



NOVEMBER 27, 2007

FOREIGN POLICY

Crown Prince Sultan visits Russia for talks with President Putin

Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz met with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin November 23 for talks about regional and international issues, including Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian situation, the crisis over Iran's nuclear program, counterterrorism and the Middle East peace summit in Annapolis, Maryland. Bilateral relations were also discussed.

In a joint communiqué, Saudi Arabia and Russia highlighted the importance of enhancing Saudi-Russian efforts in support of the peace process, stressed the importance of supporting unity in both Iraq and Lebanon, called for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, denounced terrorism and confirmed their intention to enhance bilateral cooperation related to energy.

Prince Saud Al-Faisal addresses Annapolis peace conference

In an address at the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis November 27, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal called for an end the Arab-Israeli conflict so that the people of the region can focus on peace and development instead of war.

Prince Saud said that Saudi Arabia came to Annapolis to support serious talks on final-status issues, and highlighted Saudi Arabia's commitment to promoting peace in the Middle East.

"Lives must be spared, and hope must replace despair. Our region must be kept from sliding into turmoil and chaos," Prince Saud said. "The Middle East has the capacity of becoming a haven in which all the children of Abraham can live normal and prosperous lives, free of fear and insecurity."

Prince Saud called for the Annapolis conference to be followed by the launch of Syrian and Lebanese tracks as soon as possible. In addition, he said an international follow-up mechanism should be established to monitor the progress of the negotiations, with the goal of reaching a final settlement within the set timeframe.

Foreign Minister: Kingdom confident of US commitment to peace

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said that Saudi Arabia decided to attend the peace conference in Annapolis because it was confident in the US

commitment to the peace process and because there was an Arab consensus to do so. Prince Saud made the remarks in a November 26 interview with American media at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, DC.

Another factor in Saudi Arabia's decision to attend was President Bush's assurance that the United States would use its "full influence" to bring about an agreement, and that the US would bring its own ideas to the table as well, Prince Saud said. He also noted that the United States and the Quartet have given peace talks a one-year deadline, coinciding with the end of President Bush's second term.

Prince Saud welcomed Syria's decision to attend the Annapolis conference as a sign Damascus is willing to talk, and expressed the hope that the Syrian-Israeli track would soon be on the road to a solution.

The Foreign Minister was also asked about the case of the Saudi woman who was a victim of kidnapping and rape and sentenced to 200 lashes and six months in prison. He replied that bad judgments occur in independent legal systems, and the case is still under review.

"Judgments, bad judgments to my consideration, occur in legal systems. The legal system is an independent legal system in Saudi Arabia. The thing that is disturbing is that this judgment, although made by individuals, has been used to vilify the Saudi people and the government of Saudi Arabia although they are not responsible for the judgment," he said.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi relief aid begins arriving in Bangladesh and Mali

The first relief plane in a Saudi airlift to Bangladesh arrived in Dhaka November 26. The plane carried 96 tons of relief aid for people affected by the deadly cyclone that struck Bangladesh recently. On November 18, Saudi Arabia pledged to send humanitarian aid and extended a \$100 million grant to Bangladesh to ease the suffering caused by the cyclone.

Saudi Arabia also began a relief airlift to Mali November 23. The initial relief plane carried 79 tons of relief items to Mali, which has been stricken with floods and torrential rains. The relief aid included 3,500 cartons of foodstuffs, 500 tents, 2,500 blankets, 10,000 mosquito nets and seven electric generators.

