Israel Worried Quartet Report Could Be Basis of Significant UN Security Council Resolution

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Israel is concerned that the highly anticipated Quartet document could be the core of a United Nations Security Council resolution to replace Security Council Resolution 242, which has been the basis for Mideast diplomacy since 1967.

In the last few years the Palestinians have pushed for the council to amend that 1967 resolution to more clearly reflect their stance on the contours of a two-state solution.

When it comes to the impact of the document itself, however, Israel is not expecting the Quartet report on the Middle East to be “overly dramatic.”

Since the report has already been written, Israel is less focused on “softening” the document’s language. Instead, its efforts are now geared to steering the diplomatic process once the Quartet’s recommendations are presented.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to leave for Rome Sunday after the weekly cabinet meeting. He is to meet there with US Secretary of State John Kerry in the evening, and for another working session the following day. He will also meet Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, and there is a possibility of a meeting as well with EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

Netanyahu is scheduled to return Monday evening, and the next day meet in Jerusalem with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who is arriving Monday for a 48-hour visit.

Diplomatic officials said that were Netanyahu merely trying to soften the language of the document, he would not need to meet in person with Kerry but, rather, could make his objections known over the phone.

That he is going to Rome is an indication that the discussion will be about “substance,” regarding the framework of the diplomatic process. Netanyahu has come out adamantly against the French diplomatic initiative which is calling for an international peace conference at the end of the year, and prefers direct negotiations with the Palestinians in some kind of regional framework, perhaps under an Egyptian “umbrella.”

The Quartet document, which has been in the works for months, is expected to slam Israel for its policies in the West Bank – settlement construction and preventing Palestinian development in Area C – as well as sharply criticize the Palestinians for violence and incitement.

US Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations Frank Lowenstein is taking the lead in writing the document, and over the last number of weeks has, according to diplomatic sources, wrangled intensely with the other Quartet partners – the EU, UN and Russia – over the language.

The Americans are interested in a “balanced” report that places responsibility for the diplomatic logjam on both sides, the sources said.

The Americans were instrumental at the beginning of the month in shaping a communique that followed the launch of the French initiative in Paris, a communique noted for its blandness and one that did little more than pledge the international community’s allegiance to a twostate solution.

There is expectation in Jerusalem that the Quartet document will also – thanks to American input – strike a balance so that neither side can reject it saying that they were unfairly singled out.

The release of the report has already been postponed a number of times, and while there was some expectation that it would be released on Thursday, diplomatic officials are saying it may now not be presented until next week or even early July.