

"CONTACT PERSON"

Published at: 21-03-2006

Source: Portal EUROPE



Answering the growing interest and information demand by our foreign users, Portal EUROPE.BG offers a short summary of the 'lobbying-gate' in English.

I.J.International Inc., registered on the Virgin Islands, has been awarded a public procurement contract for consultants and lobbyists of the Ministry of Exterior. A total of two applications were submitted in response to the respective call for proposals.

No mention has been made of the amount to be paid by the Ministry of Exterior for "the consultancy and mediation services related to the process of accession of Bulgaria to the EU on 1 January 2007."

Shimon Sheves is the name entered in "Contact Person" section of the application form, submitted by the company that is about to "provide assistance to the country in the negotiations with the European Union" – to quote the statement made in Brussels Monday by Exterior Minister Ivailo Kalfin. A company, that was registered on the British Virgin Islands and whose activity was referred to as "all legal" by Mr. Kalfin on 20 March.

Portal europe.bg approached Mr. Sheves for a comment:

- Good afternoon, Mr. Sheves!
- Good afternoon.
- I am calling you since your name has been stated as a contact person regarding a contract your company has signed with the Bulgarian Ministry of exterior.
- Right.
- I'd like to ask you about this contract..
- I'm on my way to the airport now. I'll be getting on the plane. I'm afraid I can't talk now.
- What is the value of the contract?
- I don't want to be rude...so I'm going to tell you that the kind of things I deal with does not allow me to communicate with journalists.
- In which three towns are the offices of your company located – in reference to one of the preliminary requirements regarding the public procurement in question?
- (pause) Nice day.
- What is your company's website?
- Wish you a very nice day.

Simon Sheves is a former Director General and Head of Cabinet of the Israeli Prime Minister in the period 1992-1995.

Since 1995, Mr. Sheves has been a "businessman providing services for business development in the

"CONTACT PERSON"

area of real estate and high tech".

The Israeli lobbying company "RSLB Partners", in which Mr. Sheves is a co-partner, is not new to the Bulgarian governmental circles. In July 2004, Milen Velchev, Minister of Finance at the cabinet of National Movement Simeon II, hired the company to lobby in favour of the remittance of Iraq's USD 1,7 B debt to Bulgaria, that amounts to 1.7 billion dollars.

Tuesday, the Ministry's spokesperson refuted these allegations saying no lobbying contract concerning the Iraqi debt has ever been signed.

In 2004 Sheves was sued for abuse of power in relation to a deal for supply of military equipment. The lawsuit was returned to the regional court that is to read the verdict.

The Global Corruption Report 2006 reads that Sheves was found guilty in two lawsuits for abuse of power – having taken advantage of his position as Head of the Prime Minister's Cabinet in order to "promote the financial interests of his friends". The trial caused serious debate on the issue of civil servants' conduct and integrity.

The fact that the owner of I.J.International Inc., registered on the Virgin Islands, has been sued for fraud and bribery was not known to the Bulgarian party in the contract.

Such was the comment of the Speaker of Ministry of Exterior, Dimitar Tsanchev, in connection with yesterday's news that MoE had signed a contract with the company in question for lobbying in the accession of our country to the EU.