

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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UNITED NATIONS

KING ABDULLAH URGES U.N. TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT

At the weekly Cabinet meeting September 12, King Abdullah expressed the hope that the upcoming U.N. General Assembly summit would clarify decisions on various issues that stand in the way of development and stability. He stressed the Kingdom's concern to see a greater role for U.N. agencies in achieving sustainable development, and emphasized Saudi Arabia's continued contribution to development projects throughout the world. The King also noted the importance of the U.N.'s role in fighting terrorism.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S.

PRINCE TURKI AL-FAISAL ASSUMES AMBASSADORSHIP

Prince Turki Al-Faisal presented a copy of his credentials as Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in New York September 13. During the meeting, Prince Turki said that he looks forward to working alongside Secretary Rice and the Bush administration in a manner that serves joint interests.

TERRORISM

FOUR MOST-WANTED CONFIRMED DEAD IN DAMMAM RAID

Over a four-day period starting Sunday, September 4, security forces carried out operations in the Eastern Province city of Dammam that resulted in the deaths of four militants, all Saudis, on the list of 36 most-wanted issued on June 28. A fifth militant not on the list was also killed. Four security officers were killed; many others were wounded, most of them later discharged from hospital.

A total of 11 persons of various nationalities were arrested under suspicion of involvement in the incident. Found at the site were weapons and explosives, telecommunication equipment, and forged documents.

GRAND MUFTI URGES MODERATION

On September 9, the Kingdom's Grand Mufti Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-AsShaikh urged expatriates and citizens to continue to report any extremist behavior, saying that if a son or other relative has become confused, it is necessary to take him to a religious scholar who can show him the danger of his thinking and point out the right way instead. He called on anyone who is still involved in subversive actions to repent, and surrender to the authorities.

TRADE

SAUDI-U.S. TRADE AGREEMENT OPENS WAY TO WTO ACCESSION

Saudi Arabia and the United States signed a bilateral trade agreement on September 9, paving the way for the Kingdom's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Accession to the WTO will help promote diversity in Saudi Arabia's growing economy and open employment opportunities for the Kingdom's youth. In addition, membership will encourage foreign investment.

Accession to the WTO will benefit U.S. manufacturing and services industries, agriculture and American workers by providing increased access to the Kingdom's growing markets.

HUMAN RIGHTS

REGULATIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION APPROVED

The Cabinet on September 12 approved the regulations for the Kingdom's Human Rights Commission, the sole government body dealing with human rights issues in the Kingdom. The commission will report directly to the Prime Minister.

MIDDLE EAST

CABINET RENEWS TARIFF EXEMPTION FOR PALESTINIAN GOODS

On September 12, the Cabinet renewed a 2001 resolution continuing the importation of Palestinian commodities, with Saudi Arabia shouldering the customs tariffs for one more year, effective October 14, 2005.

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