



JUNE 19, 2006

SAUDI ARABIA-US

Saudi Ambassador gives series of addresses this week

Saudi Ambassador to the US Prince Turki Al-Faisal gave several addresses this week on various topics – Saudi-US relations, energy security and Arab Americans in the US.

In a June 19 speech at the Brookings Institution, Prince Turki gave an overview of the Kingdom's perspective on Saudi-US relations five years after the September 11 terrorist attacks. He outlined four ways to help Saudi Arabia and the US improve relations and address current and future challenges: by establishing stronger links between the two governments, such as the Saudi-US Strategic Dialogue; by increasing people-to-people contact; and by changing the type of discourse between the two countries so that there is more constructive criticism and less political rhetoric that hardens all elements of society.

The ambassador discussed global energy security in June 20 remarks to the United States Energy Association. He outlined steps Saudi Arabia is taking to contribute to global energy security, such as expanding production and refining capacity as well as its infrastructure. He also said that Saudi Arabia believes oil prices today are too high, but supply plentiful. In addition, fears over geopolitical concerns – such as poor US-Venezuelan relations, problems in Nigeria, instability in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and tensions over Iran's nuclear program – must also be addressed through cooperation with the US and other countries.

In a June 17 keynote address at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee convention banquet, Prince Turki encouraged Arab Americans to become more involved in the American political process and to build bridges between America and the Arab world.

During his tenure as ambassador in Washington, Prince Turki has been conducting an outreach tour of America in order to listen to and address Americans' questions about the Kingdom. As part of that effort, Director of the Information Office of the Saudi Embassy Nail Al-Jubeir spoke to the Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas May 30 about the Saudi-US relationship and ongoing developments in the Kingdom. Al-Jubeir also discussed the Kingdom's public diplomacy efforts in an address to the International Public Relations Association-Gulf Chapter in Dhahran on June 12.

Kingdom announces scholarships to study civil aviation in the US

The Ministry of Higher Education and the General Authority of Civil Aviation are offering scholarships to Saudi students to study civil aviation in the United States, the Arab News reported June 20. The scholarships are open to both men and women. They include bachelor's and postgraduate studies in majors such as communications, electrical and computer engineering, computer science, systems analysis, air traffic control, flight safety, and other fields related to the airline transport industry.

Bodies of two Saudi detainees repatriated to the Kingdom

The Interior Ministry announced June 17 that the bodies of two Saudi detainees have been returned to the Kingdom from the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Spokesman Mansour Al-Turki said in a statement that the bodies were taken to a hospital for medical examinations and other standard procedures. The families of the two men have been informed, he added.

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah launches major projects in Qassim, Madinah

This week, King Abdullah launched several major projects in Qassim Province and Madinah. The King has been touring various provinces in the Kingdom in order to launch health, education and infrastructure projects.

On June 16, King Abdullah laid the foundation stone for a number of projects relating to the second phase of Qassim University in Buraydah. Estimated to cost more than SR 1 billion [\$266.7 million], the projects include a 400-bed hospital as well as faculties of Medicine, Dentistry, Shari'ah and Religious Principles, Engineering and Computer Science.

In Madinah June 18, King Abdullah inaugurated a project to expand the Prophet's Mosque so that it can accommodate an additional 270,000 worshippers, and announced that the Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Airport in Madinah would be converted to an international airport. The King also launched various other projects, including an expansion of Taybah University, a 500-bed maternity and children's hospital, new headquarters of the Madinah Governorate, a 200-bed National Guard Hospital and a new economic city.

