



Adjunct Professor of International Affairs

February 5, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: **COLONEL MIKE MEESE**
DEPARTMENT HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

CC: **COLONEL CINDY JEBB**
DEPUTY DEPARTMENT HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

Subject: Academic Report - General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret)
VISIT SAUDI ARABIA 26 JAN—2 FEB 2007

1. PURPOSE: This memo provides feedback reference Saudi Arabia visit 26 January – 2 February 2007.

Look forward to doing a faculty seminar with Department of Social Sciences at your convenience in the Spring semester.

2. SOURCES:

- a. US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia James C Oberwetter:** one-on-one office call.
- b. Mr. Michael Gfoeller DCM:** one-on-one office call. Mr. Gfoeller has 17 years diplomatic service in Saudi Arabia.
- c. Country Team Briefing.** (Political Counselor, Economic Affairs Officer, Political-Military Affairs Officer.)
- d. Senior US Intelligence Official and Deputy:** private briefing.
- e. DAO/DIA Team -- Col Bob Rosedale USAF Defense Attaché:** Briefing/Working Lunch at US Embassy.
- f. MG Rhett Hernandez USA:** Briefing by Chief US Military Training Mission and USMTM Staff.
- g. BG Richard McCabe USA:** Briefing by OPM SANG and OPM SANG Staff.
- h. Embassy Staff at DCM Residence:** Working Dinner.
- i. MG Bob Coffey USA (Ret):** Briefing by VINNELL ARABIA CORPORATION.
- j. Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, HRH Saud Al-Faisal:** Official Visit. (Accompanied by US Ambassador).
- k. Minister of the Interior, HRH Mohammed bin Naif:** Meeting.
- l. MOI Security Service, MG (Dr) (Senior Security official):** Presentation -- “Internal Security Situation” and then working dinner MOI. (Brilliant officer. PhD... UK.... “Artificial Intelligence”)

- m. Chief of the General Staff, General Saleh bin Ali Al-Muhaya:** Meeting. (CJCS). (Accompanied by MG Rhett Hernandez.)
- n. Minister of Labor, Dr. Ghazi Al-Ghoseibi:** Meeting.
- o. Commander Saudi Arabia National Guard (SANG), HRH Prince Mit'eb bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz:** Meeting with Deputy Commander SANG. (King is actual/titular Commander).
- p. Senior Officers SANG (MG Rasheed Al-Zahrani):** Gave presentation on GWOT followed by Q&A. Then working lunch.
- q. Chairman, Kingdom Holdings, HRH Al-Waleed bin Abdulaziz:** Meeting. (Saudi businessman).
- r. Royal Court Advisor, HRH Khalid bin Fahd and Guests.** Dinner. Business leader.
- s. Chairman Abdulaziz Foundation, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Saeed, Advisor to the Royal Court:** Meeting.
- t. Governor of Riyadh Province, HRH Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz:** Meeting.
- u. Chairperson Olayan Corp, Ms. Lubna Olayan:** Meeting. Global business leader.
- v. National Legislature President. (Dr.) Salih bin Abdullah bin Hemaïd of Majlis Al-Shura:** Meeting. (He is also Imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca.) (On National TV).
- w. Foreign Affairs Committee of Majlis Al-Shura Chairman Bandar bin M. Al-Aiban:** Meeting. (Six committee members. Subjected to three hour grilling).
- x. Plenary Session of the Majlis Al-Shura:** Presentation to 150 delegates. 75% with PhD or Professional degrees) (On National TV).
- y. Amjed Shaker, SAGIA:** Meeting. (Government Development Agency for the five new model cities--\$15 Billion each).
- z. Saudi Commander of Counter-Terrorism Task Force:** Meeting.
- aa. President of Exxon-Mobil Saudi Arabia:** Dinner. (guests --a banker, an educator, a legislator...all with PhD's from US Universities.)
- bb. US Foreign Commercial Service:** Briefing.
- cc. Jeddah Chamber of Commerce President and members:** Meeting.
- dd. Mecca Planning Commission:** Briefing on Mecca—The Holy City.
- ee. Twenty Saudi businessmen—Jeddah:** Seminar/Working Lunch.
- ff. Saudi female Journalist:** Meeting. (Involved in women's issues.)

3. GENERAL:

1st: Normally my CENTCOM trip personal observations looking at actual ground conditions do not differ greatly from my expectations learned from closely following a region through official reports and the media. Saudi Arabia was a very positive surprise and not what I expected --- based on the snapshot I held from being a division commander on the ground for eight months during 1990-91. (Desert Shield-Desert Storm).

2nd: The Saudi military, political, and business leadership that I encountered were extremely impressive. Almost across the board--- they came across as: determined to maintain peaceful internal order, committed to maintaining non-war relations with their neighbors; politically reasonable in tone (except for the Shia issue and Israel); beautifully educated; very hard working; and thoughtful to the challenges of social, religious, and political change without political violence and chaos in an incredibly conservative society.

