

Israelis in Cairo for Hamas peace talks

by UPI

CAIRO -- An official in the Israeli defense ministry, Amos Gilad, traveled to Cairo to discuss an Egyptian-backed cease-fire with Hamas militants in Gaza. It was Gilad's second trip to Egypt this week to talk with senior Egyptian officials, including intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, Haaretz reported. Hamas called for an end to the economic sanctions on Gaza imposed by Israel in exchange for a cease-fire. Israel opposes full relief though officials said they may consider a limited reopening of the Rafah crossing, a move the United States backs. At issue is who will handle security at Rafah and the degree to which searches can proceed. Hamas is asking for its own security officials to be involved in monitoring the border crossing but would consider an official Palestinian Authority security presence. The newspaper quoted sources as saying Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak gave Gilad a short leash in the negotiations and Israeli officials said they think Hamas is pursuing the matter to buy time to recover its military arsenal.

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