

Exclusive: Germany approves Israel's subs to thwart Greens

Globes Israel 's Business Arena



German Chancellor Angela Merkel is in talks to bring the Greens into her coalition and wants to pre-empt opposition, "Globes" has found.

Exclusive: Opposition by Germany's Alliance 90/Green Party to the sale to Israel of submarines capable of launching nuclear weapons may explain the hurried decision by German Chancellor Angela Merkel last Thursday to approve the memorandum of understanding (MoU) for a deal to supply three new submarines to the Israeli navy. Investigations by "Globes," found a number of comments by the leaders of the Green Party in recent years, showing that Merkel's potential coalition partner opposes supplying the submarines in principle. At the very least the party demands a public commitment by Israel that the submarines will have no capability to launch nuclear missiles, a capability the submarines do possess according to foreign reports.

Following her victory in last month's elections, Merkel needs the support of the Green Party in order to form a coalition. Their views explain the behind-the-scenes Israeli pressure on the German government in the matter in recent weeks, and her decision to approve the deal while the current coalition is still in power. Israeli sources told "Globes" that they had been monitoring the Green Party's position on the issue.

According to media reports in Israel and Germany at the end of last week, the German government signed an MoU for a €1.5 billion deal between Israel and Thyssenkrupp, despite suspicions of bribery and other offenses by Michael Ganor, the representative of the German

shipyards in Israel. Germany is expected to approve the deal and pay one third of the cost of the submarines, provided that there were no improprieties about the procurement decision itself.

The investigation by "Globes" found that "a majority of the senior leaders" of the Green Party previously expressed strong opposition to the sale to Israel of submarines capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads.

Renate Kunast, a Green Party leader and member of the Bundestag (the German parliament), said in 2013, "The supply of submarines to Israel is contingent on an Israeli declaration that it will not use them to launch nuclear weapons."

Jurgen Trittin, a Green Party veteran, who is taking part in the negotiations to form a new coalition, said, "The reports that the submarines have been adapted for the launching of nuclear missiles is alarming. The need to combat nuclear proliferation is an important principle for the Green Party. It must be the point of departure for any exports of German weapons, including to Israel."

Claudia Roth, another Green Party veteran and Bundestag member, who is also participating in the coalition negotiations, said, "In my opinion, supplying the submarines is sending the wrong message... it also contravenes German policy on weapons exports."

On the other hand, Katrin Goring-Eckardt, who jointly headed the Green Party list in the last elections with Cem Ozdemir, said, "Together with restrictions on exports of German weapons, the commitment to the existence of Israel is part of the Green Party's basic principles... Given Germany's historic commitment to Israel, I regard the supply of products necessary for Israel's self-defense as justified."

Back in 2005 the Greens did not oppose the sale of two submarines to Israel during the administration of Chancellor Gerhard Schroder. Since then, the party's leadership has changed, and Israel's supposed nuclear armament of the submarine has become a subject for open debate in Germany.

Last June, the Greens supported the cancellation of a deal by Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd. (IAI) (TASE: ARSP.B1) to sell UAVs to Germany because the drones could be used for more than just surveillance.

To date, Thyssenkrupp's HDW division has already sold Israel six submarines, which according to foreign reports including by German weekly 'Der Spiegel,' would allow Israel "a second strike" in the event of coming under nuclear attack.

"Globes" contacted Agnieszka Brugger who is in charge of defense affairs for the Greens party who declined to comment. The Israeli Embassy in Germany also declined to comment while Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it did not comment on matters relating to Israel's defense.