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Saudi Counter Terrorism Efforts:

The Changing Paramilitary and Domestic Security Apparatus

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Please note that this a working draft. To comment, or to provide suggestions and corrections to the authors, please e-mail them at acordesman@aol.com or nawafobaid@aol.com.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Al-Qaeda is scarcely the first internal threat that Saudi Arabia has faced. The Saudi monarchy has had to deal with a long series of internal challenges from Islamic extremists since the time of the Ikhwan in the 1920s, as well as from secular movements supported by other Arab states. These struggles were particularly serious during the peak of Nasserism and Pan Arabism in the 1950s, and the first major Islamic backlash from oil wealth and modernization in the late 1970s.

These internal security challenges decreased during the period during 1980-1990 (following the Grand Mosque takeover in 1979 until the Gulf War in 1990), largely because of the Kingdom's oil wealth, rapid growth, and a focus on internal development.

However, they became a resurgent problem after the Gulf War because of the rise of new extremist movements hostile to any US or Western military presence on Saudi soil. After the mid-1990s, the Saudi government increasingly came under direct and indirect attacks by such Islamic extremist groups. As a result, the Saudi government slowly strengthened its internal security and counterterrorist programs. It also cooperated with the US in a number of investigations including Al-Khobar Towers, the attack on the Saudi National Guard Headquarters, and the attack on the USS Cole.

Saudi Internal Security before "9/11"

The Saudi reaction to Islamic extremists or "deviant" threats was relatively limited, however, until the events of "9/11". The senior leadership quietly put pressure on the Ulema. It arrested a wide range of extremists, and publicly condemned terrorism. It exploited the fact that the Saudi clergy is funded by the government and there are no Madrassas in the Kingdom that provide religious education separate from the state educational system.

The Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs (MOIA) was first organized for the purpose of religious administration, but it has always had an internal security element as well. It has been used to provide both carrots and sticks for internal security purposes. In fact, MOIA was created after the Gulf War, when it became apparent that many hard-line Islamists opposed any Western presence on Saudi soil, and was slowly stepped up in the 1990s when Islamic extremists became more active.

The Ministry of Interior and the General Intelligence Presidency took steps to strengthen their counterterrorist and security operations. They arrested extremists within the Kingdom, and continued to monitor the activities of outside-based opposition and pressure foreign governments. After Osama Bin Laden emerged as an open opponent of the monarchy in the mid 1990's, Saudi intelligence stepped up its fight against these extremists. The security services increased their monitoring of the activities of hard-line Saudi opposition groups overseas that attacked the government, exploiting divisions in their ranks, co-opting or bribing elements within them, and putting pressure on foreign governments to end their activities.

Failures to see the Problems before "9/11"

Saudi security did not focus on Al-Qaeda and bin Laden alone. It dealt with two main groups that threatened the internal security in the Kingdom. First, the Sunni extremists

led by Al-Qaeda and other affiliated groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and what is left of the Muslim Brotherhood. Second, Shi'ites groups, supported by Iran, that were angry at the perceived mistreatment of their fellow Shi'ites in the Eastern province, but they also resented the fact that the Mecca and Medina are under Sunni control.

Saudi society and authorities underestimated the extent to which such groups were growing and how lethal they were becoming. Looking back, there were several failures:

- *First, during the 1960's and the 1970's, members of the Muslim Brotherhood were driven out of mainly Egypt, Syria, and some Palestinian Areas. They found a sanctuary in the Kingdom as preachers and teachers.* This had great influence on the next generation of Imams, teachers, and eventually their students. The majority of teachers in Saudi Arabia were non-Saudis until very recently; in fact, they were mainly Egyptians or Syrians. They used their positions to spread their ideology and a lot of what we see now can be traced back to them. Prince Nayef iterated this point in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Siyasa* on November 29, 2002. He argued that the Muslim Brotherhood is the cause of most problems in the Arab world, and that they have "done great damage to Saudi Arabia."[1] In addition, the Saudi society was young. It lacked any established institutions like Al-Azhar in Egypt to withstand and counter the influences of such ideologies.

- *Second, fund transfers were not well regulated.* People were free to raise money for different causes, and spend it as they wished—and sometimes such causes were that of the extremists. People sympathetic to different organizations raised money directly from wealthy Saudis, or legitimate charities for genuine causes were used to finance groups that in fact threatened the existence of the Saudi state. This was a difficult issue to deal with because: a) it is impossible to monitor every cash transaction, and most transactions in the region are still done by cash. In addition, there is no income tax in the Kingdom, which makes it hard to monitor what people do with their money. b) Able Muslims are obligated to give, *Zakat*, 2.5% of their annual income and 5%-10% of their land to the needy.

  Companies are obligated to pay their *Zakat* to the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, but individuals pay it directly to the needy. Given the religious nature of such action, it is usually done discreetly; hence, it is difficult to know to whom people give money, and even more difficult to question people's "noble motivations." c) Causes such as that of the Palestinians and the Chechens are seen by Saudis as legitimate struggles against an occupying power, and the Saudi authorities cannot be seen as trying to prevent donation to such causes. d) Many Saudi citizens have a lot of money in foreign banks; hence, not under the jurisdictions of the government. In addition, other neighboring countries, such as the UAE, have less strict banking rules than the Kingdom, and often are used by people to make large cash transfers.

  The lack of a Saudi income tax, Saudi Arabia's highly patriarchal, tribal, and clan-oriented society and the resultant dependency on personal patronage and charity, make Saudi Arabia a nation that places a heavy reliance on voluntary Islamic charity. As a result, large amounts of money flowed out of the Kingdom from the senior leadership and wealthy businessmen to groups and causes that would never have received the money if those asking for it had received even cursory review of what they were actually doing and saying. Senior members of the royal family, officials, and wealthy businessmen often left the task of allocating funds to junior staff that either cared nothing about where the money actually went or had far too little political sophistication to evaluate the groups asking for money.

- *Third, there was a laissez-faire attitude toward people and organizations that were not hostile to the Saudi government*. Sometimes this manifested itself in sermons, newspapers articles, and lectures. They tended to be xenophobic, inflammatory to other faiths, and sometimes called for violent actions. The authorities feared the public reactions had they cracked down on such groups—especially when they had a perceived legitimate cause e.g. the Palestinian cause. Some groups were given plenty of time to establish networks inside and outside the Kingdom, and sometimes they turned against the Saudi leadership.

- *Fourth, the Saudi authorities failed to keep track of young Saudis leaving to fight in foreign wars to support Islamic causes, and how many of the some 70,000 and 100,000 such volunteers were Saudi.* Such volunteering started with the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets and included: the war in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Chechnya. People who left were either very religious who thought that it was a religious obligation to help their brethren; or they were young, uneducated, and poor. The latter were perfect recruits for organizations who were sending people abroad.

  In any case, they came back more radicalized—unable to get a job, unable to be accepted in the society, and more often than not stayed in touch with people with similar experience to form what will become "sleeping cells." They failed to assimilate back in society, and tend to blame their failing on the leadership, and most importantly on the Saudi-US alliance. The General Intelligence Presidency discovered after the National Guard and Al-Khobar bombings of 1995 and 1996 that approximately 10,000 young Saudi men had some kind of contact with Islamic extremist groups, Afghanis, and paramilitary training facilities between 1979 and the mid-1990s.[2]

- *Fifth, the Shi'ites in Saudi Arabia felt left out of the political process and threatened by what they perceive as a "puritan" Sunni society.* The impact of this problem was compounded by the Iranian revolution and by Iranian incitements to rise against the royal family. There was a failure to integrate the Shi'ites and win them over before Iran exploits their situation. Lack of diplomatic relations with Iran also was a problem because Iran had nothing to lose by supporting extremist groups that threatened the Kingdom.

- *Sixth, the Saudi security services failed to detect a significant flow of arms, explosives, and terrorist supplies into Saudi Arabia from neighboring countries like Yemen, Jordan, and Iraq*. They also failed to connect the many young Saudis coming back from Afghanistan and Bosnia with this inflow of weapons.

Such failures took a long time to have any effects. The disagreement with the presence of US forces on Saudi soil was only that—a disagreement. However, it was taken a step further on November 13, 1995 when the American mission to train the Saudi National Guard was bombed leaving 6 dead and 60 injured. Then on June 25, 1996 a truck bomb ripped Al-Khobar towers, where US military personnel were staying, killing 19 and injuring 500.

Nevertheless, Saudi intelligence and diplomacy failed to assess just how rapidly the threat was growing and to deal effectively with Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden in Afghanistan, and the security services failed to monitor the degree to which Saudis and Saudi money indirectly became involved in supporting Al-Qaeda and other extremist causes in Central Asia, Pakistan, Germany, and elsewhere.

To deal with Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, and Islamic extremism from the mid-1990s onwards, the Saudi government continued to tolerate occasional problems with such extremists and ultra-conservative forms of Wahhabi and Islamist teaching and textbooks in its educational system that encouraged extremism. The Saudi government was generally careful to monitor the activities of Islamic groups that directly criticized the Saudi government and royal family, but failed to monitor the flow of money to causes and groups outside the Kingdom with the care and depth required until September 11, 2001 and was then slow to correct the situation.

These failures were compounded by other actions that affected internal security. The government tolerated sermons, teaching, and textbooks with a strong xenophobic character—sometimes attacking Christians, Jews and other religions—as long as they did

not attack specific political targets in Saudi Arabia or call for specific violent actions. The government also made relatively little effort to monitor the activities of "Islamic" groups in secondary schools and colleges if they did not directly oppose the monarchy, and made far too little effort to evaluate what Saudi and many foreign contract teachers were actually teaching their students.

The Saudi government did not oppose foreign and domestic efforts to raise money and obtain support for "pro-Islamic" movements in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Central Asia even when these represented extreme and sometimes violent causes. Little or no effort was made to monitor the extent to which foreign "charities" raised money for political movements in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia that were far more extreme (and sometimes violent) than would have been tolerated in Saudi Arabia. The government turned a blind eye to the flow of funds to movements like Hamas that mixed charitable with terrorist activities in Israel.

Extremists and terrorists learned to exploit this situation, using formal charities or personal requests for charitable aid to obtain money they would never have gotten if they announced their real purpose in seeking funds. At the same time, some real charities had a strong political orientation and often supported extremist movements and some donors knowingly gave money to "charities" that were extremist fronts. This was particularly true in the case of money going to Palestinian causes, after the beginning of the Second Intifada in the fall of 2000. Saudis saw Israel as an occupying nation constantly using excessive force against Palestinian freedom fighters – virtually the opposite image from Americans who saw them as terrorists. The exploitation of individualized charity resulted in massive amounts of money flowing out to extremists, and sometimes-terrorist movements, through sheer negligence, fraud, or under the guise of charity.

In retrospect, both the Ministry of Interior and the General Intelligence Presidency also failed to pay attention to the "youth explosion" caused by Saudi Arabia's high birth rate. They not only were slow to monitor the movement and activities of young Saudis outside the Kingdom, and to closely examine those Saudis that became involved in paramilitary training and movements in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Chechnya; they paid too little attention to developments inside the Kingdom, activities in its schools and universities, and the impact of unemployment and underemployment.

Saudi Response to "9/11"

On one level, the events of 9/11 served as a wake up call to the government and royal family. On another, Saudi society and some officials reacted by going into a state of denial. The royal family, most of the Ulema, and business leaders in Saudi Arabia condemned the attacks of September 11th. Saudis, like everyone in the world, were horrified, and it was brought home by the fact that there were many Saudis on those planes, and that Bin Laden himself was a Saudi.

The Saudi government issued a statement condemning the "regrettable and inhuman bombings and attacks…" that "contravene all religious values and human civilized concepts; and extended sincere condolences to the families of the victims, to U.S. President George W. Bush and to the U.S. people in general." The Saudi statement reiterated the Kingdom's position condemning all forms of terrorism, and its ongoing cooperation with the international community to combat it. Many senior members of the

royal family also issue their own statements condemning the attacks. For example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, argued during the Islamic Conference meeting, on October 11th, that terrorism harmed the Islamic world, impairs just Islamic causes, and cited that terrorism and violence never advanced the Palestinian cause.

