



NOVEMBER 25, 2008

SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

King Abdullah completes U.S. visit

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz departed the United States on November 20 after completing a tour that took him to New York, Washington, DC and Rochester, Minnesota.

King Abdullah arrived in the U.S. on November 7 to attend a U.N. interfaith dialogue conference in New York. He then participated in a G-20 economic summit on November 15 in Washington. While in the U.S., King Abdullah held talks with several top officials, including President George W. Bush, former President Bill Clinton, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

On November 22, after a two-day visit to Morocco, the King returned to Saudi Arabia.

Crown Prince Sultan arrives in New York

Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz traveled to the United States on November 23 to undergo medical check-ups, according to a statement released by the Royal Court. The Crown Prince was accompanied by Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Governor of Riyadh Province, and a number of other princes and senior officials.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Saudi King meets with Tony Blair

King Abdullah received Tony Blair, the Special Envoy of the Quartet Committee for Middle East Peace, at the royal palace in Jeddah on November 23. During their talks, they discussed the status of the Palestinians, as well as the stalled regional peace process.

Prince Saud opposes negotiating with pirates

During a press conference in Oslo, Norway on November 22, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal reiterated Saudi Arabia's opposition to negotiating with the pirates who seized a Saudi-owned oil supertanker on November 12.

The Sirius Star, which belongs to a subsidiary of Saudi Aramco, was hijacked 420 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia. Saudi Arabia is not encouraging the owners of the tanker to engage in ransom negotiations.

Prince Saud called for international efforts to put an end to piracy. "Like terrorism, it is an evil that has to be eradicated," he said, adding that the Kingdom is ready to participate in a multinational force to confront piracy.

SAUDI ARABIA

Health service preparations for the Hajj are complete

On November 23, Saudi Health Minister Dr. Hamad Al-Manea announced that all health-related preparations for this year's Hajj season have been completed. A total of 138 health centers and 24 hospitals with 3,939 beds are currently available to provide services for pilgrims. The Ministry of Health has hired 100 doctors from Pakistan and Jordan and 247 nurses from Malaysia to ensure adequate staffing. Additionally, a health center will open at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah to provide care to travelers.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi donations aid Afghans, Palestinians and Lebanese

On November 18, Saudi Arabia dispatched an aid shipment to the Pajor District of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province to assist Afghan refugees. The supplies included beds, blankets, tents and food baskets for more than 500 families.

The following day, the Kingdom launched the second phase of an aid program for residents of the Gaza Strip. Relief supplies, including baskets of food and other necessities, are being delivered to the impoverished area. The program is part of an agreement to support a number of projects and programs that will provide \$6 million worth of food, medical supplies and fuel to the Palestinians.

On November 20, the Saudi Embassy in Beirut announced that the Kingdom had donated \$1 million to the UN Mine Action Coordination Center in southern Lebanon. The latest contribution brings to \$1.5 million the total amount donated by the Kingdom for this purpose.

