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Sent: Monday, January 30, 2017 2:21 PM
To: Tara Chandra <tchandra@podestagroup.com>
Subject: Saudi's King Salman Call with President Trump

In case you have not yet seen this -- President Trump spoke with Saudi Arabia's King Salman yesterday to discuss Syria and Yemen. The full White House read-out is below as well as a couple articles of interest.

Notably, the Kingdom pledged to support safe zones in Syria and Yemen. The two leaders also discussed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and addressing Iran's activities in the region.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Regards, Tara

Readout of the President's Call with King Salman bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia
The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
January 29, 2017

President Trump spoke today with Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. The two leaders reaffirmed the longstanding friendship and strategic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia. They agreed on the importance of strengthening joint efforts to fight the spread of radical Islamic terrorism and also on the importance of working jointly to address challenges to regional peace and security, including the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. The President requested and the King agreed to support safe zones in Syria and Yemen, as well as supporting other ideas to help the many refugees who are displaced by the ongoing conflicts. They also agreed on the importance of rigorously enforcing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran and of addressing Iran's destabilizing regional activities. The President voiced support for the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic program. Both leaders expressed a desire to explore additional steps to strengthen bilateral economic and energy cooperation. The two leaders also discussed an invitation from the King for President Trump to lead a Middle East effort to defeat terrorism and to help build a new future, economically and socially, for the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the region. The President and King Salman closed by underscoring their personal commitment to continued consultations on a range of regional and bilateral issues.

Saudi king agrees in call with Trump to support Syria, Yemen safe zones: White House
Reuters
January 30, 2017

Saudi Arabia's King Salman, in a telephone call on Sunday with U.S. President Donald Trump, agreed to support safe zones in Syria and Yemen, a White House statement said.

Trump, during his presidential campaign last year, had called for Gulf states to pay for establishing safe zones to protect Syrian refugees.

A statement after the phone call said the two leaders agreed on the importance of strengthening joint efforts to fight the spread of Islamic State militants.

"The president requested, and the King agreed, to support safe zones in Syria and Yemen, as well as supporting other ideas to help the many refugees who are displaced by the ongoing conflicts," the statement said.

The Saudi Press Agency, in an initial readout of the call, made no specific mention of safe zones, but said the two leaders had affirmed the "depth and durability of the strategic relationship" between the two countries.

The agency later said "the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques had confirmed his support and backing for setting up safe zones in Syria", but did not mention Yemen, where a Saudi alliance is fighting against the Iran-aligned Houthi group.

A senior Saudi source told Reuters the two leaders spoke for more than an hour by telephone and agreed to step up counter-terrorism and military cooperation and enhance economic cooperation.

But the source had no word on whether the two leaders discussed Trump's order to put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the United States and temporarily ban travelers from Syria and six other Muslim-majority countries.

The source said Saudi Arabia would enhance its participation in the U.S.-led coalition fighting to oust Islamic State from its strongholds in Iraq and Syria.

The White House statement said the two leaders also agreed on the need to address "Iran's destabilizing regional activities." SPA confirmed the report but made no specific mention of Iran.

Both countries share views about Iranian policies in the region, the Saudi source said, suggesting Trump agreed with Riyadh's suspicion of what it sees as Tehran's growing influence in the Arab world. Iran denies it meddles in Arab countries.

The White House statement said the two also discussed what it called an invitation from the king for Trump "to lead a Middle East effort to defeat terrorism and to help build a new future, economically and socially," for Saudi Arabia and the region.

The two also discussed the Muslim Brotherhood, the senior Saudi source said, adding in a reference to the late al Qaeda leader, "it was mentioned that Osama bin Laden was recruited at an early stage" by the organization.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates designated the Brotherhood a terrorist organization. Riyadh fears the Brotherhood, whose Sunni Islamist doctrines challenge the Saudi principle of dynastic rule, has tried to build support inside the kingdom since the Arab Spring revolutions.

U.S. officials and people close to Trump's transition team have said a debate is under way in the Trump administration whether the United States should also declare the Brotherhood a terrorist organization and subject it to U.S. sanctions.

the ongoing conflicts," the White House said. The two leaders "agreed on the importance of strengthening joint efforts to fight the spread of radical Islamic terrorism and also on the importance of working jointly to address challenges to regional peace and security, including the conflicts in Syria and Yemen," it said.

