



APRIL 1, 2008

SAUDI-US RELATIONS

King Abdullah meets with Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz met with Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff at the royal ranch in Jenadriyah March 26 to discuss issues of mutual concern. Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs Prince Miteb bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Ambassador to the US Adel A. Al-Jubeir, and US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ford Fraker also attended the talks.

Chertoff met separately with Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal and Shura Council Chairman Dr. Saleh bin Homaid, who stressed the importance of easing restrictions on US visas for Saudi students. Chertoff replied that the US is working on the issue.

King Abdullah meets with US Chamber of Commerce CEO

King Abdullah met with the President and CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce Tom Donohue in Riyadh March 30 to discuss economic issues of mutual interest. Attendees included Foreign Minister Prince Saud, Chief of General Intelligence Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, Ambassador Al-Jubeir and Ambassador Fraker. Finance Minister Ibrahim Al-Assaf met separately with Donohue on March 31.

In related news, Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General for Military Affairs Prince Khalid bin Sultan met with Lincoln Bloomfield Jr., the State Department's Special Envoy for Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) Threat Reduction in Riyadh March 30.

FOREIGN POLICY

Cabinet meeting focuses on Lebanon, Palestinian situation

During the weekly Cabinet meeting March 31, the Cabinet stressed the importance of implementing the Arab League resolution on Lebanon. It also outlined several guidelines for dealing with the Palestinian situation: the creation of a national unity government, adherence to the Arab Peace Initiative, learning from previous failures, and recognition among world powers that the Palestinian issue is a global responsibility.

Foreign Minister comments on Damascus summit

In a regular press briefing March 30, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said that Saudi Arabia had been looking forward to last week's Arab summit in



Damascus and that it has never boycotted an Arab summit. However, circumstances related to the summit did not suggest the desired or hoped-for result, he stated.

Prince Saud noted that there have been flagrant attacks by some Lebanese factions on the Arab League, and called for a firm response to those attacks in order to maintain the credibility of Arab organizations. He also denied that the Kingdom pressured Egypt, Jordan and Yemen to send low-level representation to the summit, or that there were efforts to isolate Syria.

SAUDI ARABIA

Riyadh Governor: Religious extremists are tools of destruction

In a March 29 speech, Governor of Riyadh Province Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz described religious extremists as enemies of the Saudi state, and warned that they have become tools of destruction and terrorism. Islam has always advocated moderation, he said. Prince Salman made the remarks at the opening of a seminar on the life and achievements of King Abdulaziz Al-Saud in Makkah.

FOREIGN AID

Kingdom finances development projects in Sri Lanka, Maldives

The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) recently signed two agreements with Sri Lanka to provide \$22.5 million for the construction of an epilepsy hospital and a healthcare development project, including a nerve trauma center, in Colombo.

The SFD also signed an agreement with the Maldives to fund \$55.5 million in development projects for reconstruction in areas impacted by tsunami.

Saudi relief group turns over 2,700 houses to Pakistani families

The Saudi Public Assistance for Pakistan Earthquake Victims (SPAPEV) has handed over to Pakistani families the keys to 2,700 prefabricated houses that were built as part of Saudi Arabia's aid to victims of the October 2005 earthquake.

A \$16.7 million contract was signed to construct 4,000 houses in Balakot, North-West Frontier Province in October 2006. The remaining 1,300 houses are expected to be completed very soon.

