

May Bush visit to push Middle East peace

by UPI

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, Kuwait - President George Bush's visit in May to the Middle East may give him another chance to nudge Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, the U.S. Secretary of State said. "It's always good to have the parties know that the President is coming; that really gives them an incentive to move forward," said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in a briefing aboard Air Force One en route to Kuwait. Bush is scheduled to return to the region in May to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel, which offers him a chance to encourage peace negotiations to keep moving forward, she said. "So whenever the President is coming, it gives the parties a kind of pulse to keep moving forward, and I think he achieved that during this trip," Rice said. When asked about Bush's prediction of a peace treaty signed by the end of his term, Rice said the negotiations process has "a kind of rhythm." "I think what led the President to have the sense of confidence," she said, "is that you saw very serious leaders, very serious negotiators who have already begun to have discussions about some of the hardest issues."

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