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November 27

Kosovo hot topic on margins of Annapolis Summit

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The status of internationally administrated Kosovo might turn out to be a hot topic on the margins of the Middle East peace conference launched in Annapolis on Monday amid last ditch efforts of the Contact Group's mediators to bring Kosovo Albanians and Serbia closer to mutually acceptable outcome of this controversial issue.

United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the EU's Security and Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana will hold a series of separate discussions addressing the Kosovo's status issue, just weeks before the mandate of international community's negotiators expires on Dec. 10.

However, those meetings are widely seen as yet another opportunity for bitterly opposed sides to further cement their positions, with U.S. standing firmly behind monitored independence for Kosovo Albanians, and Russia supporting Belgrade's efforts to preserve territorial integrity and maintain at least ceremonial control over its breakaway province.

The last unknown position is that of the internally divided EU, as Romania, Spain, Cyprus, Greece and Slovakia expressed deep concerns regarding Kosovo Albanians' decision to proclaim independence.

Solana, who had been a vocal supporter of compromise solution in the past, is expected to clarify the Union's stance on this issue during the Wednesday's talks with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in New York.