Senior Saudi religious and legal figures condemned the attacks with equal speed. Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Senior Council of Ulema stated on September 15th, "The recent developments in the United States constitute a form of injustice that is not tolerated by Islam, which views them as gross crimes and sinful acts." Also, the Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, Sheikh Salih Al-Luheidan, stated on September 14th "as a human community we must be vigilant and careful to oppose these pernicious and shameless evils, which are not justified by any sane logic, nor by the religion of Islam." Since that time, leading Saudi officials and clerics have repeatedly condemned the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and other terrorist activities.[3]

Yet, a considerable portion of the Saudi public remained in denial. They either did not accept the fact that so many Saudis were involved in the "9/11" atrocities, or they found conspiracy theories to put the causes and blame outside Saudi Arabia. They became preoccupied with trying to counter charges in the Western media about their "sect of Islam," their society, and their schools that led young Saudis to become extremists without objectively examining what was actually happening. The government was less worried about internal terrorism than external threats. Their focus was mainly political and diplomatic and little was done to boost internal security. This attitude change a year and a half later—when the first major terrorist on Saudi soil attack occurred.

While the priority for Saudi internal security activity changed after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the Saudi government initially did more to try to improve relations with the US, deal with terrorism outside the Kingdom, and counter the damage to its image than it did to strengthen the operations of the Saudi security apparatus.

What Saudi Arabia was still slow to understand, until major terrorist attacks began to occur in the Kingdom in May 2003, was that Saudi Arabia faced truly serious internal security issues as well as the need to deal with terrorism outside the country. The apparent lack of a significant number of cells and the comparatively low levels of activity in Saudi Arabia led the Kingdom to focus on such terrorism largely in terms of external, rather than internal, threats.

Saudi intelligence and security services paid too little attention to the growing and highly visible ties between hard-line Pakistani extremists in the Pakistani ISI and religious schools, and the impact of Saudi-financed activities in Pakistan and Central Asia and the number of young Saudi men associated with Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Discussions with Saudi officials indicate that they had surprisingly little understanding of the difference between legitimate Islamic organizations in Central Asia, China, and the Far East and highly political action groups that used Islam as an ideological weep.

They paid too little attention to the fact that such groups were committed to the violent overthrow of governments in their region, which strongly opposed both modernization and reform, and which were broadly anti-Western in character. They also failed to monitor Islamist extremist "missionary" and charity groups operating in Europe. Even though such extremist groups, particularly the neo-Salafi ones, showed little of the pragmatic tolerance and moderation common to mainstream Wahhabi practices in the Kingdom, they often took on an extremist character particularly in the United Kingdom and Germany.

The Saudi security services failed to fully appreciate the threat posed by the flow of Saudi money to Palestinian groups like Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other hard-line or violent Islamic elements in countries like Egypt, and failed to detect a significant flow of arms, explosives, and terrorist supplies into Saudi Arabia from neighboring countries like Yemen.

The Saudi government was slow to understand the fact that so many young Saudis were directly involved in "9/11," as well as in the overall membership of Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, reflected the fact that Saudi security efforts had failed to come firmly to grips with its Islamic extremists at many levels.

One key problem was that the Saudi intelligence community relied too much on human contacts and informers and signals intelligence, rather than active counterterrorism efforts in the field. It also remained weak in dealing with the financial aspects of intelligence and internal security, which helps explain why it failed to properly monitor of the flow of money to Saudi charities, religious organizations, and individuals in financing extremist groups – other than those that posed a direct threat to the rule of the Saudi royal family.

In fairness, such monitoring is not easy. Saudi banking rules are relatively strict in terms of tracking and identifying individual accounts, but little effort was made before September 11th to track the flow of money inside or outside the country to extremist causes and factions. It should be noted however, that Saudi organizations and individuals have hundreds of billions of dollars of privately held money in Western and other foreign banks. Effective surveillance of such holdings is difficult, if not impossible.

The problem is further compounded by easy access to the financial institutions of other GCC countries, like the UAE. Many Gulf countries have financial institutions that make cash transfers extremely easy, which tolerate high levels of money laundering, smuggling, and narco-trafficking, and which have often been far more careless in allowing the flow of money to extremist causes than Saudi Arabia has. The leaders and citizens of countries like Kuwait and the UAE have also been as careless in their donations to "charities" as Saudis.

Saudi Arabia's Own "9/11": The Impact of May 2003

As was the case in the US before September 2001, it was not until the threat of terrorism truly came home to Saudi Arabia that the Kingdom fully understood the seriousness of the threat and the nature of the challenges it faced. As the chronology below– which is largely adapted from work by the National Council on US-Arab Relations – shows, Saudi Arabia should have seen what was coming. Nevertheless, it

failed to do so until terrorists carried out a brutal attack on several housing compounds in Riyadh on May 12, 2003.[4]

The attackers carried out four suicide bombings on compounds housing many Western residents. The bombing resulted in 34 dead, including 7 Americans and 7 Saudis, plus 200 wounded. From that point onwards, Saudi Arabia found itself fighting a repeated series of terrorist attacks on its own soil, and having to deal with more terrorist cells with far larger stocks of arms and explosives than it had previously estimated. The Saudi government also found that it was dealing with serious infiltration problems, particularly across the Yemeni border.[5]

This time, the Saudi authorities took the challenge seriously, and implemented many steps to fix their internal security apparatus, reform parts of their educational system, and develop a system of tracking and regulating charities.

The Saudi Chronology of Terrorism and Counterterrorism

The chronology of developments in terrorism in Saudi Arabia can be summarized as follows:[6]

- 1970: Shi'ites in the town of Qatif, Easter Province riot and demand more shares in the Oil revenues. The town is sealed for months.
- 1978: Shi'ites protest again in the city of Qatif. The Saudi National Guard is mobilized. As many as 50 are arrested and some are executed.
- November 20, 1979: About 200-500 armed Sunni extremists lead by, Juhaiman Al-Utaibai, seize control of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The extremists accuse the royal family of corruption, imitating the West, and of being puppets of the US. This is the same argument Juhaiman's grandfather, who was part of the Ikhwan army with King Abdulaziz, argued 58 years before. This is also the same argument that Khomeini made against the Shah. Because it is forbidden to fight inside the Grand Mosque, the Saudi authorities did not go in immediately. However, the Ulema in the Kingdom approve of the Saudi military going into the Mosque. The Saudi National Guard with the help of French Special Forces regains control of the Mosque 10-14 days later.
- December 3-5, 1979: Shi'ites in Qatif go on a riot in support of the Iranian revolution and demanding a higher share of the oil revenues. The Saudi National Guard is mobilized, they clash with protesters, and at least 5 people are killed.
- December 24, 1979: The Soviets invade Afghanistan--and shortly many Saudis, most notably bin Laden will travel to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. The Saudi intelligence, along with the US, will train the mujahedeen in guerrilla warfare to fight the communists.
- January 9, 1980: Sixty male terrorists are executed after being convicted of the Grand Mosque seizure.
- July 31, 1987: Iranian pilgrims riot and protest against the Saudi authorities. As many as 402 get killed during those riots.
- August 1, 1987: Iranians attack the Saudi and Kuwaiti embassies in the Tehran as a response to the riots in Mecca.
- August 25, 1987: The Saudi government denounces the Iranian government as terrorists for causing the riots in Mecca.
- May 15, 1988: The Soviets start withdrawing troops from Afghanistan after 9 years of war.
- 1988: Shortly after the Soviets withdrawal, Osama bin Laden forms the Al-Qaeda network from people who fought in Afghanistan.

- 1988 and 1989: A Shi'ite militants group, which will be called Saudi Hezbollah, takes credit for bombing oil and petrochemical installations and for assassinations of Saudi diplomats in Ankara, Bangkok, and Karachi.
- July 9, 1989: Two bombs explode in the vicinity of Mecca's Grand Mosque causing the death of one pilgrim and injuring 16.
- September 1989: Sixteen Shi'ites, Kuwaiti nationals, are executed for their involvement in the explosions in Mecca.
- 1994: Osama bin Laden is stripped of Saudi citizenship, and his family disowned him. Safar al-Hawaly and Salman al-Awdeh, two Ulemas who spoke against the Saudi leadership and the US presence on Saudi soil are jailed.
- November 13, 1995: The U.S. Office of the Personnel Manager, Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM/SANG)--American training mission--is attacked by a 220-pound car bomb in a parking lot. Five Americans and two Indians are killed, and 60 people are injured. Two Saudi opposition groups, Tigers of the Gulf and the Islamist Movement for Change, claim responsibility
- April 22 1996: Saudi TV airs the confessions of four Saudi nationals who admit to planning and conducting the bombing on the OPM/SANG compound. Three are veterans of the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya.
- May 31 1996: Three of the Saudis, who are involved in the OPM/SANG bombing, are executed in Riyadh.
- June 25, 1996: Truck containing about 5,000 pounds fuel and explosives targets US military compound, near King Abdulaziz Air base, in the city of Al-Khobar, the Eastern Province. There are 19 deaths and about 500 injuries.
- 1996: Hani al-Sayegh, a Saudi, leaves the Kingdom to Iran, shortly after the bombing, and is shown to have ties to Iranian intelligence. He then leaves to Kuwait, and finally to Canada.
- June 1997: Hani al-Sayegh is deported from Canada to the US. Canadian officials say that he was the lookout person during the bombing.
- October 10, 1999: Hani al-Sayegh is returned to Saudi Arabia from the US. The US denies him political asylum and argues that he "was not entitled to remain in this country and that his removal to Saudi Arabia was appropriate."
- 1999: Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdal is arrested in Saudi and put in jail for 14 months. He is charged with having contact with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan (Fourteen months later, Al-Ahdal is deported to Yemen).
- November 17, 2000: A car bomb in Riyadh kills Christopher Rodway, a British Engineer, and wounds his wife. Saudi authorities accuse Bill Sampson, a Canadian biochemist, of the bombing due to illegal trade of alcohol.
- November 22, 2000: A car bomb explodes in Riyadh wounding two men and a woman, which, again, the Saudi authorities blame on the illegal alcohol trade.
- December 15, 2000: A Bomb, which was left of the windshield, explodes in Huber severely injuring a British citizen.
- February 4, 2001: Bill Sampson appears on Saudi TV, and confesses of the bombing against Rodway.
- March 15, 2001: Chechen rebels hijack a Russian airplane after leaving Turkey they divert it to Medina in Saudi Arabia.
- March 16, 2001: Saudi commandos storm the Russian hijacked plane and free the hostages. A flight attendant, a passenger, and a hijacker are killed in the raid.

- May 2, 2001: A Letter bomb injures American doctor in Khubar.
- September 23, 2001: The GCC countries meet in Jeddah, and declare they are joining the international coalition against terrorism
- September 25, 2001: Saudi Arabia withdraws its recognition of the Taliban.
- October 6, 2001: A bomb explodes in Khubar killing two people and injuring 4.
- October 15, 2001: Hamoud bin Uqlaa al-Shuaibi, calls on Muslims to wage war on any one who supports the US war in Afghanistan.
- October 31, 2001: the Bush administration announces that it has asked the Saudi government to freeze the assets of people involved in the September 11 attacks.
- January 4-10, 2002: Muslim scholars meet in Mecca and define terrorism as "any unjustified attack by individuals, groups or states against a human being…the environment, public or private facilities, and endangering natural resources."
- March 11, 2002: The U.S. Treasury Department and Saudi Arabia announce the freezing of the accounts of the Somali and Bosnian branches of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation.
- April 25, 2002: Crown Prince Abdullah meets President Bush in Texas regarding the war on terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and the possible war on Iraq.
- June 14, 2002: Three Saudis, Zuher al-Tbaiti, Abdullah al-Ghamdi and Hilal Alissiri, appear in court in Casablanca. They are accused of plotting to blow up British warship in the Strait of Gibraltar.
- June 18, 2002: Saudi Arabia announces its arrest of 13 of al-Qaeda members: 11 Saudis, an Iraqi and a Sudanese for plotting to down a US airplane near Prince Sultan airbase.
- June 20, 2002: A British citizen, John Venessm, is killed when in a bomb explosion in Riyadh.
- August 10, 2002: Saudi foreign minister announces that Iran has turned 16 al-Qaeda suspects to Saudi authorities in June.
- September 6, 2002: The assets of Wa'el Hamza Julaidan, who is accused of being an al-Qaeda financier, are frozen in Saudi Arabia
- December 10, 2002: Saudi dissidents start a new radio station, Sawt al-Islah, "to push for reforms."
- February 17, 2003: Deputy Governor of Al-Jouf Province, Hamad Al-Wardi, is shot dead as he is driving to work.
- February 18, 2003: Saudi Arabia announces that it is: 1) referring 90 Saudis to trial for al-Qaeda links. b) 250 people are under investigation.
- May 6, 2003: After a raid and a gunfight with terrorists in Riyadh, the Saudi authorities find weapons and announce the hunt for 19 terrorists: 17 Saudis, an Iraqi, and a Yemeni.
- May 2003: Saudi Arabia asks the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and all Saudi charities to suspend activities outside Saudi Arabia until mechanisms are in place to adequately monitor and control funds so they cannot be misdirected for illegal purposes.
- May 12, 2003: Bombers simultaneously attacked three compounds, in Riyadh, housing mostly Westerns. There are 35 deaths including: 10 Americans and 7 Saudis. There are 200 injuries.
- May 13, 2003: Crown Prince Abdullah announces that the Saudi government and people will not be deterred by Monday's terror attacks in Riyadh, "We will fight terrorism together…These messages, which do not require any interpretation, provide clear evidence that the fate of those murderers is damnation on earth and the fury of Hell in the thereafter…"
- May 28, 2003: Three clerics, Ali Fahd Al-Khudair, Ahmed Hamoud Mufreh Al-Khaledi and Nasir Ahmed Al-Fuhaid, are arrested, in Tabuk, after calling for support to the terrorists who carried out the Riyadh attacks. Also, eleven suspects are taken into custody in the city of Madinah. Weapons,

false identity cards and bomb-making materials are confiscated. In addition, Saudi national Abdulmonim Ali Mahfouz Al-Ghamdi is arrested, following a car chase. Three non-Saudi women without identity cards are detained.

