

U.S. President Will Not Meet with Visiting Netanyahu



Washington, January 23 (RHC)-- U.S. President Barack Obama says he will not meet the Israeli prime minister when he visits the United States in March. The White House announced Thursday that Benjamin Netanyahu and Obama will not meet amid the administration's clashes with a Republican-led Congress, specifically over new sanctions against Iran.

House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner on Wednesday invited Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress next month, an invitation the White House called a "departure from protocol." White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said: "The typical protocol would suggest that the leader of a country would contact the leader of another country when he is travelling there. That is certainly how President Obama's trips are planned."

Hours after Obama threatened to veto any Iran sanctions bill during his State of the Union address on Tuesday, Boehner said he had invited Netanyahu to address the issue.

Officials, however, said the two leaders would not meet because of Israel's upcoming elections. National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan said it was a "matter of long-standing practice and principle" that the president would not meet incumbent leaders while they are facing an election.

The invitation to address Congress, extended without having consultations with the White House and the State Department, marks a sharp rejection of Obama's plea for the new Republican-dominated Congress

not to interfere with negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

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