

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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FOREIGN POLICY

King Abdullah interviewed by ABC's Barbara Walters

In an interview with ABC's Barbara Walters that aired October 14, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz stressed his commitment to fight terrorism until it is eliminated. He acknowledged that extremism exists in Saudi Arabia and almost every country in the world, and that the Kingdom has taken steps to counter its causes, including revising textbooks.

Commenting on the situation in Iraq, King Abdullah said that Saudi Arabia has not interfered in Iraq's affairs and he hopes justice and equity will prevail in that country. On rising oil prices, King Abdullah said that Saudi Arabia is concerned about high prices. King Abdullah also said that he believes strongly in women's rights, and that restrictions on women in the Kingdom will gradually be lifted.

Prince Turki comments on terrorism in Oxford speech

In remarks at Oxford University October 11, Saudi Ambassador to the United States Prince Turki Al-Faisal warned that Al-Qaeda is trying to create a wedge between peoples and religions, and underscored the importance of a collective local and international counterterrorism effort. Prince Turki also said that the unjust handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict above all else has damaged Western relations with the Islamic world.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi aid continues to Pakistan

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz on October 15 issued directives to extend SR 500 million [US \$133 million] to Pakistan. The additional aid is earmarked for the reconstruction of public infrastructure destroyed by the October 8 earthquake.

Meanwhile, in line with a previous directive to establish an airlift to provide aid, Saudi relief planes continue to arrive in Pakistan carrying foodstuffs, tents, blankets, power generators and other relief supplies. In addition, a Saudi medical team arrived in Pakistan on October 13 to establish a field hospital in areas affected by the quake.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Prince Bandar named National Security Council secretary-general

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz on October 16 appointed Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz Secretary-General of the National Security Council, with the rank of Minister. The King also approved the bylaws of the Council.

ECONOMY

Saudi Arabia leads Arab countries in attracting investment

Saudi Arabia led Arab countries in attracting direct foreign and Arab investment in 2004, said a report issued by the Kuwait-based Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation on October 17. Direct foreign investment in the Kingdom totaled US \$3.8 billion in 2004, according to Amr Al-Dabbagh, secretary-general of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA).

TRADE

Saudi Arabia likely to join WTO by December, says chief

Saudi Arabia will likely join the World Trade Organization (WTO) before the group's December summit in Hong Kong, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy said in remarks to the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Hong Kong October 16.

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