- May 31, 2003: Yousif Salih Fahad Al-Ayeeri, a.k.a. Swift Sword, a major Al-Qaeda operational planner and fundraiser, is killed while fleeing from a security patrol.
- June 7, 2003: Prince Nayef, Interior Minister, identifies 12 suicide bombers responsible for attacks on three Riyadh compounds and says 10 suspects are still at large. Interior Minister Prince Nayef says 25 people have been arrested and that the attacks are the work of al-Qaeda.
- June 14, 2003: Saudi security raided a terrorist cell in the Alattas building in the Khalidiya neighborhood of Makkah. The raid leaves two security agents dead. In addition, five suspects are killed and 12 are arrested. The authorities find a number of booby-trapped Qur'ans, 72 homemade bombs, weapons, ammunition, and masks.
- June 20, 2003: Security forces in Makkah arrest four Saudi women after a raid on a flat rented by a suspected terrorist.
- June 26, 2003: One of the men wanted in connection with the May 12 bombings, Ali Abdul Rahman Saeed Al-Faqaasi Al-Ghamdi, considered the top al-Qaeda guy in the Kingdom, surrenders.
- July 1, 2003: President Bush comments on US-Saudi cooperation in the war on terrorism, "America and Saudi Arabia face a common terrorist threat, and we appreciate the strong, continuing efforts of the Saudi government in fighting that threat."
- July 3, 2003: Turki Nasser Mishaal Aldandany, a top Al-Qaeda operative and mastermind of the May 12 bombings, is killed on July 3 along with three other suspects in a gun battle with security forces, in the northern city of Al-Jouf.
- July 21, 2003: The Ministry of Interior announces that they have stopped terrorist operations against vital installations and the arrest of 16 members of terrorist cells after searching their hideouts in farms and houses in Riyadh, Qasim, and the Eastern Province. Underground storages are found containing chemicals that would have been used to make explosive.
- July 25, 2003: Three men are arrested at a checkpoint in Makkah for possessing printed material that included a "religious edict" in support of terrorist acts against Western targets.
- July 28, 2003: Saudi security forces kill 6 terror suspects and wound another in a gunfight at a farm in the Qasim Province. Two Saudi policemen are also killed in the gun battle.
- August 10, 2003: Saudi security forces detain 10 suspected militants after a gunfight outside the Saudi capital, Riyadh.
- August 13, 2003: Security personnel arrest five terrorists after four policemen and a militant are killed in a shootout in Riyadh two days earlier.
- August 15, 2003: 11 militants are arrested by the Saudi authorities in the southern city of Jazan. The authorities seize a large cache of weapons, rockets and explosive chemicals.
- August 18, 2003: The Council of Ministers approves a new money laundering and terror financing laws that include harsh penalties for the crime of money laundering and terror financing.
- August 26, 2003: Saudi Arabia and the United States are to create a joint task force aimed at combating the funding of extremist groups in the country. Agents from FBI, IRS, and Treasury are to be stationed in Saudi Arabia.
- August 29, 2003: US Attorney General John Ashcroft commends Saudi Arabia's efforts in the war on terrorism: "I believe that progress is being made and I think not only that it (cooperation) is good but it continues to improve."
- September 17, 2003: US Treasury Secretary John W. Snow meets with officials in Saudi Arabia and notes that "…we discussed our outstanding progress working together on the fight against terrorist

financing. Saudi Arabia has been a strong ally to the United States in this essential matter. Their close oversight of charities to guard against money laundering and terrorist financing sets an example to all countries engaged in the war against terror… "

- September 23, 2003: Security forces surrounds a group of suspected terrorists in an apartment in the city of Jazan. During a gun battle, one security officer is killed and four officers are injured. Two suspects are detained and three are killed. One of the militants detained, Sultan Jubran Sultan al-Qahtani, is wanted by the US. The suspects are armed with machine guns, pistols and a large quantity of ammunition.
- October 5, 2003: Security forces arrest three suspects during a raid in the desert to the east of Riyadh.
- October 8, 2003: Security forces raid a farm in the northern Muleda area of Qasim Province and are able to arrest a suspect. Three other suspects fled the scene. Two security officers are injured. Large amounts of materials to make explosives and light weaponry are found in the farm where the suspects had been hiding.
- October 14, 2003: Many Saudis take to the streets in Riyadh demanding reforms.
- October 20, 2003: Saudi security forces raid several terrorist cells in various parts of the country, including the Al-Majma'a District in Riyadh, Makkah, Jeddah, and Qasim. Security forces confiscate many items including C4 plastic explosives, homemade bombs, gas masks, and large quantities of assault rifles and ammunition.
- November 2, 2003: US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says "The Saudi government, particularly since they were attacked some weeks and months ago, has been very aggressive, more aggressive than ever in the past."
- November 3, 2003: Saudi police arrest six suspected Al-Qaeda militants after a shootout in the holy city of Makkah. Two suspected terrorists are killed, and one security officer is wounded. Saudi police seize a large cache of weapons they believe are stockpiled for attacks during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The militants had rented the apartment for just the month of Ramadan.
- November 6, 2003: Saudi security forces encircle two terrorists in al-Swaidi district in Riyadh. The terrorists fire at the security forces and try to flee. In the gunfight, the Saudi security officers kill one militant, but 8 officers also injured. In the same day, Saudi authorities in the Holy city of Makkah, surrounds two suspects, a gun battle continues unit a homemade bomb explodes killing the militants
- November 7, 2003: The United States warns of terrorist strikes in the Kingdom.
- November 9, 2003: Just after midnight, Suicide bombers attack al-Muyaya residential compound in Riyadh. The Interior Minister and other leaders blame al-Qaeda for the attack. Leading to 17 deaths and 122 injuries.
- November 10, 2003: A report on Saudi Arabia's progress in the War on Terrorism is releases by the Saudi Embassy.
- November 20, 2003: Abdullah bin Atiyyah Al-Salami, a terror suspect, surrenders to Saudi police.
- November 25, 2003: A car bomb is foiled in the Saudi capital of Riyadh. Two notorious terror suspects die in the raid. Abdulmohsin Abdulaziz Al-Shabanat is killed in a gun battle and Mosaed Dheedan Al-Sobaiee also is killed as a hand grenade detonated. At least 10 suspects are detained in different parts of the country.
- November 26, 2003: A raid takes place in which a terrors suspect, who is linked to the Nov-9 bombing, is arrested. A large cache of weapons is confiscated including: 1 SAM-7, 5 RPG launchers, 384 KG of explosives (RDX), 8 AK47, 41 AK47 magazines, 20 hand grenades, 16800 rounds of ammunition. Money and communication devices are also found.

- December 1, 2003: The UK Foreign and the Commonwealth Office advise British nationals against all but essential travel to Saudi Arabia.
- December 2, 2003: A U.S. Embassy issues a warning to the 37,000 U.S. citizens living in Saudi Arabia, saying that compounds housing Westerners have come under surveillance by terrorists, indicating the possibility of another attack.
- December 4, 2003: Brigadier General Abdulaziz al-Huwairini escapes an assassination attempt in Riyadh. The "Two Holy Mosques Brigade" claims responsibility, and declares in a statement that 'since our brothers in al-Qaeda are busy fighting the crusaders, we took it upon ourselves to cleanse the land of the two holy mosques of the crusaders' agents' -- a reference to the Saudi government.
- December 6, 2003: The Saudi Ministry of Interior releases a list and the photos of 26 wanted terrorist suspects. A reward of up to $1.9 is also offered to anyone who would lead the authorities to the arrest of the 26 militants.
- December 7, 2003: Security forces arrest 25 suspects in connection with the May 12 bombings in Riyadh.
- December 8, 2003: One of the Kingdom's most wanted terrorists, Mohammad Abdullah Al-Rayis, one of the 26 most wanted, is killed. Another militant is arrested following a shootout with the security forces in Al-Suwaidy district in southern Riyadh. The Ministry of Interior praises the "citizen's cooperation."
- December 17, 2003: The United States says it will allow its non-essential diplomats to leave Saudi Arabia due to security concerns.
- December 18, 2003: Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage tells a television interviewer"…the Saudis have been going after these terrorists and trying to tear them out, root and branch...the Government of Saudi Arabia has been terrific, particularly since May 12th and their Riyadh bombing."
- December 30, 2003: Mansour ibn Muhammad Faqeeh, one of the most wanted terrorists in the Kingdom, surrenders to the security forces.
- January 3, 2004: Brig. Gen. Hadi Mabjer Al-Sahli, chairman of the military council at the border guards command in the Jizan region, is killed in front of his house.
- January 8, 2004: Swiss police arrest 8 suspects for their involvement in the May 12 attack in Riyadh.
- January 12, 2004: The Ministry of Interior announces the progress of the war against the militants. They announce the confiscation of: 23,893 kg of explosive, 301 RPG, 431 homemade grenades, 304 explosive belts, 674 detonators, 1,020 small arms and 352,398 rounds of ammunition.
- January 22, 2004: US Treasury Secretary John W. Snow tells a Washington news conference, "The United States and Saudi Arabia share a deep commitment to fighting the spread of terrorism in all its forms...Like the United States, the Saudis have been victims of al-Qaeda. They are an important partner in the war on terrorist financing, and have taken important and welcome steps to fight terrorist financing."
- January 30, 2004: The Ministry of Interior announces a raid on a house in Al-Siliye district of Riyadh. 7 people are arrested, and weapons cache and military uniform are confiscated.
- February 13, 2004: The Interior Ministry warns residents in the capital against a possible terrorist attack. It says that a car laden with explosives registered to a wanted suspect could be used in the attack.
- February 14, 2004: Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry offers SR7 million rewards for information leading to the recovery of a GMC Suburban loaded with explosives.
- February 16, 2004: British Airways cancels its flight from London to Riyadh, for 'security reasons.'

