His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Biography:

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Thani carries various responsibilities in The Office of His Highness the Emir of Qatar. Since 2013 he has been responsible for managing His Highness' International Relations, overseeing the alignment of foreign policy objectives across multiple business lines in both the public and private sectors.

In 2017, Sheikh Mohammed was appointed to the role of Secretary to His Highness the Emir for Investment Affairs, in which capacity he represents His Highness in high level strategic and investment discussions with a particular focus on the US market.

Sheikh Mohammed is also the Managing Director, a Board Member, and Co-Chair of the Executive Committee, of the State of Qatar’s Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (formerly Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee), the body responsible for the oversight and delivery of stadiums and related infrastructure for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar. Prior to that, he chaired Qatar’s successful bid to host the games, creating history by leading the team that will bring the FIFA World Cup to the Middle East for the first time.

Sheikh Mohammed holds a Bachelor’s Degree in International Politics from Georgetown University in Qatar’s School of Foreign Service ('09) and a Master’s in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy University’s School of Government ('13).
You have just won a gold medal. If you were from any other country, you would be standing on a podium proudly wearing your national flag, singing along as your national anthem played. But instead, a blank patch adorns your uniform where your flag was supposed to be.

You are left stoically singing your homeland’s anthem as the event’s organizers play the "International Judo Federation anthem" - a piece that sounds as if it was ripped from the soundtrack of a tacky 1980's martial arts film. But you were expecting all of that-the event's organizers told you that they weren't going to play your anthem or let you wear your flag, citing "security concerns". What you weren't expecting was that your opponent would eschew the most basic semblance of sportsmanship by refusing to shake your hand after the match.

A day later, officials from the hosting country-the homeland of the opponent who snubbed you-apologize for the unsportsmanlike conduct. But they make no mention of the fact that they banned your national flag and anthem. This apology, instead of being viewed as the least the officials could do to uphold an appearance of propriety, is heralded as a "historic moment that shows "progress". For most athletes, such treatment would be unthinkable, For Israeli athletes, it's just another Monday. The most recent mistreatment of Israeli athletes in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) this past week is nothing new.

It is yet another demonstration of how flagrantly many in the Middle East deny even basic civility to Israelis. But it is also a good reminder of how fickle supposedly fair and principled international groups are when it comes to imposing such civility. Going into the Judo Grand Slam, the International Judo Federation (IJF) demanded that the UAE treat Israeli athletes equally. But after the event, the IJF president, Marius Vizer, made no comment about the unequal treatment of the athletes with respect to their national flag and anthem.

In fact, he lauded UAE officials for their "courage" in apologizing that their athletes didn't shake the Israeli athletes' hands. Where was the outrage at all the other instances of unequal treatment? Both the UAE and IJF should be ashamed of themselves. Marius Vizer is not Middle Eastern-he is Eastern European. It seems safe to assume that his prime motivation in overlooking the unequal treatment of the Israeli athletes was to try to get the media to focus on the positive aspect of the story-after all, continued bad press would hurt his organization's image.

We see that Mr. Vizer traded away the rhetoric of fairness and equality, which he voiced before the event, for the most pragmatic and uncontroversial resolution he could find. After the events of this week, he can no longer claim the high ground of principle. Of course, no one should be surprised at Mr. Vizer's response. No one looks to the president of the International Judo Federation to bridge the diplomatic gulf between Israel and the United Arab Emirates—that's not his job. While we can be disappointed that he didn't take a more...
principled stance, we all understand that Mr. Vizer's job is to protect the interests of the organization that he runs. But for some reason, we don't apply this same reasoning when it comes to heads of state and sovereign governments. International Relations are complicated.

But in many cases, they are dictated by pure, cold pragmatism. Some of us will pretend that countries put principles in front of pragmatic gains, but to do so is to have an unrealistic expectation of foreign policy, and unrealistic expectations often lead to disappointment. They also can lead to dangerously foolish actions. We should hope for the best, but constantly expect and plan-pragmatically for the worst. And we should waste very little time complaining when the worst does come.

The Israeli athletes who were snubbed in Abu Dhabi will be fine. If they are strong enough to win gold medals, they are strong enough to endure whatever petty indignities the United Arab Emirates may throw at them. Israel is also strong. And while the existential challenges that Israel faces are much more daunting than petty snubs at a sports tournament, those who have Israel's best interests at heart may find pragmatic politicking much more productive than perpetual outrage.
**BIOGRAPHY**

Mohammed E. Al Emadi received his undergraduate degree in Architecture from the University of Wisconsin in 1983. Upon returning to Qatar, Al Emadi headed the Ismail Bin Ali group (IBA) as its CEO. He also served as the Director of the Projects Department in the Ministry of Municipality until 1993, where he founded and headed the Technical office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his new capacity, he oversaw the construction of Embassies and Diplomatic Residences around the world and directed large infrastructure projects in Yemen and Algeria as a part of The State’s grants to respective countries.

By Emiri Decree in 1997, Al Emadi was appointed as General Manager of Qatar Telecom (Qtel), the country’s only telecommunications service provider at the time. He spearheaded the transition of the company from a state-owned entity to a public company, and sold QR2.4 billion worth of shares (40%) as part of the transition to companies in the US, Europe, G.C.C. and the local market.

In 2000, Al Emadi assumed the Chairman of the board position in the longtime family owned IBA Group. Since then, he has driven the group's net worth from $10 million in 2000 to $1 billion in 2017 by expanding and diversifying its investment portfolio. IBA now competes competitively in construction, real estate, joinery, aluminum, hospitality and education markets. In 2008 he was appointed the chairman of Gulf wearhousing Company where he Facilitated an unprecedented growth during his tenure. GWC seen its Revenue multiply over 8 times its initial Value and the net profit soared from -24 Million Qatari Riyals to +86 Million Qatari Riyals. Concurrently, he was assigned the Deputy Chairman position in The Permanent Tender Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 2016.

**GAZA**

During the then-Emir's visit to the Gaza strip in 2012, Al Emadi was tasked with chairing the Gaza Reconstruction Committee. Besides the UN, the committee is the only sovereign representative working in the Gaza strip. To date, the committee has successfully executed over 110 projects worth $418 million in infrastructure (38km+ of main roads, 48+ internal roads), housing (4000+ units), schools, sports facilities and agriculture. In working with and through the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the Israeli Government, the committee has provided thousands of job opportunities for local consultants, contractors, skilled and unskilled workers.

Al Emadi carries considerable credibility with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, as well as a vast network of political, religious and business leaders across the region. Through diplomacy and trust-building, Al Emadi has effectively navigated through the toughest and longest lasting conflict in the region, easing tensions and averting conflict. Al Emadi continues to play an instrumental role in interceding on behalf of European countries with the Israelis and Palestinians to resolve Gaza-related issues. Al Emadi is an indispensable influencer in a territory where many have failed and very few exist.
Qatar Briefing

prepared for
Rep. Buddy Carter
History

Until 1867, Qatar was ruled by the leaders of neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa family. Following an uprising, Britain installed the head of a leading Qatari family, Muhammad bin Thani Al Thani, as ruler of what is now Qatar. Following WWI, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement formalizing Qatar as a British protectorate. In 1970, Qatar adopted its first written constitution and became fully independent in 1971.

The Al Thani family claims descent from the central Arabian tribe of Banu Tamim, the tribe to which Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism, belonged. For that reason, Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic tradition that it shares with Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has worked hard not to be dominated by Saudi Arabia in the region. Saudi Arabia is the unofficial leader of the six Gulf monarchy alliance called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman.

The GCC Crisis

A consistent source of friction within the GCC has been Qatar’s embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood as representing a moderate political Islamist movement that can foster regional stability. Differences over this and other issues widened to the point where Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014, accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism. The Ambassadors returned in November 2014 in exchange for a reported pledge by Qatar to fully commit to noninterference in the affairs of other GCC states and to refrain from supporting any Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.

These same disputes erupted again two weeks after a U.S.-Gulf summit held during President Trump’s May visit to Saudi Arabia. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt, the recognized government of Yemen, and later Jordan and a few other Muslim countries, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, expelled Qatar’s diplomats, recalled their ambassadors, and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. They accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and of supporting Iran’s regional interventions, including against the government of Bahrain.

After the rift erupted, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts.

On June 22, 2017, the Saudi-led group presented Qatar with 13 demands, including closing the Al Jazeera network, severing relations with terrorist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, scaling back relations with Iran, closing a
The GCC Crisis (continued)

Turkish military base in Qatar, and paying reparations to the Saudi-led bloc. Secretary of State Tillerson described some of the demands as excessive, but indicated Qatar should agree to implement those demands that were more measured (perhaps expelling Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas figures). Qatar submitted, via Kuwait, a response to the demands that were characterized as “overall negative.” Qatari officials said they were amenable to negotiations on several of the demands, but said they would not “surrender” and that Qatar’s wealth was helping it mitigate the economic effects of the Saudi-led sanctions.

On July 5, following a meeting of their foreign ministers in Cairo, the Saudi-led group issued a joint statement continuing their economic and political measures against Qatar, but also reframing their demands as six broad principles for Qatar to “combat extremism and terrorism” and prevent their financing; suspending “all acts of provocation”; fully complying with the commitments Qatar made in 2013 and 2014; and “refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of states.” Subsequently, Saudi Arabia allowed Qatari pilgrims to visit the Kingdom, and one of the countries that backed the Saudi effort, Senegal, restored relations with Qatar.

Secretary Tillerson’s conducted “shuttle diplomacy” in the region during July 10-13, and achieved a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. No formal direct talks have begun between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, and Qatar’s restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in late August, along with joint Qatar-Turkey military drills, appeared to further dampen hopes for a near-term resolution of the rift.

More recently, President Trump has engaged directly in mediation efforts. The President initially appeared to side with the Saudi-led move by criticizing Qatar for supporting militant groups in the region. But, he remained engaged with Emir Tamim and other Gulf leaders, reportedly urging GCC unity, preventing the financing of terrorist groups or the promotion of extremist ideology. On September 7, 2017, President Trump met with Kuwait’s Emir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah at the White House, and the GCC rift was a central topic. After the visit, the President reportedly was pivotal to arranging the first direct talks on the crisis—a phone call between Emir Tamim and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on September 9. The dialogue broke off immediately when the Qatari and Saudi sides disputed which of them had initiated the talks.

U.S.–Qatar defense and security relations are long-standing and extensive, likely contributing to statements by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis urging a rapid resolution of the isolation effort. U.S. military officials initially said that the Saudi-led moves against Qatar were not affecting U.S. operations in Qatar or the region. However, Secretary of State Tillerson indicated on June 9 that the rift had begun to adversely affect U.S. regional operations, which depend on a web of interrelationships with other defense facilities in the Gulf. In part to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the defense relationship with Qatar, the Administration and Qatar signed a firm agreement to sell Qatar F-15 aircraft on June 14, and the U.S. Navy held a drill
The GCC Crisis (continued)

with Qatar on June 17. However, in early October, U.S. military officials said they were reducing some exercises with Qatar and other GCC parties to the dispute as an apparent attempt to add pressure for a resolution to the rift.

Relations with the US

The U.S. opened an embassy in Doha in 1973. The U.S-Qatar defense relationship developed during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in late 1981 and collectively backed Iraq against the Iran in that war, despite their political and ideological differences with Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

After Iraq invaded GCC member Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC participated in the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait. After the expulsion of Iraq, U.S.-Qatari defense relations deepened, and the two countries signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA) in 1992. Since then, defense cooperation has expanded and deepened, including through U.S. sales of increasingly sophisticated arms and missile defense systems. The DCA was renewed again for 10 years in December 2013. The text of the pact is classified, but it reportedly addresses U.S. military access to Qatari military facilities, prepositioning of U.S. armor and other military equipment, and U.S. training of Qatar’s military forces.

Qatar receives virtually no U.S. security or economic assistance of any kind. At times, small amounts of U.S. aid through various programs have been provided to help Qatar develop capabilities to prevent smuggling and the movement of terrorists or proliferation-related gear into Qatar or around its waterways. Qatar has also developed relations with NATO under the “Istanbul Cooperation Initiative” (ICI). Qatar’s Ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, the headquarters of which is based near Brussels.

Approximately 10,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at the various facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The air field, which also hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command, has been steadily expanded and enhanced with Qatari funding as well as $450 million in U.S. military construction funding since 2003. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria. Qatar’s own air force participated in some of the first air strikes against Islamic State forces in Syria in late 2014, but, after a few weeks of such operations, Qatar curtailed its participation in the air operations.

The DCA also reportedly addresses U.S. training of Qatar’s military. Qatar’s force of 11,800 is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, 8,500 are ground forces, 1,800 are naval forces, and 1,500 are air forces. A 2014 law mandates four months of military training for every male between the ages of 18-35, with a reserve commitment of 10 years (up to age 40).

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events.

In the past, at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including suspected September 11, 2001, attacks mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammad. U.S. officials have stated that Qatar has taken steps in recent years to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar, although terrorist financiers in Qatar are able to exploit Qatar’s informal financial system.

Nevertheless, according to U.S. officials,
“entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional Al Qaeda affiliates such as the Nusrah Front.” The U.S. has imposed sanctions on several persons living in Qatar, including Qatari nationals, for allegedly raising funds or making donations to both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Qatar and the U.S. have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement. However, in April 2004, the U.S. and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. Qatar has used the benefits of the more limited agreement to undertake large investments in the U.S., including the City Center project in Washington, DC. Also, several U.S. universities and other institutions, such as Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Brookings Institution, and Rand Corporation, have established branches and offices at the Qatar Foundation’s Education City outside Doha. In 2005, Qatar donated $100 million to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The U.S. exported $4.9 billion in goods to Qatar in 2016 ($600 million more than 2015), and imported $1.16 billion worth of Qatari goods in 2016, slightly less than in 2015. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aircraft, machinery, and information technology. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products, but U.S. imports of Qatar’s crude oil or natural gas have declined to negligible levels in recent years, reflecting the significant increase in U.S. domestic production of those commodities.

Qatar’s growing airline, Qatar Airways, is a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. In October 2016, the airline agreed to purchase from Boeing up to another 100 passenger jets with an estimated value of $18 billion. However, some U.S. airlines are challenging Qatar Airways’ benefits under a U.S.-Qatar “open skies” agreement. The U.S. carriers assert that the airline’s privileges under that agreement should be revoked because the airline’s aircraft purchases are subsidized by Qatar’s government, giving it an unfair competitive advantage. The Obama Administration did not reopen that agreement in response to the complaints, and the Trump Administration, including during President Trump’s February 2017 meeting with airline executives, has not indicated it would do so either.

Regional Relationships

With Egypt – After the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood-linked party there won a parliamentary majority and one of its leaders, Muhammad Morsi, won presidential elections in 2012. Qatar supported Morsi’s government with $5 billion in aid, contributing to the 2014 and 2017 rifts between Qatar and the other GCC states. Saudi Arabia and the UAE strongly backed Morsi’s ouster by Egypt’s military in 2013. Because of its support for Morsi, Qatar’s relations with former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have been strained and Egypt joined the Saudi-led move against Qatar in June 2017.

With Libya – Qatar joined the U.S. and several GCC and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, however, Qatar has supported Muslim Brotherhood-linked factions in Libya opposed by the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This difference in approach in Libya among the GCC states contributed to the Saudi-led move to isolate Qatar in June 2017.
Regional (continued)

With Iran – Qatari has long joined the other GCC states and the U.S. in countering Iran strategically. Qatar enforced international sanctions against Iran during 2010-2016, and no Qatar-based entity has been designated as an Iran sanctions violator. Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, which was in a dispute with Iran over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, and Qatar joined the February 2016 GCC declaration that Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. Yet, Qatari leaders have insisted that dialogue with Iran is key to reducing regional tensions. Qatar and Iran share a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident, although some Iranian officials have occasionally accused Qatar of cheating with regard to the arrangement. Iran has supported Qatar in the GCC dispute and has exported additional foodstuffs to Qatar to help compensate for the cutoff of Saudi exports. It has permitted Qatar’s flagship airline, Qatar Airways, to overfly its airspace in light of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini denial of their airspace to that carrier. In August 2017, Qatar formally restored full diplomatic relations with Iran.

With Afghanistan – Qatar did not deploy forces to support U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, but it has facilitated talks between the U.S. and Taliban representatives. In June 2018, the Taliban opened a representative office in Qatar, but it violated U.S.-Qatar-Taliban understandings by raising a flag of the former Taliban regime on the building and Qatar, at U.S. request, immediately closed the office. Taliban officials remained in Qatar, and revived U.S.-Taliban talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of captured U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban figures held by the U.S. at the prison facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The five were banned from traveling outside Qatar until there is an agreed solution that would ensure the five do not rejoin the Taliban insurgency.

With Syria and Anti-ISIS Operations – Qatar has been providing funds and weaponry to Syrian rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al Assad. Qatar has ties to Jabhat al Nusra (JAN), an Al Qaeda affiliate designated by the U.S. as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Qatari officials assert that their intent was to induce the group to sever its ties to Al Qaeda, which it formally did in July 2016, although observers perceive the group is still aligned with Al Qaeda leadership. Qatari mediation also succeeded on a few occasions in obtaining the release of Lebanese and Western prisoners captured by the group. Qatar is a member of the U.S.-led coalition combating the Islamic State. In 2014, Qatar flew some airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State positions. Neither Qatar nor any other GCC state has participated in coalition air operations against the Islamic State inside Iraq. In April 2017, Qatar reportedly paid ransom to obtain the release of 26 Qatari ruling family members abducted while on a hunting trip in southern Iraq in 2015, reportedly by Iraqi Shiite militias.

With Turkey – Qatar allowed Turkey to open a military base in Qatar, an initiative that might have contributed to Turkey’s support for Qatar in the June 2017 intra-GCC rift. One of the “13 demands” of the Saudi-led anti-Qatar coalition has been that Qatar close the Turkish base in Qatar—a demand Qatari officials say will not be met and which might no longer be an obstacle to a solution to the intra-GCC rift. Turkey has demonstrated its support by sending additional troops to Qatar and conducting joint exercises in August 2017, and by increasing food exports to replace some of those previously provided by Saudi Arabia.

With Yemen – In 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition battling Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, including conducting air strikes against Houthi and allied positions. In September 2015, Qatar deployed 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to Yemen. As a result of the intra-GCC rift, Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led military effort in Yemen.
With Israel/Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian Issues Qatar has attempted to play a role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations by engaging all parties. While Qatar did at one point maintain some relationship with Israel, Qatar ordered the Israeli offices in Doha closed in January 2009 at the height of an Israel-Hamas conflict; the offices have not formally reopened because of the stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in recent years. Emir Tamim has regularly criticized Israel, accusing it of severe abuses against the Palestinians and insincerity in seeking a political solution to the dispute. Still, small levels of direct Israel-Qatar trade reportedly continue; Israeli exports to Qatar consist mostly of machinery and technology, and imports from Qatar are primarily plastics. Qatar has allowed senior leaders of the Islamist group Hamas—a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007—to operate in Doha. Qatari officials assert that doing so is part of an effort to broker reconciliation between Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) on the West Bank. Qatar’s hosting of Hamas leaders and its financial aid to the Gaza Strip have drawn U.S. and other Gulf state criticism as support for a terrorist organization, although Qatari officials say that doing so has had the tacit blessing of U.S. officials who see benefit in being able to engage Hamas.

US Arms Sale to Qatar

Most of Qatar’s arsenal of major combat systems still consists of French-made equipment. However, a growing percentage of its new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment. These include combat aircraft (Qatar has sought to purchase 72 U.S.-made F-15s; the sale likely will be held up by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Corker’s stated intent not to provide informal concurrence to the sale until a path to resolution of the intra-GCC rift becomes clear); helicopters (the U.S. sold Qatar AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and related equipment; UH-60 M Blackhawk helicopters; and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters in a $6.6 billion sale); missile and rocket systems (the U.S. sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin guided missiles, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) in a $665 million sale); ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems (Qatar has purchased various U.S.-made BMD systems, consistent with U.S. efforts to promote a coordinated Gulf missile defense capability against Iran’s missile arsenal); and naval vessels (an August 2016 proposed sale included an unspecified number of U.S.-made Mk-V fast patrol boats, along with other equipment).

H.R. 2712 and Qatar

History – Rep. Mast (R-FL) introduced HR 2712 in May 2017, along with House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Chairman Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Engel (D-NY). The bill was referred to both HFAC and the House Financial Services Committee. HFAC passed HR 2712 by voice vote on November 15, 2017. Rep. Donovan (R-NY) introduced an amendment during markup that added in language on Qatar. Chairman Royce has taken the lead in pressuring Majority Leader McCarthy (R-
H.R. 2712 (continued)
CA) to move HR 2712 through the process. Meanwhile, the Financial Services Committee has not given clear indication of its intentions with the bill.

Exxon Mobil has lobbied on HR 2712, taking issue with how provisions related to energy development would negatively impact other legislation it supports. The American Jewish Committee lobbied in favor of HR 2712, part of its work to “shine a harsh spotlight on Iran’s role as the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism.” The sanctions set forth include the prohibition or suspension of the following for one year: U.S. aid to the foreign government; extension of loans and financial or technical services; export of items on the U.S. Munitions List or Commerce Control List; transactions in foreign exchanges in which the U.S. has jurisdiction; and transfers of credit or payments between one or more financial institutions subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

- Section 5: The president must report a list of foreign countries providing support for the aforementioned organizations and further assessments including: steps the foreign government is taking to freeze assets of these groups; any reasons the government is not taking adequate steps to freeze assets; measures taken by the U.S. to freeze assets; list of countries where the aforementioned groups fundraise and steps those countries are taking to disrupt the fundraising efforts; and list of countries from which the groups receive surveillance equipment and what measures are being taken to disrupt the acquisition.

The Reality – After the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rift began, Secretary of State Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts. Secretary Tillerson has conducted shuttle diplomacy in the region, achieving a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. Recently, President Trump thanked Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.

Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has affirmed U.S./Qatari cooperation on fighting terrorist financing, certifying that Qatar has made improvements on this front since July. Tillerson has also expressed...
H.R. 2712 (continued)

satisfaction “with the effort they’re [Qatar] putting forth” to cut terrorism funding.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has continuously affirmed his support for Qatar and the need for continued U.S. support of Qatar, saying that the blame for the continued GCC blockade should be with Saudi Arabia, not Qatar as “there seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage.”

The GCC blockade disrupts efforts to counter various terrorist groups and efforts to quell Iran. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has frequently praised Qatari efforts, saying that the U.S. and Qatar have “a shared understanding” on the importance of fighting the financing of terror. As Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, stated last summer to Congress, “Qatar does not fund Hamas,” despite accusations to the contrary from other members of the GCC.

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events. And three of the last five Qatari nationals of concern to the U.S. government were prosecuted, several of whom are serving house arrest. Qatar was a signatory to the Jeddah Communique in 2014 and again committed itself to counter-terrorism efforts during President Trump’s trip to Riyadh.

Qatar goes to great lengths to ensure that its humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza is provided in coordination with the Israeli authorities, as mediated by the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process.

Labeling Qatar as a de facto state sponsor of terror would impact the U.S. directly. More than 11,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at various military facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria.

Additionally, a growing percentage Qatar’s new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment, including combat aircraft, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, ballistic missile defense systems, and naval vessels. Sanctions on Qatar and/or businesses operating in Qatar would impact the defense industry in addition to U.S. national security interests in the region.

Qatari investments in the U.S. are expected to exceed $35 billion by 2021. Oil companies, including ExxonMobil, GE Oil and Gas, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips are expanding their local presence, as Qatar looks to increase its oil production. International banks, such as JPMorgan, HSBC, and Deutsche Bank all have increased their operations with sovereign bond issue investments. Additionally, Qatar has become one of Boeing’s largest customers, placing an order for over $2 billion this past year, with two hundred additional jets already purchased.

HR 2712 jeopardizes both ongoing and potential business relations between the U.S. and Qatar. Nearly all U.S. investments in Qatar would be drastically affected by HR 2712, unnecessarily jeopardizing the strong relationship enjoyed by Qatar and the United States.
Greetings – Typical Qatari greetings have a degree of formality about them. However, less formal versions are used between members of the same sex who know each other well. Qatari men shake hands firmly while maintaining direct eye contact, and often men exchange embraces and cheek kisses along with the handshake. Men frequently continue holding hands during the ensuing conversation. Two men holding hands while walking is a common sight and a sign of brotherly affection. Female friends typically greet each other with kisses to each cheek. Physical touch between two men or two women during conversation is common, and Qataris of the same sex typically stand quite close while speaking to each other.

