

Obama Hails Ceasefire Between Israel, Hamas

President Barack Obama is hailing a cease-fire agreement to end a week of deadly fighting between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

The White House said Obama talked to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday and commended him for agreeing to the Egyptian cease-fire proposal, which Obama had recommended the prime minister accept.

The deal would end a week of fighting that has killed more than 140 Palestinians and five Israelis.

Obama told Netanyahu that the United States will use the opportunity offered by a cease-fire to intensify efforts to help Israel address its security needs, especially the smuggling of weapons and explosives into Gaza, the White House said in a statement.

Obama also spoke to Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi and thanked him for his efforts to achieve the agreement, as well as his personal leadership in negotiating the proposal.

Obama and Morsi agreed on the importance of working toward a more durable solution in Gaza, the White House said.

The cease-fire agreement capped days of intense efforts that drew the world's top diplomats into the fray. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stood next to Egypt's foreign minister, Mohammed Kamel Amr, as he announced the breakthrough at a news conference in Cairo.

The agreement will "improve conditions for the people of Gaza and provide security for the people of Israel," Clinton said.

Israel launched a fierce offensive in Gaza last week to stop

months of intensifying rocket attacks. Even after the deal was announced, an air-raid siren signaled a rocket attack in southern Israel, while an airstrike could be heard in Gaza.

In his call with Netanyahu, Obama said he would seek more money for a defense system known as Iron Dome that has protected Israel from rocket attacks, the White House said.

In his call with Morsi, Obama reaffirmed the close partnership between the United States and Egypt and welcomed Morsi's commitment to regional security, the White House said.

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