- February 22, 2004: The Ministry of Interior confirms the death of A'amir Al-Zaidan Al-Shihri, one of the 16 most wanted terrorists announced in last December. His buried body is recovered from outside Riyadh.
- February 28, 2004: A royal decree is announced to establish the Saudi National Commission for Relief and Charity Work abroad: to ensure that terrorist organizations do not misuse Saudi donations for humanitarian projects worldwide.
- March 15, 2004: Two of Saudi Arabia's most wanted terror suspects, Khaled Ali Haj, a Yemeni, and Ibrahim bin Abdul-Aziz bin Mohammed al-Mezeini, a Saudi, are shot dead in a shootout with Saudi police.
- March 19, 2004: U.S. Secretary of State Powell meets Saudi officials in Riyadh, tells the press that the US and Saudi Arabia are united in war on terror.
- March 24, 2004: J. Cofer Black, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. State Department, testifies to Congress, "The Saudis are a key ally in the Global War On Terror. Their performance has not been flawless, and they have a large task before them, but we see clear evidence of the seriousness of purpose and the commitment of the leadership of the Kingdom to this fight."
- March 24, 2004: Juan C. Zarate, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Executive Office for Terrorist Financing & Financial Crimes, U.S. Department of the Treasury, testifies to Congress, "the targeting actions and systemic reforms undertaken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia clearly demonstrate its commitment to work with us and the international community to combat the global threat of terrorist financing…"
- March 24, 2004: Thomas J. Harrington, Deputy Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, testifies to Congress, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important partner in this international effort and has taken significant steps to deter global terrorism."
- April 5, 2004: Saudi security forces kill a suspected militant and wound another during a car chase in al-Rawdah, an eastern Riyadh neighborhood—after receiving fire from a stolen car.
- April 8, 2004: Al-Qaeda chief in Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz al-Moqrin, puts out a video vowing to eject U.S. from the Arabian Peninsula, and argues that the real battle against the US is starting.
- April 12, 2004: A member of the security forces is killed, one militant is killed, and five policemen are wounded during a clash in eastern Riyadh.
- April 13, 2004: In the town of Uniza, Qassim, during a police patrol, the security forces come under attack from militants believed to be the same from the day before. Four Saudi policemen are killed. Two trucks filled with explosives are confiscated by Saudi security.
- April 15, 2004: Evacuation is ordered for most U.S. diplomats in Saudi Arabia - "The United States ordered the evacuation of most U.S. diplomats and all U.S. family dependents from Saudi Arabia, and "strongly urged" all American citizens to leave because of "credible and specific" intelligence about terrorist attacks planned against U.S. and other Western targets.
- April 18, 2004: Eight terror suspects, linked to violent clashes with security forces in the capital, are arrested. Three large vehicle bombs — each with over a ton of explosives on board — are defused.
- April 19, 2004: Saudi security forces seize two SUV loaded with explosives near a gas station on a highway north of Riyadh.
- April 21, 2004: Terrorists launch two suicide car bombs attacks against Saudi Arabian security headquarters in Riyadh. Five people are killed and over 150 are wounded in the attack.
- April 22, 2004: Saudi Security forces kill five terror suspects, including two of the country's most wanted men, during raids in Al-safa district in Jeddah.

- April 22, 2004: The "Al Haramin (the holy sites) Brigades in the Arabian Peninsula" claim responsibility on web sites for the April 21 Riyadh suicide bombing against "special security forces."
- April 22, 2004: Grand Mufti Abdul-Aziz al-Sheik, the kingdom's highest religious authority, condemns the attack "as one of the greatest sins" and says the attackers are "a lost minority under the cover of religion" and will be "burned in hell."
- April 24, 2004: King Fahd characterizes the April 21 attack as "the work of a deviant few who wanted to undermine the country, terrorize peaceful people and kill Muslims."
- April 29, 2004: U.S. State Department's annual report, "Patterns of Global Terrorism - 2003," praises Saudi Arabia's commitment to the war against global terrorism, "I would cite Saudi Arabia as an excellent example of a nation increasingly focusing its political will to fight terrorism. Saudi Arabia has launched an aggressive, comprehensive, and unprecedented campaign to hunt down terrorists, uncover their plots, and cut off their sources of funding."
- May 1, 2004: Gunmen opens fired against oil contractors in Yanbu, kills at least six people and wounds a dozen. A naked body is dragged behind a car. The Saudi police chase the militants and kill all four. At least one of the attackers is No. 10 on the Saudi most wanted list, Abdullah Saud Abu-Nayan al-Sobaie. In a simultaneous attack in Yanbu, a pipe bomb is thrown into an international school injuring the custodian.
- May 20, 2004: The security forces come under heavy fire from machineguns after locating five militants in a rest house in Khudairah, a village in the area of Buraidah. Saudi security forces kill four terrorist suspects and injure another in a gunfight in the town of Buridah. A Saudi policeman is killed and five are wounded.
- May 27, 2004: The top al-Qaeda leader, Abdulaziz Al-Muqrin, in Saudi Arabia issues a battle plan for an urban guerrilla war in the kingdom. He gives a detailed list of steps militants should take to succeed in their campaign against the Saudi government. He argues that the campaign should include urban warfare, assassinations, kidnapping and bombing. The "execution group" or "strike force" in each four-tiered cell should be "trained to carry out operations inside cities, including assassinations, abductions, bombings, sabotage, raids and the liberation of hostages."
- May 29, 2004: Four gunmen attack the Osais compound housing oil workers in Khobar, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia at about 7:30 a.m. Hostages, between 20-60, are being held at one compound.
- May 30, 2004: Saudi security commandos storm the Oasis compound and free the hostages. 22 people are killed in the attacks including 7 Saudi security officers. Three of the attackers escape. Al-Qaeda claims responsibility.
- June 7, 2004: Two BBC journalists are shot. Simon Cumbers is killed and security correspondent Frank Gardner is seriously injured in a gun attack in the Saudi capital, Riyadh.
- June 8, 2004: Robert C. Jacobs, an American defense contractor, is shot and killed in the Khaleej neighborhood in Riyadh.
- June 12, 2004: Paul Johnson, an American who works for Lockheed Martin, is kidnapped by al-Qaeda. Kenneth Scroggs of Laconia, who worked for Advanced Electronics Co, is killed in his garage in Riyadh.
- June 15, 2004: A video of Paul Johnson is posted on an extremist website. They demand the release of all militants detained in Saudi jails.
- June 18, 2004: The beheading of American Paul Johnson is posted on the militants' website. Saudi security forces are able to track down and kill al-Qaeda leading Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin and three of his associates. Twelve others are also arrested in al-Malaz district of Riyadh.
- June 23, 2004: King Fahd offers terrorists a limited amnesty; calling on them to turn themselves in or face the "full might" of the state. In a televised address read on his behalf by Crown Prince

Abdullah, King Fahd said those who willingly surrender within 30 days will be secure and warned all those who don't will be subjected to a fierce crackdown

- June 24, 2004: The Ministry of Interior announces that Saaban Al-Shihri, a wanted terrorist, is the first to take advantage of the amnesty by surrendering to the police.
- June 25, 2004: Prince Nayef announces that Saudi Arabia will allow foreigners, who feel threatened by the wave of terrorist violence in the Kingdom, to carry guns for their protection.
- June 28, 2004: One of Saudi Arabia's most wanted terrorists surrenders, the second suspect to turn himself in under the Amnesty. Othman Hadi Al-Maqbul Al-Amri, 37, a close associate of Saaban Al-Shehri, gives himself up after two years on the run.
- July 1, 2004: Saudi Security forces engage in a gun battle with terrorists killing one and wounding another. One Saudi police officer is killed in the fight and another is injured.
- July 3, 2004: The Saudi Arabian Interior Ministry identifies the terrorist killed in a gun battle on July 1 as Awad ibn Muhammad ibn Ali Al-Awad and the one wounded as Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Abdul Rahman Al-Abdul Wahab.
- July 4, 2004: Saudi security investigations uncover the deaths of two senior terrorists who died from untreated wounds after clashes with security forces in April 2004. Rakan ibn Mohsen Al-Seikhan and Nasser ibn Rashid Al-Rashid--both on a list of 26 most wanted suspects--were wounded during the April 12 clashes in Riyadh.
- July 14, 2004: A disabled Saudi terror suspect, Khaled ibn Odeh ibn Mohammed Al-Harbi, hands himself in to the Saudi embassy in Iran, the third to do so under a month-long partial amnesty announced in June. The man is suspected of being a top Al-Qaeda figure close to Osama Bin Laden and had been hiding along the Iran-Afghan border. He is the disabled man shown in the video found in Afghanistan showing bin Laden confessing to the 9/11 attacks.
- July 20, 2004: Saudi Arabian security forces kill two terrorist suspects, including one on a most-wanted list, and capture six others in a gun battle late yesterday in the capital, Riyadh. Authorities also found the head of slain U.S. hostage Paul Johnson in a refrigerator in the suspects' hideout.
- July 23, 2004: The partial amnesty offered by the King expires.
- July 26, 2004: A message purportedly from an al-Qaeda cell in Saudi Arabia surfaces, acknowledging that three of its militants were killed in a shootout last week with security forces.
- July 30, 2004: Abdurrahman Alamoudi pleads guilty in a Virginia court to moving cash from Libya and involvement in a plot to assassinate Saudi Prince.
- August 5, 2004: Saudi security forces arrest Faris Ahmed Jamaan Al-Zahrani, the No. 11 on a list of most wanted 26 terrorists published by the Interior Ministry last December.
- August 16, 2004: "As a result, since September 11th, 2001, more than two-thirds of al-Qaeda's top leadership have been killed or captured. More than 3,000 al-Qaeda criminals have been detained in over 100 countries. Terrorist cells have been wrapped up in Singapore, in Italy, right here in the United States. The Saudis are going after them with vigor and are more successful with each passing day." -- U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.
- August 17, 2004: Saudi Arabia's major battle with terrorism is over, and the kingdom is chasing the last remaining militants, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz says in an interview.
- August 29, 2004: Saudi police arrest two wanted militants in the central city of Buraidah in the Qasim Province.
- August 30, 2004: Gunmen opens fire at a U.S. diplomatic car near the U.S. consulate in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, but there are no injuries.
- September 2, 2004: One policeman is killed and three others are wounded in clashes with militants in a town northeast of Riyadh.

- September 3, 2004: Abdullah Al-Muqrin, who planned the attacks in May in Khobar, surrenders to the Saudi authorities. He is a relative of the slain Al-Qaeda chief.
- September 5, 2004: Saudi security forces arrests 7 suspects in Buraydah. Three policemen are killed in the engagement.
- September 6, 2004: A young man, who is accused of incitement of violence, is arrested near the Grand Mosque in Mecca.
- September 15, 2004: Edward Stuart Muirhead-Smith, 55, a British citizen, who works for the telecommunication corporation Marconi, is shot and killed at the Max shopping center in eastern Riyadh.
- September 20, 2004: Saudi Security forces clash with militants in the northern city of Tabuk. The gun battle ends with the arrests of 2 militants and the injuries of 3 Saudi officers.
- September 21, 2004: Saudi TV airs "Special Facts from Inside the Cell." Two detained militants, Khaled al-Faraj and Abdul Rahman al-Roshoud, argue that al-Qaeda cells recruited young men and once they are in the cell, they are threatened to stay in, and many are afraid to leave.
- September 22, 2004: Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia claims responsibility for the killing of Edward Muirhead-Smith, a British, who is killed on September 15, 2004.
- September 26, 2004: Laurent Barbot, 41, who is a technician for the French defense and electronics company, Thales, which is negotiating a border security deal, is shot dead in Jeddah. After a car chase and a shootout in the streets of Riyadh in Al-Shafa district, three suspects are injured, and one is arrested.
- September 27, 2004: Saudi Arabia announces plans to host an international conference on combating terrorism in Riyadh, which will take place in February 5-8.
- October 1, 2004: a man attacked a housing compound in Riyadh with a machine gun. Authorities report that there was little damage or injuries.
- October 12, 2004: Three terror suspects were killed in a shootout with Saudi security forces in Al-Nahda district of Riyadh. The Interior Ministry statement said "After the area was sealed off, the militants moved seven women and a child to the first floor of the building in order to deceive the security forces. The terrorists, using machine guns and hand grenades, opened fire on the security forces from the second floor of the building."
- October 14, 2004: The Ministry of Interior announced that the Saudi security forces killed Abdul Majeed ibn Muhammad Abdullah Al-Munie, one of the Kingdom's 26 most wanted list, during the gun battle with terrorists on October 12. He was killed with two other extremists: Essam ibn Muqbil Al-Otaibi and Abdul Hameed ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Yahya.
- October 17, 2004: Two wanted terror suspects were arrested after a gun battle with Saudi security forces in Al-Khaleej district of Riyadh at 2:05am. One of the militants was wounded in the exchange of fire.
- November 7, 2004: Militants opened fire on Saudi security forces in the al-Jamia district of Jeddah. The security forces responded. One militant was killed and two were wounded in the attack. Saudi authorities found weapons cashes including automatic rifles, ammunitions, and grenades.
- November 11, 2004: Prince Nayef was quoted saying that the Kingdom is "stripping the terrorists of all means of carrying out criminal acts."
- November 13, 2004: The Ministry of Interior announced the arrest of three men in al-Zulfi, north-west of Riyadh. Two more people were arrested in Riyadh. Interior Ministry security spokesman, Brigadier-General Mansour al-Turki, said "They are suspected mostly of supporting the extremist thought. They were trying to spread it among the youth."

