

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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ENERGY

PRINCE BANDAR DISCUSSES OIL PRODUCTION WITH WHITE HOUSE

Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar bin Sultan met with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in Washington DC on April 2 to discuss oil prices. He conveyed a message from Crown Prince Abdullah, and declared that Saudi Arabia will not allow a shortage in energy supplies to occur. Pointing out that the Kingdom had proved its policy in this respect last year, when oil production fell in Venezuela, in Nigeria, and in Iraq, he reiterated that the price of a barrel of oil should range between \$22 and \$28 as set by OPEC.

FIRST EURO-GULF ENERGY WORKSHOP HELD IN RIYADH

The Secretariat of the International Energy Forum (IEF) organized in Riyadh today the first Euro-Gulf Energy Workshop to discuss ways to develop GCC-Euro relations and improve cooperation in the oil and gas sectors. The workshop will address a number of issues affecting the current and future energy situation from the GCC-Euro perspective. A second workshop is planned for Italy later this year, followed by a final conference in Riyadh in 2005.

REFORM

PRINCE BANDAR PRAISES U.S. SENATOR ON REFORM ISSUE

Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar bin Sultan, in a statement praising a speech made by U.S. Senator Richard Lugar (R-Indiana), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at the Brookings Institute in Washington DC, declared: "The region is in need of reform, but as Senator Lugar recognizes, no lasting reform can be imposed from the outside."

TERRORISM

ANOTHER TERRORIST KILLED IN SHOOTOUT IN RIYADH

On Monday, April 5, a wanted car was observed in the eastern part of Riyadh. The two occupants ignored orders to stop. The pursuit resulted in an exchange of fire, killing one and wounding the other. Their identities are currently under investigation. No citizen or security officer was injured in the incident.

SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

KINGDOM REFUTES NEWSWEEK ACCUSATIONS

Crown Prince Abdullah's foreign affairs advisor Adel Al-Jubeir has called absolutely untrue allegations by *Newsweek* that a federal investigation into the bank accounts of the Saudi Embassy in Washington DC had identified more than \$27 million in "suspicious" transactions. "We are aware of the investigation, in fact we're working with the U.S. government on it," Al-Jubeir told Wolf Blitzer on *CNN's Late Edition* on April 4. "We have provided them with a list of all the students in the U.S. who receive money from Saudi Arabia, as well as all the support Saudi Arabia has given to various institutions in the U.S. We want to know if any of them are not legitimate so we can take action."

Al-Jubeir noted that Michael Isikoff previously wrote in *Newsweek* that Omar al-Bayoumi was a Saudi agent. "The FBI investigation of al-Bayoumi concluded he did not give money...nor was he an agent of the Saudi government. But I don't see *Newsweek* or Mr. Isikoff apologizing for the mistake they made." Al-Jubeir also said that Riggs Bank did not drop the Saudi Embassy as a customer, as Isikoff reported in his article. "I would argue that it was the other way around. We had some issues with the bank that pertained to loans and lines of credit, and the ambassador made the decision to terminate the relationship."

DOMESTIC ISSUES

PRISON OFFICIALS DISMISSED OVER 2003 FIRE

A Royal Decree has endorsed the findings of the committee set up to investigate a fire in the Haer Penitentiary near Riyadh on September 14, 2003, that resulted in the death by suffocation of 68 inmates. The fire was set by an inmate, who has been referred to court. A number of administrators and guards were found guilty of negligence and laxity in implementing evacuation plans and safety rules, and the director of prisons for Riyadh Province has been relieved of his post.

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