

Netanyahu defends message to Biden that pissed off Trump

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A worker puts up banners depicting Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Israel, June 10, 2020 © Reuters / Ammar Awad

Tel Aviv, December 13 (RHC)-- Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has defended his decision to congratulate Joe Biden on his electoral win before most other world leaders. The message infuriated Donald Trump, once a close ally of Netanyahu.

"I highly appreciate President Trump's big contribution to Israel and its security," Netanyahu said in a statement on Friday. "I also appreciate the importance of the strong alliance between Israel and the U.S. and therefore it was important for me to congratulate the incoming president," he added, referring to his

message to Biden in the days after last November's US presidential election, issued whilst Trump was still disputing Biden's win.

That message of congratulations reportedly infuriated Trump. In a series of interviews for an upcoming book, the former president complained that Netanyahu hailed Biden's victory "before the ink was even dry." "He was very early... like, earlier than most. I haven't spoken to him since. Fuck him," Trump said.

Although Trump is well-known for firing off insulting remarks about world leaders, he never publicly spoke ill of Netanyahu during his term in office. A staunch and vocal supporter of Israel, Trump handed Netanyahu a number of high-profile political and diplomatic victories after taking office in 2016, including moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to the disputed city of Jerusalem, pulling the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal, and formally recognizing Syria's Golan Heights territory as a part of Israel.

The Trump administration also helped broker the Abraham Accords, a series of landmark deals that saw Israel normalize diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and later Sudan and Morocco.

Both Netanyahu and Trump are currently out of office, with Trump hinting at another run for the presidency in 2024 and Netanyahu serving as leader of the Israeli opposition. When both men were in power, they projected an image of unity, though author Barak Ravid -- who interviewed Trump for the upcoming book -- noted in an Axios report that Trump privately "felt he'd helped ensure Netanyahu's political survival, but didn't get the same in return."

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