

## Middle East talks begin in Washington

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Diplomats from more than 40 countries were in Washington Monday for the latest bid to talk out a Middle East peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. U.S. President George Bush was to meet separately with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and their respective delegations before the talks move to Annapolis, Md., Tuesday. Sunday night, Saeb Erekat, a senior Palestinian negotiator, told reporters the fact so many Arab states had sent delegations was noteworthy, the Baltimore Sun reported. "All the Arabs are coming -- the whole world is coming, the world is here to tell us, 'We are with you -- do it,'" Erekat said. Bush said during the weekend the goal of the talks is to create a Palestinian state that could exist peacefully alongside Israel. While Syria is on the State Department's list of terror-sponsoring states, delegates from Damascus decided to attend, and the issue of Syria's and Israel's discord over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights was added to the Annapolis agenda, the report said.

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