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Barak met earlier with Clinton in New York Monday night to discuss the Iranian threat and negotiations with the Palestinians.

The defense minister specifically addressed Israeli concerns over Iran's continued drive to harness nuclear power for military purposes.

"Iran continues to deceive the world community and continues to move forward with its military nuclear program despite sanctions. There is no doubt that the sanctions are hurting Iran, but Iran continues to play for time," Barak told Clinton.

A defense ministry spokesman said the main topic of discussion between the two was, however, the building freeze in Judea and Samaria.

"The peace process between Israel and the Palestinians requires brave decisions from both sides," Barak said, "and we can not let different disagreements complicate the process."

"We are at a historical time, with a real chance of a breakthrough to peace. Israel wants peace, but expects that any agreement will protect its security interests," the defense minister explained.

"Israel expects the US to protect its relative advantage over its neighbors," he added.

Barak and Clinton. also discussed broadening peace talks to include others in the Middle East, as well as the Iranian nuclear threat.

Earlier Monday, Barak met with US Defense Secretary Robert Gates in Washington to discuss ways to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge in the Middle East. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen also participated in the meeting.

"I am confident that the qualitative, security relationship between Israel and the US that has existed up until now, will continue to gather strength and develop further in the future," said Barak. He also discussed with Gates and Mullen, Israel's concerns over Russia's recent agreement to sell missiles to Syria, the transfer of weapons from Syria to Lebanese terror group Hizbullah and the current state of relations between Israel and Turkey, another one of the US's allies in the Middle East region.

Earlier on Monday, Barak on met with US National Security Adviser Gen. Jim Jones to discuss the ongoing peace talks with Palestinians and the possibility of Israel extending the building freeze in the West Bank.

"The decisions that lie before Israel and the Palestinians are important ones, far more dramatic than the continuation of construction in Judea and Samaria," Barak said at the meeting.

Barak also discussed with Jones and other senior White House officials his concerns over the continuing transfer of weapons from Iran and Syria to Lebanese terror group Hizbullah and Russia's recently signed agreement to sell missiles to Syria.





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