- November 21, 2004: "Today at dawn the security forces arrested a member of the deviant minority[Al-Qaeda] who admitted wanting to carry out an act in a neighboring country…He said he had come here to consult his brothers and was arrested at 5am" Prince Abdullah said. Without specifying the targeted country.
- November 22, 2004: Saudi security forces seized weapons cache and ammunition at from a suspected terrorist hideout in the city of Buraidah, in Al-Qasim province.
- November 27, 2004: in Al-Jamia district of Jeddah at 6:30 pm, Saudi security attacked a car that had been under surveillance for a few days. The Saudi forces and the suspected terrorists engaged in a gun battle resulting in the death of a suspected militant and the detention of another.
- November 28, 2004: The Interior Ministry announced that the person killed yesterday (11/27/2004), Essam Siddiq Qassem Mubaraki, was on the Kingdom most wanted list for his involvement in the Muhaya housing compound bombing in Riyadh in November 2003.
- November 29, 2004: Saudi border guards seized large quantities of weapons in the province of Asir on the Saudi-Yemeni border. The arms cache include: hand grenades, rocket-propelled grenades, rocket launchers and dynamite sticks.
- November 29, 2004: Saudi security forces captured a suspected militant Riyadh after he failed to stop at a police check point.
- November 30, 2004: A suspected terrorist was surrounded by Saudi forces and captured north of Riyadh in the city of Buraidah in Al-Qassim province. The police faced no resistance.
- December 2, 2004: Saudi security forces have arrested two militants in Artawiya and two others were captured in vicinity of Hafr Al Baten and Buraidah. Seven security forces were injured in the raids.
- December 4, 2004: Saudi security forces arrested a man in the city of Taif, Western Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Interior spokesman said that the detained man was the brother of one of the people on the Kingdom's 26 most wanted list. He was suspected of supporting militants.
- December 6, 2004: The U.S. Consulate in Jeddah was attacked. Five people were killed including the three attackers, and two non-US citizens who worked in the consulate. Two of the gunmen were injured and taken to the hospital (one would later die in the hospital). Four Saudi security officers were killed and several were wounded.

  Al-Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility with a statement that was posted on website. The statement said that the attack was revenge for the US attack on Fallujah last month.
- December 7, 2004: Saudi authorities identified the people who carried the attack against the US Consulate: Fayez ibn Awwad Al-Jeheni, Eid ibn Dakhilallah Al-Jeheni and Hassan ibn Hamed Al-Hazmi, none was on the 26 most-wanted list.
- December 28, 2004: Saudi security forced engaged in a gun battle with suspected militants in Al-Deera district or Riyadh. Three gunmen were killed and one was injured in the fight.
- December 29, 2004: Saudi security forces killed a militant in a gun battle in Riyadh after he threw a hand grenade at Saudi officers while patrolling a residential district in Riyadh. Police later surrounded the car and killed the man in the shootout.

  Another militant was killed in Jeddah

  Militants launched coordinated car bombings against the Ministry of Interior and a security forces recruitment center in Riyadh. The bomb next to the Interior Ministry was injured several people including five Saudi security officers and some bystanders. The security forces were able to stop the suicide bombing before detonating killing seven militants.
- December 31, 2004: Al-Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula posted a statement on a website claiming responsibility and saying that their target was the Interior Minister, Prince Nayef,

and his son and Deputy, Prince Ahmad bin Nayef.

- January 2, 2005: The Ministry of Interior names the attackers of the December 29 attack. Three participated in the attack on the Interior Ministry: Ismael Ali Mohammad Al-Khuzaim, Abdullah Saud Al-Subaiei, on the Kingdom's most wanted and was the suicide bomber in the attack, Mohammad Mohsen Al-Osaimi. Two more people were named for their involvement in the attack on the recruitment center: Dakheel Abdul Aziz Dakheel Mohammad Al-Obeid, and Nasser Ali Saad Al-Motairi
- January 9, 2005: Saudi forces killed 4 gunmen in a gun battle in Al-Zulfi, northwest of Riyadh. Three Saudi Security forces were injured. The police seized arms caches.
- January 10, 2005: The Ministry of Interior identified three of the four militants killed yesterday. They were: Muhammad Al-Farraj, Mishaal Obaid Abdullah Al-Hasiri, and Omar Abdullah Al-Raid Al-Qahtani.
- January 18, 2005: The Saudi Ministry of Interior announced that they were able to trace the explosive to a neighborhood in Riyadh.

Changes in Post-May 2003 Reactions

Saudi Arabia's intelligence community began to make a major effort to track the activities of Saudi religious and charitable groups inside and outside the Kingdom, and is now giving special attention to Pakistan and Central Asia. It is tightening security inside the Kingdom, and increasing surveillance of young men with ties to extremist groups, and religious figures who have made hard-line or extremist statements. Surveillance has also been increased over the activities of religious schools and teachers.

Furthermore, the Saudi authorities realized that "emptiness leads to terrorism" as a consultative Shura Council member has said.[7] The authorities have realized that addressing economic and educational needs of the Saudi public is the most important element of the fight against terrorists. Although this was realized before the May 2003 bombing, it is more urgent now.

The government is pouring billions of dollars into training young Saudis for the technical and job related skills to prepare them for the work force. "The Saudi government has come to view putting more of its people to work as a matter of national security." This seems to be the realization of the authorities, and as the development director at the General Organization for Technical Educations and Vocational Training argued, "I believe that not being able to get a job for young Saudis will lead to disaster, whether in security or moral terms." [8]

This Saudization program is only beginning to meet the needs of internal stability and security. Saudis fill only 13% of the private sector jobs compared to a goal of 45% by this year.[9] There are many signs that this is heading in the right direction, but a lot more has to be done in both the training and the Saudization program. There ought to be a change in the attitudes toward taking private sector jobs. This involves changes in the attitude of the Saudis. Culturally they have tended to avoid low paying jobs especially those in the service sector. Clearly this is disappearing slowly as many Saudis taking jobs as hotel concierge, supermarket cashiers, and taxi drivers.

The Problem of Corruption

Saudi Arabia also still needs to fully address another area of internal security that is not normally seen as part of the security apparatus but which certainly affects its operations. The level of corruption in Saudi Arabia is often exaggerated and used to make broad, undocumented charges against the government and royal family. Corruption is, however, a serious problem and exaggerated perceptions of corruption can be as important as reality.

Saudi Arabia has been slow to reform civil law and regulation to create the legal basis for large-scale private and foreign investment and commercial operations that can be based on secure rights to property, conducting business without interference or reliance on agents, and resolving commercial disputes. There has been progress in these areas, but there has not been enough and Saudi security is growing increasingly dependent on the broad international perception that Saudi Arabia will reduce corruption, that members of the royal family and senior officials cannot intervene improperly in business affairs, and that investments and business activities are safe.

More and more Saudis are demanding transparency. They want to know where money is being spent. The senior leadership is heeding the call, and we see this in Crown Prince Abdullah's announcement about the Kingdom's plans for spending the budget surplus for 2004.[10] This will please the Saudi public, prevent squandering of funds, and improve the country's reputation in the world.

The Shi'ite Problem and Iran

Fortunately, one threat to Saudi internal security seems to have diminished while the threat posed by Al-Qaeda grew. The threat Iran posed by exploited Saudi Shi'ite concerns and tensions seem to have diminished. In the past, Saudi Arabia had serious problems with Iranian intelligence agents and covert support of Shi'ite extremists after the fall of the Shah in 1979 until it reached an accommodation with the Iranian government in the late 1990s. Weapons and explosives were intercepted in the Eastern Province and there were numerous small acts of sabotage related to Iranian-sponsored activities. Iran trained a number of Saudi Shi'ites in low intensity warfare and covert operations in Iran and Lebanon, and regularly disrupted the Hajj to make political protests.

Saudi intelligence estimates have clearly linked Iran's Revolutionary Guard and certain officers of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence with the Al-Khobar bombing. Iranian activity seems to have sharply diminished since the uncovering of the major covert Iranian networks operating in the Eastern Province, but Saudi intelligence officials note that Iran still attempts to maintain a significant intelligence presence in the Kingdom, and still provides political, paramilitary, and religious training for at least some Saudi Shi'ites. However, due to the new capabilities of the Saudi counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism forces, it is proving more difficult for Iranian informants and operatives to establish new networks within the Kingdom.

While the threat Iran posed as an enabler of the Shi'ite opposition is under control, as mentioned above, the potential threat posed by a nuclear Iran is real. The Kingdom is worried, and again the country can: a) live with a nuclear Iran by doing nothing, b) build

an anti missile defense system, or c) acquire its own nuclear weapons. None of these choices is easy, but given that Iraq, as a military power, is gone for at least the next 5-10 years, with the US occupation, the only viable rival to Iran is Saudi Arabia. Doing nothing is not an option especially during this period of transitional reforms the Kingdom is going through.

Although very unlikely, Iran could use its nuclear weapons to blackmail the Kingdom over its Shi'ite population, over its support of Bahrain, or over its control of the holy places, Mecca and Medina. Conventional weapons by themselves are not the answer. The questions, however, remains, will the Saudis trust that the US will be there for their protection? Is this enough to deter Iran from blackmailing the Kingdom? Do they have to look somewhere else for protection? Do they try to acquire their own deterrence?

The Evolving Saudi Security Apparatus

Saudi Arabia's security apparatus now deals with these issues using a complex mix of paramilitary and internal security forces, and an equally complex legal system for dealing with civil and security cases. This is a truly massive effort. The total internal security budget for 2003 topped $7 billion and in 2004 is estimated at $8 - $8.5billion (including security and intelligence), with a virtually open-ended capability to spend on any internal security purpose.

As has already been noted, a number of civil ministries like the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Guidance play at least an indirect role in internal security because of their political impact. Others include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Communications; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Culture and Information; the Ministry of Education; Ministry of Higher Education; Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources; and the Ministry of Pilgrimage and Islamic Trusts. This kind of indirect role in internal security is typical of similar ministries in virtually every country in the developing world, as well as a number of countries in Europe.

Saudi security forces involve a mix of elements in the regular armed forces, and the National Guard, and a range of internal security and intelligence services most of which are under the Ministry of Interior. The following charts show visually the various services. The regular army provides external security, but is normally kept away from urban areas except for special forces and the helicopters it uses to support the MOI security services.

The National Guard – with its more than 100,000 troops – provides internal security under a different chain of command using both its regular forces and tribal levies. It protects the territory of the Kingdom and the approaches to its cities and critical facilities, acts as reinforcements for the regular forces, can serve as an urban security force in an emergency. It does, however, have an Intelligence Directorate that focuses on counterintelligence within the National Guard itself and plays a limited role in counterterrorism operations. As of yet, it has no foreign intelligence operations capability.

The Pivotal Role of the Ministry of Interior

The key to the Saudi security apparatus is the Ministry of Interior. The internal security forces are centralized under Prince Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz, the Minister of Interior.[11] Prince Nayef is a major political power in the Kingdom. He is one of the strongest figures in the Royal family and has long played a critical role in Saudi security. His Vice-Minister is Prince Ahmed bin Abdul Aziz, whose main function is to deal with the different provinces of the Kingdom and who also plays a major role as the main force behind the General Security Service; Prince Mohammed bin Nayef is the Assistant Minister for Security Affairs and handles all the uniformed services that fall under the Ministry of Interior.