The standard Arabic greetings of Assalaam aleikum and Wa aleikum assalaa, followed by polite questions, are used in both formal and informal settings. Two men or two women shake hands. A man typically will not shake a woman’s hand unless she extends it first. Qatari men often will not introduce a woman who is accompanying them, although she may introduce herself. Nods of respect in greeting are more common than handshakes between men and women. To show added respect, a man may place his left hand on the other’s right shoulder and exchange kisses to both cheeks. While direct eye contact is used between friends, eyes are typically averted when one wishes to show special respect, especially to one’s elders.

Titles – Titles are also used whenever possible. Sayyed (Sir) or Sayeeda/Sayedity (Ma’am) followed by a person’s full name is the general form of address in formal situations. Qatari women may also be referred to as “Madame.” Government ministers are addressed with, “Your Excellency, (full name)”, while government ministers of the ruling line are called, “Your Excellency, Minister of ___, (full name)”. Lesser members of the royal family and anyone in religious authority are called Sheikh, followed by his or her full name, while more senior members of the royal family receive a combination of these titles: “Your Excellency, Sheikh (full name).” Rulers themselves are address as Samu al-Emir (Your Highness).

Body Language – Touching members of the opposite sex, however, is socially unacceptable, and greetings between men and women require a much greater degree of personal space. Men and women do not usually make eye contact out of respect for each other’s modesty.

Business Attire – Business dress in Qatar is conservative. Men should wear a dark-colored (blue, black, gray) business suit with a white shirt, modest tie, and dress shoes. Women should also wear dark-colored business suits, with conservative heels. Avoid short skirts (skirts should at least cover the knees) and open-toed shoes at all times. Blouses should cover the elbows and should fasten at the neck.

Business Practices – Religion, hierarchy, and strong family ties combine in Qatar’s finely honed business style, which has proven successful on the international stage. Native Qataris are predominantly Sunni Muslims who follow Sharia law, so religion plays a big part in almost every aspect of life, including business. Business dealings will be limited during the month-long period of Ramadan. Qatari professionals greatly value status, education, and authority, and all of these factors contribute to a deep-rooted belief in vertical hierarchy, whereby decisions are made only at the top of an organization. Yet because Qatar is a family-centric society, many businesses are family owned and operated; in such cases, consensus may be required, with agreement sought from each family member before a decision can be made.

Qataris tend to be vague and indirect, hesitant to share information that could convey a competitive advantage. For the visitor’s part, it is wise to remember when conversing that the spoken word carries much more weight in Qatari society than it does in many other countries of the
Etiquette (continued)

world: verbal commitments are regarded as even more important than written contracts. If you say you can do something, you will be expected to deliver on your promise.

Gift Giving and Dining – Qataris do not generally expect gifts from visitors they invite to their homes, as hospitality is one of the pillars of society. The host expects to be the one in position to extend generosity. Qataris, like other cultures in the Arab world, believe that sharing a meal together promotes friendship and positively affects any relationship. Gifts, while not required, are always appreciated as a measure of goodwill and an expression of gratitude for hospitality received.

Although gifts are always appreciated in Qatar, they are considered unnecessary in Qatari business circles. If given at all, they are generally only presented after a business relationship/friendship has been well-established, such as at the conclusion of a successful business deal. Gifts are of the highest quality and include hallmarked silver or platinum items. Traditional Arab perfumes are also highly valued by Qatari men, although these are usually only given by those who know the recipient’s personal tastes.

Qatari businesspeople often prefer treating their business associates to a meal in a high-quality restaurant in place of giving a gift. As mentioned earlier, sharing a meal is considered one of the best ways to foster friendship in this hospitable society and thus can serve as a better way of expressing appreciation than gifts.
Biographies

Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani
Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Sheikh Jasim, renounced his claim reportedly based on his father's lack of confidence in Sheikh Jasim's ability to lead.

Sheikh Tamim became Emir on June 25, 2014, when Emir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Emir Tamim was educated at Great Britain's Sherbourne School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Emir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe, including in Harrod's department store in London, the U.S., and elsewhere.

Sheikh Tamim has held numerous government positions, including top security and economics posts. In 2009, he was appointed deputy commander-in-chief of Qatar’s armed forces. He has also promoted sport as part of Qatar’s bid to raise its international profile.

Since taking over as Emir, Sheikh Tamim has focused considerable energy on domestic issues, streamlining government bureaucracy, building roads and a new metro system, and constructing a new airport. He is also working to diversify the country’s economy away from hydrocarbons.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani
Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani has been Minister of Foreign Affairs since January 2016. He replaced Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, who had been the first non-member of the royal family to serve in the post.

He obtained his undergraduate degree in economics and business administration from Qatar University in 2003. Upon graduation, he began to serve at the Supreme Council for Family Affairs as an economic researcher. From 2005 to 2009 he was the Director of Economic Affairs, after which he began managing projects supporting and developing small and medium scale state enterprises at the Ministry of Business and Trade.

Muhammad has been credited with handling Qatar’s sensitive relationship with Egypt’s government following the Muslim Brotherhood’s ouster in July 2013. It is likely that as Foreign Minister he will maintain the lower-profile attitude in regional affairs that has marked Doha’s foreign policy under Sheikh Tamim. Moreover, his background in economic affairs and business development suggests that Qatar may be recalibrating its focus from regional political conflicts to economic interests and trade.

In 2010, the former Emir named Muhammad Secretary of the Personal Representative of the Emir for Follow-up Affairs at the Emiri Diwan. He was appointed the Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation Affairs in January 2014.
Ambassador to the United States Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Sheikh Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani presented his credentials to become ambassador of Qatar to the U.S. on April 24, 2017. He previously served as Qatari Ambassador to France from November 2013 to October 2016. Prior to that, Ambassador Al Thani served as the permanent representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York from July 2011 to October 2013, working with the U.N. to promote Qatar’s 2030 National Vision, as well as Ambassador to Brussels from October 2007 to July 2011, during which time he chaired the Qatari Mission to the EU.

Ambassador Al Thani was also Qatari liaison with NATO, as a member of the Qatari diplomatic mission in Brussels (November 2004-July 2007). Additional postings include the Qatari Embassy in D.C. (October 2000-October 2004) and the Qatari Mission to the U.N. (August 1998-September 2000). A career member of the Senior Foreign Service since March 2009, Ambassador Al Thani began his diplomatic career in the Department of European and American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 1997-August 1998).

Ambassador Al Thani received his master’s degree in international relations from the American University in D.C. in 2004.
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Qatar Briefing

prepared for
Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón
History

Until 1867, Qatar was ruled by the leaders of neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa family. Following an uprising, Britain installed the head of a leading Qatari family, Muhammad bin Thani Al Thani, as ruler of what is now Qatar. Following WWI, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement formalizing Qatar as a British protectorate. In 1970, Qatar adopted its first written constitution and became fully independent in 1971.

The Al Thani family claims descent from the central Arabian tribe of Banu Tamim, the tribe to which Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism, belonged. For that reason, Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic tradition that it shares with Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has worked hard not to be dominated by Saudi Arabia in the region. Saudi Arabia is the unofficial leader of the six Gulf monarchy alliance called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman.

The GCC Crisis

A consistent source of friction within the GCC has been Qatar’s embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood as representing a moderate political Islamist movement that can foster regional stability. Differences over this and other issues widened to the point where Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014, accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism. The Ambassadors returned in November 2014 in exchange for a reported pledge by Qatar to fully commit to noninterference in the affairs of other GCC states and to refrain from supporting any Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.

These same disputes erupted again two weeks after a U.S.-Gulf summit held during President Trump’s May visit to Saudi Arabia. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt, the recognized government of Yemen, and later Jordan and a few other Muslim countries, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, expelled Qatar’s diplomats, recalled their ambassadors, and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. They accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and of supporting Iran’s regional interventions, including against the government of Bahrain.

After the rift erupted, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts.

On June 22, 2017, the Saudi-led group presented Qatar with 13 demands, including closing the Al Jazeera network, severing relations with terrorist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, scaling back relations with Iran, closing a
The GCC Crisis (continued)

Turkish military base in Qatar, and paying reparations to the Saudi-led bloc. Secretary of State Tillerson described some of the demands as excessive, but indicated Qatar should agree to implement those demands that were more measured (perhaps expelling Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas figures). Qatar submitted, via Kuwait, a response to the demands that were characterized as “overall negative.” Qatari officials said they were amenable to negotiations on several of the demands, but said they would not “surrender” and that Qatar’s wealth was helping it mitigate the economic effects of the Saudi-led sanctions.

On July 5, following a meeting of their foreign ministers in Cairo, the Saudi-led group issued a joint statement continuing their economic and political measures against Qatar, but also reframing their demands as six broad principles for Qatar to “combat extremism and terrorism” and prevent their financing; suspending “all acts of provokeation”; fully complying with the commitments Qatar made in 2013 and 2014; and “refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of states.” Subsequently, Saudi Arabia allowed Qatari pilgrims to visit the Kingdom, and one of the countries that backed the Saudi effort, Senegal, restored relations with Qatar.

Secretary Tillerson’s conducted “shuttle diplomacy” in the region during July 10-13, and achieved a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. No formal direct talks have begun between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, and Qatar’s restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in late August, along with joint Qatar-Turkey military drills, appeared to further dampen hopes for a near-term resolution of the rift.

More recently, President Trump has engaged directly in mediation efforts. The President initially appeared to side with the Saudi-led move by criticizing Qatar for supporting militant groups in the region. But, he remained engaged with Emir Tamim and other Gulf leaders, reportedly urging GCC unity, preventing the financing of terrorist groups or the promotion of extremist ideology. On September 7, 2017, President Trump met with Kuwait’s Emir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah at the White House, and the GCC rift was a central topic. After the visit, the President reportedly was pivotal to arranging the first direct talks on the crisis—a phone call between Emir Tamim and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on September 9. The dialogue broke off immediately when the Qatari and Saudi sides disputed which of them had initiated the talks.

U.S.–Qatar defense and security relations are long-standing and extensive, likely contributing to statements by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis urging a rapid resolution of the isolation effort. U.S. military officials initially said that the Saudi-led moves against Qatar were not affecting U.S. operations in Qatar or the region. However, Secretary of State Tillerson indicated on June 9 that the rift had begun to adversely affect U.S. regional operations, which depend on a web of interrelationships with other defense facilities in the Gulf. In part to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the defense relationship with Qatar, the Administration and Qatar signed a firm agreement to sell Qatar F-15 aircraft on June 14, and the U.S. Navy held a drill.
The GCC Crisis (continued)

with Qatar on June 17. However, in early October, U.S. military officials said they were reducing some exercises with Qatar and other GCC parties to the dispute as an apparent attempt to add pressure for a resolution to the rift.

Relations with the US

The U.S. opened an embassy in Doha in 1973. The U.S-Qatar defense relationship developed during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in late 1981 and collectively backed Iraq against the Iran in that war, despite their political and ideological differences with Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

After Iraq invaded GCC member Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC participated in the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait. After the expulsion of Iraq, U.S.-Qatari defense relations deepened, and the two countries signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA) in 1992. Since then, defense cooperation has expanded and deepened, including through U.S. sales of increasingly sophisticated arms and missile defense systems. The DCA was renewed again for 10 years in December 2013. The text of the pact is classified, but it reportedly addresses U.S. military access to Qatari military facilities, prepositioning of U.S. armor and other military equipment, and U.S. training of Qatar’s military forces.

Qatar receives virtually no U.S. security or economic assistance of any kind. At times, small amounts of U.S. aid through various programs have been provided to help Qatar develop capabilities to prevent smuggling and the movement of terrorists or proliferation-related gear into Qatar or around its waterways. Qatar has also developed relations with NATO under the “Istanbul Cooperation Initiative” (ICI). Qatar’s Ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, the headquarters of which is based near Brussels.

Approximately 10,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at the various facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The air field, which also hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command, has been steadily expanded and enhanced with Qatari funding as well as $450 million in U.S. military construction funding since 2003. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria. Qatar’s own air force participated in some of the first air strikes against Islamic State forces in Syria in late 2014, but, after a few weeks of such operations, Qatar curtailed its participation in the air operations.

The DCA also reportedly addresses U.S. training of Qatar’s military. Qatar’s force of 11,800 is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, 8,500 are ground forces, 1,800 are naval forces, and 1,500 are air forces. A 2014 law mandates four months of military training for every male between the ages of 18-35, with a reserve commitment of 10 years (up to age 40).

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events.

In the past, at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including suspected September 11, 2001, attacks mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammad. U.S. officials have stated that Qatar has taken steps in recent years to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar, although terrorist financiers in Qatar are able to exploit Qatar’s informal financial system.

Nevertheless, according to U.S. officials,
entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional Al Qa'ida affiliates such as the Nusrah Front.” The U.S. has imposed sanctions on several persons living in Qatar, including Qatari nationals, for allegedly raising funds or making donations to both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Qatar and the U.S. have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement. However, in April 2004, the U.S. and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. Qatar has used the benefits of the more limited agreement to undertake large investments in the U.S., including the City Center project in Washington, DC. Also, several U.S. universities and other institutions, such as Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Brookings Institution, and Rand Corporation, have established branches and offices at the Qatar Foundation’s Education City outside Doha. In 2005, Qatar donated $100 million to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The U.S. exported $4.9 billion in goods to Qatar in 2016 ($600 million more than 2015), and imported $1.16 billion worth of Qatari goods in 2016, slightly less than in 2015. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aircraft, machinery, and information technology. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products, but U.S. imports of Qatar’s crude oil or natural gas have declined to negligible levels in recent years, reflecting the significant increase in U.S. domestic production of those commodities.

Qatar’s growing airline, Qatar Airways, is a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. In October 2016, the airline agreed to purchase from Boeing up to another 100 passenger jets with an estimated value of $18 billion. However, some U.S. airlines are challenging Qatar Airways’ benefits under a U.S.-Qatar “open skies” agreement. The U.S. carriers assert that the airline’s privileges under

Regional Relationships

With Egypt – After the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood-linked party there won a parliamentary majority and one of its leaders, Muhammad Morsi, won presidential elections in 2012. Qatar supported Morsi’s government with $5 billion in aid, contributing to the 2014 and 2017 rifts between Qatar and the other GCC states. Saudi Arabia and the UAE strongly backed Morsi’s ouster by Egypt’s military in 2013. Because of its support for Morsi, Qatar’s relations with former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have been strained and Egypt joined the Saudi-led move against Qatar in June 2017.

With Libya – Qatar joined the U.S. and several GCC and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, however, Qatar has supported Muslim Brotherhood-linked factions in Libya opposed by the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This difference in approach in Libya among the GCC states contributed to the Saudi-led move to isolate Qatar in June 2017.
Regional (continued)

With Iran – Qatari has long joined the other GCC states and the U.S. in countering Iran strategically. Qatar enforced international sanctions against Iran during 2010-2016, and no Qatar-based entity has been designated as an Iran sanctions violator. Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, which was in a dispute with Iran over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, and Qatar joined the February 2016 GCC declaration that Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. Yet, Qatari leaders have insisted that dialogue with Iran is key to reducing regional tensions. Qatar and Iran share a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident, although some Iranian officials have occasionally accused Qatar of cheating with regard to the arrangement. Iran has supported Qatar in the GCC dispute and has exported additional foodstuffs to Qatar to help compensate for the cutoff of Saudi exports. It has permitted Qatar’s flagship airline, Qatar Airways, to overfly its airspace in light of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini denial of their airspace to that carrier. In August 2017, Qatar formally restored full diplomatic relations with Iran.

With Afghanistan – Qatar did not deploy forces to support U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, but it has facilitated talks between the U.S. and Taliban representatives. In June 2018, the Taliban opened a representative office in Qatar, but it violated U.S.-Qatar-Taliban understandings by raising a flag of the former Taliban regime on the building and Qatar, at U.S. request, immediately closed the office. Taliban officials remained in Qatar, and revived U.S.-Taliban talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of captured U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban figures held by the U.S. at the prison facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The five were banned from traveling outside Qatar until there is an agreed solution that would ensure the five do not rejoin the Taliban insurgency.

With Syria and Anti-ISIS Operations – Qatar has been providing funds and weaponry to Syrian rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al Assad. Qatar has ties to Jabhat al Nusra (JAN), an Al Qaeda affiliate designated by the U.S. as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Qatari officials assert that their intent was to induce the group to sever its ties to Al Qaeda, which it formally did in July 2016, although observers perceive the group is still aligned with Al Qaeda leadership. Qatari mediation also succeeded on a few occasions in obtaining the release of Lebanese and Western prisoners captured by the group. Qatar is a member of the U.S.-led coalition combating the Islamic State. In 2014, Qatar flew some airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State positions. Neither Qatar nor any other GCC state has participated in coalition air operations against the Islamic State inside Iraq. In April 2017, Qatar reportedly paid ransom to obtain the release of 26 Qatari ruling family members abducted while on a hunting trip in southern Iraq in 2015, reportedly by Iraqi Shiite militias.

With Turkey – Qatar allowed Turkey to open a military base in Qatar, an initiative that might have contributed to Turkey’s support for Qatar in the June 2017 intra-GCC rift. One of the “13 demands” of the Saudi-led anti-Qatar coalition has been that Qatar close the Turkish base in Qatar—a demand Qatari officials say will not be met and which might no longer be an obstacle to a solution to the intra-GCC rift. Turkey has demonstrated its support by sending additional troops to Qatar and conducting joint exercises in August 2017, and by increasing food exports to replace some of those previously provided by Saudi Arabia.

With Yemen – In 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition battling Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, including conducting air strikes against Houthi and allied positions. In September 2015, Qatar deployed 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to Yemen. As a result of the intra-GCC rift, Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led military effort in Yemen.
Regional (continued)

With Israel/Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian Issues Qatar has attempted to play a role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations by engaging all parties. While Qatar did at one point maintain some relationship with Israel, Qatar ordered the Israeli offices in Doha closed in January 2009 at the height of an Israel-Hamas conflict; the offices have not formally reopened because of the stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in recent years. Emir Tamim has regularly criticized Israel, accusing it of severe abuses against the Palestinians and insincerity in seeking a political solution to the dispute. Still, small levels of direct Israel-Qatar trade reportedly continue; Israeli exports to Qatar consist mostly of machinery and technology, and imports from Qatar are primarily plastics. Qatar has allowed senior leaders of the Islamist group Hamas—a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007—to operate in Doha. Qatari officials assert that doing so is part of an effort to broker reconciliation between Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) on the West Bank. Qatar’s hosting of Hamas leaders and its financial aid to the Gaza Strip have drawn U.S. and other Gulf state criticism as support for a terrorist organization, although Qatari officials say that doing so has had the tacit blessing of U.S. officials who see benefit in being able to engage Hamas.

US Arms Sale to Qatar

Most of Qatar’s arsenal of major combat systems still consists of French-made equipment. However, a growing percentage of its new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment. These include combat aircraft (Qatar has sought to purchase 72 U.S.-made F-15s; the sale likely will be held up by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Corker’s stated intent not to provide informal concurrence to the sale until a path to resolution of the intra-GCC rift becomes clear); helicopters (the U.S. sold Qatar AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and related equipment; UH-60 M Blackhawk helicopters; and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters in a $6.6 billion sale); missile and rocket systems (the U.S. sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin guided missiles, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) in a $665 million sale); ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems (Qatar has purchased various U.S.-made BMD systems, consistent with U.S. efforts to promote a coordinated Gulf missile defense capability against Iran’s missile arsenal); and naval vessels (an August 2016 proposed sale included an unspecified number of U.S.-made Mk-V fast patrol boats, along with other equipment).

H.R. 2712 and Qatar

History – Rep. Mast (R-FL) introduced HR 2712 in May 2017, along with House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Chairman Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Engel (D-NY). The bill was referred to both HFAC and the House Financial Services Committee. HFAC passed HR 2712 by voice vote on November 15, 2017. Rep. Donovan (R-NY) introduced an amendment during markup that added in language on Qatar. Chairman Royce has taken the lead in pressuring Majority Leader McCarthy (R-
The Bill – The bill would authorize sanctions on any foreign entity or government that provides support to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), or any affiliated or successor groups. It specifically singles out Qatar and Iran as states that have supported Hamas.

- Sec. 2(a)(3) reads: “Hamas has received significant financial and military support from Qatar. Qatar has hosted multiple senior Hamas officials, including Hamas leader Khaled Mashal since 2012, who has had regular interviews carried on al-Jazeera, a news organization based in Qatar and which receives some funding from members of the country’s ruling family. In March 2014, the Department of the Treasury’s Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence confirmed that “Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally has for many years openly financed Hamas.”

- Section 3: The president must report to Congress the foreign persons, agencies, and instrumentalities of foreign states that provide support to Hamas or the PIJ. Sanctions include banking and financing, defense-related sales, and goods and technologies regulated through the Export Administration or included in the U.S. Munitions List.

- Section 4: The president must report to Congress any governments determined to “repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.” The sanctions set forth include the prohibition or suspension of the following for one year: U.S. aid to the foreign government; extension of loans and financial or technical services; export of items on the U.S. Munitions List or Commerce Control List; transactions in foreign exchanges in which the U.S. has jurisdiction; and transfers of credit or payments between one or more financial institutions subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

The Reality – After the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rift began, Secretary of State Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts. Secretary Tillerson has conducted shuttle diplomacy in the region, achieving a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. Recently, President Trump thanked Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.

Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has affirmed U.S./Qatari cooperation on fighting terrorist financing, certifying that Qatar has made improvements on this front since July. Tillerson has also expressed
H.R. 2712 (continued)

satisfaction “with the effort they’re [Qatar] putting forth” to cut terrorism funding.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has continuously affirmed his support for Qatar and the need for continued U.S. support of Qatar, saying that the blame for the continued GCC blockade should be with Saudi Arabia, not Qatar as “there seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage.”

The GCC blockade disrupts efforts to counter various terrorist groups and efforts to quell Iran. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has frequently praised Qatari efforts, saying that the U.S. and Qatar have “a shared understanding” on the importance of fighting the financing of terror. As Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, stated last summer to Congress, “Qatar does not fund Hamas,” despite accusations to the contrary from other members of the GCC.

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events. And three of the last five Qatari nationals of concern to the U.S. government were prosecuted, several of whom are serving house arrest. Qatar was a signatory to the Jeddah Communique in 2014 and again committed itself to counter-terrorism efforts during President Trump’s trip to Riyadh.

Qatar goes to great lengths to ensure that its humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza is provided in coordination with the Israeli authorities, as mediated by the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process.

Labeling Qatar as a de facto state sponsor of terror would impact the U.S. directly. More than 11,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at various military facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udair Air Base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria.

Additionally, a growing percentage Qatar’s new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment, including combat aircraft, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, ballistic missile defense systems, and naval vessels. Sanctions on Qatar and/or businesses operating in Qatar would impact the defense industry in addition to U.S. national security interests in the region.

Qatari investments in the U.S. are expected to exceed $35 billion by 2021. Oil companies, including ExxonMobil, GE Oil and Gas, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips are expanding their local presence, as Qatar looks to increase its oil production. International banks, such as JPMorgan, HSBC, and Deutsche Bank all have increased their operations with sovereign bond issue investments. Additionally, Qatar has become one of Boeing’s largest customers, placing an order for over $2 billion this past year, with two hundred additional jets already purchased.

HR 2712 jeopardizes both ongoing and potential business relations between the U.S. and Qatar. Nearly all U.S. investments in Qatar would be drastically affected by HR 2712, unnecessarily jeopardizing the strong relationship enjoyed by Qatar and the United States.
Protocol and Etiquette

Greetings – Typical Qatari greetings have a degree of formality about them. However, less formal versions are used between members of the same sex who know each other well. Qatari men shake hands firmly while maintaining direct eye contact, and often men exchange embraces and cheek kisses along with the handshake. Men frequently continue holding hands during the ensuing conversation. Two men holding hands while walking is a common sight and a sign of brotherly affection. Female friends typically greet each other with kisses to each cheek. Physical touch between two men or two women during conversation is common, and Qataris of the same sex typically stand quite close while speaking to each other.

The standard Arabic greetings of Assalaam aleikum and Wa aleikum assalaam, followed by polite questions, are used in both formal and informal settings. Two men or two women shake hands. A man typically will not shake a woman’s hand unless she extends it first. Qatari men often will not introduce a woman who is accompanying them, although she may introduce herself. Nods of respect in greeting are more common than handshakes between men and women. To show added respect, a man may place his left hand on the other’s right shoulder and exchange kisses to both cheeks. While direct eye contact is used between friends, eyes are typically averted when one wishes to show special respect, especially to one’s elders.

