponsored resolution at the United Nations Security Council.

The US has thus far been a staunch supporter of Israel at the UN, protecting it from condemnation in the 15-member council by using its veto power as a permanent member.

“We will not endanger our international support for some construction tender or for expanding construction in Itamar,” a senior source was quoted as saying.

Netanyahu reportedly told ministers from the pro-settlement Jewish Home party that new construction in the West Bank was liable to endanger Israeli settlers even more and complicate the situation between Israeli and Palestinians.

In a response to the Channel 2 report, a senior Israeli official told The Times of Israel that the Prime Minister’s Office was “unaware of any American threats” to refrain from exercising its veto power in the Security Council.

Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians have reached fever pitch in recent days, following weeks of clashes on the Temple Mount and a series of deadly terrorist attacks on Israelis.

Washington’s reported threat to not veto the motion at the UN came shortly after a Politico report which said [US President Barack Obama had rejected multiple calls](http://www.timesofisrael.com/obama-refused-to-oppose-palestinian-un-statehood-bid/) by a top Democratic senator that he speak out publicly against a Palestinian statehood resolution at the United Nations.

Obama’s refusal, the report said, “highlights how wide the gulf between the Obama administration and Israeli government has become.” The rebuff “unfolded in the context of a personal relationship between Obama and Netanyahu that’s become highly toxic, poisoning US-Israeli relations more widely.”

In March, the administration signaled that it would reevaluate its automatic-veto policy at the UN, after Netanyahu asserted in a pre-election interview that there would be no Palestinian state during his tenure.

“We are currently reevaluating our approach but it doesn’t mean that we’ve made a decision regarding changing our position at the UN,” State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said during a briefing at the time, responding to reports that the US was considering lifting its veto on UN Security Council resolutions toward Palestinian statehood.