These services and their troop totals are listed in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Ministry of Interior Troop Totals - 2004

Department	**Troop Level**
General Security Service *(mabahith)*	CLASSIFIED
Passport & Immigration Department	7,500
Drug Enforcement Agency	20,000
General Prisons Service	15,000
Mujahideen	5,000
Border Guard (includes Coast Guard)	30,000
Civil Defense Administration	25,000
Special Security Forces	10,000
Public Security Administration	135,000
Various Police Forces - 95,000	
Special Emergency Forces - 30,000	
Petroleum Installation Security Force - 10,000	

The Role of Prince Nayef

There are two prevailing schools of thought prevailing in the Kingdom on Prince Nayef. Some Saudis feel he is conservative and has underestimated the Kingdom's security problems. They feel he was too slow to react to the growth of Islamic extremist movements outside the Kingdom, and the role the Kingdom played in supporting such movements with money and Saudi volunteers, and saw outside pressure from the US to crackdown on such activities as the result of exaggerated US fears that were at least partly the result of pressure from Israel.

The other school of thought holds that he is the nerve center of the complex security network in Saudi Arabia and hence is the key actor in Saudi Arabia's ongoing war against terrorism and they give him the credit for all the successes in that war (hundreds of arrests of suspected militants, killing of senior al-Qaeda figures, foiling of major bombings both within and outside the Kingdom, and the uncovering of huge weapons and explosives caches).

Using the Wrong Words at the Wrong Time

The former view is given some support by Prince Nayef's own words, and it has been clear that the MOI has lacked an effective public relations strategy. Since September 11, 2001, Prince Nayef has made several political statements implying that the people who benefited the most from the attacks were the "Zionists." For example, he made s statements in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Siyasa* on November 29, 2002.

Prince Nayef did say, "we put big question marks and ask who committed the events of September 11 and who benefited from them. Who benefited from the event of September 11? I think they (the Zionists) are behind these events." He expressed the view that it was "impossible" that Al-Qaeda alone, or that 19 youths of which 15 were Saudi, could have acted alone.

He then went on to attack the Moslem Brotherhood by saying "All our problems come from the Moslem brotherhood. We have given too much support to this group…The Muslim Brotherhood has destroyed the Arab world." He attacked a multinational spectrum of Islamic Politicians for turning their backs on Saudi Arabia, forgetting the favors it had given them, and launching attacks on the Kingdom. He singled out Hassan Al-Turabi of the Sudan as a case in point. He also mentioned Hamas, Jordan's parliamentary opposition and the Islamic Action Front for their attacks on the Kingdom, and attacked Islamic scholars like Abdul Rahman Khalifa, Rashid Ghannouchi, Abdul Majeed Al-Zidani, and Necmettin Erbakan for supporting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. He stated there were no dormant Al-Qaeda cells remaining in Saudi Arabia and that this threat no longer existed.[12]

In fairness, Prince Nayef used such language in a long interview stressing the need to crack down on terrorism, that the government was putting pressure on Saudi religious figures and mosques that the Kingdom has made numerous arrests, and that terrorism was fundamentally anti-Islamic. He was also reacting to a flood of poorly-founded US and Western press criticism of Saudi Arabia, linking the possibility that the wife of the Saudi Ambassador to the US gave money to a family that *migh*t have been linked to terrorists.[13]

Actions are More Important than Words

Actions, not words, however, are the key to successful counterterrorism. Other Saudis feel that Prince Nayef has reacted strongly and effectively to the increases in the Islamist threat to the Kingdom since the attacks of May 2003, and feel he is often quoted out of context. It is also clear than many US and other Western experts feel that Prince Nayef, his brother Prince Ahmad, and his son Prince Mohammed have been highly effective in reacting to the threat since May 2003.

The Directors General of the respective services administratively all report to the Minister and Vice Minister and are directly responsible to the Minister; operationally they are directly linked to the Assistant Minister for Security Affairs. They include the Directors General of the Civil Defense Administration, Public Security Administration (all police forces fall under this service and more importantly, the Special Emergency Forces, which have taken the lead in the domestic war against terrorism), Passports & Immigration Department, Border Guards, Mujahideen, the General Prisons Service and

the Special Security Forces. Because of the power of the GSS and the sensitivity of its mission, its Director General reports to Vice Minister Prince Ahmad.

The Public Security Force, Special Security Forces, Mujahideen, and General Security Service (GSS) provide internal security at the political and intelligence levels, security inside cities and deal with limited problems that require crowd control and SWAT like operations, and counter-terrorist capabilities. They also provide the Kingdom's primary counter-terrorist force and played a major role in dealing with the bombings of the SANG headquarters and the USAF barracks at Al-Khobar.

All of these activities are becoming steadily more coordinated and effective, and steps are being taken to build morale as well. Prince Nayef and Prince Ahmad are reported to pay massive bonuses to successful security officers, but also have a reputation for honesty and using the massive security budget only for the mission and not to enrich themselves. And Prince Mohammed bin Nayef has also been very generous to the families of the security officers who have died combating the terrorist networks in the Kingdom. This generosity has made the three senior figures extremely popular among the officers of the Ministry of Interior.

Figure 2: The Saudi Intelligence and Security Community

The Police and Security Services

The police and security forces are still somewhat traditional in character, but have been steadily modernized. Over the past two years, under the strong leadership of Prince Mohamed bin Nayef, there has been a major reorganization and development of these forces financed by huge budget increases. Early in Saudi Arabia's history there were no formal police and local and tribal authorities administered justice. During the reign of King Abdul Aziz, more modern police, justice, and internal security organizations were developed. In 1950, he created a "general directorate" to supervise all police functions. He established the Ministry of Interior in 1951, which has since controlled police matters.

Saudi Arabia has received substantial technical advice from British, French, German, Jordanian, Pakistani, and US experts. Substantial numbers of British and French advisors served in Saudi Arabia in the past, including seconded ex-government and military personnel, but it is unclear how many have continued to serve since the early 1990s.

The police security forces are now divided into regular police (which fall under public security) and special investigative and intelligence police of the General Security Service (GSS), which are called the *mabahith* (secret police). The GSS performs the domestic security and counterintelligence functions of the Ministry of Interior. The GSS has a large special investigation force, something like the British CID. The US State Department reports that political detainees arrested by the GSS are often held incommunicado in special prisons during the initial phase of an investigation, which may last weeks or months. The GSS allows the detainees only limited contact with their families or lawyers.

There are approximately 135,000 paramilitary policemen in the Public Security Administration equipped with the latest weaponry. They are assigned to Provincial Governors, and are under the Minister of Interior. Public Security forces train at the King Fahd College for Security Studies located in Riyadh. The Public Security Administration forces have a police college in Mecca. Police uniforms are similar to the khaki and olive drab worn by the army except for the distinctive black beret. Policemen usually wear side arms while on duty.

The Public Security's Special Emergency Forces have taken the lead in combating the al-Qaeda networks in the Kingdom. They have similar specialized training as the Special Security Forces in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. Because of their mobility, they act as a rapid deployment security force in case of an unexpected security threat. They number around 30,000 and are in the process of a large-scale modernization and development program. They operate basically as the defensive Special Security Force and anti-terrorist service of the Kingdom. The Special Security Force is the Saudi equivalent of a special weapons assault team (SWAT) and acts as the offensive force in the Kingdom. It reports directly to the Minister of Interior but its operational head is the Assistant Minister for Security Affairs. It was organized in response to the poor performance of the National Guard during the revolt in 1979 at the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

The force is equipped with the latest light armored vehicles, automatic weapons, and non-lethal chemical weapons. Although its core personnel have been raised to 10,000, its total final strength remains unclear as the threat level varies. Its antiterrorism units have

been steadily expanded since 1990. In the past few years, enormous sums have been spent to reorganize and modernize this force. It is designed to deal with terrorism and hijacking and has SWAT capabilities and detachments in every major Saudi city and province.

The public security forces are recruited from all areas of the country and maintain police directorates at provincial and local levels. These forces, particularly the centralized Public Security Police, can be reinforced by the National Guard in an emergency or can get support from the regular armed forces. The director general for public security retains responsibility for police units but, in practice, provincial governors exercise considerable autonomy.

The focus of police and security activity has also changed over the years. Saudi Arabia is now a highly urbanized society and these formal state institutions carry out most internal security and criminal justice activity in urban areas. This has helped drive the effort to modernize the police and security forces. For example, state of the art command and control systems have been acquired and deployed and new vehicles and radio communications equipment have enabled police directorates to operate sophisticated mobile units, particularly in the principal cities. The Special Security Forces and the Special Emergency Forces have acquired a sizable fleet of helicopters for use in urban areas and have been utilized against various terrorist cells operating in the Kingdom.

The Ministry of Interior now maintains one of the most sophisticated centralized computer systems in the world at the National Information Center in Riyadh. This computer network links some 1,100 terminals, and maintains records on citizens' identity numbers and passports, foreigners' residence and work permits, hajj visas, vehicle registrations, and criminal records. Reports from agents and from the large number of informants employed by the security services are also entered. Officials of the GSS and GIP have authority to carry out wiretaps and mail surveillance. The Ministry of the Interior also has a large electronic intelligence operation with a separate budget that is estimated at over $500 million per year.

Some security activities do, however, continue to be enforced on a tribal level in tribal areas. The King provides payments or subsidies to key Sheiks and they are largely in charge of tribal affairs. Offenses and many crimes are still punished by the responsible Sheik. The National Guard acts as a support force to deal with problems that cannot be settled or controlled by the tribal authorities.

General Security Service

The General Security Service (GSS), or “Mabahith” as it is known in Arabic, is the domestic intelligence service of the Ministry of Interior. It is the most important and sensitive service in the Kingdom. Although exact figures pertaining to the GSS are classified, informed estimates show that it has by far the largest budget of any domestic intelligence service in the Middle East. The numbers of its staff are likewise confidential.

Cooperation between the US and Saudi intelligence communities has increased since the attacks in May 2003. Shortly thereafter, the FBI began to work with the GSS in earnest and a close working relationship has developed. Although shortcomings on both

sides remain, their joint efforts have contributed to major successes in the war on terrorism in the Kingdom and abroad.

Under the strong leadership of Prince Ahmad and Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, the GSS has been successful at thwarting many plots and pressuring many Saudis not to join the militants. On August 30, 2004 Prince Nayef said that he "…can say, confidently, that what happened does not exceed five or six per cent of what was foiled."[14] The GSS has remarkably improved the quality of its information gathering, the assessment of this data, and most importantly, its dissemination to troops on the ground.

GSS operations have been streamlined in order to adapt to new threats. In addition, budget increases have allowed for highly specialized training programs and acquisitions of the latest equipment, making the GSS one of the most professional intelligence services in the region. Furthermore, its interrogation methods have yielded actionable intelligence that has thwarted numerous attacks in the Kingdom and abroad.

Due to this success, the senior officers of the service have become prime targets of the terrorists. There were at least two instances when they attempted assassinations against top security officials. First, in December 2003, Lieutenant-Colonel Ibrahim al-Dhaleh, of the GSS, was attacked by a car bomb. Second, there have been other attempts against Major-General Abdul Aziz al-Huweirini, the Assistant Director for Interrogations at the GSS, and the senior officer in charge of debriefing captured al-Qaeda terrorists in the Kingdom. He was shot and injured on December 4, 2003.[15] He has since recovered and returned to his post.

The General Intelligence Presidency

Saudi Arabia's main foreign intelligence service is the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP). Among its many responsibilities, it has a foreign security, anti-terrorism, foreign liaison functions, strategic analytical assessments, coordinating the foreign covert networks of the Kingdom, and ultimately foreign covert operations if need be.

The President of the GIP reports directly to the Prime Minister (the King). Although the budget of the GIP is classified, it is roughly estimated at a minimum of $500 million per year. That would make it the most funded intelligence service in the Middle East.

An Emerging Saudi Intelligence Community

In theory, the head of the General Intelligence Presidency is responsible for intelligence collection and analysis, and for the coordination of intelligence tasks and reporting by *all* intelligence agencies, including those of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense and Civil Aviation and the National Guard. In practice, at the operational level, there now is no real Saudi intelligence "community."

One is in the process of being formed, however, and a real effort is being made to ensure that the various services can function in a unified manner. Since 9/11, the senior Saudi leadership has realized that intelligence sharing -- or "fusion" -- is weak, coordination is poor, and the different services are filled with personal and bureaucratic rivalries and tensions. The problems are compounded by the fact that the research departments of the services --- especially those at the GIP -- are weak, and that in general

Saudi intelligence collection relies too heavily on personal contacts and briefings, rather than systematic and structured analysis.

