Link from my friend Darrell...

It has been revealed that top US officials knew of the secret talks between Israel, Syria and the European Union. A former political advisor to former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, stated that former US Vice President Dick Cheney knew of the talks and asked to be kept informed of the proceedings. senior officials in the Pentagon were also kept in the loop.

Quote: *"A document that Dr. Nimrod Novik, a former political advisor to Vice Premier Shimon Peres, disseminated last October to members of the Council for Peace and Security also said that Washington knew about the talks. "While the administration is taking care not to broadcast a U-turn in its approach as long as the president has not given it an explicit green light, the signs of a change in direction are multiplying," Novik wrote. "During the fighting in Lebanon, former senior [U.S.] officials were authorized to speak with Damascus, within a narrow mandate, while Pentagon and State Department officials support a change in the policy toward Hamas and quote the president in this context."*

As US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice wraps up her tour of the Middle East, Javier Solana, the High Representative for the European Common, Foreign and Security Policy has commenced his four day trip to the region, beginning with Egypt. Before he left Brussels today, he stated that the time is right for a new push for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. Condoleezza Rice has proposed the Quartet (EU, US, UN, Russia), the group that drafted the "Roadmap to peace" document back in 2003, meet at the end of the month
. German Chancellor Angela Merkel also expressed hope that the prospect of the "two-state solution" had come a little closer.

Quote: *""I look forward to that meeting as we re-energize the Quartet and its efforts to support the progress in the Middle East that could lead to a two state solution, and Israel and a Palestinian state living side by side in peace, democracy and freedom," she said. Rice said it may still take a "few weeks" to prepare talks between Israel and Palestinian leaders and that she wanted to get the Quartet together in advance of that meeting. "There are a lot of ideas on how we can get the Israeli-Palestinian peace process back on track," she said. "It's going to be a very useful thing because we want to have a unified effort."*

Source Haaretz , Jerusalem Post , Jerusalem Post