

Memorandum for the Record

Meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Nizar Madani

Date: October 15, 2003

Location: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh

Commission participants: Philip Zelikow, Daniel Byman, and Kevin Scheid

Other participants: Acting Charge d' Affaires Margaret Scobey, MFA protocol representatives

Writeup by: Dan Byman

Reviewed by: Philip Zelikow

Notes: This memorandum is a summary of the key points of the meeting

Philip Zelikow began with an overview of the Commission's work and asked questions on the Kingdom's willingness and capacity to fight terrorism, both before and after September 11, 2001. Nizar responded to the questions and raised several additional issues for consideration.

Nizar emphasized that the September 11 attacks horrified most Saudis. The 15 Saudis who carried out the attacks do not represent the government or the people. He claimed that polling indicated that 90 percent of Saudis reject Bin Ladin and his activities. In Nizar's view, the United States and Saudi Arabia are in the "same boat" with regard to terrorism. In fact, he believes that Bin Ladin made the decision to use Saudis for the attack in order to drive a wedge between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Since the September 11 attacks, Saudi Arabia has taken seven steps to fight terrorism:

- Saudi leaders have declared a "relentless war" against terrorists, those who fund them, and those who justify their activities ideologically;
- The Kingdom has frozen terrorist assets and tried to block both deliberate and accidental financial support;
- A High Commission was established in 2003 to oversee charities;
- Approximately 500 suspected terrorists have been arrested, and regular arrests continue;
- Terrorist cells have been broken up, and arms seized;
- Saudis have provided information on terrorists to several governments, including the United States, that has saved many lives; and
- The Kingdom has established two joint task forces with the United States.

Saudi Arabia often did a poor job explaining its policies to the American public. After September 11, however, it has become more open. He encourages Americans to visit the Kingdom to learn about how it is fighting terrorism.

Saudi foreign policy emphasizes preserving peace and stability. The primary issues today are the Arab-Israeli conflict and Iraq. The Arab-Israeli dispute is a primary source of instability, so the Kingdom works hard for peace. In Iraq, Saudi Arabia wants to preserve both the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. He believes that Iraqi stability requires progress on the political process in Iraq, the role of the United Nations, and the economic situation.

Saudi Arabia has made progress on relations with its neighbors. Saudi Arabia and Yemen cooperate closely. The often-troubled relationship improved considerably after the 2000 border agreement. Relations with Iran were poor after the 1979 Islamic revolution, but have improved

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In Saudi embassies, the Ambassador has the responsibility for the bilateral relationship. Embassy officials responsible for Islamic affairs or commerce rely on their own agencies for administration and budget concerns. If they are acting inappropriately, the Ambassador can take the issue to the government in Riyadh.

Nizar had no information on the post-September 11 departure of several members of the Bin Ladin family from the United States, but he noted that this was not a Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsibility. Zelikow asked that he look into this matter and provide additional information, and Nizar promised to help in this process.'

Nizar expressed disbelief about the allegations regarding Princess Haifa, noting that it was preposterous that she was involved in terrorism. Zelikow expressed understanding of this position and explained that the interest was primarily due to the unclear role of Osama Bassnan - if the Commission could learn more about his role, everything could be put in a clearer perspective.

Nizar also emphasized that [redacted] [Embassy believes he is a member of the *shura* Council] was a good man, whom he knew personally and respected. Zelikow noted that circumstances had put him in the public eye in the United States and that the Commission sought access to him to set the record straight.

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