Saudi Arabia is one of the U.S.'s oldest allies in the Middle East. Saudis and other Gulf Arabs criticized former President Barack Obama for not offering enough support in the showdown with Iran.

Ties were also strained last year after the U.S. Congress passed a law that allows victims of the Sept. 11 attacks to sue the kingdom. Fifteen Saudi nationals took part in the attacks on New York and Washington.

Saudi officials, however, have welcomed Trump's election and praised his energy policies as well as his choice of Rex Tillerson, the former chairman of Exxon Mobil Corp., as secretary of state. The kingdom is considering New York as a possible venue for the share sale of its oil giant Aramco, in what could be the world's biggest initial public offering.

"The Saudis welcomed his appointment," Teneo's Hawes said. "Tillerson is someone who has tremendous diplomatic experience in the region," he said. "He is a known quantity. Right now, I think this is going as well as Saudi policymakers could have hoped."

Bin Laden

Trump and the Saudi king discussed ways to boost economic ties, which the senior Saudi person said would increase trade and create jobs. The call also tackled how the late al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, aimed to destroy the kingdom's ties with the U.S. by recruiting Saudis to launch the 9-11 attacks, the person said.

Trump has ordered a review of U.S. strategy to combat Islamic State fighters operating in Iraq and Syria. In a memo Saturday, Trump ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a plan within 30 days to eliminate the terror group.

It's unclear how or whether the strategy would deviate from the Obama administration's efforts, which has involved deploying U.S. special forces, supplying and equipping local armies, and building a coalition air campaign. Over the weekend, a U.S. serviceman was killed in a raid against al-Qaeda militants in Yemen, the first such loss since Trump took office.

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Trump also spoke with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. In what appears to have been a reference to the Muslim Brotherhood, the Crown Prince was cited by UAE state news agency WAM as saying "groups that raise fake slogans and ideologies aim to hide their criminal truth by spreading chaos and destruction."

The White House said Trump had also "raised the idea of supporting safe zones for the refugees displaced by the conflict in the region, and the Crown Prince agreed to support this initiative."

(Reporting By Steve Holland in Washington, Samia Nakhoul in Beirut and William Maclean and Reem Shamseddine in Dubai; Writing by Yara Bayoumy; Editing by Meredith Mazzilli)

Trump's Calls With Gulf Allies Offer Insight on Mideast Policy

By Glen Carey and Justin Sink

Bloomberg

January 29, 2017

Two days after moving to block the entry of citizens of seven majority Muslim countries, President Donald Trump's talks with two Gulf Arab leaders contained no public mention of the ban. The focus, instead, was on anti-terrorism efforts and confronting a mutual foe: Iran.

Trump spoke by phone on Sunday with Saudi Arabia's King Salman, whose country is home to Islam's holiest shrines, as well as Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed. The call with the Saudi monarch lasted more than an hour, according to a senior Saudi person who spoke on condition of anonymity. In addition to fighting terrorism, they agreed to tackle Iran's "destabilizing regional activities," the White House said.

The remarks shed more light on Trump's Middle East policy by signaling he wants to improve ties with the Sunni-ruled Gulf Arab monarchies that felt shunned by the U.S. under the Obama administration, which focused on clinching a nuclear deal with Iran. The new U.S. president, however, stopped short of repeating his earlier vows to repeal the accord, saying he agreed with the Saudi king on "the importance of rigorously enforcing" it, according to the Trump administration.

"If you are the incoming U.S. president, you will have a huge advantage with the Saudis and the Gulf states -- just by not being Obama," Crispin Hawes, London-based managing director at Teneo Intelligence, said in a phone interview. "The impression Trump gives is that he sees political relationships in a bilateral framework. The Saudi-U.S. relationship on every observable level functions very well. At a starting point if you are King Salman, this is all good."

Both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, whose capital is Abu Dhabi, are engaged in proxy confrontations with Shiite-ruled Iran in some of the Middle East's bloodiest conflicts. The Islamic Republic was one of the seven countries included in the 90-day immigration ban on Friday, the others being Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya.

Safe Zones

Trump asked the two leaders to help secure safe zones in conflict areas in the region to support the displaced. King Salman also agreed to back "other ideas to help the many refugees who are displaced by

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