3rd: They are also extremely and objectively pro-American in terms of strongly wanting US weapons and training, US security guarantees, US business partnerships ---and access to: US education, medical care, investment opportunities, banking resources, and recreation. This is a very strong impression. These people are sincere.

4th: The Saudis are fundamentally hurt by their perception of US fear and loathing of their nation since “911.” They are somewhat in denial—which I pointed out to them. They all professed shock that we had walked away from an ally of such long-standing commitment based on “sixteen hijackers”—none of whom were pilots of the suicide aircraft—who were targeted and selected by Al-Qaeda to embarrass the Saudis--- who were isolated criminals in a nation of 27 million people--- and who were part of an international terrorist organization that had targeted Saudi Arabia as much as the United States. They see every media slight, every visa problem, every diplomatic offense, and every denial of military support as evidence of discrimination based on “911.” This feeling of betrayal was capped by the President’s State of the Union Speech dealing with the US “addiction to oil”.... A damaging speech that they perceived as targeting an ally who had been resolute for decades in standing with America in a hostile Arab world.

5th: The Saudis strongly and adamantly feel we ignored their expert regional advice (directly from the King to President Bush in Crawford, Texas before the ground invasion) --- and made a mess of Iraq which now: imperils their northern border, threatens the Iraqi Sunni minority, gave Iraq to the Iranians, created a Sunni-Shia split that they feel (incorrectly) did not previously exist, put the Iranians on their northern border, and weakened Saudi security. They add that the botched execution of Saddam during the first day of the Holy Season (the equivalent they say of an execution on Christmas Eve) gave a final legitimacy to a criminal Saddam that was extremely harmful. In addition, they note that they had 1.3 million Muslims in Mecca on the day Saddam was executed -- who could have exploded in fury at the insult to Islam caused by both the date and manner of his execution. Their pushback was...”don’t tell us it was the Shiites that did this---you had him in your custody—by releasing him—you put us at unwarned risk.”

6th: The Saudis strongly and positively responded to my own intervention that the two nations--the US and Saudi Arabia—were strongly bound by intense common interests---that the two nations had no option but to cooperate for our mutual economic and security interests—and that there were no real alternative alliance options for either nation.

7th: The Saudis are awash in cash. The price of oil is flooding their government with economic, political, and military options. Much of the nation is involved in a crash building boom. This is not a third world country. (I realize there are many different realities in Saudi Arabia---the villages in much of the country are still in the 17th Century.) They are in a deliberate and reasonably well thought out national development surge. (\$15 Billion per city to create FIVE new economic cities in a decade. \$15 Billion to enhance border security. Tens of Billions to create a modernized Navy, Air Force and national command/control/early warning/intelligence/satellite system. Tens of Billions to create a modern educational system. Tens of Billions to bring industrial capacity to Saudi Arabia. Tens of Billions to upgrade transportation (Ports, railroads, airfields, highways. Billions to craft a better, safer Hajj infrastructure, etc)

8th: The Saudis are carefully thinking through the challenge of remaining a devout Muslim nation while allowing better employment and opportunities for women, the creation of a modern education system, the effective use of credit/banking, the opening of the Kingdom to business and tourism, the restriction of the Religious Police to avoid alienating youth and protecting women from public harassment, and the full exploitation of the triumph of Saudi acceptance into the WORLD TRADE ASSOCIATION. (WTO).

9th: The Saudis have created an enormously effective internal security system. They have fractured and then killed or captured the majority of the original threat structure that carried out the first wave of al-Qaeda attacks on foreigners and their own political system. They are fighting this war not only with extremely effective counter-terrorist formations---but also a war of ideas, new social/political tools, and the direct participation of their Muslim religious leaders. We should listen to them ---and learn from them.

10th: The Saudis are correctly concerned about Iranian long-term imperialism backed by a powerful armed forces and nuclear weapons. It is my personal judgment that the Saudis will go nuclear within ten years -- if we do not repair the bi-national alliance, create regional counters to Iranian expansionism, and equip them with fully modernized military capabilities. They have already publicly announced their legitimate interest in nuclear power production capability.

4. US ENTRY VISAS:

The single biggest outrage from the Saudi perspective is the problem getting visas to the US. It is easily corrected with minimal resources through common-sense policy changes.

The Saudis want to send their teenagers to US universities, their sick people to US medical care, their business leaders to US business, their military people to US training sites, and their wealthy population to US recreation and shopping. Our ham-fisted, inflexible visa policy is losing friends and billions of dollars.

