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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Israel dismisses deputy envoy to U.S. over media leak (Reuters)

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israel has dismissed its deputy ambassador in Washington over a leak to the media about secret discussions involving the United States, diplomatic sources said on Wednesday.

They said the removal of Dan Arbell, formerly the deputy director for North American affairs at Israel's Foreign Ministry, was announced in an internal memorandum to diplomats on Tuesday following an investigation.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Ilana Stein said: "A senior official is being returned after his tenure was brought to an end". She described the move as unusual, but declined to elaborate on the circumstances or the identity of the official.

Israel's bedrock alliance with the United States has been bolstered by common worries about Iran, but cracks have appeared as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Barack Obama disagreed on how to pursue Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Israeli media published closed-door comments last year by Michael Oren, Israel's ambassador to Washington, describing "a crisis of historic proportions" in bilateral ties after the Obama administration censured Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu has described such reports as overblown, noting Obama's public support for Israel's military build-up and, last month, its diplomatic campaign against a Palestinian bid to sidestep stalled peacemaking by appealing for U.N. membership.

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