

Israeli PM Olmert linked to fraud case

by UPI

NEW YORK -- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert denied involvement in a campaign finance scandal allegedly involving an influential U.S. philanthropist. Israeli authorities approached Morris Talansky, 75 of Long Island, N.Y., at the Tel Aviv airport in April on suspicion of ties to a bribery scandal linked to Olmert's term as mayor of Jerusalem in 1999, The New York Times said Wednesday. Olmert was challenging former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for the top position in the Likud Party at the time. Omri Sharon, the son of the former prime minister, is in jail for charges linked to the bribery scandal. The Israeli prime minister told Knesset members allegations he took bribes were unfounded, though the speculation weakened him politically, the Times said. Talansky, who the Times says may only be a witness in the case, is an influential philanthropist who raised millions of dollars for Jewish hospitals. The Times report cited tax records that show Talansky also served as the treasurer of the New Jerusalem Foundation that has Olmert as a patron. Talansky is a registered Democrat who gave sizable political donations to former New York Governor Rudy Giuliani, a Republican, and former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

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