Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, of Israel, and Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leader, have accepted separate invitations from President Bush that will hopefully end the conflict between the two countries.

These meetings will not take place for a few weeks because General William Ward will visit the two countries to make an initial assessment of the situation in the individual countries. General Ward was a former commander of the NATO Stabilization force in postwar Bosnia and has also been assigned to Egypt, Somalia, Germany, and South Korea.

The newly appointed Secretary Rice said that this is a “time of optimism” for the Middle East. She is also quoted as saying, “We will have to, all of us, make certain that there is an effective fight against terrorism, because security and terrorism are at the core of peaceful existence”.

The Bush administration is hopeful because this was Secretary Rice’s first trip as Secretary of State and the tension has been eased between Israel and Palestine. In fact, officials have implied that Mr. Abbas may announce a long term cease fire with Israel.

If the cease fire is called, it will end four years of conflict between the two nations. The conflict began with a Palestinian uprising in 2000 over the rights to land that both nations consider holy.

For more information visit: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/07/international/middleeast/07cnd-mideast.html?hp&ex=1107838800&en=5de449077c9b169f&ei=5094&partner=homepage
“It is an important and popular fact that things are not always what they seem. For instance, on the planet Earth, man had always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much — the wheel, New York, wars and so on — whilst all the dolphins had ever done was muck about in the water having a good time. But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than man — for precisely the same reasons.”

—Douglas Adams

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In the circus tent of a hurricane designed by a drunken god my extravagant heart blows up again in a rampage of champagne-colored rain and the fragments whir like a weather vane while the angels all applaud.

Daring as death and debonair I invade my lion’s den; a rose of jeopardy flames in my hair yet I flourish my whip with a fatal flair defending my perilous wounds with a chair while the gnawings of love begin.

Mocking as Mephistopheles, eclipsed by magician’s disguise, my demon of doom tilts on a trapeze, winged rabbits revolving about his knees, only to vanish with devilish ease in a smoke that sears my eyes.

—Sylvia Plath