We need to open the visa consulate operations in Western Saudi Arabia –Jeddah ----and the Eastern Provinces-- Ad-Damman. We now give a “wealthy Saudi grandmother with cancer-- who lives outside Riyadh—the requirement to fly to the Capital--stand in a line for HOURS starting at 6AM—and then possibly get turned down because of the incredible similarity of names among Saudis. If turned down...she then flies back to her home. Resubmits information. Flies back to Riyadh—and then possibly again gets turned down with no explanation.”

We should open Eastern and Western Province visa sections in berm-protected trailers – outside vulnerable urban centers - with Saudi security in less than 60 days. We should require the Saudi Ministry of the Interior to sign off on all visa requests. They are very keen on protecting the US from another attack. The MOI security services have penetrated Saudi society and can sort out who is the real threat.

5. US FAMILIES RETURN TO SAUDI ARABIA:

The Saudis are deeply insulted that we evacuated our families. Most of the Europeans, Australians, etc did not. They want them back. The Saudis believe there is still a threat--but that it is enormously reduced by their extremely aggressive counter-terrorist strategy. The crime rate, the safety concerns are FAR LESS THAN A MAJOR US CITY. Tens of thousands of Europeans and Americans move freely around Saudi Arabia without issue. They camp out—they go to public places—western women are not harassed and feel safe. (With modest clothing and demeanor).

The US compounds and the international diplomatic quarters are very secure. The Saudis are in general enormously friendly to foreigners and in particular Americans. There is ample support infrastructure...western stores, tourism, sports, scuba diving, five star hotels; communications, etc. They welcome us into their homes. US women are welcomed into their wives social activities. There is a huge and interactive expatriate community.

The US Military and the US contractors want the families back now on a voluntary basis ----in particular, those who are without school age children. (There is, however, a first-rate English language, international school system available.)

State Department policy treats Saudi Arabia as an unaccompanied tour -- with huge pay differential for hardship and hostile conditions. This policy allows Foreign Service officers to satisfy their career requirement for service in a one-year combat area. Many (to include the Embassy RSO) are actually accompanied by their wives (who are Embassy employees) and they serve for years in this supposed danger area. There is an institutional bias in the decision process.

We should immediately return families on a voluntary basis to Saudi Arabia. During a phase-in period we should retain hostile service pay. Our US military is grossly over-committed and we need assignments where our families can live together. It will enormously improve our ability to recruit and retain talented people to live and work in Saudi Arabia.

Service in Saudi Arabia is an exciting, reasonably safe, and satisfying environment. It is nonsense to compare this to service in Iraq or Afghanistan.

6. RELEASABILITY OF US WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY:

The Saudis need cutting edge US military technology to counter and deter the Iranian threat. There is in my view, zero chance of the Israelis attacking Saudi Arabia. There is in my judgment, zero chance of the Saudis attacking anyone (never mind the Israelis.)

It serves our national interests to have US military technology in the hands of the Saudis...along with our parts system, our trainers, our training system, our doctrine, our US-Saudi interoperability.

There is less likelihood of the Saudis transferring US secret military technology to a third party-- than an ally like the UK or the Israelis ---(for commercial-- not espionage purposes).

The Saudis are a cash customer. They are in an ongoing process to make major purchases. They are humiliated by the delay and the unpredictability of the FMS process. They have immediate options to buy from the French, the British, and the Russians (Putin coming soon to this marketplace). We are going to lose the technology connection to this important ally if we do not correct the system ---to include the problem with hostile oversight by the US Congress.

7. US MISSION TO SAUDI ARABIA:

There is an uncommonly talented and effective US mission to Saudi Arabia. They accurately, in my view, understand the situation. The US Ambassador, Jim Oberwetter has been extremely effective and is widely respected by the Saudis --as well as by his own Embassy and the US Military Mission.

The US Military Mission (MG Rhett Hernandez), the OPM SANG mission (BG Richard McCabe), and the Vinnell Corporation team (MG (Ret) Bob Coffey) are simply first-rate, professional, high morale, and experienced.

It is a real joy to see such a large and effective US team operating in such a crucial arena.

8. SUMMARY:

We need to repair the relationship with the Saudis. It should be easy. Only three US Senators have been to Saudi Arabia in three years. We need to pay attention to them. They are crucial to our economic and security interests. They have enormous amounts of cash. Their leadership is sound. They are strongly pro-American. They are extremely easy to work with. They are trying to achieve social and political change without violent revolution.

The solution is to: Fix the visa system; get them required military technology rapidly and flexibly for cash; get our own US political and business leadership to see them first-hand in Saudi Arabia; get our families back in country; welcome their students, military trainees, businessmen, and sick people into America; fix the chaos on their northern border in Iraq; and support new alliances to counter the Iranian threat without military provocation.

General Abizaid is a deeply respected national figure throughout the Saudi leadership. His leadership has been greatly valued by the Saudis and the US Mission.

Barry R McCaffrey
General, USA (Ret)
Adjunct Professor of International Affairs
United States Military Academy
West Point, NY