

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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

JUNE 21, 2005

SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE IN RIYADH

Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Saud Al-Faisal met in Riyadh on June 20 with visiting U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and described her talks with Crown Prince Abdullah earlier that day as "deep and mutually beneficial".

At a joint press conference, Prince Saud and Secretary Rice affirmed the strength of Saudi-U.S. relations and the ongoing cooperation in the war on terrorism. Prince Saud declared: "We both believe that the future of our relations depends on the interaction between our respective citizens and we are working to ensure the openness which exists between our two nations continues into the future."

IRAQ

SAUDI ARABIA TO ATTEND BRUSSELS MEETING

At his June 18 press briefing, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal confirmed that Saudi Arabia will participate in the international conference scheduled for June 22 in Brussels, and expressed the hope that this conference will contribute to Iraq's stability, independence, territorial integrity and reconstruction.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

SAUDI ARABIA SIGNS SMALL QUANTITIES PROTOCOL

Saudi Arabia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) signed in Vienna, Austria, on June 16 the Small Quantities Protocol, an appendix to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

PRINCE SAUD CONFIRMS ADHERENCE TO NUCLEAR BAN

At his June 18 press briefing, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal denied that Saudi Arabia possesses any proscribed nuclear reactors or fissionable materials, re-affirmed the Kingdom's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and reiterated commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its appendices.

TERRORISM

TWO SUSPECTS KILLED; FIVE ARRESTED

In a follow-up to the murder of a security officer in Makkah on June 18, two militants suspected of the crime were observed on June 21 in Jeddah. Pursued by security forces, they opened fire, and in the subsequent shootout, were killed. During the encounter, three security men were injured, one seriously.

Meanwhile, five members of a gang, all of Chadian nationality, have been arrested in connection with the September 26, 2004, murder of French resident Laurent Barbot, and several armed robberies in Jeddah over a two-month period last year. They are suspected of perpetrating the crimes in order to finance their Al-Qaeda cell.

ECONOMY

SAUDI-MALAYSIAN CONSORTIUM WINS SHUAIBA WATER CONTRACT

The Kingdom's Water and Electricity Company (WEC) announced on June 18 that a Saudi-Malaysian consortium had won the bidding for the construction of the Independent Water and Power Project (IWPP) at Shuaiba, on a 'build, operate, own' (BOO) basis. This is the first of four such projects to be implemented by the private sector in accordance with a decision of the Supreme Economic Council in June of 2002, the other three being Shuqaiq, Raz Azzour and Jubail.

The consortium will own 60 percent of the share capital, with 32 percent owned by the Public Investment Fund (PIF) and 8 percent by the Saudi Electricity Company (SEC). Minister of Water and Electricity Abdullah Al-Hosain affirms that the project has the government's full support, commenting that Shuaiba will address the increasing demand for water and electricity for cities such as Jeddah, Makkah and Taif.

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