Titles – Titles are also used whenever possible. Sayyed (Sir) or Sayeeda/ Sayedity (Ma’am) followed by a person’s full name is the general form of address in formal situations. Qatari women may also be referred to as “Madame.” Government ministers are addressed with, “Your Excellency, (full name)”, while government ministers of the ruling line are called, “Your Excellency, Minister of ___ (full name)”. Lesser members of the royal family and anyone in religious authority are called Sheikh, followed by his or her full name, while more senior members of the royal family receive a combination of these titles: “Your Excellency, Sheikh (full name).” Rulers themselves are address as Samu al-Emir (Your Highness).

Body Language – Touching members of the opposite sex, however, is socially unacceptable, and greetings between men and women require a much greater degree of personal space. Men and women do not usually make eye contact out of respect for each other’s modesty.

Business Attire – Business dress in Qatar is conservative. Men should wear a dark-colored (blue, black, gray) business suit with a white shirt, modest tie, and dress shoes. Women should also wear dark-colored business suits, with conservative heels. Avoid short skirts (skirts should at least cover the knees) and open-toed shoes at all times. Blouses should cover the elbows and should fasten at the neck.

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Etiquette (continued)

world: verbal commitments are regarded as even more important than written contracts. If you say you can do something, you will be expected to deliver on your promise.

**Gift Giving and Dining** – Qataris do not generally expect gifts from visitors they invite to their homes, as hospitality is one of the pillars of society. The host expects to be the one in position to extend generosity. Qataris, like other cultures in the Arab world, believe that sharing a meal together promotes friendship and positively affects any relationship. Gifts, while not required, are always appreciated as a measure of goodwill and an expression of gratitude for hospitality received.

Although gifts are always appreciated in Qatar, they are considered unnecessary in Qatari business circles. If given at all, they are generally only presented after a business relationship/friendship has been well-established, such as at the conclusion of a successful business deal. Gifts are of the highest quality and include hallmarked silver or platinum items. Traditional Arab perfumes are also highly valued by Qatari men, although these are usually only given by those who know the recipient's personal tastes.

Qatari businesspeople often prefer treating their business associates to a meal in a high-quality restaurant in place of giving a gift. As mentioned earlier, sharing a meal is considered one of the best ways to foster friendship in this hospitable society and thus can serve as a better way of expressing appreciation than gifts.
Biographies

Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Sheikh Jasim, renounced his claim reportedly based on his father’s lack of confidence in Sheikh Jasim’s ability to lead.

Sheikh Tamim became Emir on June 25, 2014, when Emir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Emir Tamim was educated at Great Britain's Sherbourne School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Emir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe, including in Harrod's department store in London, the U.S., and elsewhere.

Sheikh Tamim has held numerous government positions, including top security and economics posts. In 2009, he was appointed deputy commander-in-chief of Qatar's armed forces. He has also promoted sport as part of Qatar's bid to raise its international profile.

Since taking over as Emir, Sheikh Tamim has focused considerable energy on domestic issues, streamlining government bureaucracy, building roads and a new metro system, and constructing a new airport. He is also working to diversify the country's economy away from hydrocarbons.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani

Mohammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani has been Minister of Foreign Affairs since January 2016. He replaced Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, who had been the first non-member of the royal family to serve in the post.

He obtained his undergraduate degree in economics and business administration from Qatar University in 2003. Upon graduation, he began to serve at the Supreme Council for Family Affairs as an economic researcher. From 2005 to 2009 he was the Director of Economic Affairs, after which he began managing projects supporting and developing small and medium scale state enterprises at the Ministry of Business and Trade.

Mohammad has been credited with handling Qatar’s sensitive relationship with Egypt’s government following the Muslim Brotherhood’s ouster in July 2013. It is likely that as Foreign Minister he will maintain the lower-profile attitude in regional affairs that has marked Doha's foreign policy under Sheikh Tamim. Moreover, his background in economic affairs and business development suggests that Qatar may be recalibrating its focus from regional political conflicts to economic interests and trade.

In 2010, the former Emir named Muhammad Secretary of the Personal Representative of the Emir for Follow-up Affairs at the Emiri Diwan. He was appointed the Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation Affairs in January 2014.
Sheikh Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani presented his credentials to become ambassador of Qatar to the U.S. on April 24, 2017. He previously served as Qatari Ambassador to France from November 2013 to October 2016. Prior to that, Ambassador Al Thani served as the permanent representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York from July 2011 to October 2013, working with the U.N. to promote Qatar’s 2030 National Vision, as well as Ambassador to Brussels from October 2007 to July 2011, during which time he chaired the Qatari Mission to the EU.

Ambassador Al Thani was also Qatari liaison with NATO, as a member of the Qatari diplomatic mission in Brussels (November 2004-July 2007). Additional postings include the Qatari Embassy in D.C. (October 2000-October 2004) and the Qatari Mission to the U.N. (August 1998-September 2000). A career member of the Senior Foreign Service since March 2009, Ambassador Al Thani began his diplomatic career in the Department of European and American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 1997-August 1998).

Ambassador Al Thani received his master’s degree in international relations from the American University in D.C. in 2004.
This material is distributed by Stonington Strategies LLC on behalf of the State of Qatar. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
Qatar General Briefing

prepared for
Rep. John Ratcliffe
History

Until 1867, Qatar was ruled by the leaders of neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa family. Following an uprising, Britain installed the head of a leading Qatari family, Muhammad bin Thani Al Thani, as ruler of what is now Qatar. Following WWI, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement formalizing Qatar as a British protectorate. In 1970, Qatar adopted its first written constitution and became fully independent in 1971.

The Al Thani family claims descent from the central Arabian tribe of Banu Tamim, the tribe to which Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism, belonged. For that reason, Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic tradition that it shares with Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has worked hard not to be dominated by Saudi Arabia in the region. Saudi Arabia is the unofficial leader of the six Gulf monarchy alliance called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman.

The GCC Crisis

A consistent source of friction within the GCC has been Qatar’s embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood as representing a moderate political Islamist movement that can foster regional stability. Differences over this and other issues widened to the point where Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014, accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism. The Ambassadors returned in November 2014 in exchange for a reported pledge by Qatar to fully commit to noninterference in the affairs of other GCC states and to refrain from supporting any Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.

These same disputes erupted again two weeks after a U.S.-Gulf summit held during President Trump’s May visit to Saudi Arabia. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt, the recognized government of Yemen, and later Jordan and a few other Muslim countries, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, expelled Qatar’s diplomats, recalled their ambassadors, and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. They accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and of supporting Iran’s regional interventions, including against the government of Bahrain.

After the rift erupted, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts.

On June 22, 2017, the Saudi-led group presented Qatar with 13 demands, including closing the Al Jazeera network, severing relations with terrorist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, scaling back relations with Iran, closing a
The GCC Crisis (continued)

Turkish military base in Qatar, and paying reparations to the Saudi-led bloc. Secretary of State Tillerson described some of the demands as excessive, but indicated Qatar should agree to implement those demands that were more measured (perhaps expelling Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas figures). Qatar submitted, via Kuwait, a response to the demands that were characterized as “overall negative.” Qatari officials said they were amenable to negotiations on several of the demands, but said they would not “surrender” and that Qatar’s wealth was helping it mitigate the economic effects of the Saudi-led sanctions.

On July 5, following a meeting of their foreign ministers in Cairo, the Saudi-led group issued a joint statement continuing their economic and political measures against Qatar, but also reframing their demands as six broad principles for Qatar to “combat extremism and terrorism” and prevent their financing; suspending “all acts of provocation”; fully complying with the commitments Qatar made in 2013 and 2014; and “refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of states.” Subsequently, Saudi Arabia allowed Qatari pilgrims to visit the Kingdom, and one of the countries that backed the Saudi effort, Senegal, restored relations with Qatar.

Secretary Tillerson’s conducted “shuttle diplomacy” in the region during July 10-13, and achieved a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. No formal direct talks have begun between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, and Qatar’s restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in late August, along with joint Qatar-Turkey military drills, appeared to further dampen hopes for a near-term resolution of the rift.

More recently, President Trump has engaged directly in mediation efforts. The President initially appeared to side with the Saudi-led move by criticizing Qatar for supporting militant groups in the region. But, he remained engaged with Emir Tamim and other Gulf leaders, reportedly urging GCC unity, preventing the financing of terrorist groups or the promotion of extremist ideology. On September 7, 2017, President Trump met with Kuwait’s Emir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah at the White House, and the GCC rift was a central topic. After the visit, the President reportedly was pivotal to arranging the first direct talks on the crisis—a phone call between Emir Tamim and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on September 9. The dialogue broke off immediately when the Qatari and Saudi sides disputed which of them had initiated the talks.

U.S.–Qatar defense and security relations are long-standing and extensive, likely contributing to statements by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis urging a rapid resolution of the isolation effort. U.S. military officials initially said that the Saudi-led moves against Qatar were not affecting U.S. operations in Qatar or the region. However, Secretary of State Tillerson indicated on June 9 that the rift had begun to adversely affect U.S. regional operations, which depend on a web of interrelationships with other defense facilities in the Gulf. In part to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the defense relationship with Qatar, the Administration and Qatar signed a firm agreement to sell Qatar F-15 aircraft on June 14, and the U.S. Navy held a drill.
The GCC Crisis (continued)

with Qatar on June 17. However, in early October, U.S. military officials said they were reducing some exercises with Qatar and other GCC parties to the dispute as an apparent attempt to add pressure for a resolution to the rift.

Relations with the US

The U.S. opened an embassy in Doha in 1973. The U.S-Qatar defense relationship developed during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in late 1981 and collectively backed Iraq against the Iran in that war, despite their political and ideological differences with Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

After Iraq invaded GCC member Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC participated in the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait. After the expulsion of Iraq, U.S.-Qatari defense relations deepened, and the two countries signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA) in 1992. Since then, defense cooperation has expanded and deepened, including through U.S. sales of increasingly sophisticated arms and missile defense systems. The DCA was renewed again for 10 years in December 2013. The text of the pact is classified, but it reportedly addresses U.S. military access to Qatari military facilities, prepositioning of U.S. armor and other military equipment, and U.S. training of Qatar’s military forces.

Qatar receives virtually no U.S. security or economic assistance of any kind. At times, small amounts of U.S. aid through various programs have been provided to help Qatar develop capabilities to prevent smuggling and the movement of terrorists or proliferation-related gear into Qatar or around its waterways. Qatar has also developed relations with NATO under the “Istanbul Cooperation Initiative” (ICI). Qatar’s Ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, the headquarters of which is based near Brussels.

Approximately 10,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at the various facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The air field, which also hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command, has been steadily expanded and enhanced with Qatari funding as well as $450 million in U.S. military construction funding since 2003. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria. Qatar’s own air force participated in some of the first air strikes against Islamic State forces in Syria in late 2014, but, after a few weeks of such operations, Qatar curtailed its participation in the air operations.

The DCA also reportedly addresses U.S. training of Qatar’s military. Qatar’s force of 11,800 is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, 8,500 are ground forces, 1,800 are naval forces, and 1,500 are air forces. A 2014 law mandates four months of military training for every male between the ages of 18-35, with a reserve commitment of 10 years (up to age 40).

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events.

In the past, at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including suspected September 11, 2001, attacks mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammad. U.S. officials have stated that Qatar has taken steps in recent years to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar, although terrorist financiers in Qatar are able to exploit Qatar’s informal financial system.

Nevertheless, according to U.S. officials,
US/Qatari Relations (continued)

“entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional Al Qaeda affiliates such as the Nusrah Front.” The U.S. has imposed sanctions on several persons living in Qatar, including Qatari nationals, for allegedly raising funds or making donations to both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Qatar and the U.S. have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement. However, in April 2004, the U.S. and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. Qatar has used the benefits of the more limited agreement to undertake large investments in the U.S., including the City Center project in Washington, DC. Also, several U.S. universities and other institutions, such as Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Brookings Institution, and Rand Corporation, have established branches and offices at the Qatar Foundation’s Education City outside Doha. In 2005, Qatar donated $100 million to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The U.S. exported $4.9 billion in goods to Qatar in 2016 ($600 million more than 2015), and imported $1.16 billion worth of Qatari goods in 2016, slightly less than in 2015. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aircraft, machinery, and information technology. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products, but U.S. imports of Qatar’s crude oil or natural gas have declined to negligible levels in recent years, reflecting the significant increase in U.S. domestic production of those commodities.

Qatar’s growing airline, Qatar Airways, is a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. In October 2016, the airline agreed to purchase from Boeing up to another 100 passenger jets with an estimated value of $18 billion. However, some U.S. airlines are challenging Qatar Airways’ benefits under a U.S.-Qatar “open skies” agreement. The U.S. carriers assert that the airline’s privileges under

that agreement should be revoked because the airline’s aircraft purchases are subsidized by Qatar’s government, giving it an unfair competitive advantage. The Obama Administration did not reopen that agreement in response to the complaints, and the Trump Administration, including during President Trump’s February 2017 meeting with airline executives, has not indicated it would do so either.

Regional Relationships

With Egypt – After the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood-linked party there won a parliamentary majority and one of its leaders, Muhammad Morsi, won presidential elections in 2012. Qatar supported Morsi’s government with $5 billion in aid, contributing to the 2014 and 2017 rifts between Qatar and the other GCC states. Saudi Arabia and the UAE strongly backed Morsi’s ouster by Egypt’s military in 2013. Because of its support for Morsi, Qatar’s relations with former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have been strained and Egypt joined the Saudi-led move against Qatar in June 2017.

With Libya – Qatar joined the U.S. and several GCC and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, however, Qatar has supported Muslim Brotherhood-linked factions in Libya opposed by the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This difference in approach in Libya among the GCC states contributed to the Saudi-led move to isolate Qatar in June 2017.
Regional (continued)

With Iran – Qatari has long joined the other GCC states and the U.S. in countering Iran strategically. Qatar enforced international sanctions against Iran during 2010-2016, and no Qatar-based entity has been designated as an Iran sanctions violator. Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, which was in a dispute with Iran over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, and Qatar joined the February 2016 GCC declaration that Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. Yet, Qatari leaders have insisted that dialogue with Iran is key to reducing regional tensions. Qatar and Iran share a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident, although some Iranian officials have occasionally accused Qatar of cheating with regard to the arrangement. Iran has supported Qatar in the GCC dispute and has exported additional foodstuffs to Qatar to help compensate for the cutoff of Saudi exports. It has permitted Qatar’s flagship airline, Qatar Airways, to overfly its airspace in light of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini denial of their airspace to that carrier. In August 2017, Qatar formally restored full diplomatic relations with Iran.

With Afghanistan – Qatar did not deploy forces to support U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, but it has facilitated talks between the U.S. and Taliban representatives. In June 2013, the Taliban opened a representative office in Qatar, but it violated U.S.-Qatar-Taliban understandings by raising a flag of the former Taliban regime on the building and Qatar, at U.S. request, immediately closed the office. Taliban officials remained in Qatar, and revived U.S.-Taliban talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of captured U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban figures held by the U.S. at the prison facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The five were banned from traveling outside Qatar until there is an agreed solution that would ensure the five do not rejoin the Taliban insurgency.

With Syria and Anti-ISIS Operations – Qatar has been providing funds and weaponry to Syrian rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad. Qatar has ties to Jabhat al Nusra (JAN), an Al Qaeda affiliate designated by the U.S. as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Qatari officials assert that their intent was to induce the group to sever its ties to Al Qaeda, which it formally did in July 2016, although observers perceive the group is still aligned with Al Qaeda leadership. Qatari mediation also succeeded on a few occasions in obtaining the release of Lebanese and Western prisoners captured by the group. Qatar is a member of the U.S.-led coalition combating the Islamic State. In 2014, Qatar flew some airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State positions. Neither Qatar nor any other GCC state has participated in coalition air operations against the Islamic State inside Iraq. In April 2017, Qatar reportedly paid ransom to obtain the release of 26 Qatari ruling family members abducted while on a hunting trip in southern Iraq in 2015, reportedly by Iraqi Shiite militias.

With Turkey – Qatar allowed Turkey to open a military base in Qatar, an initiative that might have contributed to Turkey’s support for Qatar in the June 2017 intra-GCC rift. One of the “13 demands” of the Saudi-led anti-Qatar coalition has been that Qatar close the Turkish base in Qatar—a demand Qatari officials say will not be met and which might no longer be an obstacle to a solution to the intra-GCC rift. Turkey has demonstrated its support by sending additional troops to Qatar and conducting joint exercises in August 2017, and by increasing food exports to replace some of those previously provided by Saudi Arabia.

With Yemen – In 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition battling Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, including conducting air strikes against Houthi and allied positions. In September 2015, Qatar deployed 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to Yemen. As a result of the intra-GCC rift, Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led military effort in Yemen.
Regional (continued)

With Israel/Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian Issues Qatar has attempted to play a role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations by engaging all parties. While Qatar did at one point maintain some relationship with Israel, Qatar ordered the Israeli offices in Doha closed in January 2009 at the height of an Israel-Hamas conflict; the offices have not formally reopened because of the stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in recent years. Emir Tamim has regularly criticized Israel, accusing it of severe abuses against the Palestinians and insincerity in seeking a political solution to the dispute. Still, small levels of direct Israel-Qatar trade reportedly continue; Israeli exports to Qatar consist mostly of machinery and technology, and imports from Qatar are primarily plastics. Qatar has allowed senior leaders of the Islamist group Hamas—a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007—to operate in Doha. Qatari officials assert that doing so is part of an effort to broker reconciliation between Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) on the West Bank. Qatar’s hosting of Hamas leaders and its financial aid to the Gaza Strip have drawn U.S. and other Gulf state criticism as support for a terrorist organization, although Qatari officials say that doing so has had the tacit blessing of U.S. officials who see benefit in being able to engage Hamas.

US Arms Sale to Qatar

Most of Qatar’s arsenal of major combat systems still consists of French-made equipment. However, a growing percentage of its new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment. These include combat aircraft (Qatar has sought to purchase 72 U.S.-made F-15s; the sale likely will be held up by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Corker’s stated intent not to provide formal concurrence to the sale until a path to resolution of the intra-GCC rift becomes clear); helicopters (the U.S. sold Qatar AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and related equipment; UH-60 M Blackhawk helicopters; and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters in a $6.6 billion sale); missile and rocket systems (the U.S. sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin guided missiles, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) in a $665 million sale); ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems (Qatar has purchased various U.S.-made BMD systems, consistent with U.S. efforts to promote a coordinated Gulf missile defense capability against Iran’s missile arsenal); and naval vessels (an August 2016 proposed sale included an unspecified number of U.S.-made Mk-V fast patrol boats, along with other equipment).

H.R. 2712 and Qatar

History – Rep. Mast (R-FL) introduced HR 2712 in May 2017, along with House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Chairman Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Engel (D-NY). The bill was referred to both HFAC and the House Financial Services Committee. HFAC passed HR 2712 by voice vote on November 15, 2017. Rep. Donovan (R-NY) introduced an amendment during markup that added in language on Qatar. Chairman Royce has taken the lead in pressuring Majority Leader McCarthy (R-
The Bill – The bill would authorize sanctions on any foreign entity or government that provides support to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), or any affiliated or successor groups. It specifically singles out Qatar and Iran as states that have supported Hamas.

- Sec. 2(a)(3) reads: “Hamas has received significant financial and military support from Qatar. Qatar has hosted multiple senior Hamas officials, including Hamas leader Khaled Mashal since 2012, who has had regular interviews carried on al-Jazeera, a news organization based in Qatar and which receives some funding from members of the country’s ruling family. In March 2014, the Department of the Treasury’s Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence confirmed that “Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally has for many years openly financed Hamas.”

- Section 3: The president must report to Congress the foreign persons, agencies, and instrumentalities of foreign states that provide support to Hamas or the PIJ. Sanctions include banking and financing, defense-related sales, and goods and technologies regulated through the Export Administration or included in the U.S. Munitions List.

- Section 4: The president must to report to Congress any governments determined to “repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.” The sanctions set forth include the prohibition or suspension of the following for one year: U.S. aid to the foreign government; extension of loans and financial or technical services; export of items on the U.S. Munitions List or Commerce Control List; transactions in foreign exchanges in which the U.S. has jurisdiction; and transfers of credit or payments between one or more financial institutions subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

The Reality – After the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rift began, Secretary of State Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts. Secretary Tillerson has conducted shuttle diplomacy in the region, achieving a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. Recently, President Trump thanked Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.

Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has affirmed U.S./Qatari cooperation on fighting terrorist financing, certifying that Qatar has made improvements on this front since July. Tillerson has also expressed
satisfaction “with the effort they’re [Qatar] putting forth” to cut terrorism funding.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has continuously affirmed his support for Qatar and the need for continued U.S. support of Qatar, saying that the blame for the continued GCC blockade should be with Saudi Arabia, not Qatar as “there seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage.”

The GCC blockade disrupts efforts to counter various terrorist groups and efforts to quell Iran. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has frequently praised Qatari efforts, saying that the U.S. and Qatar have a “shared understanding” on the importance of fighting the financing of terror. As Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, stated last summer to Congress, “Qatar does not fund Hamas,” despite accusations to the contrary from other members of the GCC.

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events. And three of the last five Qatari nationals of concern to the U.S. government were prosecuted, several of whom are serving house arrest. Qatar was a signatory to the Jeddah Communique in 2014 and again committed itself to counter-terrorism efforts during President Trump’s trip to Riyadh.

Qatar goes to great lengths to ensure that its humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza is provided in coordination with the Israeli authorities, as mediated by the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process.

Labeling Qatar as a de facto state sponsor of terror would impact the U.S. directly. More than 11,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at various military facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria.

Additionally, a growing percentage of Qatar’s new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment, including combat aircraft, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, ballistic missile defense systems, and naval vessels. Sanctions on Qatar and/or businesses operating in Qatar would impact the defense industry in addition to U.S. national security interests in the region.

Qatari investments in the U.S. are expected to exceed $35 billion by 2021. Oil companies, including ExxonMobil, GE Oil and Gas, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips are expanding their local presence, as Qatar looks to increase its oil production. International banks, such as JPMorgan, HSBC, and Deutsche Bank all have increased their operations with sovereign bond issue investments. Additionally, Qatar has become one of Boeing’s largest customers, placing an order for over $2 billion this past year, with two hundred additional jets already purchased.

HR 2712 jeopardizes both ongoing and potential business relations between the U.S. and Qatar. Nearly all U.S. investments in Qatar would be drastically affected by HR 2712, unnecessarily jeopardizing the strong relationship enjoyed by Qatar and the United States.
Greetings – Typical Qatari greetings have a degree of formality about them. However, less formal versions are used between members of the same sex who know each other well. Qatari men shake hands firmly while maintaining direct eye contact, and often men exchange embraces and cheek kisses along with the handshake. Men frequently continue holding hands during the ensuing conversation. Two men holding hands while walking is a common sight and a sign of brotherly affection. Female friends typically greet each other with kisses to each cheek. Physical touch between two men or two women during conversation is common, and Qataris of the same sex typically stand quite close while speaking to each other.

The standard Arabic greetings of Assalaam aleikum and Wa aleikum assalaam, followed by polite questions, are used in both formal and informal settings. Two men or two women shake hands. A man typically will not shake a woman’s hand unless she extends it first. Qatari men often will not introduce a woman who is accompanying them, although she may introduce herself. Nods of respect in greeting are more common than handshakes between men and women. To show added respect, a man may place his left hand on the other’s right shoulder and exchange kisses to both cheeks. While direct eye contact is used between friends, eyes are typically averted when one wishes to show special respect, especially to one’s elders.

Titles – Titles are also used whenever possible. Sayyed (Sir) or Sayeeda/Sayedity (Ma’am) followed by a person’s full name is the general form of address in formal situations. Qatari women may also be referred to as “Madame.” Government ministers are addressed with, “Your Excellency, (full name)”, while government ministers of the ruling line are called, “Your Excellency, Minister of ___, (full name)”. Lesser members of the royal family and anyone in religious authority are called Sheikh, followed by his or her full name, while more senior members of the royal family receive a combination of these titles: “Your Excellency, Sheikh (full name).” Rulers themselves are address as Samu al-Emir (Your Highness).

Body Language – Touching members of the opposite sex, however, is socially unacceptable, and greetings between men and women require a much greater degree of personal space. Men and women do not usually make eye contact out of respect for each other’s modesty.

Business Attire – Business dress in Qatar is conservative. Men should wear a dark-colored (blue, black, gray) business suit with a white shirt, modest tie, and dress shoes. Women should also wear dark-colored business suits, with conservative heels. Avoid short skirts (skirts should at least cover the knees) and open-toed shoes at all times. Blouses should cover the elbows and should fasten at the neck.

