

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE
INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE
ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA
IN WASHINGTON, DC

JUNE 21, 2004

TERRORISM

MURDER OF U.S. HOSTAGE PAUL JOHNSON

Crown Prince Abdullah's Foreign Affairs Advisor Adel Al-Jubeir confirmed on June 18 the death in Riyadh of U.S. hostage Paul Johnson, saying: "Today, we are faced with the tragedy of his gruesome death at the hands of barbarians who have rejected the teachings of their faith and the principles of humanity." Offering heartfelt condolences, he declared that the people of Saudi Arabia "are outraged by the cruel and cold-blooded murder of this innocent man. His murder has shaken us to the core." The perpetrators, he said, claim to be Muslim, but they are not: there is no justification in Islam for harming the innocent.

FOUR TERRORISTS KILLED, SUSPECTS IN U.S. HOSTAGE CASE

Late June 18, security forces killed four of the deviant group responsible for the brutal murder of U.S. hostage Paul Johnson: Abdulaziz Al-Muqren, Faisal Aldakheel, Turki Al-Mutairi, and Ibrahim Al-Duraihem. One security officer was killed, and two others wounded. In addition, a total of 12 people have been arrested, suspected of having links with the recent terrorist incidents.

Adel Al-Jubeir told Wolf Blitzer on CNN's 'Late Edition' on June 20 that the search is continuing for Mr. Johnson's body. He reiterated the Kingdom's policy against negotiating with terrorists; and denied as a myth, allegations that Saudi Arabia, together with Pakistan, contributed to the growth of al-Qaeda, pointing out that many countries gave money to Afghanistan, including the United States. Other myths that have been shattered, he said, are that the bin Laden family were whisked out of the United States when airspace was closed after 9-11; that the Saudi government funded al-Qaeda; and that Princess Haifa gave money to two of the hijackers -- all of these were dispelled by the 9/11 Commission's report.

SAUDI RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS CONDEMN TERRORIST ACTS

In London, U.K., Islamic Affairs Minister Shaikh Salih bin Abdulaziz Al As-Shaikh reiterated that Islam is a religion of love and tolerance that calls for dialogue with others. Makkah Imam Shaikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais led Friday prayers on June 11 at the East London Mosque, and called for interfaith peace and harmony. Saudi Muslim scholars issued a statement on June 13 condemning as outrageous crimes forbidden by Islam, all acts of terror that lead to death and the destruction of property. On June 18, Makkah Imam Shaikh Dr. Salih bin Abdullah

bin Humaid reiterated that any terrorist act is criminal and contrary to religion, noting that recent incidents in the Kingdom have targeted Muslims who thought themselves safe as well as non-Muslims who are under their protection.

SAUDI OFFICIALS DENY ANY DEAL WITH BIN LADEN

On June 20, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia categorically rejected any claims that its government has ever provided support for bin Laden or Al-Qaeda. In spite of an official statement from the 9-11 Commission confirming that there is no evidence of this, there are individuals who continue to try to malign the Kingdom by spreading untruths, or making insinuations to damage its reputation.

G-8 TASK FORCE COMMENDS SAUDI EFFORTS

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) set up by the G-8 nations has completed an in-depth evaluation and concluded that Saudi Arabia is “in line with the best international practices” and meets or exceeds all FATF recommendations on combating money laundering and terror financing. The FATF also identified a number of areas of excellence, such as the Saudi system of regulation of charities, which is more thorough and more effective than anything they had encountered elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom was critical of the report from the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force in regard to Saudi Arabia, calling it “politically motivated, ill-informed and factually incorrect” and noting that the CFR Task Force, unlike the G-8 FATF, did not send a team to Saudi Arabia and ignored much of the information provided, including by American officials.

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