

# Lebanon: Saniora Denies Secretly Meeting Bush in Aqaba

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The press office of the head of the unconstitutional government Fouad Saniora denied news reports that a meeting had taken place in Jordan between him, MP Saad Hariri and US President George W. Bush.

"Prime Minister Saniora and MP Hariri need not hold secret meetings with any official," the press office statement said. The Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar quoted political sources in Beirut as saying that Bush, who wanted to visit Lebanon, requested holding a meeting away from the media with Saniora.

The US President said he skipped Lebanon because he did not want to "distract from the delicate political process" there aimed at holding presidential elections. The source added that Jordan's King Abdullah II volunteered to arrange the meeting and called Saniora for a visit to the kingdom.

"MP Saad Hariri also followed Saniora coming from Paris." The three men embarked on a military plane piloted by King Abdullah to the Aqaba base, where the meeting was held with Bush. The daily added that Bush renewed to Saniora his support to his 'government' and the February 14 bloc.

Answering questions on-line about his Middle East tour, Bush said that Lebanon was still on the US agenda. "Let me assure you that I am committed to democracy in Lebanon. Syria, however, continues to try to subvert the outcome of the Lebanese political process from the outside," Bush said.

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