Business Practices – Religion, hierarchy, and strong family ties combine in Qatar’s finely honed business style, which has proven successful on the international stage. Native Qataris are predominantly Sunni Muslims who follow Sharia law, so religion plays a big part in almost every aspect of life, including business. Business dealings will be limited during the month-long period of Ramadan. Qatar professionals greatly value status, education, and authority, and all of these factors contribute to a deep-rooted belief in vertical hierarchy, whereby decisions are made only at the top of an organization. Yet because Qatar is a family-centric society, many businesses are family owned and operated; in such cases, consensus may be required, with agreement sought from each family member before a decision can be made.

Qataris tend to be vague and indirect, hesitant to share information that could convey a competitive advantage. For the visitor’s part, it is wise to remember when conversing that the spoken word carries much more weight in Qatari society than it does in many other countries of the
Etiquette (continued)

world: verbal commitments are regarded as even more important than written contracts. If you say you can do something, you will be expected to deliver on your promise.

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**Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani**

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Sheikh Jasim, renounced his claim reportedly based on his father’s lack of confidence in Sheikh Jasim’s ability to lead.

Sheikh Tamim became Emir on June 25, 2014, when Emir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Emir Tamim was educated at Great Britain’s Sherborne School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Emir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe, including in Harrod’s department store in London, the U.S., and elsewhere.

Sheikh Tamim has held numerous government positions, including top security and economics posts. In 2009, he was appointed deputy commander-in-chief of Qatar’s armed forces. He has also promoted sport as part of Qatar’s bid to raise its international profile.

Since taking over as Emir, Sheikh Tamim has focused considerable energy on domestic issues, streamlining government bureaucracy, building roads and a new metro system, and constructing a new airport. He is also working to diversify the country’s economy away from hydrocarbons.

**Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani**

Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani has been Minister of Foreign Affairs since January 2016. He replaced Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, who had been the first non-member of the royal family to serve in the post.

He obtained his undergraduate degree in economics and business administration from Qatar University in 2003. Upon graduation, he began to serve at the Supreme Council for Family Affairs as an economic researcher. From 2005 to 2009 he was the Director of Economic Affairs, after which he began managing projects supporting and developing small and medium scale state enterprises at the Ministry of Business and Trade.

Muhammad has been credited with handling Qatar’s sensitive relationship with Egypt’s government following the Muslim Brotherhood’s ouster in July 2013. It is likely that as Foreign Minister he will maintain the lower-profile attitude in regional affairs that has marked Doha’s foreign policy under Sheikh Tamim. Moreover, his background in economic affairs and business development suggests that Qatar may be recalibrating its focus from regional political conflicts to economic interests and trade.

In 2010, the former Emir named Muhammad Secretary of the Personal Representative of the Emir for Follow-up Affairs at the Emiri Diwan. He was appointed the Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation Affairs in January 2014.
Ambassador to the United States Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Sheikh Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani presented his credentials to become ambassador of Qatar to the U.S. on April 24, 2017. He previously served as Qatari Ambassador to France from November 2013 to October 2016. Prior to that, Ambassador Al Thani served as the permanent representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York from July 2011 to October 2013, working with the U.N. to promote Qatar’s 2030 National Vision, as well as Ambassador to Brussels from October 2007 to July 2011, during which time he chaired the Qatari Mission to the EU.

Ambassador Al Thani was also Qatari liaison with NATO, as a member of the Qatari diplomatic mission in Brussels (November 2004-July 2007). Additional postings include the Qatari Embassy in D.C. (October 2000-October 2004) and the Qatari Mission to the U.N. (August 1998-September 2000). A career member of the Senior Foreign Service since March 2009, Ambassador Al Thani began his diplomatic career in the Department of European and American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 1997-August 1998).

Ambassador Al Thani received his master’s degree in international relations from the American University in D.C. in 2004.
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Qatar General Briefing

prepared for
Rep. Mark Sanford
History

Until 1867, Qatar was ruled by the leaders of neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa family. Following an uprising, Britain installed the head of a leading Qatari family, Muhammad bin Thani Al Thani, as ruler of what is now Qatar. Following WWI, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement formalizing Qatar as a British protectorate. In 1970, Qatar adopted its first written constitution and became fully independent in 1971.

The Al Thani family claims descent from the central Arabian tribe of Banu Tamim, the tribe to which Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism, belonged. For that reason, Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic tradition that it shares with Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has worked hard not to be dominated by Saudi Arabia in the region. Saudi Arabia is the unofficial leader of the six Gulf monarchy alliance called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman.

The GCC Crisis

A consistent source of friction within the GCC has been Qatar’s embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood as representing a moderate political Islamist movement that can foster regional stability. Differences over this and other issues widened to the point where Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014, accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism. The Ambassadors returned in November 2014 in exchange for a reported pledge by Qatar to fully commit to noninterference in the affairs of other GCC states and to refrain from supporting any Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.

These same disputes erupted again two weeks after a U.S.-Gulf summit held during President Trump’s May visit to Saudi Arabia. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt, the recognized government of Yemen, and later Jordan and a few other Muslim countries, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, expelled Qatar’s diplomats, recalled their ambassadors, and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. They accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and of supporting Iran’s regional interventions, including against the government of Bahrain.

After the rift erupted, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts.

On June 22, 2017, the Saudi-led group presented Qatar with 13 demands, including closing the Al Jazeera network, severing relations with terroristic groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, scaling back relations with Iran, closing a
The GCC Crisis (continued)

Turkish military base in Qatar, and paying reparations to the Saudi-led bloc. Secretary of State Tillerson described some of the demands as excessive, but indicated Qatar should agree to implement those demands that were more measured (perhaps expelling Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas figures). Qatar submitted, via Kuwait, a response to the demands that were characterized as “overall negative.” Qatari officials said they were amenable to negotiations on several of the demands, but said they would not “surrender” and that Qatar’s wealth was helping it mitigate the economic effects of the Saudi-led sanctions.

On July 5, following a meeting of their foreign ministers in Cairo, the Saudi-led group issued a joint statement continuing their economic and political measures against Qatar, but also reframing their demands as six broad principles for Qatar to “combat extremism and terrorism” and prevent their financing; suspending “all acts of provocation”; fully complying with the commitments Qatar made in 2013 and 2014; and “refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of states.” Subsequently, Saudi Arabia allowed Qatari pilgrims to visit the Kingdom, and one of the countries that backed the Saudi effort, Senegal, restored relations with Qatar.

Secretary Tillerson’s conducted “shuttle diplomacy” in the region during July 10-13, and achieved a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. No formal direct talks have begun between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, and Qatar’s restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in late August, along with joint Qatar-Turkey military drills, appeared to further dampen hopes for a near-term resolution of the rift.

More recently, President Trump has engaged directly in mediation efforts. The President initially appeared to side with the Saudi-led move by criticizing Qatar for supporting militant groups in the region. But, he remained engaged with Emir Tamim and other Gulf leaders, reportedly urging GCC unity, preventing the financing of terrorist groups or the promotion of extremist ideology. On September 7, 2017, President Trump met with Kuwait’s Emir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah at the White House, and the GCC rift was a central topic. After the visit, the President reportedly was pivotal to arranging the first direct talks on the crisis—a phone call between Emir Tamim and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on September 9. The dialogue broke off immediately when the Qatari and Saudi sides disputed which of them had initiated the talks.

U.S.–Qatar defense and security relations are long-standing and extensive, likely contributing to statements by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis urging a rapid resolution of the isolation effort. U.S. military officials initially said that the Saudi-led moves against Qatar were not affecting U.S. operations in Qatar or the region. However, Secretary of State Tillerson indicated on June 9 that the rift had begun to adversely affect U.S. regional operations, which depend on a web of interrelationships with other defense facilities in the Gulf. In part to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the defense relationship with Qatar, the Administration and Qatar signed a firm agreement to sell Qatar F-15 aircraft on June 14, and the U.S. Navy held a drill...
The GCC Crisis (continued)

with Qatar on June 17. However, in early October, U.S. military officials said they were reducing some exercises with Qatar and other GCC parties to the dispute as an apparent attempt to add pressure for a resolution to the rift.

Relations with the US

The U.S. opened an embassy in Doha in 1973. The U.S-Qatar defense relationship developed during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in late 1981 and collectively backed Iraq against the Iran in that war, despite their political and ideological differences with Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

After Iraq invaded GCC member Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC participated in the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait. After the expulsion of Iraq, U.S.-Qatari defense relations deepened, and the two countries signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA) in 1992. Since then, defense cooperation has expanded and deepened, including through U.S. sales of increasingly sophisticated arms and missile defense systems. The DCA was renewed again for 10 years in December 2013. The text of the pact is classified, but it reportedly addresses U.S. military access to Qatari military facilities, prepositioning of U.S. armor and other military equipment, and U.S. training of Qatar’s military forces.

Qatar receives virtually no U.S. security or economic assistance of any kind. At times, small amounts of U.S. aid through various programs have been provided to help Qatar develop capabilities to prevent smuggling and the movement of terrorists or proliferation-related gear into Qatar or around its waterways. Qatar has also developed relations with NATO under the “Istanbul Cooperation Initiative” (ICI). Qatar’s Ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, the headquarters of which is based near Brussels.

Approximately 10,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at the various facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The air field, which also hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command, has been steadily expanded and enhanced with Qatari funding as well as $450 million in U.S. military construction funding since 2003. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria. Qatar’s own air force participated in some of the first air strikes against Islamic State forces in Syria in late 2014, but, after a few weeks of such operations, Qatar curtailed its participation in the air operations.

The DCA also reportedly addresses U.S. training of Qatar’s military. Qatar’s force of 11,800 is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, 8,500 are ground forces, 1,800 are naval forces, and 1,500 are air forces. A 2014 law mandates four months of military training for every male between the ages of 18-35, with a reserve commitment of 10 years (up to age 40).

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events.

In the past, at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including suspected September 11, 2001, attacks mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammad. U.S. officials have stated that Qatar has taken steps in recent years to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar, although terrorist financiers in Qatar are able to exploit Qatar’s informal financial system.

Nevertheless, according to U.S. officials,
US/Qatari Relations (continued)

“entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional Al Qaeda affiliates such as the Nusrah Front.” The U.S. has imposed sanctions on several persons living in Qatar, including Qatari nationals, for allegedly raising funds or making donations to both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Qatar and the U.S. have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement. However, in April 2004, the U.S. and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. Qatar has used the benefits of the more limited agreement to undertake large investments in the U.S., including the City Center project in Washington, DC. Also, several U.S. universities and other institutions, such as Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Brookings Institution, and Rand Corporation, have established branches and offices at the Qatar Foundation’s Education City outside Doha. In 2005, Qatar donated $100 million to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The U.S. exported $4.9 billion in goods to Qatar in 2016 ($600 million more than 2015), and imported $1.16 billion worth of Qatari goods in 2016, slightly less than in 2015. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aircraft, machinery, and information technology. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products, but U.S. imports of Qatar’s crude oil or natural gas have declined to negligible levels in recent years, reflecting the significant increase in U.S. domestic production of those commodities.

Qatar’s growing airline, Qatar Airways, is a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. In October 2016, the airline agreed to purchase from Boeing up to another 100 passenger jets with an estimated value of $18 billion. However, some U.S. airlines are challenging Qatar Airways’ benefits under a U.S.-Qatar “open skies” agreement. The U.S. carriers assert that the airline’s privileges under

that agreement should be revoked because the airline’s aircraft purchases are subsidized by Qatar’s government, giving it an unfair competitive advantage. The Obama Administration did not reopen that agreement in response to the complaints, and the Trump Administration, including during President Trump’s February 2017 meeting with airline executives, has not indicated it would do so either.

Regional Relationships

With Egypt – After the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood-linked party there won a parliamentary majority and one of its leaders, Muhammad Morsi, won presidential elections in 2012. Qatar supported Morsi’s government with $5 billion in aid, contributing to the 2014 and 2017 rifts between Qatar and the other GCC states. Saudi Arabia and the UAE strongly backed Morsi’s ouster by Egypt’s military in 2013. Because of its support for Morsi, Qatar’s relations with former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have been strained and Egypt joined the Saudi-led move against Qatar in June 2017.

With Libya – Qatar joined the U.S. and several GCC and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, however, Qatar has supported Muslim Brotherhood-linked factions in Libya opposed by the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This difference in approach in Libya among the GCC states contributed to the Saudi-led move to isolate Qatar in June 2017.
Regional (continued)

With Iran – Qatari has long joined the other GCC states and the U.S. in countering Iran strategically. Qatar enforced international sanctions against Iran during 2010-2016, and no Qatar-based entity has been designated as an Iran sanctions violator. Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, which was in a dispute with Iran over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, and Qatar joined the February 2016 GCC declaration that Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. Yet, Qatari leaders have insisted that dialogue with Iran is key to reducing regional tensions. Qatar and Iran share a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident, although some Iranian officials have occasionally accused Qatar of cheating with regard to the arrangement. Iran has supported Qatar in the GCC dispute and has exported additional foodstuffs to Qatar to help compensate for the cutoff of Saudi exports. It has permitted Qatar’s flagship airline, Qatar Airways, to overfly its airspace in light of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini denial of their airspace to that carrier. In August 2017, Qatar formally restored full diplomatic relations with Iran.

With Afghanistan – Qatar did not deploy forces to support U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, but it has facilitated talks between the U.S. and Taliban representatives. In June 2018, the Taliban opened a representative office in Qatar, but it violated U.S.-Qatar-Taliban understandings by raising a flag of the former Taliban regime on the building and Qatar, at U.S. request, immediately closed the office. Taliban officials remained in Qatar, and revived U.S.-Taliban talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of captured U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban figures held by the U.S. at the prison facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The five were banned from traveling outside Qatar until there is an agreed solution that would ensure the five do not rejoin the Taliban insurgency.

With Syria and Anti-ISIS Operations – Qatar has been providing funds and weaponry to Syrian rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al Assad. Qatar has ties to Jabhat al Nusra (JAN), an Al Qaeda affiliate designated by the U.S. as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Qatari officials assert that their intent was to induce the group to sever its ties to Al Qaeda, which it formally did in July 2016, although observers perceive the group is still aligned with Al Qaeda leadership. Qatari mediation also succeeded on a few occasions in obtaining the release of Lebanese and Western prisoners captured by the group. Qatar is a member of the U.S.-led coalition combating the Islamic State. In 2014, Qatar flew some airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State positions. Neither Qatar nor any other GCC state has participated in coalition air operations against the Islamic State inside Iraq. In April 2017, Qatar reportedly paid ransom to obtain the release of 26 Qatari ruling family members abducted while on a hunting trip in southern Iraq in 2015, reportedly by Iraqi Shiite militias.

With Turkey – Qatar allowed Turkey to open a military base in Qatar, an initiative that might have contributed to Turkey’s support for Qatar in the June 2017 intra-GCC rift. One of the “13 demands” of the Saudi-led anti-Qatar coalition has been that Qatar close the Turkish base in Qatar—a demand Qatari officials say will not be met and which might no longer be an obstacle to a solution to the intra-GCC rift. Turkey has demonstrated its support by sending additional troops to Qatar and conducting joint exercises in August 2017, and by increasing food exports to replace some of those previously provided by Saudi Arabia.

With Yemen – In 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition battling Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, including conducting air strikes against Houthi and allied positions. In September 2015, Qatar deployed 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to Yemen. As a result of the intra-GCC rift, Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led military effort in Yemen.
Aviation Week, Qatar

A Qatari Mirage 2000-5 during international training exercises

Aviation Week, Qatar

Regional (continued)

With Israel/Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian Issues Qatar has attempted to play a role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations by engaging all parties. While Qatar did at one point maintain some relationship with Israel, Qatar ordered the Israeli offices in Doha closed in January 2009 at the height of an Israel-Hamas conflict; the offices have not formally reopened because of the stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in recent years. Emir Tamim has regularly criticized Israel, accusing it of severe abuses against the Palestinians and insincerity in seeking a political solution to the dispute. Still, small levels of direct Israel-Qatar trade reportedly continue; Israeli exports to Qatar consist mostly of machinery and technology, and imports from Qatar are primarily plastics. Qatar has allowed senior leaders of the Islamist group Hamas—a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007—to operate in Doha. Qatari officials assert that doing so is part of an effort to broker reconciliation between Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) on the West Bank. Qatar’s hosting of Hamas leaders and its financial aid to the Gaza Strip have drawn U.S. and other Gulf state criticism as support for a terrorist organization, although Qatari officials say that doing so has had the tacit blessing of U.S. officials who see benefit in being able to engage Hamas.

US Arms Sale to Qatar

Most of Qatar’s arsenal of major combat systems still consists of French-made equipment. However, a growing percentage of its new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment. These include combat aircraft (Qatar has sought to purchase 72 U.S.-made F-15s; the sale likely will be held up by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Corker’s stated intent not to provide informal concurrence to the sale until a path to resolution of the intra-GCC rift becomes clear); helicopters (the U.S. sold Qatar AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and related equipment; UH-60 M Blackhawk helicopters; and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters in a $6.6 billion sale); missile and rocket systems (the U.S. sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin guided missiles, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) in a $665 million sale); ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems (Qatar has purchased various U.S.-made BMD systems, consistent with U.S. efforts to promote a coordinated Gulf missile defense capability against Iran’s missile arsenal); and naval vessels (an August 2016 proposed sale included an unspecified number of U.S.-made Mk-V fast patrol boats, along with other equipment).

H.R. 2712 and Qatar

History – Rep. Mast (R-FL) introduced HR 2712 in May 2017, along with House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Chairman Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Engel (D-NY). The bill was referred to both HFAC and the House Financial Services Committee. HFAC passed HR 2712 by voice vote on November 15, 2017. Rep. Donovan (R-NY) introduced an amendment during markup that added in language on Qatar. Chairman Royce has taken the lead in pressuring Majority Leader McCarthy (R-
H.R. 2712 (continued)

CA) to move HR 2712 through the process. Meanwhile, the Financial Services Committee has not given clear indication of its intentions with the bill.

Exxon Mobil has lobbied on HR 2712, taking issue with how provisions related to energy development would negatively impact other legislation it supports. The American Jewish Committee lobbied in favor of HR 2712, part of its work to “shine a harsh spotlight on Iran’s role as the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism.” The sanctions set forth include the prohibition or suspension of the following for one year: U.S. aid to the foreign government; extension of loans and financial or technical services; export of items on the U.S. Munitions List or Commerce Control List; transactions in foreign exchanges in which the U.S. has jurisdiction; and transfers of credit or payments between one or more financial institutions subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

• Section 5: The president must report a list of foreign countries providing support for the aforementioned organizations and further assessments including: steps the foreign government is taking to freeze assets of these groups; any reasons the government is not taking adequate steps to freeze assets; measures taken by the U.S. to freeze assets; list of countries where the aforementioned groups fundraise and steps those countries are taking to disrupt the fundraising efforts; and list of countries from which the groups receive surveillance equipment and what measures are being taken to disrupt the acquisition.

The Reality – After the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rift began, Secretary of State Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts. Secretary Tillerson has conducted shuttle diplomacy in the region, achieving a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. Recently, President Trump thanked Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.

Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has affirmed U.S./Qatari cooperation on fighting terrorist financing, certifying that Qatar has made improvements on this front since July. Tillerson has also expressed
Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has continuously affirmed his support for Qatar and the need for continued U.S. support of Qatar, saying that the blame for the continued GCC blockade should be with Saudi Arabia, not Qatar as “there seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage.”

The GCC blockade disrupts efforts to counter various terrorist groups and efforts to quell Iran. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has frequently praised Qatari efforts, saying that the U.S. and Qatar have “a shared understanding” on the importance of fighting the financing of terror. As Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, stated last summer to Congress, “Qatar does not fund Hamas,” despite accusations to the contrary from other members of the GCC.

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events. And three of the last five Qatari nationals of concern to the U.S. government were prosecuted, several of whom are serving house arrest. Qatar was a signatory to the Jeddah Communiqué in 2014 and again committed itself to counter-terrorism efforts during President Trump’s trip to Riyadh.

Qatar goes to great lengths to ensure that its humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza is provided in coordination with the Israeli authorities, as mediated by the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process.

Labeling Qatar as a de facto state sponsor of terror would impact the U.S. directly. More than 11,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at various military facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria.

Additionally, a growing percentage Qatar’s new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment, including combat aircraft, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, ballistic missile defense systems, and naval vessels. Sanctions on Qatar and/or businesses operating in Qatar would impact the defense industry in addition to U.S. national security interests in the region.

Qatari investments in the U.S. are expected to exceed $35 billion by 2021. Oil companies, including ExxonMobil, GE Oil and Gas, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips are expanding their local presence, as Qatar looks to increase its oil production. International banks, such as JPMorgan, HSBC, and Deutsche Bank all have increased their operations with sovereign bond issue investments. Additionally, Qatar has become one of Boeing’s largest customers, placing an order for over $2 billion this past year, with two hundred additional jets already purchased.

HR 2712 jeopardizes both ongoing and potential business relations between the U.S. and Qatar. Nearly all U.S. investments in Qatar would be drastically affected by HR 2712, unnecessarily jeopardizing the strong relationship enjoyed by Qatar and the United States.
Protocol and Etiquette

Greetings – Typical Qatari greetings have a degree of formality about them. However, less formal versions are used between members of the same sex who know each other well. Qatari men shake hands firmly while maintaining direct eye contact, and often men exchange embraces and cheek kisses along with the handshake. Men frequently continue holding hands during the ensuing conversation. Two men holding hands while walking is a common sight and a sign of brotherly affection. Female friends typically greet each other with kisses to each cheek. Physical touch between two men or two women during conversation is common, and Qataris of the same sex typically stand quite close while speaking to each other.

The standard Arabic greetings of Assalaam aleikum and Wa aleikum assalaam, followed by polite questions, are used in both formal and informal settings. Two men or two women shake hands. A man typically will not shake a woman’s hand unless she extends it first. Qatari men often will not introduce a woman who is accompanying them, although she may introduce herself. Nods of respect in greeting are more common than handshakes between men and women. To show added respect, a man may place his left hand on the other’s right shoulder and exchange kisses to both cheeks. While direct eye contact is used between friends, eyes are typically averted when one wishes to show special respect, especially to one’s elders.

Titles – Titles are also used whenever possible. Sayyed (Sir) or Sayeeda/ Sayedity (Ma’am) followed by a person’s full name is the general form of address in formal situations. Qatari women may also be referred to as “Madame.” Government ministers are addressed with, “Your Excellency, (full name)”, while government ministers of the ruling line are called, “Your Excellency, Minister of ___, (full name)”. Lesser members of the royal family and anyone in religious authority are called Sheikh, followed by his or her full name, while more senior members of the royal family receive a combination of these titles: “Your Excellency, Sheikh (full name).” Rulers themselves are address as Samu al-Emir (Your Highness).

Body Language – Touching members of the opposite sex, however, is socially unacceptable, and greetings between men and women require a much greater degree of personal space. Men and women do not usually make eye contact out of respect for each other’s modesty.

Business Attire – Business dress in Qatar is conservative. Men should wear a dark-colored (blue, black, gray) business suit with a white shirt, modest tie, and dress shoes. Women should also wear dark-colored business suits, with conservative heels. Avoid short skirts (skirts should at least cover the knees) and open-toed shoes at all times. Blouses should cover the elbows and should fasten at the neck.

Business Practices – Religion, hierarchy, and strong family ties combine in Qatar’s finely honed business style, which has proven successful on the international stage. Native Qataris are predominantly Sunni Muslims who follow Sharia law, so religion plays a big part in almost every aspect of life, including business. Business dealings will be limited during the month-long period of Ramadan. Qatari professionals greatly value status, education, and authority, and all of these factors contribute to a deep-rooted belief in vertical hierarchy, whereby decisions are made only at the top of an organization. Yet because Qatar is a family-centric society, many businesses are family owned and operated; in such cases, consensus may be required, with agreement sought from each family member before a decision can be made.

Qataris tend to be vague and indirect, hesitant to share information that could convey a competitive advantage. For the visitor’s part, it is wise to remember when conversing that the spoken word carries much more weight in Qatari society than it does in many other countries of the
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Giving and Dining – Qataris do not generally expect gifts from visitors they invite to their homes, as hospitality is one of the pillars of society. The host expects to be the one in position to extend generosity. Qataris, like other cultures in the Arab world, believe that sharing a meal together promotes friendship and positively affects any relationship. Gifts, while not required, are always appreciated as a measure of goodwill and an expression of gratitude for hospitality received.

Although gifts are always appreciated in Qatar, they are considered unnecessary in Qatari business circles. If given at all, they are generally only presented after a business relationship/friendship has been well-established, such as at the conclusion of a successful business deal. Gifts are of the highest quality and include hallmarked silver or platinum items. Traditional Arab perfumes are also highly valued by Qatari men, although these are usually only given by those who know the recipient's personal tastes.

