

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

Sen. Mark Warner: Netanyahu's war 'threatens to undermine' long-term support for, security of Israel

Warner's comments came at an Intelligence Committee hearing with the heads of U.S. intelligence agencies, who delivered a report on global security issues



Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA)

By [Marc Rod](#) March 11, 2024

Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on Monday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war strategy risks undermining international support for Israel and, thereby, Israel's long-term security.

"Israel's war against Hamas has shown the difficulty of using military force alone to eradicate a nonstate actor embedded in a civilian population, especially one that has been adept at using underground tunnels," Warner said.

"And I worry that Prime Minister Netanyahu's conduct in the war threatens to undermine support for Israel in the long term, including in the United States. This international support has been key to Israel's security and, as a longtime friend of Israel, this is a concerning and potentially significant legacy of this war."

Warner's comments came at an Intelligence Committee hearing with the heads of U.S. intelligence agencies, who delivered a report on global security issues.

In a written report published in conjunction with the testimony on Monday, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence assessed that Israel is likely to face "mounting international pressure" in the coming year as a result of the war in Gaza, and that there is a high risk of destabilization and interstate conflict across the region.

The report states that Israel will likely face "lingering armed resistance... for years to come" from Hamas and "struggle to neutralize" Hamas's tunnel system.

It also describes Israel's governing coalition, led by Netanyahu, as potentially "in jeopardy," making "a different, more moderate government... a possibility."

William Burns, the CIA director who has taken a major role in recent rounds of hostage talks, outlined details of the latest version of the deal on the table at the hearing: the release of 40 hostages, including the remaining women, the elderly and the seriously ill and wounded, alongside a six-week cease-

fire, the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israel and increased humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

Burns described a six-week pause as “the first step toward what might be more enduring arrangements over time.” He also described a cease-fire as necessary to effectively distribute aid inside Gaza.

“I understand Israel’s need — and the president has emphasized this — to respond to the brutish attack that Israeli suffered,” Burns said. “But I think we all also have to be mindful of the enormous toll that this has taken on innocent civilians in Gaza. And as the president has said, it’s very important for Israel to be extremely mindful of that and to avoid further loss of life.”

The report assesses that “Iranian leaders did not orchestrate nor had foreknowledge of the Hamas attack against Israel,” but have “encouraged and enabled” its proxies across the region to strike Israeli and U.S. targets across the region since Oct. 7. The report assessed that strikes against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria “almost certainly” will resume, adding that Houthi attacks in the Red Sea “create a real risk of broader escalation.”

During the hearing, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said that Iran is not consistently in operational control of its proxies, but it is broadly “orchestrating” their activities. She said that the intelligence community continues to believe that Iran doesn’t seek a full war, but that has not stopped proxies like the Houthis and groups in Iraq and Syria from escalating their activities.

Haines said the Oct. 7 attack will likely have “a generational impact” on global terrorism, inspiring other groups like Al-Qaida and ISIS to attack U.S. and Israeli targets and individuals to conduct terrorism globally.

The assessment describes the war as a “challenge” for the U.S.’ Arab partners, adding that Iran will likely use it to push back on Arab-Israeli normalization efforts. But the assessment also states that Arab partners continue to see the U.S. as best placed to contain and end the war.

The report assesses that Iran is not currently pursuing a functional nuclear weapon, but will likely expand its uranium enrichment activities, potentially

up to weapons grade, “in response to additional sanctions, attacks, or censure against its nuclear program.” Iran also has the capability to quickly produce weapons-grade uranium. The report predicts that Iranian efforts to interfere in the 2024 election are possible.

Lawmakers, particularly Republicans, have raised concerns since Oct. 7 that Iran or affiliated terror groups could attempt to infiltrate the homeland via the U.S. southern border. Haines said at the hearing that Iran has supported such attempts in the past, but it “has been very challenging for them” and the intelligence community monitors that threat closely. She said Iran prefers to use criminal groups to carry out operations inside the U.S.

FBI Director Christopher Wray also warned the committee that TikTok poses a national security threat to the U.S., ahead of a Wednesday House vote seeking to force the app’s Chinese parent company to sell it or shut down in the U.S. National security officials will brief House lawmakers in private on TikTok on Tuesday. The Jewish Federations of North America and the Republican Jewish Coalition are supporting the bill.

The intelligence community leaders will also be back on Capitol Hill on Tuesday for a hearing with members of the House Intelligence Committee.