

Benjamin Netanyahu may be regretting forcing his ministers to meet Donald Trump

[Bethan McKernan](#) Beirut Monday 22 May 2017 18:40 BST

Israeli officials use brief introductions to US president to deliver incorrect terror attack information, press him for promises on embassy move and hold up proceedings for selfies

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As Netanyahu then sought to hurry Trump down the receiving line of ministers, Oren Hazan, a scandal-plagued

member of the Knesset, held up proceedings to demand a selfie with the visiting president *Oren Hazan/Twitter*

The Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was [forced to strong-arm](#) reluctant members of his government into greeting Donald Trump at the airport – but several of them managed to embarrass him within minutes of the US president's arrival.

Original plans for a lengthy welcome reception including handshakes with officials at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport on Monday were shelved at the White House's request due to the hot weather, Israeli media reported.

On learning that they would have to cancel existing work commitments to travel from Jerusalem and undergo lengthy security checks just to witness the event from the sidelines, several ministers reportedly told Mr Netanyahu in Sunday's weekly cabinet meeting they had decided not to attend.

Donald Trump lands in Tel Aviv on first foreign tour

The prime minister was allegedly so angry he cut the meeting short. Shortly afterwards, his office issued instructions demanding the presence of all government ministers.

As Air Force One touched down in Israel at lunchtime, however, ministers ended up having their chance to meet Mr Trump after all – and Mr Netanyahu was less than delighted with what they had to say.

Gilad Erdan, the security minister, sought to impress Israel's precarious security situation on Mr Trump by mistakenly telling him a traffic accident in the city earlier that morning was being investigated as a terror attack.

Several, including Naftali Bennett, the outspoken education minister, used the brief introduction to ask Mr Trump to deliver on his election campaign promise to move the US embassy to Jerusalem (to whom Mr Trump replied,

“Good one”).

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As Mr Netanyahu then sought to hurry his counterpart down the receiving line of ministers, Oren Hazan, a scandal-plagued member of the Knesset, held up proceedings to demand a selfie with the visiting president.

“I told Trump how excited I was [to meet him] and that I was a fan of him from the beginning,” the 35-year-old told reporters.

“Then I just added, 'What do you say, can I have a selfie?' So he said, ‘Come on.’”

Both Mr Trump and Mr Netanyahu looked visibly displeased with the request. The Israeli leader attempted to bat the young man’s hand away.

“Netanyahu was a little less fond of the idea,” Mr Hazan admitted, “but the president waited, and the embarrassing thing was that I fumbled with my phone. Even when the phone froze I insisted on turning it off, turning it on again. We took the picture and I tell you – for me and I think that for him too, this is a historical moment,” newspaper [Yedioth Ahronoth](#) quoted him as saying.

Mr Hazan is a divisive figure in Israel. He used to own a casino in Bulgaria, where it is alleged he procured sex workers and drugs for customers. Mr Hazan denies the allegations.

Mr Netanyahu, for his part, awkwardly made small talk with Mr Trump while the two posed for photos with their spouses Sara and Melania. The Israeli leader described his counterpart as a “great friend”.

In a short speech the US president said the previous stop of his first foreign

tour – to [Saudi Arabia](#) – had given him “new reasons for hope” of peace in the region.

Mr Trump then travelled to Jerusalem by helicopter, where he met President Reuven Rivlin.

He is scheduled to visit the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre before meeting President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority, in Bethlehem in the West Bank on Tuesday.

Israel and the Palestinian Territories form the second leg of the president’s inaugural foreign trip. He leaves Tuesday evening for the Vatican for talks with Pope Francis before attending a Nato summit in Brussels and a meeting of the G7 in Italy.

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