The Saudi intelligence community will be comprised of the GIP, GSS, the three intelligence branches of the military (Army, Navy, and Air Force), the National Guard Intelligence Directorate, the Interior Minister's Bureau of Analysis and Studies, the Foreign Ministry's Information and Studies Center, and the National Guard's Specialized Studies Center.

The Changing Role of the GIP

Under Prince Turki Al-Faisal's leadership, the GIP was successful in dealing with many internal and foreign threats that posed a direct menace to the Kingdom. It had a long history of cooperation with US intelligence although it has (along with its sister agency, the GSS) generally opposed any Western efforts to introduce law enforcement organizations like the CIA and FBI into Saudi security issues in ways that could embarrass the Saudi government. This led to acute tensions between the two main Saudi services and their American counterparts over the investigation like the Al Khobar bombing, and helped lead to the charges that the Saudi government covered up Iranian involvement in the bombing.

In fairness to Saudi Arabia, however, the US, Britain, and other Western countries failed to cooperate with Saudi intelligence in a number of past cases because they felt that this might violate the rights of legitimate opposition movements or raise human rights issues. The US and other Western intelligence services also turned a blind eye or at least tolerated, Islamic extremist activity when it seemed to serve their interests in Afghanistan and Bosnia, or acted as a counter balance to Russian influence in Central Asia and paid little attention to the potential threat posed by funds and manpower coming out of the Kingdom. If Saudi Arabia was slow to see the threat of extremism and terrorism and sometimes "exported" its problems, the US, Britain, and other European intelligence and security services made equally serious mistakes in monitoring and characterizing "Islamic" movements.

Major developments have taken place within the GIP since September 11th. Prince Turki Al-Faisal was replaced in 2001 by Crown Prince Abdullah's half-brother, Prince Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz.[16] This development was particularly striking because Prince Turki Al-Faisal had spent some 30 years in intelligence and had built a solid reputation for professionalism and effectiveness. He began his career as deputy director in the Office of Foreign Liaison at the age of 23.

Over the years, he reorganized and consolidated the office into a full-fledged intelligence service. He became Director of Intelligence in 1977 and it was at that time that the move toward a professional intelligence service began in earnest. Prince Turki had long been the main contact point for the US, British, French and other main Western and Arab services among others. He was also responsible for dealing with operations in Afghanistan and Central Asia since the Soviet invasion in 1979. He was also the main point of contact with the US-Saudi backed Mujahideen and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) service, with the various warring Afghan factions after the Soviet withdrawal, and with the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden (along with other Arab

Mujahideen).[17] He was considered by many inside Saudi Arabia as one of the Kingdom's leading strategic thinkers.

The Future Role and Capabilities of the GIP

The future of Saudi internal security will not be shaped by the leadership of the General Intelligence Presidency alone, but rather by the overall effectiveness of the government and the royal family in dealing with the broader mix of political, economic, social, and demographic issues that threaten Saudi Arabia's internal security. An important fact that has been missed by most foreign assessments is that the GIP, in its bylaws, does not have the right to make arrests, rather, it can track and monitor individuals in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the General Security Service carries out any recommendations for arrests. Hence, its role is one of an early warning advisory service, which, depending on the effectiveness of its head, can be extremely influential in Saudi security planning, or irrelevant, as is the case today.

Saudi Arabia clearly needs to do more to expand and modernize some aspects of its intelligence operations. In the past, Saudi intelligence has tended to rely heavily on interpersonal relations and human intelligence (HUMINT), supplemented by limited usage of surveillance equipment (SIGINT) and computerized records. It worked closely with the major Western and Arab intelligence services in some areas, and had some access to more advanced imagery and signal intelligence through such sources. Saudi intelligence did not, however, establish and organize for the kind of sophisticated domestic and foreign surveillance networks necessary to provide adequate coverage of small, dispersed Islamic terrorist groups and individual movements. It has tended to rely on information from traditional elites, and to have limited data on urbanized Saudis and Saudi young males that become affiliated with extremist movements inside and especially outside of Saudi Arabia. Surveillance of financial transfers, charitable organizations, and activities like money laundering has been particularly weak, as no such body within the GIP was set up to deal with those issues.

Moreover, the GIP has become markedly less effective since the departure of Prince Turki. Most of the sophisticated networks that had been established over many years have deteriorated and hence the GIP's role in the global war on terrorism has been marginal at best. Thus, the Kingdom has had to rely heavily on only one truly professional security service, the GSS.

To address this deficiency, Crown Prince Abdullah appointed Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed as the new Assistant President of the GIP. He was a former Deputy Commander of the National Guard for the Western Region and this experience, along with his personal dynamism, has led some to hope that he can save the GIP from irrelevancy. Hence, two new assistant presidents share the organizational day-to-day working of the service. Prince Abdulaziz bin Bandar Bin Abdulaziz is the other assistant president and is mainly in charge of the analysis and research directorate.

It is hoped that the dynamism of the two Assistant Presidents will lead to a reinvigoration of the service, especially if they surround themselves by a core group of capable new professional intelligence officers. Prince Nawaf is the nominal head and the King's son; Prince Saud bin Fahd occupied the second slot as the Vice President of GIP.

Operations and Activities Since May 2003

However, a weak Research and Analysis Department within the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP) has limited that organization and has made it incapable of meeting the intelligence requirements of the senior leadership in assessing and countering threats to the Kingdom. Considering the kingdom's vital strategic position in the international community, as well as its place at the center of the global war on terrorism, such deficiencies are particularly dangerous. In general, the weakness of the GIP is one of the critical national security problems facing Saudi Arabia.

Border and Coastal Security

Border and coastline control is the responsibility of the Border Guard and has long been an important aspect of security operations. Smuggling is endemic, even across the Saudi border with Iraq. Saudi border guards arrested 777 smugglers crossing the border during 2001, and seized nearly three tons of hashish, more than 5,700 bottles of alcohol, more than 450 weapons, and 43,680 rounds of ammunition.[18] Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, smuggling across this border has dropped drastically. While Saudi Arabia does not announce the fact publicly, it regularly had to deal with Iraqi patrols that crossed into Saudi territory, and it is now clear that some Iraqi intelligence officers had been operating in the Kingdom prior to the Iraq war.

Saudi Arabia has taken diplomatic steps to greatly reduce its problems and tensions with Iran and Yemen, and particularly to reduce Iranian efforts to exploit Saudi Arabia's problems with its Shi'ites and use the Hajj as a propaganda forum. The Kingdom has also, however, taken strong steps to improve its counterterrorism efforts in dealing with border and coastal security as well. It has improved its monitoring of foreign nationals and ability to track their movements and activities.

The Role of the Border Guards

The 30,000 man Border Guard covers Saudi Arabia's land and sea borders. It performs a host of patrol and surveillance missions, and can act as a light defensive screen. It is equipped with four-wheel drive vehicles and automatic weapons as well as a sizable fleet of helicopters. The Border Guard did much of the fighting with Yemen in the past, and took casualties in doing so. It still must deal with the problem of smuggling and infiltration across the Saudi borders with Yemen, Jordan, and Iraq.

Some members of the Coast Guard have been implicated in smuggling by sea, but this activity is severely punished and does not seem to be any more common than in other countries. Similar problems exist along the border with Yemen, although the border clashes that used to take place between Yemeni and Saudi security forces seem to have largely ended following the settlement of the Saudi-Yemeni border in June 2000.

The main problems are now smuggling and inter-tribal violence, which are still endemic. The Yemeni border has been the main source of the weapons and explosives used in the recent terrorist attacks against the Kingdom. This border is still the main conduit by which militants from Afghanistan enter the country. The Saudi borders with Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, and Oman are stable and secure except for smuggling. The movement of alcohol and narcotics is still a problem.

The Option of a Border Surveillance and Defense System

Saudi Arabia has considered major changes in its security apparatus to deal with these issues. As early as the 1990s, Saudi Arabia considered building a border surveillance system that would use patrol aircraft, remotely piloted vehicles, and early warning systems to detect intruders and border crossings. This would have involved a 12 kilometer-deep security zone around all 6,500 kilometers of the land and sea borders, with a mix of acoustic, seismic, radar, magnetic, and infrared sensors to detect movements of men and vehicles in the border area. It would have been supported by small manned patrol aircraft, and unmanned remotely piloted vehicles, wherever some threat from an intruder might exist.

Thomson CSF completed a $5 million feasibility study for this system in early 1990, and two consortiums—one led by E Systems and the other by Thomson CSF -- submitted bids to Saudi Arabia in May 1991. The system was not funded in part because of its cost, and in part because of the ease with which given sections could be penetrated before an effective response would be possible. Its estimated cost was around $3 billion and it would have taken several years to complete.[19]

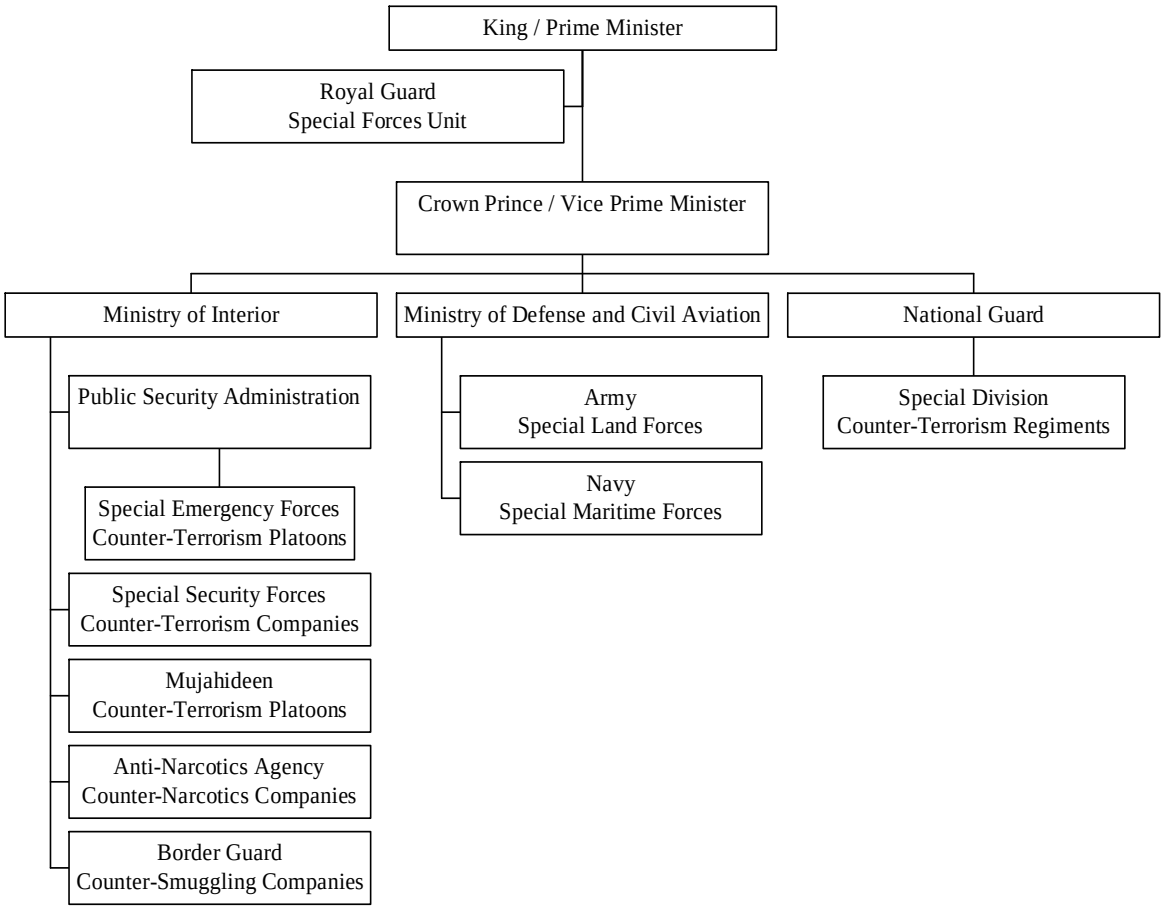
Putting such a system has been put on hold at the request of the Yemeni government. If the government does put such a system in place, it is now likely to be through the installation of a much more technically sophisticated system. The Ministry of Interior is in the process of approving an $8.75 billion contract with the French government to install an electronic defensive shield along this border.

