



FEBRUARY 20, 2007

FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign Minister discusses Saudi-Russian relations, regional issues

In his regular briefing February 14, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal welcomed the recent visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin and underscored the importance of cementing Saudi-Russian relations.

Prince Saud said the Kingdom does not see any obstacles to cooperating with Russia to develop a nuclear energy program. He pointed out that at last year's Jaber Summit in Riyadh, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders approved in principle the use of nuclear energy in line with international non-proliferation protocols.

The Foreign Minister also lauded the Makkah Agreement between Fatah and Hamas, and expressed the hope that the agreement on a Palestinian national unity government would receive the necessary international support.

On Lebanon, Prince Saud decried the February 13 bombings on commuter buses outside of Beirut that killed three people. He urged Lebanese leaders to resolve their differences through dialogue.

Iraq reopens embassy in Saudi Arabia after 17 years

Iraq reopened its embassy in Riyadh February 14, formally resuming diplomatic relations after 17 years.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, who was on a two-day visit to the Kingdom, opened the embassy in a ceremony. He said that the reopening of the embassy in Riyadh was based on an Iraqi government initiative to restore full diplomatic relations with Arab and Islamic countries, beginning with Saudi Arabia.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi Arabia donates \$1 million to WFP programs in Guinea

Saudi Arabia has donated \$1 million to the World Food Program's operations in Guinea, which is struggling to cope with some 20,000 refugees from conflicts in neighboring Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. The organization provides rations for the



refugees, school meals for 200,000 primary school students, programs to improve nutrition for mothers and children, as well as food-for-work projects.

In a statement today, the WFP thanked Saudi Arabia for its donation. “WFP is extremely grateful for this donation from Saudi Arabia, which has once again shown that it is as anxious as we are to make sure that food reaches the most needy,” Philippe Guyon LeBouffy, country director for Guinea, said in the statement.

Saudi Arabia has become an increasingly significant donor to the WFP, the statement noted. In 2006, the Kingdom donated nearly \$31 million, while Saudi individuals and associations donated almost \$10 million over the last two years. The Kingdom is the biggest contributor in the Middle East and the 16th largest overall. WFP operations in Lebanon, Cambodia, Palestine, Pakistan, as well as East and West Africa have all benefited from Saudi support.

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah opens annual Jenadriyah Heritage and Culture Festival

On February 14, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz opened the 22nd Jenadriyah National Festival for Heritage and Culture. The weeklong event – organized each year by the National Guard – showcases Saudi Arabia’s rich cultural heritage with exhibits including traditional arts and crafts, poetry, singing and dancing.

This year’s festival also offers competitions on memorizing and reciting the Holy Qur’an, a book fair, a fine arts exhibit, lectures on various cultural and religious topics, plays, night poetry sessions, and the traditional camel race.

