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## US Set to Release Israel Spy Pollard to Placate Netanyahu on Iran

By Jason Ditz  
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In a move which officials are “strongly denying” is related to the ongoing Israeli fury about the P5+1 nuclear deal with Iran, the Obama Administration is said to be preparing for the release of Jonathan Pollard, who has been in a federal prison for decades after being convicted of spying on behalf of Israel. Officials have further denied that any decision was actually finalized on the release.

The Texas-born Pollard was a civilian employee of the US Navy and was caught handing large amounts of classified documents to Israeli agents. He and his wife later insisted that they felt they had a “moral obligation” as Jews to spy on behalf of the Israeli government. He was sentenced to life in prison in 1987.

Israel granted Pollard citizenship retroactively in 1995, while in prison, and Israeli governments have repeatedly sought his release. The Netanyahu government has picked up the pace on this, trying to “trade” concessions on the stalled peace process with the Palestinians for Pollard, something the US has repeatedly spurned.

Despite official denials, there is a clear link between US efforts to buy off the Israeli government to get them to stop railing daily about the Iran nuclear deal. The US is also expected to offer a one-



time bonus of extra military equipment in the realm of \$4 billion as part of the “reparations” for the deal.

US intelligence officials are said to strongly oppose Pollard’s release, particularly if it is done as part of a diplomatic exchange instead of a tit-for-tat trade of spies, the preferred method of settling long-standing detention of spies.

While the announcements today are clearly meant to tie this to the Iran dispute, the timing of the release is still unclear, though officials say it will almost certainly happen by year’s end. Pollard is technically eligible for parole on November 21.

It will likely be simpler from a legal perspective for the administration to wait until that November date to actually complete the release, though they theoretically could justify the release on health grounds, as Israeli officials have repeatedly claimed Pollard is in failing health.

The release would be a major win for Netanyahu, as Israeli officials have been lionizing Pollard for decades as a hero of the Israeli state.