

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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

FEBRUARY 8, 2005

COUNTER-TERRORISM CONFERENCE

INAUGURATED BY CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH

Crown Prince Abdullah inaugurated in Riyadh on February 5, 2005, the four-day Counter-Terrorism International Conference organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participating were fifty-one countries in addition to Saudi Arabia and including fifteen from the Arab World; plus eleven international organizations, including Interpol, the G-8's Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering, and two delegations from the United Nations. In a serious effort to explore the multi-dimensional and trans-national problem of terrorism, the participants are examining not only its root causes, but any relationship to money laundering, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling.

In his speech, Crown Prince Abdullah denounced the false slogans that have been raised by deviant groups as running counter to the teachings of Islam. The convening of the conference, he said, is evidence that the victims of terrorism are from a number of countries, differing in culture and religion; and that the international community is determined to confront such crimes together with their false ideas and extremist rhetoric. Expressing the hope that the conference would lead to effective international cooperation, he called for the establishment of an international center for combating terrorism to facilitate exchange of information in order to prevent terrorist acts, and declared that in the end, the forces of love, tolerance and peace will triumph.

'RIYADH DECLARATION'

The Counter-Terrorism International Conference concluded on February 8, 2005 with the 51 countries and 11 organizations participating in the four-day event expressing great appreciation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for calling for and hosting the conference. The final communiqué, to be known as the 'Riyadh Declaration', confirms that terrorist acts are a threat to international security, encourages mass media to condemn extremism and deviant ideas, urges countries and organizations worldwide to work together, supports the resolutions of the United Nations, and endorses Crown Prince Abdullah's proposal for an international center for combating terrorism.

INTERIOR MINISTER GIVES KINGDOM'S TERRORISM STATISTICS

Minister of Interior Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz confirmed that in 22 acts of terrorism in Saudi Arabia over the past two years, 90 innocent people have been killed and 507 injured; 39 security officers have lost their lives, and 213 wounded; and 92 militants have been killed and 17 injured. During this period, security forces succeeded in aborting 52 planned terrorist acts.

In a briefing on the progress of the conference, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal confirmed that the controversial issue of a definition of terrorism had been avoided, noting that the participants, rather than waste time arguing, prefer to work on forging specific suggestions. Commenting on the relationship between terrorism and school curricula, he said any incitement to extremism has been removed from materials used in the Kingdom's educational system.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom's Grand Mufti Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-AsShaikh issued a statement on February 4, 2005, praising the convening of the conference, and declaring that the malicious acts of the terrorists such as killing non-Muslims who are living in the Kingdom and accusing Muslims of being "infidels" are crimes that are in contravention of Islam. All Muslims should therefore cooperate to eradicate extremism and make young people aware of its dangers.

GOVERNMENT

CABINET RESHUFFLE AFFECTS FOUR MINISTRIES

Dr. Saleh bin Al-A'boud, Rector of the Islamic University in Madinah, replaces Dr. Muhammad bin Ahmed Al-Rasheed as Minister of Education; Dr. Abdulmuhsin Al-Akkas of the Consultative Council (*Majlis Al-Shura*) replaces Dr. Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Namlah as Minister of Social Affairs; and Dr. Fouad bin Abdulsalaam Al-Farsi, now Minister of Pilgrimage, has exchanged portfolios with Iyad bin Ameen Madani, now Minister of Culture and Information.

ECONOMY

JEDDAH ECONOMIC FORUM 2005 TO FOCUS ON CAPACITY BUILDING

The Jeddah Economic Forum for 2005, scheduled for February 19 to 21, will have as its theme 'Capacity Building: Developing People for Sustainable Growth'. The Forum is organized by the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) in coordination with U.K.'s London School of Business.

Meanwhile, Oil Minister Ali Al-Naimi has confirmed the Kingdom's surplus production capacity as about two million barrels per day, available for use if global supplies face a shortage. Last year Saudi Arabia increased its capacity to 11 million bpd, and plans a further increase to 12.5 million within four years.

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