



JULY 1, 2008

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia marks 3rd anniversary of King Abdullah's reign

This week, Saudi Arabia marked the third anniversary of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's ascension to the throne on August 1 (25 Jumada II, 1426). In a statement on the occasion, the Cabinet praised King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's vision that aims to boost relations with friendly countries, promote interfaith dialogue, annihilate terrorists and promote balanced development throughout the Kingdom.

The statement also highlighted the King's achievements on both the domestic and international levels, including seeking Arab cooperation to confront regional crises, investing in the Kingdom's energy sector, and emphasizing social development programs.

Saudi authorities arrest more than 700 suspected militants

Saudi authorities have arrested 701 suspected militants of different nationalities since the beginning of this year, the Ministry of Interior announced June 25. Of the 701 suspects arrested, 181 have been released and 520 remain in custody for links to Al-Qaeda.

According to the Ministry, the suspects planned attacks on oil installations in the Kingdom. They were also recruiting and acquiring funds in various ways, including theft and fraud.

The arrests were the result of a series of security operations that also netted weapons, ammunition, electronics, documents and cash. Documents found during the operations indicate that the suspects were engaged in recruiting in order to "revive the criminal activities in all regions of the Kingdom" to destabilize the country.

As part of their recruitment efforts, the suspects exploited religious beliefs and spread "misleading propaganda" on the Internet. Some of the suspects had links with foreign organizations and used the Hajj as a means of communicating with militants abroad.

Security forces also discovered that militants abroad were taking advantage of facilities for pilgrims to recruit Asian and African individuals to carry out attacks in the Kingdom. These cells primarily targeted economic installations by seeking work at the sites, the Ministry said.

In addition, one of the suspects was found with a message from Al-Qaeda No. 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Ministry said.



Another cell arrested in Yanbu was raising money by selling fake coupons for meat purchased by Muslims during the Hajj as part of their religious duty. In May 2008, Saudi authorities arrested 28 militants of different nationalities linked to Al-Qaeda.

SAUDI-US RELATIONS

King Abdullah meets with CENTCOM chief, Sen. Kerry

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz met with Chief of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) Gen. David Petraeus in Jeddah June 30 to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Also on June 30, King Abdullah met with Senator John Kerry (D-Massachusetts) in Jeddah. Minister of Finance Dr. Ibrahim Al-Assaf met separately with Sen. Kerry June 29 for talks about finance, investment and other economic issues.

FOREIGN AID

World Bank to work with Saudi Arabia on energy initiative

The World Bank has agreed to work with Saudi Arabia to implement an energy initiative to help impoverished countries cope with the burden of high oil prices, according to a June 24 statement issued by President Robert Zoellick.

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz proposed the initiative at the Jeddah energy forum June 22. He also announced that Saudi Arabia is allocating \$500 million in soft loans to help developing countries carry out energy and other projects.