Qatari businesspeople often prefer treating their business associates to a meal in a high-quality restaurant in place of giving a gift. As mentioned earlier, sharing a meal is considered one of the best ways to foster friendship in this hospitable society and thus can serve as a better way of expressing appreciation than gifts.
Biographies

Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani
Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Sheikh Jasim, renounced his claim reportedly based on his father’s lack of confidence in Sheikh Jasim’s ability to lead.

Sheikh Tamim became Emir on June 25, 2014, when Emir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Emir Tamim was educated at Great Britain’s Sherbourne School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Emir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe, including in Harrod’s department store in London, the U.S., and elsewhere.

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Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani
Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani has been Minister of Foreign Affairs since January 2016. He replaced Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, who had been the first non-member of the royal family to serve in the post.

He obtained his undergraduate degree in economics and business administration from Qatar University in 2003. Upon graduation, he began to serve at the Supreme Council for Family Affairs as an economic researcher. From 2005 to 2009 he was the Director of Economic Affairs, after which he began managing projects supporting and developing small and medium scale state enterprises at the Ministry of Business and Trade.

Muhammad has been credited with handling Qatar’s sensitive relationship with Egypt’s government following the Muslim Brotherhood’s ouster in July 2013. It is likely that as Foreign Minister he will maintain the lower-profile attitude in regional affairs that has marked Doha’s foreign policy under Sheikh Tamim. Moreover, his background in economic affairs and business development suggests that Qatar may be recalibrating its focus from regional political conflicts to economic interests and trade.

In 2010, the former Emir named Muhammad Secretary of the Personal Representative of the Emir for Follow-up Affairs at the Emiri Diwan. He was appointed the Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation Affairs in January 2014.
Ambassador to the United States Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Sheikh Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani presented his credentials to become ambassador of Qatar to the U.S. on April 24, 2017. He previously served as Qatari Ambassador to France from November 2013 to October 2016. Prior to that, Ambassador Al Thani served as the permanent representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York from July 2011 to October 2013, working with the U.N. to promote Qatar’s 2030 National Vision, as well as Ambassador to Brussels from October 2007 to July 2011, during which time he chaired the Qatari Mission to the EU.

Ambassador Al Thani was also Qatari liaison with NATO, as a member of the Qatari diplomatic mission in Brussels (November 2004-July 2007). Additional postings include the Qatari Embassy in D.C. (October 2000-October 2004) and the Qatari Mission to the U.N. (August 1998-September 2000). A career member of the Senior Foreign Service since March 2009, Ambassador Al Thani began his diplomatic career in the Department of European and American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 1997-August 1998).

Ambassador Al Thani received his master’s degree in international relations from the American University in D.C. in 2004.
Qatar Briefing

preparing for
Anita Zucker
History

Until 1867, Qatar was ruled by the leaders of neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa family. Following an uprising, Britain installed the head of a leading Qatari family, Muhammad bin Thani Al Thani, as ruler of what is now Qatar. Following WWI, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement formalizing Qatar as a British protectorate. In 1970, Qatar adopted its first written constitution and became fully independent in 1971.

The Al Thani family claims descent from the central Arabian tribe of Banu Tamim, the tribe to which Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism, belonged. For that reason, Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic tradition that it shares with Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has worked hard not to be dominated by Saudi Arabia in the region. Saudi Arabia is the unofficial leader of the six Gulf monarchy alliance called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman.

The GCC Crisis

A consistent source of friction within the GCC has been Qatar’s embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood as representing a moderate political Islamist movement that can foster regional stability. Differences over this and other issues widened to the point where Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014, accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism. The Ambassadors returned in November 2014 in exchange for a reported pledge by Qatar to fully commit to noninterference in the affairs of other GCC states and to refrain from supporting any Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.

These same disputes erupted again two weeks after a U.S.-Gulf summit held during President Trump’s May visit to Saudi Arabia. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt, the recognized government of Yemen, and later Jordan and a few other Muslim countries, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, expelled Qatar’s diplomats, recalled their ambassadors, and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. They accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and of supporting Iran’s regional interventions, including against the government of Bahrain.

After the rift erupted, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts.

On June 22, 2017, the Saudi-led group presented Qatar with 13 demands, including closing the Al Jazeera network, severing relations with terrorist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, scaling back relations with Iran, closing a
The GCC Crisis (continued)

Turkish military base in Qatar, and paying reparations to the Saudi-led bloc. Secretary of State Tillerson described some of the demands as excessive, but indicated Qatar should agree to implement those demands that were more measured (perhaps expelling Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas figures). Qatar submitted, via Kuwait, a response to the demands that were characterized as “overall negative.” Qatari officials said they were amenable to negotiations on several of the demands, but said they would not “surrender” and that Qatar’s wealth was helping it mitigate the economic effects of the Saudi-led sanctions.

On July 5, following a meeting of their foreign ministers in Cairo, the Saudi-led group issued a joint statement continuing their economic and political measures against Qatar, but also reframing their demands as six broad principles for Qatar to “combat extremism and terrorism” and prevent their financing; suspending “all acts of provocation”; fully complying with the commitments Qatar made in 2013 and 2014; and “refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of states.” Subsequently, Saudi Arabia allowed Qatari pilgrims to visit the Kingdom, and one of the countries that backed the Saudi effort, Senegal, restored relations with Qatar.

Secretary Tillerson’s conducted “shuttle diplomacy” in the region during July 10-13, and achieved a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. No formal direct talks have begun between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, and Qatar’s restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in late August, along with joint Qatar-Turkey military drills, appeared to further dampen hopes for a near-term resolution of the rift.

More recently, President Trump has engaged directly in mediation efforts. The President initially appeared to side with the Saudi-led move by criticizing Qatar for supporting militant groups in the region. But, he remained engaged with Emir Tamim and other Gulf leaders, reportedly urging GCC unity, preventing the financing of terrorist groups or the promotion of extremist ideology. On September 7, 2017, President Trump met with Kuwait’s Emir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah at the White House, and the GCC rift was a central topic. After the visit, the President reportedly was pivotal to arranging the first direct talks on the crisis—a phone call between Emir Tamim and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on September 9. The dialogue broke off immediately when the Qatari and Saudi sides disputed which of them had initiated the talks.

U.S.–Qatar defense and security relations are long-standing and extensive, likely contributing to statements by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis urging a rapid resolution of the isolation effort. U.S. military officials initially said that the Saudi-led moves against Qatar were not affecting U.S. operations in Qatar or the region. However, Secretary of State Tillerson indicated on June 9 that the rift had begun to adversely affect U.S. regional operations, which depend on a web of interrelationships with other defense facilities in the Gulf. In part to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the defense relationship with Qatar, the Administration and Qatar signed a firm agreement to sell Qatar F-15 aircraft on June 14, and the U.S. Navy held a drill.
The GCC Crisis (continued)

with Qatar on June 17. However, in early October, U.S. military officials said they were reducing some exercises with Qatar and other GCC parties to the dispute as an apparent attempt to add pressure for a resolution to the rift.

Relations with the US

The U.S. opened an embassy in Doha in 1973. The U.S-Qatar defense relationship developed during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in late 1981 and collectively backed Iraq against the Iran in that war, despite their political and ideological differences with Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

After Iraq invaded GCC member Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC participated in the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait. After the expulsion of Iraq, U.S.-Qatari defense relations deepened, and the two countries signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA) in 1992. Since then, defense cooperation has expanded and deepened, including through U.S. sales of increasingly sophisticated arms and missile defense systems. The DCA was renewed again for 10 years in December 2013. The text of the pact is classified, but it reportedly addresses U.S. military access to Qatari military facilities, prepositioning of U.S. armor and other military equipment, and U.S. training of Qatar’s military forces.

Qatar receives virtually no U.S. security or economic assistance of any kind. At times, small amounts of U.S. aid through various programs have been provided to help Qatar develop capabilities to prevent smuggling and the movement of terrorists or proliferation-related gear into Qatar or around its waterways. Qatar has also developed relations with NATO under the “Istanbul Cooperation Initiative” (ICI). Qatar’s Ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, the headquarters of which is based near Brussels.

Approximately 10,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at the various facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The air field, which also hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command, has been steadily expanded and enhanced with Qatari funding as well as $450 million in U.S. military construction funding since 2003. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria. Qatar’s own air force participated in some of the first air strikes against Islamic State forces in Syria in late 2014, but, after a few weeks of such operations, Qatar curtailed its participation in the air operations.

The DCA also reportedly addresses U.S. training of Qatar’s military. Qatar’s force of 11,800 is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, 8,500 are ground forces, 1,800 are naval forces, and 1,500 are air forces. A 2014 law mandates four months of military training for every male between the ages of 18-35, with a reserve commitment of 10 years (up to age 40).

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events.

In the past, at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including suspected September 11, 2001, attacks mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammad. U.S. officials have stated that Qatar has taken steps in recent years to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar, although terrorist financiers in Qatar are able to exploit Qatar’s informal financial system.

Nevertheless, according to U.S. officials,
“entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional Al Qa'ida affiliates such as the Nusrah Front.” The U.S. has imposed sanctions on several persons living in Qatar, including Qatari nationals, for allegedly raising funds or making donations to both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Qatar and the U.S. have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement. However, in April 2004, the U.S. and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. Qatar has used the benefits of the more limited agreement to undertake large investments in the U.S., including the City Center project in Washington, DC. Also, several U.S. universities and other institutions, such as Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Brookings Institution, and Rand Corporation, have established branches and offices at the Qatar Foundation’s Education City outside Doha. In 2005, Qatar donated $100 million to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The U.S. exported $4.9 billion in goods to Qatar in 2016 ($600 million more than 2015), and imported $1.16 billion worth of Qatari goods in 2016, slightly less than in 2015. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aircraft, machinery, and information technology. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products, but U.S. imports of Qatar’s crude oil or natural gas have declined to negligible levels in recent years, reflecting the significant increase in U.S. domestic production of those commodities.

Qatar’s growing airline, Qatar Airways, is a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. In October 2016, the airline agreed to purchase from Boeing up to another 100 passenger jets with an estimated value of $18 billion. However, some U.S. airlines are challenging Qatar Airways’ benefits under a U.S.-Qatar “open skies” agreement. The U.S. carriers assert that the airline’s privileges under that agreement should be revoked because the airline’s aircraft purchases are subsidized by Qatar’s government, giving it an unfair competitive advantage. The Obama Administration did not reopen that agreement in response to the complaints, and the Trump Administration, including during President Trump’s February 2017 meeting with airline executives, has not indicated it would do so either.

Regional Relationships

With Egypt – After the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood-linked party there won a parliamentary majority and one of its leaders, Muhammad Morsi, won presidential elections in 2012. Qatar supported Morsi’s government with $5 billion in aid, contributing to the 2014 and 2017 rifts between Qatar and the other GCC states. Saudi Arabia and the UAE strongly backed Morsi’s ouster by Egypt’s military in 2013. Because of its support for Morsi, Qatar’s relations with former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have been strained and Egypt joined the Saudi-led move against Qatar in June 2017.

With Libya – Qatar joined the U.S. and several GCC and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, however, Qatar has supported Muslim Brotherhood-linked factions in Libya opposed by the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This difference in approach in Libya among the GCC states contributed to the Saudi-led move to isolate Qatar in June 2017.
Regional (continued)

With Iran – Qatari has long joined the other GCC states and the U.S. in countering Iran strategically. Qatar enforced international sanctions against Iran during 2010-2016, and no Qatar-based entity has been designated as an Iran sanctions violator. Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, which was in a dispute with Iran over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, and Qatar joined the February 2016 GCC declaration that Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. Yet, Qatari leaders have insisted that dialogue with Iran is key to reducing regional tensions. Qatar and Iran share a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident, although some Iranian officials have occasionally accused Qatar of cheating with regard to the arrangement. Iran has supported Qatar in the GCC dispute and has exported additional foodstuffs to Qatar to help compensate for the cutoff of Saudi exports. It has permitted Qatar’s flagship airline, Qatar Airways, to overfly its airspace in light of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini denial of their airspace to that carrier. In August 2017, Qatar formally restored full diplomatic relations with Iran.

With Afghanistan – Qatar did not deploy forces to support U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, but it has facilitated talks between the U.S. and Taliban representatives. In June 2013, the Taliban opened a representative office in Qatar, but it violated U.S.-Qatar-Taliban understandings by raising a flag of the former Taliban regime on the building and Qatar, at U.S. request, immediately closed the office. Taliban officials remained in Qatar, and revived U.S.-Taliban talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of captured U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban figures held by the U.S. at the prison facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The five were banned from traveling outside Qatar until there is an agreed solution that would ensure the five do not rejoin the Taliban insurgency.

With Syria and Anti-ISIS Operations – Qatar has been providing funds and weaponry to Syrian rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al Assad. Qatar has ties to Jabhat al Nusra (JAN), an Al Qaeda affiliate designated by the U.S. as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Qatari officials assert that their intent was to induce the group to sever its ties to Al Qaeda, which it formally did in July 2016, although observers perceive the group is still aligned with Al Qaeda leadership. Qatari mediation also succeeded on a few occasions in obtaining the release of Lebanese and Western prisoners captured by the group. Qatar is a member of the U.S.-led coalition combating the Islamic State. In 2014, Qatar flew some airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State positions. Neither Qatar nor any other GCC state has participated in coalition air operations against the Islamic State inside Iraq. In April 2017, Qatar reportedly paid ransom to obtain the release of 26 Qatari ruling family members abducted while on a hunting trip in southern Iraq in 2015, reportedly by Iraqi Shiite militias.

With Turkey – Qatar allowed Turkey to open a military base in Qatar, an initiative that might have contributed to Turkey’s support for Qatar in the June 2017 intra-GCC rift. One of the “13 demands” of the Saudi-led anti-Qatar coalition has been that Qatar close the Turkish base in Qatar—a demand Qatari officials say will not be met and which might no longer be an obstacle to a solution to the intra-GCC rift. Turkey has demonstrated its support by sending additional troops to Qatar and conducting joint exercises in August 2017, and by increasing food exports to replace some of those previously provided by Saudi Arabia.

With Yemen – In 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition battling Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, including conducting air strikes against Houthi and allied positions. In September 2015, Qatar deployed 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to Yemen. As a result of the intra-GCC rift, Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led military effort in Yemen.
Regional (continued)

With Israel/Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian Issues Qatar has attempted to play a role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations by engaging all parties. While Qatar did at one point maintain some relationship with Israel, Qatar ordered the Israeli offices in Doha closed in January 2009 at the height of an Israel-Hamas conflict; the offices have not formally reopened because of the stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in recent years. Emir Tamim has regularly criticized Israel, accusing it of severe abuses against the Palestinians and insincerity in seeking a political solution to the dispute. Still, small levels of direct Israel-Qatar trade reportedly continue; Israeli exports to Qatar consist mostly of machinery and technology, and imports from Qatar are primarily plastics. Qatar has allowed senior leaders of the Islamist group Hamas—a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007—to operate in Doha. Qatari officials assert that doing so is part of an effort to broker reconciliation between Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) on the West Bank. Qatar’s hosting of Hamas leaders and its financial aid to the Gaza Strip have drawn U.S. and other Gulf state criticism as support for a terrorist organization, although Qatari officials say that doing so has had the tacit blessing of U.S. officials who see benefit in being able to engage Hamas.

US Arms Sale to Qatar

Most of Qatar’s arsenal of major combat systems still consists of French-made equipment. However, a growing percentage of its new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment. These include combat aircraft (Qatar has sought to purchase 72 U.S.-made F-15s; the sale likely will be held up by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Corker’s stated intent not to provide informal concurrence to the sale until a path to resolution of the intra-GCC rift becomes clear); helicopters (the U.S. sold Qatar AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and related equipment; UH-60 M Blackhawk helicopters; and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters in a $6.6 billion sale); missile and rocket systems (the U.S. sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin guided missiles, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) in a $665 million sale); ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems (Qatar has purchased various U.S.-made BMD systems, consistent with U.S. efforts to promote a coordinated Gulf missile defense capability against Iran’s missile arsenal); and naval vessels (an August 2016 proposed sale included an unspecified number of U.S.-made Mk-V fast patrol boats, along with other equipment).

H.R. 2712 and Qatar

History – Rep. Mast (R-FL) introduced HR 2712 in May 2017, along with House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Chairman Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Engel (D-NY). The bill was referred to both HFAC and the House Financial Services Committee. HFAC passed HR 2712 by voice vote on November 15, 2017. Rep. Donovan (R-NY) introduced an amendment during markup that added in language on Qatar. Chairman Royce has taken the lead in pressing Majority Leader McCarthy (R-
The Bill – The bill would authorize sanctions on any foreign entity or government that provides support to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), or any affiliated or successor groups. It specifically singles out Qatar and Iran as states that have supported Hamas.

- Sec. 2(a)(3) reads: “Hamas has received significant financial and military support from Qatar. Qatar has hosted multiple senior Hamas officials, including Hamas leader Khaled Mashal since 2012, who has had regular interviews carried on al-Jazeera, a news organization based in Qatar and which receives some funding from members of the country’s ruling family. In March 2014, the Department of the Treasury’s Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence confirmed that “Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally has for many years openly financed Hamas.”

- Section 3: The president must report to Congress the foreign persons, agencies, and instrumentalities of foreign states that provide support to Hamas or the PIJ. Sanctions include banking and financing, defense-related sales, and goods and technologies regulated through the Export Administration or included in the U.S. Munitions List.

- Section 4: The president must to report to Congress any governments determined to “repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.” The sanctions set forth include the prohibition or suspension of the following for one year: U.S. aid to the foreign government; extension of loans and financial or technical services; export of items on the U.S. Munitions List or Commerce Control List; transactions in foreign exchanges in which the U.S. has jurisdiction; and transfers of credit or payments between one or more financial institutions subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

The Reality – After the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rift began, Secretary of State Tillerson took the lead on efforts to mediate the dispute, working closely with Kuwait. He and other State Department officials have indicated that the rift hinders U.S.-led antiterrorism and other regional efforts. Secretary Tillerson has conducted shuttle diplomacy in the region, achieving a bilateral U.S.-Qatar accord to combat terrorism that it was hoped would prove Qatar’s intentions to curb terrorism financing. Recently, President Trump thanked Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.

Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has affirmed U.S./Qatari cooperation on fighting terrorist financing, certifying that Qatar has made improvements on this front since July. Tillerson has also expressed...
satisfaction “with the effort they’re putting forth” to cut terrorism funding.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has continuously affirmed his support for Qatar and the need for continued U.S. support of Qatar, saying that the blame for the continued GCC blockade should be with Saudi Arabia, not Qatar as “there seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage.”

The GCC blockade disrupts efforts to counter various terrorist groups and efforts to quell Iran. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has frequently praised Qatari efforts, saying that the U.S. and Qatar have “a shared understanding” on the importance of fighting the financing of terror. As Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, stated last summer to Congress, “Qatar does not fund Hamas,” despite accusations to the contrary from other members of the GCC.

Qatar has participated in the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program to boost domestic security capabilities, and it has continued to participate in and host Global Counterterrorism Forum events. And three of the last five Qatari nationals of concern to the U.S. government were prosecuted, several of whom are serving house arrest. Qatar was a signatory to the Jeddah Communique in 2014 and again committed itself to counter-terrorism efforts during President Trump’s trip to Riyadh.

Qatar goes to great lengths to ensure that its humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza is provided in coordination with the Israeli authorities, as mediated by the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process.

Labeling Qatar as a de facto state sponsor of terror would impact the U.S. directly. More than 11,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed at various military facilities in Qatar. Most are Air Force personnel based at the Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command. The U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve to combat the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria.

Additionally, a growing percentage of Qatar’s new arms purchases are of U.S. equipment, including combat aircraft, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, ballistic missile defense systems, and naval vessels. Sanctions on Qatar and/or businesses operating in Qatar would impact the defense industry in addition to U.S. national security interests in the region.

Qatari investments in the U.S. are expected to exceed $35 billion by 2021. Oil companies, including ExxonMobil, GE Oil and Gas, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips are expanding their local presence, as Qatar looks to increase its oil production. International banks, such as JPMorgan, HSBC, and Deutsche Bank all have increased their operations with sovereign bond issue investments. Additionally, Qatar has become one of Boeing’s largest customers, placing an order for over $2 billion this past year, with two hundred additional jets already purchased.

HR 2712 jeopardizes both ongoing and potential business relations between the U.S. and Qatar. Nearly all U.S. investments in Qatar would be drastically affected by HR 2712, unnecessarily jeopardizing the strong relationship enjoyed by Qatar and the United States.
Greetings – Typical Qatari greetings have a degree of formality about them. However, less formal versions are used between members of the same sex who know each other well. Qatari men shake hands firmly while maintaining direct eye contact, and often men exchange embraces and cheek kisses along with the handshake. Men frequently continue holding hands during the ensuing conversation. Two men holding hands while walking is a common sight and a sign of brotherly affection. Female friends typically greet each other with kisses to each cheek. Physical touch between two men or two women during conversation is common, and Qataris of the same sex typically stand quite close while speaking to each other.

The standard Arabic greetings of Assalaam aleikum and Wa aleikum assalaam, followed by polite questions, are used in both formal and informal settings. Two men or two women shake hands. A man typically will not shake a woman’s hand unless she extends it first. Qatari men often will not introduce a woman who is accompanying them, although she may introduce herself. Nods of respect in greeting are more common than handshakes between men and women. To show added respect, a man may place his left hand on the other’s right shoulder and exchange kisses to both cheeks. While direct eye contact is used between friends, eyes are typically averted when one wishes to show special respect, especially to one’s elders.

Titles – Titles are also used whenever possible. Sayyed (Sir) or Sayeeda/ Sayedity (Ma’am) followed by a person’s full name is the general form of address in formal situations. Qatari women may also be referred to as “Madame.” Government ministers are addressed with, “Your Excellency, (full name)”, while government ministers of the ruling line are called, “Your Excellency, Minister of ___, (full name)”. Lesser members of the royal family and anyone in religious authority are called Sheikh, followed by his or her full name, while more senior members of the royal family receive a combination of these titles: “Your Excellency, Sheikh (full name).” Rulers themselves are addressed as Samu al-Emir (Your Highness).

Body Language – Touching members of the opposite sex, however, is socially unacceptable, and greetings between men and women require a much greater degree of personal space. Men and women do not usually make eye contact out of respect for each other’s modesty.

Business Attire – Business dress in Qatar is conservative. Men should wear a dark-colored (blue, black, gray) business suit with a white shirt, modest tie, and dress shoes. Women should also wear dark-colored business suits, with conservative heels. Avoid short skirts (skirts should at least cover the knees) and open-toed shoes at all times. Blouses should cover the elbows and should fasten at the neck.

Business Practices – Religion, hierarchy, and strong family ties combine in Qatar’s finely honed business style, which has proven successful on the international stage. Native Qataris are predominantly Sunni Muslims who follow Sharia law, so religion plays a big part in almost every aspect of life, including business. Business dealings will be limited during the month-long period of Ramadan. Qatari professionals greatly value status, education, and authority, and all of these factors contribute to a deep-rooted belief in vertical hierarchy, whereby decisions are made only at the top of an organization. Yet because Qatar is a family-centric society, many businesses are family owned and operated; in such cases, consensus may be required, with agreement sought from each family member before a decision can be made. Qataris tend to be vague and indirect, hesitant to share information that could convey a competitive advantage. For the visitor’s part, it is wise to remember when conversing that the spoken word carries much more weight in Qatari society than it does in many other countries of the
Etiquette (continued)

world: verbal commitments are regarded as even more important than written contracts. If you say you can do something, you will be expected to deliver on your promise.

**Gift Giving and Dining** – Qataris do not generally expect gifts from visitors they invite to their homes, as hospitality is one of the pillars of society. The host expects to be the one in position to extend generosity. Qataris, like other cultures in the Arab world, believe that sharing a meal together promotes friendship and positively affects any relationship. Gifts, while not required, are always appreciated as a measure of goodwill and an expression of gratitude for hospitality received.

Although gifts are always appreciated in Qatar, they are considered unnecessary in Qatari business circles. If given at all, they are generally only presented after a business relationship/friendship has been well-established, such as at the conclusion of a successful business deal. Gifts are of the highest quality and include hallmarked silver or platinum items. Traditional Arab perfumes are also highly valued by Qatari men, although these are usually only given by those who know the recipient’s personal tastes.