The Expanding Mission of the Border Guard

The Coast Guard has been historically concerned with smuggling, but now has a growing internal security mission.[20] They are being expanded and given better equipment like very fast patrol boats. The Air Force and Navy are providing them more surveillance and patrol support, and some consideration is being given to giving the Coast Guard surveillance helicopters while the Navy is seeking suitable maritime patrol aircraft.

It is virtually impossible, however, for Saudi Arabia to fully secure its Gulf or Red Sea coasts against smuggling and infiltration by small craft. Traffic in the Gulf and Red Sea is simply too high, the coasts are too long, and sensors cannot track movements by dhows and small craft. The Saudi navy, coastguard, and National Guard are able to provide adequate security screening for key ports, desalination facilities, and petroleum export facilities with roughly two weeks of warning. Coverage is generally limited in peacetime.

Figure 3: Saudi Counterterrorism Forces



Security and the Role of the Judicial System

The Saudi civil and criminal legal system is another aspect of the Saudi security apparatus. It has slowly been modernized, but presents problems both in terms of both efficient internal security operations and human rights. It is traditional, religious in character, and is based on Shari'a as interpreted by Islamic practice under the Wahhabi order, which adheres to the Hanbali School of the Sunni branch of Islam.

The Shari' a courts exercise jurisdiction over common criminal cases and civil suits regarding marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. These courts base judgments largely on the Koran and on the Sunna, another Islamic text. Cases involving relatively small penalties are tried in Shari' a summary courts; more serious crimes are adjudicated in Shari'a courts of common pleas. Appeals from Shari' a courts are made to the courts of appeal. The Saudi government permits Shi'ite Muslims to use their own legal tradition to adjudicate non-criminal cases within their community. Other civil proceedings, including those involving claims against the Government and enforcement of foreign judgments, are held before specialized administrative tribunals, such as the Commission for the Settlement of Labor Disputes and the Board of Grievances.[21]

The Judicial System and Internal Security

The judicial system works differently when it deals with internal security issues. The Saudi government is still deeply concerned about the security of the military forces – although there have been no recent cases of active opposition within either the regular military forces or the paramilitary and security forces. The military justice system has jurisdiction over uniformed personnel and civil servants that are charged with violations of military regulations. The King, the Crown Prince, and the Minister of Defense and Civil Aviation review the decisions of courts-martial and it is clear that serious cases get the direct attention of the senior leadership. Similarly, the Saudi government conducts closed trials for persons who may be political prisoners and in other cases has detained persons incommunicado for long periods while under investigation.

The US State Department reports that there are several bodies that perform higher legal review functions:

- The Supreme Judicial Council is not a court and may not reverse decisions made by a court of appeals. However, the Council may review lower court decisions and refer them back to the lower court for reconsideration. Only the Supreme Judicial Council may discipline or remove a judge. The King appoints the members of the Council.
- The Council of Senior Religious Scholars is an autonomous body of 20 senior religious jurists, including the Minister of Justice. It establishes the legal principles to guide lower-court judges in deciding cases.
- Provincial governors have the authority to exercise leniency and reduce a judge's sentence.
- The King reviews cases involving capital punishment. The King has the authority to commute death sentences and grant pardons, except for capital crimes committed against individuals. In such cases, he may request the victim's next of kin to pardon the murderer—usually in return for compensation from the family or the King.

The "Mutawwa'in" or Religious Police

Saudi Arabia has a religious police called the "Mutawwa'in," which is a force organized under the King in conjunction with the Islamic "clergy" or Ulema. It is known in English as the Organization to Prevent Vice and Promote Virtue or Committees for Public Morality and part of the government's Department of Virtue Propagation and Vice Prevention. It is primarily responsible for ensuring compliance with the precepts of Wahhabism, but performs some security functions in dealing with religious extremists.[22] The Mutawwa'in enforce the public observances of religious practices, such as the closure of public establishments during prayer times. They have been known to exceed their authority with both Saudi and expatriates alike by undue harassment of both men and women in public places and trespassing into private homes.

The State Department reported that:

> The Mutawaa'in have the authority to detain persons for no more than 24 hours for violations of the strict standards of proper dress and behavior. However, they sometimes exceed this limit before delivering detainees to the police. Current procedures require a police officer to accompany the Mutawaa'in at the time of an arrest. The Mutawaa'in generally comply with this requirement. In the more conservative Riyadh district, however, there are continuing reports received of Mutawaa'in accosting, abusing, arresting, and detaining persons alleged to have violated dress and behavior standards. Mutawaa'in practices and incidents of abuse varied widely in different regions of the country, but were most numerous in the central Nejd region. In certain areas, both the Mutawaa'in and religious vigilantes acting on their own harassed, assaulted, battered, arrested, and detained citizens and foreigners. The Government requires the Mutawaa'in to follow established procedures and to offer instruction in a polite manner; however, Mutawaa'in did not always comply with the requirements. The Government has not publicly criticized abuses by Mutawaa'in and religious vigilantes, but has sought to curtail these abuses.

It also reports that the Mutawaa'in enforce strict standards of social behavior, including the closing of commercial establishments during the five daily prayer observances, insisting upon compliance with strict norms of public dress, and dispersing gatherings of women in public places. The Mutawaa'in frequently reproach Saudi and foreign women for failure to observe strict dress codes, and arrested men and women found together who were not married or closely related. In November 1998, several Mutawaa'in attacked and killed an elderly Shi'ite prayer leader in Hofuf for calling the prayer according to the Shi'ite tradition. Mutawaa'in attempts to cover up the killing were unsuccessful. The State Department reports that the government reportedly investigated the incident; but does not make public the results of any investigations involving Mutawaa'in personnel.

The level of Mutawwa'in activity has varied over time, and is difficult to predict. The government appointed a new and more compliant leader of the religious police after a series of raids on rich and influential Saudis in 1990, but their power grew strikingly after the Gulf War, as Saudi traditionalists reacted to the presence of US and other Western forces, but seems to have peaked in the mid-1990s. The number of reports of harassment by the Mutawaa'in during the late 1990s remained relatively low in comparison with previous years, but the Mutawaa'in continues to intimidate, abuse, and detain citizens and foreigners of both sexes.

Some Saudi officials go so far as to describe the Mutawwa'in as a form of disguised unemployment for religious Saudis, and state it is sharply overstaffed in some areas. One senior Saudi official went so far as to refer to the Mutawwa'in a "religious labor union more interested in their benefits than anything else." Other Saudis are more divided in their reaction. Some feel the Mutawwa'in perform a useful function in limiting the secularization of the Kingdom. Others see it as an outdated and over-conservative annoyance.[23] Serious questions also remain about the degree to which the attitudes of organizations like the "Mutawwa'in" affected the safety of Saudi girls' schools and did or did not interfere in a school fire that killed 15 Saudi girls in March 2002.[24]

In late November 2002, Prince Nayef was sufficiently disturbed over continuing problems with the Mutawwa'in so that he publicly took action to try to improve the conduct of the Department of Virtue Propagation and Vice Prevention. He called upon the Department to "hire well qualified people and not people of limited qualifications who act recklessly," to "gently deal with the people and avoid harshness, especially with young people." He announced a training institute was being set up, and that the Mutawwa'in would operate with better training and discipline.[25]

In general, the "Mutawwa'in" seem to be more of a Saudi internal security problem than part of the solution. Saudis do not seem to be able to cite any examples of cases where the "Mutawwa'in" have played a role in limiting the activities of Islamic extremists and defending the core values of Islam against extremism. They cannot cite cases in which the "Mutawwa'in" played a role in defending religious values while aiding modernization and reform. To be blunt, they have been a "gentler and kinder" Taliban. They have carried out rote enforcement of Saudi religious practices while acting as a tacit endorsement of efforts to force compliance with Islam rather than persuade. As such, they often at least indirectly endorse Islamic extremism while lacking the intellectual depth, training, and experience to truly defend one of the world's great religions.

It should be noted, however, that there is another force called the "Mujahideen," whose operations are centered in Riyadh, and largely patrol it at night as a kind of religious vice squad. It has taken part in counter-terrorism operations. This force is much more professional than the "Mutawwa'in," and is rarely seen or talked about. It is staffed by around 5,000 and is an independent service that reports administratively to Prince Nayef, the Minister of Interior, and operationally to the Assistant Minister for Security Affairs.

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[1] Ain AlYaqeen, November 29, 2002. www.ain-al-yaqeen.com/issues/20021129/feat6en.htm. Accessed on 9/8/2004

[2] Interviews in Saudi Arabia in 2000.

[3] Associated Press, NY, December 30, 2001, 1928; Reuters, December 29, 2001, 1802; Saudi Arabia, Vol. 18, No 10, October 2001, pp. 1-4.

[4] This chronology is taken from work by the National Council on US-Arab Relations. A far more detailed version, with detailed references to the events in Appendix 1, can be found at http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/Fact_Sheets/TimelineTerrorism.html.

[5] Gulf News, February 19, 2004, http://www.gulf-news.com/Articles/news.asp? ArticleID=111432.

[6] Various sources were used for this chronology. Including many wire stories, some of the documents provided by the Saudi embassy and:

a) http://timelines.ws/countries/SAUDIARABIA.HTML, accessed 9/28/04
b) http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/Fact_Sheets/TimelineTerrorism.html, accessed 01/26/05
c) http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=43846&d=26&m=4&y=2004, accessed: 9/28/04.

[7] Salhani, Claude, "Game over for Saudi terrorists." UPI International, 9/14/2004.
[8] Wilson, Scott, "Saudis Fight Militancy with Jobs." The Washington Post, 8/31/2004.
[9] Wilson, Scott, "Saudis Fight Militancy with Jobs." The Washington Post, 8/31/2004.
[10] Salhani, Claude, "Analysis: Saudi's new weapon—reform." UPI International, 9/7/2004.
[11] Prince Nayef is 68 years old. Like Fahd, Abdullah and Nawaf, he is a son of King Abdul Aziz.
[12] These comments are based on an English transcript and summary provided in e-mail form by the Saudi Embassy in Washington on December 5, 2002.
[13] These comments are based on an English transcript and summary provided in e-mail form by the Saudi Embassy in Washington on December 5, 2002.
[14] Gulf Daily News ,http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/arc_Articles.asp?Article=90497&Sn=WORL&IssueID=27163 Accessed 9/16/04
[15] Blanche, Ed. "Saudi Extremists Target Intelligence Chiefs." Jane's Intelligence Review, February 1, 2004.
[16] Prince Nawaf is a son of King Abd al-Aziz, and the uncle of Prince Turki. Prince Turki is brother of Prince Saud al-Faisal, the foreign minister and son of the late King Faisal.
[17] See Simon Henderson, "The Saudis: Friend or Foe?," Wall Street Journal, October 22, 2001, as provided by e-mail in publications@washingtoninstitute.org. Also see The Estimate, Vol. XIII, No. 16, September 7, 2001, p. 1.
[18] Arab News, July 8, 2001, Jeddah, Available at: http://www.arabnews.com/article.asp?ID=3823 .
[19] Defense News, November 11, 1991, p. 36; Washington Technology, September 24, 1992, p. 1.
[20] This analysis draws heavily on interviews, various annual editions of the IISS, Military Balance; and Jane's Sentinel: The Gulf States, 1997; London, Jane's Publishing 1997..
[21] This text is modified from text provided in the US State Department, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, http:// www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/saudiara.html , and US State Department, *1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, "Saudi Arabia", Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, February 25, 2000.
[22] US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, various editions, especially US State Department, 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, "Saudi Arabia", Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, February 25, 2000.
[23] The Ministry of Islamic Affairs funds the Mutawaa'in, and the general president of the Mutawaa'in holds the rank of cabinet minister. The Ministry also pays the salaries of imams (prayer leaders) and others who work in the mosques. During 1999, foreign imams were barred from leading worship during the most heavily attended prayer times and prohibited from delivering sermons during Friday congregational prayers. The Government claims that its actions were part of its Saudisation plan to replace foreign workers with citizens.
[24] Associated Press, NY, March 18, 2002, 0650, March 25, 2002, 1225; Reuters, March 12, 2002, 0430.
[25] These comments are based on an English transcript and summary provided in e-mail form by the Saudi Embassy in Washington on December 5, 2002.