



DECEMBER 4, 2007

FOREIGN POLICY

King Abdullah briefed by President Abbas on Annapolis conference

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Riyadh December 1. During the meeting, President Abbas briefed King Abdullah on the recent peace conference in Annapolis. The King in turn expressed the hope that these international efforts would result in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

At its December 3 meeting, the Cabinet reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to fostering peace in the region, and expressed the hope that the Annapolis conference would contribute to the launch of serious Palestinian-Israeli peace talks between as well as the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi authorities arrest 208 suspected militants

Saudi security forces have arrested 208 suspected militants who planned a series of attacks, the Ministry of Interior announced November 28.

The planned attacks included an imminent one on an oil installation in the Eastern Province, attacks with missiles as well as a number of assassinations of Muslim scholars and security forces. Some of the suspects are also accused of promoting terrorism, sending individuals to "troubled areas" to engage in terrorist acts, and providing financial support to terrorists.

Authorities arrested the suspects over the past few months in security operations around the Kingdom, according to the statement. The operations also netted information and materials.

In a December 2 press conference, Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz said that Saudi security forces have foiled more than 180 terrorist plots. If even 30 percent of those plots had been carried out, the Kingdom would have faced great tragedy, he noted.

Prince Nayef also said that the identities of the 208 suspected militants who were arrested would be released at a later date in order to avoid compromising ongoing security investigations.



Pilgrims begin arriving in Saudi Arabia for the Hajj

Saudi Arabia has begun welcoming pilgrims for this year's Hajj. As of November 30, around 570,480 people had already arrived for the annual pilgrimage.

Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAA) alone expects to transport more than 1.1 million pilgrims this year, an increase of 207,000 over last year. The pilgrims will fly from 80 cities in the Kingdom and overseas, including 18 North American and European cities. The Jeddah Islamic Port has also completed its preparations for the Hajj pilgrims.

In related news, King Abdullah will host 1,000 pilgrims from more than 25 countries for the Hajj this year.

ENERGY

Oil Minister: Markets are well supplied

Oil Minister Ali Al-Naimi said November 28 that while Saudi Arabia is concerned about rising oil prices, global markets are well supplied and there are sufficient inventories.

"We observe with great concerns the recent escalation of oil prices, but we believe that, the world market is well supplied and the petroleum inventories are comfortable," Al-Naimi said in an address at the Middle East Asia Energy Summit in Singapore. "Fundamentals do not support current high petroleum prices. The move to such high prices has been supported by the weakening of the US dollar, speculation, geopolitics, and the fear of a major disruption of supplies."

FOREIGN AID

Saudi Arabia funds training center for women in the West Bank

The Saudi Committee for the Relief of the Palestinian People signed an agreement with the United Nations Program for Human Settlements (UN Habitat) on November 28 to fund a \$1.6 million vocational training center for Palestinian women in Hebron, the West Bank.

Also on November 28, a Saudi-financed bridge opened in Lebanon. The Jadra Bridge was destroyed by Israeli attacks on Lebanon last year.

