

Netanyahu becomes Israeli military affairs minister after Lieberman's resignation



Tel Aviv, November 17 (RHC)-- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has become his own minister of military affairs, failing to fill the position with anyone else after Avigdor Lieberman's resignation, according to a Likud Party spokesman.

The decision was announced on Friday after Netanyahu's meeting with a key far-right coalition partner, Jewish Home Party leader Naftali Bennett, failed to determine Israel's next military affairs minister.

Bennett, who is currently Israel's Education Minister, had sought to replace Lieberman. The education minister had called for Israel to "start winning again" -- expressing frustration at Netanyahu's compliance with an Egypt-brokered ceasefire with the Gaza Strip.

Israel was quick to accept a truce after a botched Israeli operation in Gaza was met with a strong reaction from the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, killing an Israeli special operations officer and firing a record number of nearly 500 rockets into Israel in a single day.

Lieberman, who leads the secular-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, resigned less than a day after the

ceasefire, describing the truce as “a capitulation to terror” and withdrawing his party from Israel's ruling coalition in the 120-member parliament.

The loss of Lieberman’s five parliamentary seats has destabilized Netanyahu's majority coalition, fueling speculation of an early election before the scheduled date next November.

Netanyahu, who is also currently his cabinet's own foreign minister and health minister, has been under further pressure for two alleged corruption cases since February. The investigations revolve around a case of illicit valuable presents received by Netanyahu and his family from billionaire benefactors, and another case of a suspected quid pro quo deal between the premier and Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper.

The corruption cases have triggered numerous anti-Netanyahu protests in Tel Aviv and other cities in the occupied territories, with the participants calling on the scandal-hit prime minister to step down.

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