

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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TERRORISM

KINGDOM PURSUES SUSPECTS AS ACTS OF TERROR CONTINUE

Foreign minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal has declared that since combating terrorism is an international responsibility, those who are proven guilty of links with terrorist groups, such as the so-called Saudi opposition party in London, U.K., should be extradited to the authorities requesting them. He was speaking at a briefing in Jeddah on June 6, in which he expressed pride in the Saudi security forces who gave priority to saving the lives of the hostages in the recent terrorist attack in Al-Khobar. He gave assurances that the terrorists who escaped will be found and arrested.

Meanwhile, on the Taif-Makkah road on June 1, security forces killed two men suspected of involvement in the May 29 Al-Khobar attack. One of them disguised as a woman. No injuries were sustained by any security officer.

Early on June 2, unknown gunmen fired at passing cars on the Riyadh-Alkharj highway, slightly injuring a Saudi citizen; and on June 6, one Briton was killed and another injured when unknown gunmen fired on them in a Riyadh suburb.

SAUDI-U.S. PRESS CONFERENCE ON SAUDI CHARITIES

At a joint press conference in Washington, DC on June 2, Saudi Arabia and the United States requested that the United Nations 1267 Sanctions Committee add to its consolidated list of financiers of terrorism five branches of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation: the Netherlands, Albania, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia. In addition, the Saudi government announced the dissolution of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation in Riyadh, along with other Saudi charities which used to operate abroad. The assets of these entities will be folded into the Saudi National Commission for Relief and Charity Work Abroad, a non-governmental body assuming responsibility for the distribution overseas of private charitable donations from Saudi Arabia. These actions are the result of ongoing efforts to combat the financing of terrorism; in August 2003, Saudi Arabia and the United States established a joint task force in Riyadh for this purpose.

Crown Prince Abdullah's Foreign Affairs Advisor Adel Al-Jubeir commented on the occasion: "Al-Qaeda is trying to destabilize our economy and our government. But their barbaric actions grow more desperate while the resolve of our people to uproot them grows stronger."

OIL

OIL MINISTER COMMENTS ON RAISING PRODUCTION

Referring on June 4 to the OPEC decision to raise output (2.5 million barrels per day by mid August), oil minister Ali Al-Naimi affirmed that OPEC's primary goal is oil market stability by maintaining prices that are fair for the producer, the consumer and the investor, while preventing negative impact on the global economy. OPEC therefore seeks to maintain a price range of U.S. \$22 to \$28 a barrel. While affirming that increased production should reduce the current rocketing prices, Minister Al-Naimi noted that there could be no guarantee, since several other factors are involved.

In a lecture in Beirut on June 2, Minister Al-Naimi estimated the Kingdom's oil reserves at 261 billion barrels (one quarter of the world total), and its average daily production at over 8 million barrels (ten percent of the global figure).

Crown Prince Abdullah's Foreign Affairs Advisor Adel Al-Jubeir remarked in a statement on June 3: "If prices are too high, customers are hurt, economic growth slows, demand for crude oil slows, and the world economy is damaged. This, in the long run, also hurts producers, who are part of the world economy."

REFORM

DIALOGUE FORUM ON WOMEN TO BE HELD MID-JUNE

The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue will hold its Third National Forum in Madinah on June 12-14, on the topic 'Women's rights, duties, and education'. Around seventy men and women from all parts of the Kingdom are expected to take part.

Addressing reform in the region in a press briefing in Jeddah on June 6, foreign minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal reiterated that this should come from within the states concerned, commenting that the countries of the Middle East are not in need of opinions on how to reach democracy or *shura* [consultation]. Saudi Arabia, he said, is fortunate in its resources, and can depend on itself to introduce the reforms that it sees appropriate at the economic and political level.

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