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## [Turkmenistan: We don't want ex-Mossad man as ambassador](#)

### **Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman's appointment rejected, new embassy not opened**

**[By Barak Ravid |Haaretz News |March 3, 2010](#)**

For four months now Turkmenistan has been delaying the ratification of the appointment of Reuven Dinell, a close associate of Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, as Israel's first ambassador to that country. Sources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have said this is an unusual diplomatic hint to the effect that Turkmenistan is not interested in the appointment, because Dinell formerly worked at the Mossad. "They are hoping we will get the hint and appoint someone else to the position," said a top person at the ministry.

At the end of July 2009, Lieberman announced his intention to appoint Dinell as Israel's ambassador to Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. The foreign minister attributed particular importance to the appointment in light of the fact that it involves the opening of an embassy in a country that shares a long border with Iran. Lieberman believed this also entails sending a message to Tehran.

In 2003, in his capacity as minister of transportation, Lieberman appointed Dinell, who is considered close to the minister, to head the establishment of the Carmel port in Haifa. Currently Dinell serves as deputy director general for management resources at the Israel Ports Development and Assets Company.

Lieberman saw Dinell's appointment to Turkmenistan as a highlight of his first year as foreign minister, and pinned many hopes on Dinell and the abilities he would bring to the role of ambassador from his period of service in the Mossad.

On October 25, the government approved the appointment and a few days later, as is customary under diplomatic protocol, Israel send an official letter to Turkmenistan with the details about the new ambassador, together with a request to the government there to agree to the appointment.

The process of granting approval for an ambassador's appointment is technical and symbolic, and usually does not present any problem. However, Turkmenistan decided exceptionally not to approve the appointment. Nearly four months have passed since the Israeli request was sent, but the Turkmenistani government has not sent back any reply to Jerusalem concerning Dinell's appointment. The Turkmenistani government's conduct is causing the foreign minister serious embarrassment, in light of the great importance he has attributed to the appointment and the opening of the new embassy, which he has taken as a personal project.

The background to Turkmenistan's refusal to accept Dinell as Israel's ambassador may well lie in an embarrassing affair that has been following him since 1996, when he was serving as the first Mossad envoy to Moscow. That year Dinell was expelled from Russia after security agents in Moscow caught him receiving classified satellite photographs from Russian officers.

Sources at the Foreign Ministry assessed on Sunday that the Russians, who consider Dinell persona non grata, sent messages to the authorities in Turkmenistan indicating they expect that country not to give its agreement to the appointment.

"From the outset this appointment was very strange," said a senior source at the Foreign Ministry. "They took someone who is a declared espionage person, who had even been thrown out of Russia for that, and put him in Turkmenistan. They did all this without consulting any professional element. What did they expect would happen? There's no way he would get the

approval of the Turkmenistani authorities.”

The Foreign Minister’s Bureau stated in response: “There has been a delay in the opening of the embassy in Turkmenistan because a number of difficulties have arisen, mostly with regard to security matters, as often happens when opening a new delegation. We hope it will be possible to arrange matters in the coming weeks.”

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