

MSNBC's "The Dylan Ratigan Show" reported on the current state of the relationship between the Obama Administration and the State of Israel and played comments made by Congressman Pence at a press conference earlier today:

The *Associated Press* also reported on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Congress today:



[Israeli leader gets warmer welcome in Congress](#)

WASHINGTON - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu received a warmer public reception from Congress than from the Obama administration, with a top Democrat and Republican joining Tuesday to welcome a leader who has refused to back down in a disagreement with the White House over Israeli housing expansion in a disputed part of Jerusalem.

"We in Congress stand by Israel," the leader of the House, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, assured Netanyahu at an all-smiles appearance before the cameras. "In Congress we speak with one voice on the subject of Israel."

President Barack Obama will meet with Netanyahu later Tuesday, but the meeting has been declared closed to journalists in what could be an indication that the spat marring ties between the allies is not over yet. The Obama administration appears eager to let Netanyahu's awkwardly timed visit pass with as little public remark as possible, and has refused to detail what promises Netanyahu is making to ease the most serious diplomatic breach between the two nations in decades.

Neither side has publicly detailed which steps, if any, Netanyahu has proposed to defuse tensions. Netanyahu has given no indication that he will agree to halt or slow Israeli building in Jerusalem, which the administration has said - in an unusually blunt and public fashion - is harming peace efforts and ties between the U.S. and Israel.

In his meeting with Pelosi, Netanyahu asserted that Israel had been building in east Jerusalem since the 1967 Mideast war, when it captured the West Bank from Jordan, and that the matter had "never been a subject of argument among us or in the U.S.," according to Netanyahu's office. The Jewish neighborhoods built in east Jerusalem will remain part of Israel in any final status deal with the Palestinians, he told Pelosi, so building there doesn't harm the chances for peace.

The international community, including the U.S., has never recognized Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem and sees the Jewish concentrations there as no different from West Bank settlements.

The Palestinian demand for a halt to building in Jerusalem as a precondition for peace talks, Netanyahu said, will serve only to delay peace talks further. Netanyahu said the sides "must not be trapped by an unreasonable and illogical demand."

The abrupt rescheduling Monday of Netanyahu's planned trip to the State Department for what had been billed as a public meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton underscored the uneasy atmosphere. Netanyahu's meeting with Clinton took place at his hotel and was closed to the press.

It was followed by a private dinner at Vice President Joe Biden's home on Monday night that was meant to salve hurt feelings from two weeks ago, when Netanyahu's government announced a provocative housing expansion in east Jerusalem while Biden was visiting the city. Netanyahu said he was unaware of the move, blaming low-level bureaucrats, but an angry and embarrassed Biden was reportedly 90 minutes late for a dinner with the Israeli leader.

Both nations are now trying to move on without backing down.

"We have no stronger ally anywhere in the world than Israel," said House Republican Leader John Boehner. "We all know we're in a difficult moment. I'm glad the prime minister is here so we can have an open dialogue."

Other Republicans have weighed in on Israel's side, criticizing the Obama administration for its handling of the crisis.

"I never thought I'd live to see the day that an American administration would denounce the state of Israel for rebuilding Jerusalem," [Rep. Mike Pence of Indiana said on the House floor Tuesday after meeting Netanyahu.](#)

"I urge the president to stop all this talk about settlements in Jerusalem and start focusing on isolating a threatening and menacing and rising nuclear Iran," he said.

Pelosi and Boehner both pointed to the threat from Iran as a top concern and an area in which the United States will cooperate with Israel. Netanyahu thanked his congressional hosts for what he called warm, bipartisan support. "We face two great challenges", Netanyahu said, a "quest for peace with our Palestinian neighbors" and stopping Iran from developing atomic weapons.

Obama has remained out of the fray as Clinton and other U.S. officials have rebuked Israel.

P.J. Crowley, the State Department spokesman, told The Associated Press that the U.S. and Israel were currently engaged in "give and take."

"We are not going to talk about the precise steps both sides have to take. We will continue to discuss those steps privately," Crowley said.