Qatari businesspeople often prefer treating their business associates to a meal in a high-quality restaurant in place of giving a gift. As mentioned earlier, sharing a meal is considered one of the best ways to foster friendship in this hospitable society and thus can serve as a better way of expressing appreciation than gifts.
Biographies

Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani
Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Sheikh Jasim, renounced his claim reportedly based on his father’s lack of confidence in Sheikh Jasim’s ability to lead.

Sheikh Tamim became Emir on June 25, 2014, when Emir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Emir Tamim was educated at Great Britain’s Sherbourne School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Emir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe, including in Harrod’s department store in London, the U.S., and elsewhere.

Sheikh Tamim has held numerous government positions, including top security and economics posts. In 2009, he was appointed deputy commander-in-chief of Qatar’s armed forces. He has also promoted sport as part of Qatar’s bid to raise its international profile.

Since taking over as Emir, Sheikh Tamim has focused considerable energy on domestic issues, streamlining government bureaucracy, building roads and a new metro system, and constructing a new airport. He is also working to diversify the country’s economy away from hydrocarbons.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani
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Ambassador to the United States Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Sheikh Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani presented his credentials to become ambassador of Qatar to the U.S. on April 24, 2017. He previously served as Qatari Ambassador to France from November 2013 to October 2016. Prior to that, Ambassador Al Thani served as the permanent representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York from July 2011 to October 2013, working with the U.N. to promote Qatar’s 2030 National Vision, as well as Ambassador to Brussels from October 2007 to July 2011, during which time he chaired the Qatari Mission to the EU.

Ambassador Al Thani was also Qatari liaison with NATO, as a member of the Qatari diplomatic mission in Brussels (November 2004-July 2007). Additional postings include the Qatari Embassy in D.C. (October 2000-October 2004) and the Qatari Mission to the U.N. (August 1998-September 2000). A career member of the Senior Foreign Service since March 2009, Ambassador Al Thani began his diplomatic career in the Department of European and American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 1997-August 1998).

Ambassador Al Thani received his master’s degree in international relations from the American University in D.C. in 2004.
US praises Qatar ties, calls for Gulf unity

The United States praised Qatar for its improved counterterrorism cooperation Tuesday and warned that its rift with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbors has hurt the fight against extremism.

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Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a diplomatic boycott of Qatar and closed their frontiers last year, accusing the gas-rich emirate of cosying up to Iran and sponsoring Islamist groups.

US President Donald Trump, fresh from a successful trip to Riyadh, seemed at first to take the Saudi side in the dispute and demanded that Qatar, which denies the charges, change its behavior.

But US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have been working to bring the dispute to an end and bind both Qatar and its opponents into a deeper mutual alliance.

On Tuesday, these diplomatic efforts produced the first of what may become an annual US-Qatari Strategic Dialogue, hosted by Tillerson and Mattis for their counterparts from Qatar.

In opening remarks, neither side criticized Saudi Arabia or its ambitious crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman by name, but both sides stressed the importance of unity in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"As the Gulf dispute nears the eight-month mark the United States remains as concerned
"This dispute has had direct negative consequences economically and militarily for those involved as well as the United States."

Saudi Arabia is also a long-time ally of the United States and is bigger, richer and more influential than Qatar, which lies on a peninsula off its neighbor’s Gulf coast in gas-rich waters.

But Qatar has parlayed its riches into an outsized influence with key economic investments in Western countries underpinning ties and winning prizes like hosting rights for the 2022 World Cup.

It has also annoyed its neighbors by funding and hosting the Al-Jazeera satellite network, which broadcasts Arabic news and views across the region that make some governments uncomfortable.

And it has fostered ties with some Islamist groups, giving it a role in regional crises that is unwelcome to some leaders.

Sometimes this is helpful to the United States: The Taliban has an office in Qatar, which serves as a back-channel for the US to get messages to their Afghan foe even as their troops fight.

But Qatar's ties to groups like the Palestinian movement Hamas, who the United States views as terrorists, have hurt ties.

Nevertheless, Qatar is also host to the huge Al-Udeid air base, a hub for allied aircraft in many Middle East conflict and home to thousands of US personnel and a forward command center.

Tillerson and Mattis both praised Qatar's improved cooperation in counterterrorism and praised the military relationship, while expressing the hope that the spat with Saudi would end.
Qatar signs $12 billion deal to buy F-15 jets from U.S.

(Reuters) - Qatar’s Ministry of Defense said on Wednesday the country signed a deal to buy F-15 fighter jets from the United States for $12 billion.


The deal was completed despite the Gulf country being criticized recently by U.S. President Donald Trump for supporting terrorism.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and representatives from Qatar were set to meet Wednesday to seal the agreement, a source familiar with the deal told Reuters. Bloomberg News reported the deal was for 36 jets.

The sale will increase security cooperation and interoperability between the U.S. and Qatar, the Pentagon said in an emailed statement on Wednesday.

Defense Secretary Mattis and Qatari Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid al-Attiyah also discussed the current state of operations against the ISIS and the importance of de-escalating tensions so all partners in the gulf region can focus on next steps in meeting common goals, the Pentagon added.

In November, the United States approved possible sale of up to 72 F-15QA aircraft to Qatar for $21.1 billion. Boeing Co is the prime contractor on the fighter jet sale to the Middle East nation.

Boeing declined to comment.

Trump on Friday accused Qatar of being a “high-level” sponsor of terrorism, potentially hindering the U.S. Department of State’s efforts to ease
heightening tensions and a blockade of the Gulf nation by Arab states and others.

Reporting by Ankit Ajmera in Bengaluru and Mike Stone in Washington; Editing by Chris Sanders and Lisa Shumaker
ZOA's Morton Klein Secretly Visited Qatar This Month. Here's Why He Went – and What He Did There

The Zionist Organization of America leader denounced Qatar just last year, but flew to Doha this month at the Emir's invitation: 'I spoke truth to power about anti-Semitism,' he explains in an interview with Haaretz

Amir Tibon (Washington, D.C.) Jan 30, 2018 2:55 PM

WASHINGTON – When Qatar's public relations efforts to change its reputation within the U.S. Jewish community were first published in
September, one of the first Jewish-American leaders to attack the rich Emirate was Mort Klein of the Zionist Organization of America. Klein, like many other Jewish leaders, was offered an opportunity to meet with the Emir of Qatar during the UN General Assembly. He refused the invitation, and put out a press release explaining why:

"ZOA has decided that, at this point, we can’t allow the imprimatur of ZOA to be involved with the potential of legitimizing in any way Qatar’s disgraceful activities. ZOA would be interested in meeting with them if they first take explicit steps to change their monstrous behavior."

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Earlier in January, however, Klein had visited Qatar at the invitation of the Emir, and had a private meeting with him in Doha, the Emirate's capital city. The visit, which had not previously been reported, took place at the same time that other prominent public figures who are known as supporters of the Israeli government, such as Alan Dershowitz and Mike Huckabee, visited Doha. Their visits attracted strong criticism from other supporters of Israel, who warned that the Qatars were using "pro-Israel" names to whitewash their support for Hamas and other terror organizations.

Haaretz independently confirmed through three different sources that Klein visited Qatar. When reached for comment on Monday, Klein explained what caused him to change his mind and visit the Emirate. "They invited me to go a number of times – in September, October, November and December," he said. "At first I refused, because of their support for Hamas and the anti-Semitism being broadcast on Al Jazeera. But over time, I saw that more and more Jewish leaders were going there, and I realized that at this point, they won't be able to use me for propaganda, because everyone is already going, but I might use the visit to push them on these issues."

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Klein's explanation shows the extent to which Qatar has succeeded, in just a few months, to make inroads into the right-wing segments of the U.S. Jewish community. The list of Jewish leaders who have visited the country in recent months includes Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations; Jack Rosen of the American Jewish Congress (Rosen told Haaretz that "I have been travelling to Qatar and the region for many years ... I pay my own way and I am not part of this new group of leaders who have been going recently."'); Rabbi Menachem Genack of the Orthodox Union; Martin Oliner of the Religious Zionists of America; and the latest, Dershowitz – who is active on many fronts as a vocal supporter of Israel – and Klein.

What these leaders share is that none of them are considered critics of the
right-wing Netanyahu government in Israel or the Trump administration in Washington.

Dershowitz identifies himself as a Democrat, but over the past year he has published articles and offered commentary in favor of both Trump and Netanyahu – not just on policy issues, but also regarding their legal troubles and corruption investigations. All the other names come from organizations that support Israeli settlements and have reacted positively to Trump's policy toward Israel.

Klein told Haaretz that the Qatari choice to engage with "right-of-center Zionists" was noticeable. "They didn't invite people from J Street, Americans for Peace Now or the Reform Movement," he said. "I think it's interesting." Klein said another factor in his decision to go to Qatar was the fact that U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin praised Qatar publicly for signing a memorandum with the United States against terror funding.

Like most of the other Jewish leaders invited to Qatar, Klein's trip was paid for by the Emirate ("I didn't take anything else from them," he emphasized). During his visit, he met with a number of senior officials in the country, including the Emir. "They knew that I'm a very tough critic of them," he said. Just this past June, ZOA called on the Trump administration to cancel the license of Qatar Airways to fly into the United States because of Qatar's support for terrorism.

"I came there with a 50 page report written by our research department, with all the problems related to Qatar," Klein said. "From their ties to Hamas to the anti-Semitic contents on Al Jazeera, and the anti-Semitic books in the Doha International Book Fair. I brought this with me to the meeting with the Emir. We sat for close to two hours and I shared everything with him. I told the Qatari that it's good to have verbal assurances of change, but that it will require many months of actions from them, to convince me that something has truly changed. They denied supporting Hamas and said their work in Gaza was being coordinated with Israel."
Klein said that he "decided it was important for me to speak truth to power, especially when the Emir repeatedly invited me to give them my views on what they needed to do." He added that "our organization's mission is to help Israel and the Jewish people. There is a long history of Jewish leaders going to speak to bad actors on behalf of our people." Among the examples, he mentioned that "Yitzhak Shamir met the Palestinians in Madrid. [Menachem] Begin met with Anwar Sadat." Klein also emphasized that "this is the head of a country, not the head of Hamas." According to him, the visit was an important opportunity "to tell them what they need to do better."

On the Palestinian issue, Klein said, "I told the Emir why his speech on Jerusalem before the UN was wrong. I said that Jerusalem has been a Jewish city for thousands of years. I also said that the Arab Peace Initiative, which they support, would be a total disaster. He said that on this issue, we'll have to respectfully disagree. The Qatari pointed out that many Israelis, such as Shimon Peres, supported this initiative."
Other Jewish leaders who have traveled to Qatar, such as Hoenlein and Dershowitz, offered somewhat similar explanations for their decision to visit the Emirate. Hoenlein claimed he was trying to assist with returning the bodies of two Israeli soldiers held by Hamas; Dershowitz said he want to "investigate" whether Qatar had truly changed its stance on Hamas and other issues.

Rosen, who told Haaretz his visit to Qatar was separate from the wave of other Jewish leaders' visits, noted that "I can’t speak to their objectives or motives but I believe that positive results in these matters are better obtained by using discretion."

The visits by Jewish leaders to Qatar have been met with strong criticism from within the Jewish community. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, an Orthodox leader from New Jersey who made headlines in recent years for his harsh attacks on the Obama administration, published a number of articles criticizing the Jewish leaders who have gone to Qatar. One of them, published in November in Breitbart, carried the headline "Jewish Community for Sale to Qatar?"

Boteach wrote in it that "It has been dispiriting to watch how some in our community are seemingly up for sale. There has been no demand that before embracing Qatar they first stop funding Hamas terrorists. And those Jewish individuals hired by Qatar and accepting Qatari money are no doubt aware that their embrace will lessen the pressure on Qatar, which is currently experiencing a severe boycott because of its terror-funding activities."

Yigal Carmon of the Middle East Media Research Institute, a pro-Israel organization that monitors Arab media outlets, published an article recently under the headline "Qatar – the Emirate That Fools Them All – and Its Enablers", in which he warned that "It is sad to see American Jewish leaders
bolstering anti-Semitic stereotypes by ignorantly intervening in internal conflicts that do not concern them, complex inter-Arab conflicts which are difficult to assess even as observers."

Carmon specifically criticized Dershowitz for comparing Qatar's regional isolation in the Gulf to that of Israel in the broader Middle East. He called Dershowitz "one of the enablers of Qatar", before listing the Emirate's support for Hamas and other terror organizations.

Jonathan Schanzer of the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies told Haaretz two weeks ago that "there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they’re not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors."

Coincidentally, the argument within the Jewish community on Qatar is happening at the same time that the Trump administration is getting closer to the Emirate. This week, a senior Qatari delegation is visiting Washington. Two weeks ago, Trump had a phone call with the Emir, in which he thanked him for Qatar's "action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding."

**Gone Viral**
Muzin and Dershowitz are on the right side of history

SHMULLY HECHT | JANUARY 25, 2018, 11:49 PM |

It is easy for ignorant observers to mischaracterize behind the scenes negotiations. All too often, pundits trade measured speculation for sensationalized, libelous, and condescending accusations – after all, it sells better. But this is not how diplomacy works and is certainly not how real political change is ever achieved. The informed person knows that commentary from the overhyped peanut gallery is at best foolish and at worst intellectually dishonest.

A few months ago, Nick Muzin asked me to attend meetings with influential global thought leaders who are also prominent in the Jewish world, and the Emir of Qatar. I have known Nick for over 15 years. We have studied Jewish texts together, celebrated Shabbos at each other's homes, and shared events with world leaders at Shabtai, the Jewish Society at Yale. Nick is a dear friend, a Jewish leader, and an inspiration for those who seek to reconcile a traditional Jewish life with the modern world. So needless to say, I was astounded that he was asking me to meet with the head of a country that funds Hamas, a terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of the State of Israel, had founded Al Jazeera, and was consistently flirting with Iran.

I consulted both a former National Security Advisor and a former Ambassador of Israel. Both were now at liberty to speak freely and give candid advice. They told me that I should engage with Qatar. Unlike Iran, they explained, Qatar had the potential to amend its ways and align itself with the West. If Qatari leaders wanted to meet with every prominent Jew they could get into a room, that was a good sign. For unlike others in the region, (and the list is shrinking) they were willing to engage. Why should we fight our enemies when we could possibly turn them into allies? A mere cursory reading of world history compels us to try.

I attended the meeting expecting a full charm offensive from the Emir. I was pleasantly surprised. While there was no shortage of controversy and contention between many of us and the Qataris, we were still able to have a deep and thoughtful dialogue. Don’t get me wrong. Between Qatar’s ties to Hamas, the routine anti-Semitism on Al Jazeera, and their friendliness with Iran, there was a lot of work to be done to come to some kind of understanding. The Emir at times, referred to Israel as Palestine. Yet it was clear that everyone around the table was there to try and bridge the very wide gaps.
Over the past few months, I have seen sentiments on Qatar within the Jewish community shift dramatically from mostly negative to cautiously optimistic. This shift doesn’t come from an aggressive white-washing public relations campaign or on the heels of bribery, as some have suggested. These shifting sentiments are in response to Qatar’s outreach to the Jewish community. Many prominent Jewish leaders have flown to Qatar and have spent quality time with the country’s leadership. There they have discussed their concerns, built personal relationships, and have made suggestions about how the Qatars can improve their relationship with the United States and Israel. And from what I’ve heard, the Qatars have begun to listen and engage. That’s more than can be said for many other countries in the region.

Recently, Harvard Professor Alan Dershowitz — a man who needs no introduction but will get one from me anyway — went to Doha to talk with the Qatars. Alan is the undisputed defender of the Jewish people and State of Israel. While much of his work reaches the public eye, it is the phone calls with desperate families, sleepless nights and sincere emotional commitment to anxious parties, and his indefatigable courage, that truly define his character. I have personally worked with him to successfully bring many of the so-called enemies of the Jewish people to the table. He has been the architect of the strategy to have them retract their hostile actions. He is our generation’s greatest proponent of democracy and rights for all. Not to mention his intellectual prowess, and tireless commitment to Justice. He is certainly not a man who changes his mind or values, on a whim.

Upon his return from Doha, he wrote an op-ed in which he called for a greater attempt at understanding on both sides and a fact-finding commission to resolve conflicting factual claims — something that is very much needed if we are going to make any progress in this conflict. In fact, several publications (including The New York Times) have recently begun looking into the complexity of the situation. They have noted that Qatar’s relationship with terrorist organizations is often exaggerated and that in many cases they have a better track record than other countries in the region (particularly Saudi Arabia). The media, no doubt, will pay increasing attention to the facts of the case as events unfold. But already, with some brief investigation, we see that the conventional wisdom on Qatar is perhaps more simplistic than the reality.

Alan also noted that the Qatars were taking some good steps in order to improve relations with Israel and to help reunify the Gulf States to present a united front to Iran. After all, we certainly do not want to force Qatar into the arms of Iran — a likely possibility if the Gulf Cooperative Council continues its economic sanctions on Qatar. One good step that the Qatars took, that Alan didn’t mention, was their decision to invite and speak with Alan Dershowitz. Qatar’s willingness to engage with people they disagree with will serve them well.

If you want to know what’s really going on with Qatar, or frankly with any serious matter, ignore the speculation of brash bystanders who have been left out of these engagements. In some instances they have been ignored precisely due to their inability to dialogue with anyone in strict confidence. Concerned citizens must step away from the worn-out soapboxes of uninformed commentators who (desperate to cling to any form of prominence) will repeat the same talking points, over
and over again, in absolute denial of which way the wind is actually blowing.

No amount of noise from those seeking fame and unwarranted relevance can ever achieve what a group of earnest and open-minded people can. The stakes are high. In Alan Dershowitz and Nick Muzin, America and Israel have our greatest advocates at the helm. The winds may have actually begun to blow Westward.
(Beirut) – Qatar announced a range of significant human rights reforms during 2017 that if carried out would usher in some of the most progressive human rights standards in the gulf region, Human Rights Watch said today in its World Report 2018.

The reforms include legislation that can dramatically improve labor
standards for migrant workers, including a migrant domestic workers law, and to grant permanent residency to children born to Qatari mothers and foreign fathers and to some foreign residents living in the country.

“Qatar could have retrenched into authoritarianism in the face of a political crisis but instead has responded to a breakdown in neighborly relations by raising the bar on human rights standards in the Gulf,” said Belkis Wille, senior Qatar researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Implementing its commitments to respecting the rights of Qatari women, millions of migrant workers, and vulnerable refugees in the country will be the real measure of its success in 2018.”

In the 643-page World Report, its 28th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that political leaders willing to stand up for human rights principles showed that it is possible to limit authoritarian populist agendas. When combined with mobilized publics and effective multilateral actors, these leaders demonstrated that the rise of anti-rights governments is not inevitable.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates cut diplomatic relations with Qatar citing political grievances and demands. The crisis precipitated a range of human rights violations against people living in Qatar, infringing on their right to free expression, separating families, and interrupting medical care and education.

On August 3, the Qatari cabinet moved to protect the legal status of foreign nationals in Qatar, approving a draft law that would allow permanent residence for children of Qatari women married to non-Qataris, as well as expatriates who “provide outstanding services to Qatar.” While the law falls short of granting women the same rights as Qatari men to pass citizenship to their children, it would help children of Qatari women secure resident status in Qatar even if they do not have valid passports from another country. The law could also help Emirati, Egyptian, Bahraini, and Saudi nationals who
otherwise have no rights to legal residence in the country but who remain there for family or work reasons or because they fear persecution in their home countries.

The government’s most significant reform commitments came in protections for the nearly 2 million migrant workers in the country who make up 95 percent of the country’s workforce but are barred from unionizing or collective action. The government passed a new law to protect migrant domestic workers and pledged to end the sponsorship system of labor employment and to implement a minimum wage.

On August 22, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, ratified **Law No.15 on service workers in the home**. The law grants labor protections for the first time to Qatar’s **173,742 domestic workers**. The new law guarantees domestic workers a maximum 10-hour workday, a weekly rest day, three weeks of annual leave, an end-of-service payment, and healthcare benefits. However, **the new law is still weaker** than the country’s general Labor Law and does not fully conform to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, the global treaty on domestic workers’ rights.

On October 26, Qatar committed to extensive reforms of its kafala (sponsorship) system, which ties workers to individual sponsors for their visa and employment, replacing it with a system of government-sponsored employment. It also promised to institute a nondiscriminatory minimum wage, **improve the payment of wages**, end passport confiscation, enhance labor inspections and occupational safety and health, including with a heat mitigation strategy, and improve labor recruitment procedures.

Qatar also unblocked local access to the Doha News website, the country’s only independent news website, which authorities had ordered Qatar’s two internet service providers, Vodafone and Ooredoo, **to block on November 30, 2016**.
Qatar in the Media

prepared for
Rep. Buddy Carter
Qatar: Year of Crisis Spurred Rights Reform

Human Rights Watch – January 18, 2018 3:23AM EST

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Trump thanks Qatar for efforts to combat terrorism

 Reuters – January 15, 2018 2:10PM EST
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-usa/trump-thanks-qatar-for-efforts-to-combat-terrorism-idUSKBN1F42HT

(Washington) – U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday thanked the ruler of Qatar for “action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms,” the White House said in a statement that suggested a warming of ties between the two countries.

In June, Trump had called on Qatar to stop funding groups that commit terrorism, saying the Gulf nation had historically done so “at a very high level.”

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, who along with Qatar are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, plus non-GCC member Egypt cut off diplomatic, travel and trade ties with Qatar last year, accusing it of supporting militants and their arch-foe Iran.

Qatar denies the charges and says their move is aimed at curtailing its sovereignty.

The White House statement on the call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani did not directly address the rift but said Trump “reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats.”

“The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism,” it said.

Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s Call with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar

White House – January 15, 2018

(Washington) – President Donald J. Trump spoke today with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to discuss ways to strengthen United States-Qatar bilateral relations on security and economic issues. President Trump reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats. The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding. The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.

Qatar signs security agreement with NATO

NATO – January 16, 2018

( Brussels) – The State of Qatar signed a security agreement with NATO at the Alliance’s Headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday (16 January 2018).

At a signing ceremony, Brigadier General Tariq Khalid M. F. Alobaidli, Head of the International Military Cooperation Department, Armed Forces of the State of Qatar, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, stressed the importance of NATO’s cooperation with Qatar in the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI).

This security agreement provides the framework for the protection of exchange of classified information, as defined by all 29 member countries. These agreements are signed by NATO partner countries that wish to engage in cooperation with NATO. All four ICI partner countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and U.A.E.) have now signed individual security agreements with NATO. This enables the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programmes (IPCP) of the ICI countries with NATO to be implemented as effectively as possible.
Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated?

Alan Dershowitz – January 12, 2018 2:45PM EST
http://thehill.com/opinion/international/368764-why-is-qatar-being-blockaded-and-isolated

I just returned from a private visit to Qatar, at the invitation of and paid for by the Emir. I do not represent Qatar's government and, to be honest, I was initially reluctant to accept his invitation because I had heard that Qatar was contributing to Hamas, which is a terrorist group, and that it was supporting Iran, which is the largest exporter of terrorism in the world. But then I did my own research and concluded that the Qatar issue was more complex and nuanced. So I wanted to see for myself.

As soon as I got to Doha, Qatar's capital, I was surprised to read that an Israeli tennis player had been welcomed by the Qatari government to participate in a tennis tournament. I had hoped to attend the match and cheer him on, but unfortunately he lost. Nonetheless, I was surprised to see how open Qatar was to welcoming Israeli athletes, as the government had pledged to do if Israel qualifies for the World Cup in soccer in 2022.

I was also surprised because, just days earlier, Saudi Arabia — which has criticized Qatar for supporting Israel's arch enemies, Hamas and Iran — had excluded an Israeli chess player who had qualified for an international chess tournament to be held in Riyadh. Moreover, Saudi officials criticized Qatar for allowing an Israeli tennis player to participate in its tournament, and for ordering “the Israeli flag to be raised in the Qatar open.” The Saudis insist that “normalization of the tennis open is rejected.”

This episode made clear to me that the Saudis were not necessarily the good guys in their dispute with Qatar. The Saudis have led a campaign to blockade, boycott and isolate their tiny neighboring state. They have gotten other states to join them in this illegal activity. It is illegal and immoral because it keeps family members who live in different Gulf States from attending family functions, including weddings and funerals. It also requires Air Qatar to avoid the air space of neighboring countries and fly over Iran. The right to travel is a fundamental human right.

The Saudis defend their action on several grounds. First, they complain that Qatar sponsors and finances the Al Jazeera media, which is quite influential in the Arab world and around the globe. As one of their primary demands, they insist that Qatar shut down Al Jazeera, because it presents “alternative views” to those espoused by the Saudis and other Gulf states. This blatant attempt to shut down conflicting views violates core principles of freedom of speech and expression.

One does not have to agree with all the content of Al Jazeera in order to defend their free speech rights and those of their viewers. I have been interviewed by the English Al Jazeera channel on numerous occasions and have found it to be generally fair, though I disagree with much of its content. That is the essence of freedom of expression: to defend the right of those with whom you may disagree.

A second complaint is that Qatar financially supports Hamas in the Gaza Strip. I too, was concerned by this allegation and met with Qatar's ambassador to Gaza. He explained that Qatar's financial assistance was limited to direct payments to builders in Gaza who were constructing homes, schools and hospitals. He insisted that no money was being given to support terrorism.

When I pointed out that money is fungible and that funds given for humanitarian purposes can then free Hamas to use other funds to support terrorism, he said that Hamas would not build these buildings with their own funds in any event. He also told me that the building projects sponsored by Qatar were “coordinated” with Israeli authorities. I have no way of confirming the accuracy of these conflicting claims, but I think they ought to be subject to a process of verification before the Saudi arguments are accepted.

The Saudis also claim that Qatar gave asylum to Hamas leaders, who live freely in Doha. Again, there is the conflict over the facts. The Qataris claim that American officials had asked them to allow the Hamas leaders to live in Doha, and that they have now left. Again, these factual issues should be subject to objective verification.

Yet another complaint is that Qatar, alone among the Gulf States, has extensive business ties with Iran. The Qataris provided two responses: First, that other gulf states do far more business with Iran. Second, that since they had been cut off by Saudi Arabia, from whom they received much of their food and other necessities of life, they have been forced to increase their
trade with Iran, which is a neighboring state with which they share gas reserves. Once again, the facts must be established objectively.

After hearing these different accounts, I observed that Qatar is quickly becoming the Israel of the Gulf States, surrounded by enemies, subject to boycotts and unrealistic demands, and struggling for its survival. I heard a lot of positive statements regarding Israel from Qatari leaders as well as hints of commercial relationships between these isolated nations.

The Qataris would like to reestablish normal relationships with the surrounding states and have asked the White House to convene a meeting to be attended by all the Gulf States. That seems like a good idea. Another good idea might be the establishment of an independent commission of credible experts to resolve the conflicting factual claims about what Qatar is and is not doing.

The current situation does not serve the interests of the United States, of the Gulf region or of world peace. It would be far better if the Gulf States could present a united front with regard to Iran, Hamas, terrorism and freedom of the media.
(Washington) – US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley is correcting comments she made before Congress this summer, now saying the strategic energy-rich country of Qatar “does not fund Hamas,” the Islamist group that controls the Gaza Strip.

Haley’s reversal, contained in a memo to Congress obtained by BuzzFeed News, comes as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson seeks to unite competing factions in the Trump administration behind a common policy in the high-stakes Gulf crisis.

Since June, when Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates led a punishing trade and transport boycott against Qatar, senior Trump officials have taken different sides in the feud. President Donald Trump and key aides, including Haley and then-chief strategist Stephen Bannon, initially viewed the dispute as an “opportunity” to pressure Qatar on its alleged support for Islamist groups such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood – support Qatar denies it provides.

Meanwhile, Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis view the blockade as a threat to both stability in the region and the US air base in Qatar, which is home to the largest concentration of US military personnel in the Middle East.

On June 28, Haley repeated the claim that Qatar was “funding Hamas” during a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, prompting written follow-up questions from congressional staff asking if the United States is aware of Qatari government payments to the group. She responded in writing this month, saying the US is not.

“While the Qatari government does not fund Hamas, it does allow Hamas political representatives to be based in Qatar, which Qatar believes limits Iran’s influence and pressure over Hamas,” Haley said in the memo to House lawmakers.

“Qatar has committed to take action against terrorist financing, including shutting down Hamas bank accounts,” she added.

Analysts said the revised remarks expose the disconnect between State Department policy and White House rhetoric surrounding the diplomatic dispute.

“One moment Haley is bashing Qatar and so is the president. The next moment Tillerson and Mattis are working to end the Gulf feud,” said Ilan Goldenberg, a Middle East expert at the Center for a New American Security and a former State Department official.

“These answers were certainly written by State Department staff,” he added. “Haley got up there and bashed Qatar publicly, and then State followed Tillerson’s overall guidance on taking a conciliatory approach.”

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, denied that Haley and Tillerson were ever out of sync, and said the roster of Trump administration officials are working in lockstep together. “The whole US government is united on this issue. We’re working hard to support GCC unity, which is critical for stability in the region,” the official said. “At the same time, we encourage countries to take more steps toward fighting terrorism.”

Others said Haley’s responses clearly amounted to a retraction. “It sure reads like a reversal in her position to me,” said David Ottaway, a Gulf expert at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. “Maybe she made those earlier charges without knowing what she was talking about. Or maybe she was prevailed upon by State to change her position to be in line with Tillerson’s effort to be more nonaligned so he can be more effective in mediating the dispute.”

On Thursday, Tillerson was unable report any progress in resolving the nearly five-month crisis following his trip to the capitals of Saudi Arabia and Qatar last week.

In an interview last Thursday, the top US diplomat blamed the four countries lined up against Qatar, including Egypt and Bahrain, for failing to make progress in the negotiations. “There seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the
parties to want to engage,” Tillerson told Bloomberg News. “It’s up to the leadership of the quartet when they want to engage with Qatar because Qatar has been very clear – they’re ready to engage.”

Tillerson has struggled to exert pressure on Riyadh and the UAE across the entire US government. Trump initially said the Saudi blockade was “hard but necessary,” though he later called for the crisis to be resolved. His son-in-law, Jared Kushner, reportedly backs Saudi Arabia. Over the summer, Haley called the blockade an “opportunity” for the US to clamp down on Gulf countries’ support for terrorism. “I see it as an opportunity,” she said. “It’s a good chance to tell Qatar quit funding Hamas.”

On Monday, Bannon defended the UAE and Saudi position during a speech at the Hudson Institute amid reports that his former firm recently accepted $330,000 from the UAE to run an anti-Qatar messaging campaign.

“Haley’s answers underscore the differences on this issue between the secretary of state, who wants to reconcile Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and the White House, which backs Saudi Arabia 100%,” said Bruce Riedel, a scholar at the Brookings Institution and a former CIA officer. “Haley is caught between two competing power centers where the White House has all the advantages.”
(Washington) – Qatar has recently expanded its public relations effort aimed at improving its image in the United States, including within the Jewish community.

The wealthy emirate, often criticized for having ties to Hamas, has invited influential American public figures – some of them with close ties to the Trump administration – to visit and meet with its senior leadership, which denies providing support to the Gaza Islamist group and other terror organizations.

Last week, prominent New York attorney Alan Dershowitz published an article on the Hill website, following his visit to Qatar at the invitation of the country’s powerful emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. Dershowitz wrote that he was surprised to hear the Qatari response to many of the accusations hurled at the Gulf state, and urged the Trump administration and Congress to reexamine the issue.

Also last week, Qatar hosted former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, a leading right-wing media commentator and father of White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Huckabee tweeted that he found Doha, Qatar, to be “surprisingly beautiful, modern, and hospitable.”

Another recent visitor to the tiny emirate, whose wealth comes from its huge natural gas reserves, was conservative radio host John Batchelor. He took his popular audio show to Qatar last week at the behest of the country’s leadership, where he was joined by Thaddeus McCotter, a former Republican congressman from Michigan.

The emirate has also flown in representatives of various Washington think tanks on Qatar-funded trips.

Dershowitz, Huckabee and Batchelor all seem to be visiting as part of the Qatari leadership’s efforts to change its reputation among American politicians as a “problematic” nation associated with its support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar hosts some of Hamas’ senior leaders and funds the international media network Al Jazeera, whom neighboring Arab countries have accused of supporting Islamist movements and of destabilizing their regimes.

As part of the attempt to push back against these allegations, Qatar has hired the services of Nick Muzin, a public relations adviser who previously worked as a senior staffer to Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

An Orthodox Jew, Muzin has used his contacts within the Republican Party and the Jewish community to find an ear for Qatar’s arguments in Washington and New York – at a time when the emirate is facing a severe crisis because of attempts by Saudi Arabia to isolate it economically and diplomatically.

When Qatar’s hiring of Muzin’s Stonington Strategies firm was first revealed last summer – for a reported monthly fee of $50,000 – it raised eyebrows in Jewish and conservative circles because of Muzin’s professional background. Cruz, his former boss, has called for the Muslim Brotherhood to be designated a terrorist organization, yet Qatar is considered a major Brotherhood supporter in the Arab world.

Who are the good guys?

Muzin’s first attempts to organize meetings for the Qatari emir and crown prince with Jewish-American leaders ran into public opposition and became a source of debate in the Jewish press. Fast forward a few months, though, and it seems the Qatari public outreach effort is slowly beginning to change some minds in Washington and elsewhere.

Dershowitz’s article – titled “Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated?” – is a good example, especially in light of the author’s reputation as a staunch supporter of Israel.

He wrote he had “just returned from a private visit to Qatar, at the invitation of and paid for by the Emir. I do not represent
Qatar’s government and, to be honest, I was initially reluctant to accept his invitation because I had heard that Qatar was contributing to Hamas, which is a terrorist group, and that it was supporting Iran, which is the largest exporter of terrorism in the world. But then I did my own research and concluded that the Qatar issue was more complex and nuanced. So I wanted to see for myself.”

One of the first things that surprised him, Dershowitz wrote, was that as soon as he got to Doha, Qatar’s capital, “I was surprised to read that an Israeli tennis player had been welcomed by the Qatari government to participate in a tennis tournament.” Dershowitz compared this recent event to Saudi Arabia’s refusal last month to allow Israeli chess players to attend the world chess championship held in Riyadh. “Moreover,” he added, “Saudi officials criticized Qatar for allowing an Israeli tennis player to participate in its tournament, and for ordering ‘the Israeli flag to be raised.’”

“This episode,” he concluded, “made clear to me that the Saudis were not necessarily the good guys in their dispute with Qatar.”

After going over Qatar’s reaction to allegations that it supports Hamas and other terror organizations (allegations that Qatar’s leadership denies), Dershowitz wrote: “After hearing these different accounts, I observed that Qatar is quickly becoming the Israel of the Gulf States, surrounded by enemies, subject to boycotts and unrealistic demands, and struggling for its survival. I heard a lot of positive statements regarding Israel from Qatari leaders as well as hints of commercial relationships between these isolated nations.”

In a conversation with Haaretz on Tuesday, Dershowitz emphasized that he has “not come to any firm conclusions” about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Iran and other problematic actors in the region. He did, however, leave the emirate with “somewhat more nuanced” views, as “there appear to be two sides to the story.”

Dershowitz explained that he asked the emir and other senior Qatari officials to assist with the release of two Israeli citizens currently being held in Gaza, as well as the return of the bodies of two slain Israeli soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, killed in action during the 2014 Gaza war. “They told me they’re trying,” he said, stopping short of providing more details on the sensitive subject.

Coincidentally, on Monday – shortly after the publication of Dershowitz’s article and the culmination of Huckabee’s Qatar visit – U.S. President Donald Trump talked with the emir by phone. A White House readout of that conversation stated: “The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.” It continued: “The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.”

One person unmoved by Dershowitz’s article was Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of the D.C. think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He has written extensively in recent years about Qatar’s ties to Hamas and other terror organizations. “Stick to what you know,” Schanzer tweeted Dershowitz. “Happy to brief you sometime on Qatar. Doha is bad news.” And in a subsequent tweet, Schanzer added: “The man [Dershowitz] defends Israel until he’s blue in the face and then normalizes Hamas’s top patron.”

Dershowitz responded, “Happy to hear facts. Not conclusions. I make up my own mind based on facts.”

Schanzer told Haaretz on Wednesday that “there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they’re not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors.”

Schanzer previously called to designate Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism for its ties to these groups. “If you really want to
Qatar Doubles Down on PR Campaign Appealing to U.S. Jews and D.C. Insiders (continued)

see all sides of the story,” he told Haaretz, “you're not going to get it in Doha.”

The problem with Qatar

Qatar is not only inviting opinion formers to Doha – it is also working to bring its arguments to Washington. Last week, the Qatari minister in charge of aid and assistance to Gaza, Mohammed al-Emadi, visited the U.S. capital, where he met with, among others, members of Congress and diplomats. Emadi came to Washington partly because he is the rare example of an Arab diplomat who, according to press reports, works on a regular basis with Israeli security officials as part of Qatar’s efforts to help reconstruct the Gaza Strip following the 2014 war. By presenting him to decision-makers and influencers in the U.S. capital, the emirate is hoping to convince them it has a positive impact in Gaza and is working with Israel to improve the situation there.

“The frustration with Qatar,” said an Israeli official who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue, “is that they do some good things in Gaza. But at the same time, there are problems arising from their use of Al Jazeera and their ties with Hamas. It’s a complicated situation. They are one of the only countries in the world that truly cares about improving the situation in Gaza. They’re also one of the only countries that has ties to all the bad guys in the region – Hamas, Sunni Islamists and Iran.”

Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein told Haaretz that he has discussed Qatar’s policies with Muzin, whom he has “known and worked closely with for a number of years – ever since he was an important staffer for Sen. Cruz.”

Last September, Klein refused to meet with the Qatari leadership, accusing the regime of funding “Islamic terrorists who aim to murder Jews, Americans, Christians and even fellow Muslims.”

This week, though, Klein said that while he still has many doubts about Qatar’s role in the region, he is open to hearing the arguments being fleshed out by Dershowitz and others. “I think Dershowitz’s article was totally reasonable,” Klein said. “I think we should check out their claims. If they’re true, then there’s no reason not to go there and engage in dialogue with them. But if they’re lying, then we should have nothing to do with them.”

Klein added, though, that Qatar has to stop airing incitement on Al Jazeera if it ever wants to win the trust of the United States and Israel.

With regards to his conversations with Muzin, Klein said the PR maven “made it clear to me that he wouldn’t take on the job of working for Qatar unless he was assured by the leaders of Qatar that their goal is to make Qatar a more free and civilized society, and to do something about the problems with Al Jazeera.”

Qatar still faces significant criticism on Capitol Hill. Last October, two Republican members of Congress published an article titled “It’s Up to Congress to Hold Qatar Accountable.” Reps. Dan Donovan and Brian Fitzpatrick – both members of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa – wrote that “Qatar is the master of playing all sides. The same country that served as the U.S. Central Command headquarters during the invasion of Iraq and still hosts a critical American air base today also sponsors Hamas’s anti-Israel agenda, gives sanctuary to terrorist leaders and spreads its wealth to terrorist and extremist groups throughout the Middle East.”

In November, a Democratic consulting firm, Bluelight Strategies, which has also worked with Qatari opposition leaders opposing the country’s regime, circulated a political memo among Democrats in Congress urging them to attack Republicans and the Trump administration for turning a blind eye to Qatar’s ties with Hamas and other terror groups. The memo, titled “Emerging GOP Vulnerability on Terrorism, Iran and Israel,” highlighted the Trump administration’s confusing policy regarding the Gulf crisis, and urged Democrats to speak out on the issue: “The more the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans are called out for embracing Hamas state sponsorship of terrorism, the more the message will penetrate.”

This view of Qatar as a country that tries to have it both ways is still prevalent in Washington and, as of now, it remains the main challenge standing in the way of the emirate’s charm offensive.
Qatar Restores Full Relations With Iran, Deepening Gulf Feud

Declan Walsh – August 24, 2017


(London) – Qatar restored full diplomatic relations with Iran on Thursday, the latest volley in an 11-week-old geopolitical feud that has set the tiny yet fabulously wealthy Persian Gulf nation against its neighbors and rattled a previously placid part of the Middle East.

Qatar’s Foreign Ministry announced that it was sending its ambassador back to Tehran after a 20-month hiatus that started in January 2016, when Qatar broke off relations after attacks on two Saudi diplomatic facilities in Iran.

The Qatari cabinet also approved a travel agreement, with guarantees to ensure that Qatari citizens sent to Iran will not be detained or mistreated. On Friday, state television aired a half-hour program praising the move and promising “good future relations.”

The Qataris gave no explanation for the sudden move. But the timing suggested a purposeful snub of Saudi Arabia, which along with three other countries began a punitive boycott of Qatar in June, accusing it of supporting terrorism and having a too-cozy relationship with Iran. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut their air and sea routes to Qatar, and closed its only land border, with Saudi Arabia.

Mediation by the United States, Kuwait and Germany has failed to resolve the feud in the gulf, the one corner of the Middle East that has been largely free of war, refugees or political turmoil in recent years. Analysts said the partial blockade has badly weakened the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council and threatens to undermine regional stability.

The crisis lapsed into a stalemate after Qatar refused an initial list of 13 demands, which included cutting all ties with Tehran. But things took a turn for the worse this week after a visit by a minor Qatari royal, Sheikh Abdullah al-Thani, to the Saudi ruler, King Salman, at his holiday villa in Morocco.

Sheikh Abdullah, who lives in London and comes from a wing of the ruling family that was ousted in a 1972 coup, posed for pictures with King Salman at his lavish coastal palace outside Tangiers. (Estimates of the cost of the king’s holiday run as high as $100 million — expensive even for a monarch who typically travels with an entourage of 1,000 or more.)

Although there was no official explanation for the visit, the Saudi news media played up Sheikh Abdullah’s visit as the beginning of a potential challenge to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Few analysts believe the emir faces a serious threat, but some Qatari took the move as a provocation, and as further evidence that the true intention of the Saudi- and Emirati-led boycott is to engineer leadership change in Doha.

The diplomatic skirmishes are the latest moves in a crisis that, until now, has largely played out in the news media, amid accusations of hacked emails and fake news stories, and in fruitless efforts at conciliation led by worried Western allies like Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson.

President Trump’s role in the crisis has been hotly debated since he openly sided with the Saudi-led bloc in June, although he has been silent in recent weeks.

The charge that Qatar is too close to Iran resonated with Mr. Trump, who during a summit meeting in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in May called on Muslim leaders to isolate Iran, a nation that he said “fueled the fires of sectarian conflict and terror.”

Qatar insists that it maintains cordial relations with Iran out of commercial necessity, in that the two countries share the world’s largest gas field, the source of Qatar’s vast wealth, and notes that the United Arab Emirates has a far greater trading relationship with Iran.

Doha also says it has shown solidarity with its Sunni neighbors during disputes with Shiite-led Iran, particularly in the January 2016 attack on the Saudi mission in Iran, after which Qatar recalled its ambassador.

Still, Qatar’s payment last April of a huge ransom to Shiite militants in Iraq, in exchange for a group of hostages that included members of the Qatari royal family, was seen by critics as fresh proof of Qatar’s reckless approach to foreign policy. The incident further inflamed the already tender relations between Qatar and its neighbors.
Since the dispute flared in June, Iran has provided Qatar with sea shipments of fresh food and allowed a stream of Qatari airplanes to cross its airspace. On Thursday, Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, Bahram Ghasemi, welcomed the return of Qatar’s ambassador to Tehran in a short statement. There was no immediate reaction from the four boycotting countries.

Qatar has taken a defiant stance, introducing a raft of measures to ensure the country, whose population is 90 percent foreign, remains attractive to outside investors and workers.

On Thursday, it enacted regulations that give greater protections to foreign domestic workers, many of whom work as nannies, cooks and cleaners. Their limited rights and often poor treatment in gulf countries like Qatar has frequently been a focus of Western human rights groups.

But the strain of the crisis is starting to show on Qatar’s economy and financial system. Depositors from boycotting countries withdrew billions of dollars from Qatari banks in June, forcing the treasury to step in. Qatar’s rating with international credit agencies has also taken a hit.

Qatar’s imports fell 38 percent in June and recovered only slightly last month, according to official figures released on Thursday.

Still, the sanctions have not affected Qatar’s gas exports, the primary source of its wealth, which grew by 7.8 percent in July compared with a year earlier. Analysts say the effect of the sanctions may lessen as Qatar develops alternate sea and air routes.
The United Arab Emirates orchestrated the hacking of Qatari government news and social media sites in order to post incendiary false quotes attributed to Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani, in late May that sparked the ongoing upheaval between Qatar and its neighbors, according to U.S. intelligence officials.

Officials became aware last week that newly analyzed information gathered by U.S. intelligence agencies confirmed that on May 23, senior members of the UAE government discussed the plan and its implementation. The officials said it remains unclear whether the UAE carried out the hacks itself or contracted to have them done. The false reports said that the emir, among other things, had called Iran an "Islamic power" and praised Hamas.

The hacks and posting took place on May 24, shortly after President Trump completed a lengthy counterterrorism meeting with Persian Gulf leaders in neighboring Saudi Arabia and declared them unified.

Citing the emir's reported comments, the Saudis, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt immediately banned all Qatari media. They then broke relations with Qatar and declared a trade and diplomatic boycott, sending the region into a political and diplomatic tailspin that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has warned could undermine U.S. counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State.

In a statement released in Washington by its ambassador, Yousef al-Otaiba, the UAE said the Post article was “false.”

"The UAE had no role whatsoever in the alleged hacking described in the article," the statement said. "What is true is Qatar’s behavior. Funding, supporting, and enabling extremists from the Taliban to Hamas and Qadaffi. Inciting violence, encouraging radicalization, and undermining the stability of its neighbors.”

The revelations come as emails purportedly hacked from Otaiba’s private account have circulated to journalists over the past several months. That hack has been claimed by an apparently pro-Qatari organization calling itself GlobalLeaks. Many of the emails highlight the UAE’s determination over the years to rally Washington thinkers and policymakers to its side on the issues at the center of its dispute with Qatar.

All of the Persian Gulf nations are members of the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State. More than 10,000 U.S. troops are based at Qatar’s al-Udeid Air Base, the U.S. Central Command’s regional headquarters, and Bahrain is the home of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. All are purchasers of U.S. defense equipment and tied to U.S. foreign policy priorities in numerous ways.

The conflict has also exposed sharp differences between Trump — who has clearly taken the Saudi and UAE side in a series of tweets and statements — and Tillerson, who has urged compromise and spent most of last week in shuttle diplomacy among the regional capitals that has been unsuccessful so far.

"We don’t expect any near-term resolution,” Tillerson aide R.C. Hammond said Saturday. He said the secretary had left behind proposals with the “Saudi bloc” and with Qatar including “a common set of principles that all countries can agree to so that we start from ... a common place.”

Qatar has repeatedly charged that its sites were hacked, but it has not released the results of its investigation. Intelligence officials said their working theory since the Qatar hacks has been that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt or some combination of those countries were involved. It remains unclear whether the others also participated in the plan.

U.S. intelligence and other officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment, as did the CIA. The FBI, which Qatar has said was helping in its investigation, also declined to comment.
UAE orchestrated hacking of Qatari government sites, sparking regional upheaval, according to U.S. intelligence officials (continued)

A spokesman for the Qatari Embassy in Washington responded by drawing attention to a statement by that government’s attorney general, Ali Bin Fetais al-Marri, who said late last month that “Qatar has evidence that certain iPhones originating from countries laying siege to Qatar were used in the hack.”

Hammond said he did not know of the newly analyzed U.S. intelligence on the UAE or whether Tillerson was aware of it.

The hacking incident reopened a bitter feud among the gulf monarchies that has simmered for years. It last erupted in 2013, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain accused Qatar of providing safe haven for their political dissidents and supporting the pan-Arab Muslim Brotherhood; funding terrorists, including U.S.-designated terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah; and using its state-funded media outlets to destabilize its neighbors.

Qatar — an energy-rich country ruled by its own unelected monarchy — saw the Saudi-led accusations as an attempt by neighboring autocrats to stifle its more liberal tendencies. Separately, the United States warned Qatar to keep a tighter rein on wealthy individuals there who surreptitiously funded Islamist terror groups — a charge that Washington has also made in the past against the Saudis and other Gulf countries. While Qatar promised some steps in response to the charges in a 2014 agreement with the others, it took little action.

During his two-day visit to Riyadh, Trump met with the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar — and held individual closed-door meetings with several GCC leaders, including the Qatar emir. The day before his departure on the morning of May 22, Trump delivered a speech, focused on the need for religious tolerance and unity against terrorism, to more than 50 Muslim leaders gathered from around the world for the occasion.

But he devoted most of his attention to Saudi King Salman, praising as a wise leader the man who controls his country’s vast oil reserves. In what the administration hailed as a high point of the visit, the Saudis agreed to purchase $110 billion in U.S. arms and signed letters of intent to invest hundreds of billions in deals with U.S. companies.

He had told the Saudis in advance, Trump said in an interview Wednesday with the Christian Broadcasting Network, that the agreements and purchases were a prerequisite for his presence. “I said, you have to do that, otherwise I’m not going,” Trump recounted.

The statements attributed to the emir first appeared on the Qatar News Agency’s website early on the morning of May 24, in a report on his appearance at a military ceremony, as Trump was wrapping up the next stop on his nine-day overseas trip, in Israel. According to the Qatari government, alerts were sent out within 45 minutes saying the information was false.

Later that morning, the same false information appeared on a ticker at the bottom of a video of the emir’s appearance that was posted on Qatar News Agency’s YouTube channel. Similar material appeared on government Twitter feeds.

The reports were repeatedly broadcast on Saudi Arabian government outlets, continuing even after the Qatari alert said it was false. The UAE shut down all broadcasts of Qatari media inside its borders, including the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera satellite network, the most watched in the Arab world.

The first week in June, the Saudi-led countries severed relations, ordered all Qatari nationals inside their countries to leave, and closed their borders to all land, air and sea traffic with Qatar, a peninsular nation in the Persian Gulf whose only land connection is with Saudi Arabia.

In addition to charges of supporting terrorism and promoting instability inside their countries, they accused Qatar of being too close to Iran, Saudi Arabia’s main rival for regional power and, according to the United States, the world’s foremost supporter of global terrorism. Iran conducts robust trade with most of the gulf, including the UAE, and shares the world’s largest natural gas field with Qatar.

The day after the boycott was announced, Trump indirectly took credit for it. “So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with
King and 50 countries already paying off,” he tweeted. “They said they would take a hard line on funding extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar.”

At the same time, Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called for negotiations and a quick resolution of the dispute. When the Saudi-led group released a list of 13 “non-negotiable” demands for Qatar — including shutting down Al Jazeera and expelling a number of people deemed terrorists — the State Department suggested that they were unreasonable and that the terrorism funding issue was a smokescreen for long-standing regional grievances that should be resolved through mediation and negotiation.

Qatar rejected the demands. Tillerson appeared to agree that they were draconian. But when he called for the boycott to be eased, saying it was causing both security and humanitarian hardship, Trump said the measure was harsh "but necessary.”

The one concrete result of Tillerson’s stops in the region last week was a new bilateral agreement signed with Qatar on stopping terrorism financing, the only one of the gulf countries that had responded to an invitation to do so, Hammond said.

Speaking to reporters on his plane flying back to Washington on Friday, Tillerson said the trip was useful “first to listen and get a sense of how serious the situation is, how emotional some of these issues are.” He said that he had left proposals with both sides that suggested “some ways that we might move this forward.”

All of the countries involved, Tillerson said, are “really important to us from a national security standpoint. … We need this part of the world to be stable, and this particular conflict between these parties is obviously not helpful.”

Asked about Trump’s tweets and other comments, he noted that being secretary of state “is a lot different than being CEO of Exxon,” his previous job, “because I was the ultimate decision-maker.” He knew what to expect from long-standing colleagues, he said, and decision-making was disciplined and "highly structured.”

“Those are not the characteristics of the United States government. And I don’t say that as a criticism, it’s just an observation of fact,” Tillerson said. While neither he nor the president came from the political world, he said, his old job put him in contact with the rest of the world and “that engagement … is actually very easy for me.”

For his part, Trump agreed in the Christian Broadcasting Network interview that he and Tillerson “had a little bit of a difference, only in terms of tone” over the gulf conflict.

Qatar, Trump said, “is now a little bit on the outs, but I think they’re being brought back in.” Asked about the U.S. military base in Qatar, Trump said he was not concerned.

“We’ll be all right,” he said. “Look, if we ever have to leave” the base, “we would have 10 countries willing to build us another one, believe me. And they’ll pay for it.”
This material is distributed by Stonington Strategies LLC on behalf of the State of Qatar. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
Qatar in the Media

prepared for
Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón
Qatar: Year of Crisis Spurred Rights Reforms

Human Rights Watch – January 18, 2018 3:23AM EST

(Beirut) – Qatar announced a range of significant human rights reforms during 2017 that if carried out would usher in some of the most progressive human rights standards in the gulf region, Human Rights Watch said today in its World Report 2018.

The reforms include legislation that can dramatically improve labor standards for migrant workers, including a migrant domestic workers law, and to grant permanent residency to children born to Qatari mothers and foreign fathers and to some foreign residents living in the country.

“Qatar could have retrenched into authoritarianism in the face of a political crisis but instead has responded to a breakdown in neighborly relations by raising the bar on human rights standards in the Gulf,” said Belkis Wille, senior Qatar researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Implementing its commitments to respecting the rights of Qatari women, millions of migrant workers, and vulnerable refugees in the country will be the real measure of its success in 2018.”

In the 643-page World Report, its 28th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that political leaders willing to stand up for human rights principles showed that it is possible to limit authoritarian populist agendas. When combined with mobilized publics and effective multilateral actors, these leaders demonstrated that the rise of anti-rights governments is not inevitable.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates cut diplomatic relations with Qatar citing political grievances and demands. The crisis precipitated a range of human rights violations against people living in Qatar, infringing on their right to free expression, separating families, and interrupting medical care and education.

On August 3, the Qatari cabinet moved to protect the legal status of foreign nationals in Qatar, approving a draft law that would allow permanent residence for children of Qatari women married to non-Qatars, as well as expatriates who “provide outstanding services to Qatar.” While the law falls short of granting women the same rights as Qatari men to pass citizenship to their children, it would help children of Qatari women secure resident status in Qatar even if they do not have valid passports from another country. The law could also help Emirati, Egyptian, Bahraini, and Saudi nationals who otherwise have no rights to legal residence in the country but who remain there for family or work reasons or because they fear persecution in their home countries.

The government’s most significant reform commitments came in protections for the nearly 2 million migrant workers in the country who make up 95 percent of the country’s workforce but are barred from unionizing or collective action. The government passed a new law to protect migrant domestic workers and pledged to end the sponsorship system of labor employment and to implement a minimum wage.

On August 22, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, ratified Law No.15 on service workers in the home. The law grants labor protections for the first time to Qatar’s 173,742 domestic workers. The new law guarantees domestic workers a maximum 10-hour workday, a weekly rest day, three weeks of annual leave, an end-of-service payment, and healthcare benefits. However, the new law is still weaker than the country’s general Labor Law and does not fully conform to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, the global treaty on domestic workers’ rights.

On October 26, Qatar committed to extensive reforms of its kafala (sponsorship) system, which ties workers to individual sponsors for their visa and employment, replacing it with a system of government-sponsored employment. It also promised to institute a nondiscriminatory minimum wage, improve the payment of wages, end passport confiscation, enhance labor inspections and occupational safety and health, including with a heat mitigation strategy, and improve labor recruitment procedures.

Qatar also unblocked local access to the Doha News website, the country’s only independent news website, which authorities had ordered Qatar’s two internet service providers, Vodafone and Ooredoo, to block on November 30, 2016.
Trump thanks Qatar for efforts to combat terrorism

Reuters – January 15, 2018 2:10PM EST
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-usa/trump-thanks-qatar-for-efforts-to-combat-terrorism-idUSKBN1F42HT

(Washington) – U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday thanked the ruler of Qatar for “action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms,” the White House said in a statement that suggested a warming of ties between the two countries.

In June, Trump had called on Qatar to stop funding groups that commit terrorism, saying the Gulf nation had historically done so “at a very high level.”

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, who along with Qatar are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, plus non-GCC member Egypt cut off diplomatic, travel and trade ties with Qatar last year, accusing it of supporting militants and their arch-foe Iran.

Qatar denies the charges and says their move is aimed at curtailing its sovereignty.

The White House statement on the call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani did not directly address the rift but said Trump “reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats.”

“The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism,” it said.

Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s Call with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar

White House – January 15, 2018

(Washington) – President Donald J. Trump spoke today with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to discuss ways to strengthen United States-Qatar bilateral relations on security and economic issues. President Trump reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats. The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding. The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.

Qatar signs security agreement with NATO

NATO – January 16, 2018

(Brussels) – The State of Qatar signed a security agreement with NATO at the Alliance’s Headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday (16 January 2018).

At a signing ceremony, Brigadier General Tariq Khalid M. F. Alobaidli, Head of the International Military Cooperation Department, Armed Forces of the State of Qatar, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, stressed the importance of NATO’s cooperation with Qatar in the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI).

This security agreement provides the framework for the protection of exchange of classified information, as defined by all 29 member countries. These agreements are signed by NATO partner countries that wish to engage in cooperation with NATO. All four ICI partner countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and U.A.E.) have now signed individual security agreements with NATO. This enables the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programmes (IPCP) of the ICI countries with NATO to be implemented as effectively as possible.
Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated?

Alan Dershowitz – January 12, 2018 2:45PM EST

http://thehill.com/opinion/international/368764-why-is-qatar-being-blockaded-and-isolated

I just returned from a private visit to Qatar, at the invitation of and paid for by the Emir. I do not represent Qatar’s government and, to be honest, I was initially reluctant to accept his invitation because I had heard that Qatar was contributing to Hamas, which is a terrorist group, and that it was supporting Iran, which is the largest exporter of terrorism in the world. But then I did my own research and concluded that the Qatar issue was more complex and nuanced. So I wanted to see for myself.

As soon as I got to Doha, Qatar’s capital, I was surprised to read that an Israeli tennis player had been welcomed by the Qatari government to participate in a tennis tournament. I had hoped to attend the match and cheer him on, but unfortunately he lost. Nonetheless, I was surprised to see how open Qatar was to welcoming Israeli athletes, as the government had pledged to do if Israel qualifies for the World Cup in soccer in 2022.

I was also surprised because, just days earlier, Saudi Arabia — which has criticized Qatar for supporting Israel’s arch enemies, Hamas and Iran — had excluded an Israeli chess player who had qualified for an international chess tournament to be held in Riyadh. Moreover, Saudi officials criticized Qatar for allowing an Israeli tennis player to participate in its tournament, and for ordering “the Israeli flag to be raised in the Qatari open.” The Saudis insist that “normalization of the tennis open is rejected.”

This episode made clear to me that the Saudis were not necessarily the good guys in their dispute with Qatar. The Saudis have led a campaign to blockade, boycott and isolate their tiny neighboring state. They have gotten other states to join them in this illegal activity. It is illegal and immoral because it keeps family members who live in different Gulf States from attending family functions, including weddings and funerals. It also requires Air Qatar to avoid the air space of neighboring countries and fly over Iran. The right to travel is a fundamental human right.

The Saudis defend their action on several grounds. First, they complain that Qatar sponsors and finances the Al Jazeera media, which is quite influential in the Arab world and around the globe. As one of their primary demands, they insist that Qatar shut down Al Jazeera, because it presents “alternative views” to those espoused by the Saudis and other gulf states. This blatant attempt to shut down conflicting views violates core principles of freedom of speech and expression.

One does not have to agree with all the content of Al Jazeera in order to defend their free speech rights and those of their viewers. I have been interviewed by the English Al Jazeera channel on numerous occasions and have found it to be generally fair, though I disagree with much of its content. That is the essence of freedom of expression: to defend the right of those with whom you may disagree.

A second complaint is that Qatar financially supports Hamas in the Gaza Strip. I too, was concerned by this allegation and met with Qatar’s ambassador to Gaza. He explained that Qatar’s financial assistance was limited to direct payments to builders in Gaza who were constructing homes, schools and hospitals. He insisted that no money was being given to support terrorism.

When I pointed out that money is fungible and that funds given for humanitarian purposes can then free Hamas to use other funds to support terrorism, he said that Hamas would not build these buildings with their own funds in any event. He also told me that the building projects sponsored by Qatar were “coordinated” with Israeli authorities. I have no way of confirming the accuracy of these conflicting claims, but I think they ought to be subject to a process of verification before the Saudi arguments are accepted.

The Saudis also claim that Qatar gave asylum to Hamas leaders, who live freely in Doha. Again, there is the conflict over the facts. The Qatari’s claim that American officials had asked them to allow the Hamas leaders to live in Doha, and that they have now left. Again, these factual issues should be subject to objective verification.

Yet another complaint is that Qatar, alone among the Gulf States, has extensive business ties with Iran. The Qatari’s provided two responses: First, that other gulf states do far more business with Iran. Second, that since they had been cut off by Saudi Arabia, from whom they received much of their food and other necessities of life, they have been forced to increase their
Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated? (continued)

trade with Iran, which is a neighboring state with which they share gas reserves. Once again, the facts must be established objectively.

After hearing these different accounts, I observed that Qatar is quickly becoming the Israel of the Gulf States, surrounded by enemies, subject to boycotts and unrealistic demands, and struggling for its survival. I heard a lot of positive statements regarding Israel from Qatari leaders as well as hints of commercial relationships between these isolated nations.

The Qataris would like to reestablish normal relationships with the surrounding states and have asked the White House to convene a meeting to be attended by all the Gulf States. That seems like a good idea. Another good idea might be the establishment of an independent commission of credible experts to resolve the conflicting factual claims about what Qatar is and is not doing.

The current situation does not serve the interests of the United States, of the Gulf region or of world peace. It would be far better if the Gulf States could present a united front with regard to Iran, Hamas, terrorism and freedom of the media.
Nikki Haley Reverses Testimony to Congress, Says Qatar “Does Not Fund Hamas”

John Hudson – October 27, 2017, 6:01PM EST

(Washington) – US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley is correcting comments she made before Congress this summer, now saying the strategic energy-rich country of Qatar “does not fund Hamas,” the Islamist group that controls the Gaza Strip.

Haley’s reversal, contained in a memo to Congress obtained by BuzzFeed News, comes as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson seeks to unite competing factions in the Trump administration behind a common policy in the high-stakes Gulf crisis.

Since June, when Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates led a punishing trade and transport boycott against Qatar, senior Trump officials have taken different sides in the feud. President Donald Trump and key aides, including Haley and then-chief strategist Stephen Bannon, initially viewed the dispute as an “opportunity” to pressure Qatar on its alleged support for Islamist groups such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood – support Qatar denies it provides.

Meanwhile, Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis view the blockade as a threat to both stability in the region and the US air base in Qatar, which is home to the largest concentration of US military personnel in the Middle East.

On June 28, Haley repeated the claim that Qatar was “funding Hamas” during a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, prompting written follow-up questions from congressional staff asking if the United States is aware of Qatari government payments to the group. She responded in writing this month, saying the US is not.

“While the Qatari government does not fund Hamas, it does allow Hamas political representatives to be based in Qatar, which Qatar believes limits Iran’s influence and pressure over Hamas,” Haley said in the memo to House lawmakers.

“Qatar has committed to take action against terrorist financing, including shutting down Hamas bank accounts,” she added.

Analysts said the revised remarks expose the disconnect between State Department policy and White House rhetoric surrounding the diplomatic dispute.

“One moment Haley is bashing Qatar and so is the president. The next moment Tillerson and Mattis are working to end the Gulf feud,” said Ilan Goldenberg, a Middle East expert at the Center for a New American Security and a former State Department official.

“These answers were certainly written by State Department staff,” he added. “Haley got up there and bashed Qatar publicly, and then State followed Tillerson’s overall guidance on taking a conciliatory approach.”

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, denied that Haley and Tillerson were ever out of sync, and said the roster of Trump administration officials are working in lockstep together. "The whole US government is united on this issue. We're working hard to support GCC unity, which is critical for stability in the region," the official said. “At the same time, we encourage countries to take more steps toward fighting terrorism.”

Others said Haley’s responses clearly amounted to a retraction. “It sure reads like a reversal in her position to me,” said David Ottaway, a Gulf expert at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. “Maybe she made those earlier charges without knowing what she was talking about. Or maybe she was prevailed upon by State to change her position to be in line with Tillerson's effort to be more nonaligned so he can be more effective in mediating the dispute.”

On Thursday, Tillerson was unable report any progress in resolving the nearly five-month crisis following his trip to the capitals of Saudi Arabia and Qatar last week.

In an interview last Thursday, the top US diplomat blamed the four countries lined up against Qatar, including Egypt and Bahrain, for failing to make progress in the negotiations. “There seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the
Nikki Haley Reverses Testimony to Congress, Says Qatar “Does Not Fund Hamas” (continued)

parties to want to engage,” Tillerson told Bloomberg News. “It’s up to the leadership of the quartet when they want to engage with Qatar because Qatar has been very clear – they’re ready to engage.”

Tillerson has struggled to exert pressure on Riyadh and the UAE across the entire US government. Trump initially said the Saudi blockade was “hard but necessary,” though he later called for the crisis to be resolved. His son-in-law, Jared Kushner, reportedly backs Saudi Arabia. Over the summer, Haley called the blockade an “opportunity” for the US to clamp down on Gulf countries’ support for terrorism. “I see it as an opportunity,” she said. “It’s a good chance to tell Qatar quit funding Hamas.”

On Monday, Bannon defended the UAE and Saudi position during a speech at the Hudson Institute amid reports that his former firm recently accepted $330,000 from the UAE to run an anti-Qatar messaging campaign.

“Haley’s answers underscore the differences on this issue between the secretary of state, who wants to reconcile Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and the White House, which backs Saudi Arabia 100%,” said Bruce Riedel, a scholar at the Brookings Institution and a former CIA officer. “Haley is caught between two competing power centers where the White House has all the advantages.”
Qatar Doubles Down on PR Campaign Appealing to U.S. Jews and D.C. Insiders

Amir Tibon – January 18, 2018 7:01PM EST

(Washington) – Qatar has recently expanded its public relations effort aimed at improving its image in the United States, including within the Jewish community.

The wealthy emirate, often criticized for having ties to Hamas, has invited influential American public figures – some of them with close ties to the Trump administration – to visit and meet with its senior leadership, which denies providing support to the Gaza Islamist group and other terror organizations.

Last week, prominent New York attorney Alan Dershowitz published an article on the Hill website, following his visit to Qatar at the invitation of the country’s powerful emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. Dershowitz wrote that he was surprised to hear the Qatari response to many of the accusations hurled at the Gulf state, and urged the Trump administration and Congress to reexamine the issue.

Also last week, Qatar hosted former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, a leading right-wing media commentator and father of White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Huckabee tweeted that he found Doha, Qatar, to be “surprisingly beautiful, modern, and hospitable.”

Another recent visitor to the tiny emirate, whose wealth comes from its huge natural gas reserves, was conservative radio host John Batchelor. He took his popular audio show to Qatar last week at the behest of the country’s leadership, where he was joined by Thaddeus McCotter, a former Republican congressman from Michigan.

The emirate has also flown in representatives of various Washington think tanks on Qatar-funded trips.

Dershowitz, Huckabee and Batchelor all seem to be visiting as part of the Qatari leadership’s efforts to change its reputation among American politicians as a “problematic” nation associated with its support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar hosts some of Hamas’ senior leaders and funds the international media network Al Jazeera, whom neighboring Arab countries have accused of supporting Islamist movements and of destabilizing their regimes.

As part of the attempt to push back against these allegations, Qatar has hired the services of Nick Muzin, a public relations adviser who previously worked as a senior staffer to Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

An Orthodox Jew, Muzin has used his contacts within the Republican Party and the Jewish community to find an ear for Qatar’s arguments in Washington and New York – at a time when the emirate is facing a severe crisis because of attempts by Saudi Arabia to isolate it economically and diplomatically.

When Qatar’s hiring of Muzin’s Stonington Strategies firm was first revealed last summer – for a reported monthly fee of $50,000 – it raised eyebrows in Jewish and conservative circles because of Muzin’s professional background. Cruz, his former boss, has called for the Muslim Brotherhood to be designated a terrorist organization, yet Qatar is considered a major Brotherhood supporter in the Arab world.

Who are the good guys?

Muzin’s first attempts to organize meetings for the Qatari emir and crown prince with Jewish-American leaders ran into public opposition and became a source of debate in the Jewish press. Fast forward a few months, though, and it seems the Qatari public outreach effort is slowly beginning to change some minds in Washington and elsewhere.

Dershowitz’s article – titled “Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated?” – is a good example, especially in light of the author’s reputation as a staunch supporter of Israel.

He wrote he had “just returned from a private visit to Qatar, at the invitation of and paid for by the Emir. I do not represent
Qatar Doubles Down on PR Campaign Appealing to U.S. Jews and D.C. Insiders (continued)

Qatar’s government and, to be honest, I was initially reluctant to accept his invitation because I had heard that Qatar was contributing to Hamas, which is a terrorist group, and that it was supporting Iran, which is the largest exporter of terrorism in the world. But then I did my own research and concluded that the Qatar issue was more complex and nuanced. So I wanted to see for myself.

One of the first things that surprised him, Dershowitz wrote, was that as soon as he got to Doha, Qatar’s capital, “I was surprised to read that an Israeli tennis player had been welcomed by the Qatari government to participate in a tennis tournament.” Dershowitz compared this recent event to Saudi Arabia’s refusal last month to allow Israeli chess players to attend the world chess championship held in Riyadh. “Moreover,” he added, “Saudi officials criticized Qatar for allowing an Israeli tennis player to participate in its tournament, and for ordering the Israeli flag to be raised.”

“This episode,” he concluded, “made clear to me that the Saudis were not necessarily the good guys in their dispute with Qatar.”

After going over Qatar’s reaction to allegations that it supports Hamas and other terror organizations (allegations that Qatar’s leadership denies), Dershowitz wrote: “After hearing these different accounts, I observed that Qatar is quickly becoming the Israel of the Gulf States, surrounded by enemies, subject to boycotts and unrealistic demands, and struggling for its survival. I heard a lot of positive statements regarding Israel from Qatari leaders as well as hints of commercial relationships between these isolated nations.”

In a conversation with Haaretz on Tuesday, Dershowitz emphasized that he has “not come to any firm conclusions” about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Iran and other problematic actors in the region. He did, however, leave the emirate with “somewhat more nuanced” views, as “there appear to be two sides to the story.”

Dershowitz explained that he asked the emir and other senior Qatari officials to assist with the release of two Israeli citizens currently being held in Gaza, as well as the return of the bodies of two slain Israeli soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, killed in action during the 2014 Gaza war. “They told me they’re trying,” he said, stopping short of providing more details on the sensitive subject.

Coincidentally, on Monday – shortly after the publication of Dershowitz’s article and the culmination of Huckabee’s Qatar visit – U.S. President Donald Trump talked with the emir by phone. A White House readout of that conversation stated: “The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.” It continued: “The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.”

One person unmoved by Dershowitz’s article was Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of the D.C. think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He has written extensively in recent years about Qatar’s ties to Hamas and other terror organizations. “Stick to what you know,” Schanzer tweeted Dershowitz. “Happy to brief you sometime on Qatar. Doha is bad news.” And in a subsequent tweet, Schanzer added: “The man [Dershowitz] defends Israel until he’s blue in the face and then normalizes Hamas’s top patron.”

Dershowitz responded, “Happy to hear facts. Not conclusions. I make up my own mind based on facts.”

Schanzer told Haaretz on Wednesday that “there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they’re not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors.”

Schanzer previously called to designate Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism for its ties to these groups. “If you really want to
see all sides of the story,” he told Haaretz, “you’re not going to get it in Doha.”

The problem with Qatar

Qatar is not only inviting opinion formers to Doha – it is also working to bring its arguments to Washington. Last week, the Qatari minister in charge of aid and assistance to Gaza, Mohammed al-Emadi, visited the U.S. capital, where he met with, among others, members of Congress and diplomats. Emadi came to Washington partly because he is the rare example of an Arab diplomat who, according to press reports, works on a regular basis with Israeli security officials as part of Qatar’s efforts to help reconstruct the Gaza Strip following the 2014 war. By presenting him to decision-makers and influencers in the U.S. capital, the emirate is hoping to convince them it has a positive impact in Gaza and is working with Israel to improve the situation there.

“The frustration with Qatar,” said an Israeli official who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue, “is that they do some good things in Gaza. But at the same time, there are problems arising from their use of Al Jazeera and their ties with Hamas. It’s a complicated situation. They are one of the only countries in the world that truly cares about improving the situation in Gaza. They’re also one of the only countries that has ties to all the bad guys in the region – Hamas, Sunni Islamists and Iran.”

Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein told Haaretz that he has discussed Qatar’s policies with Muzin, whom he has “known and worked closely with for a number of years – ever since he was an important staffer for Sen. Cruz.” Last September, Klein refused to meet with the Qatari leadership, accusing the regime of funding “Islamic terrorists who aim to murder Jews, Americans, Christians and even fellow Muslims.”

This week, though, Klein said that while he still has many doubts about Qatar’s role in the region, he is open to hearing the arguments being fleshed out by Dershowitz and others. “I think Dershowitz’s article was totally reasonable,” Klein said. “I think we should check out their claims. If they're true, then there’s no reason not to go there and engage in dialogue with them. But if they’re lying, then we should have nothing to do with them.”

Klein added, though, that Qatar has to stop airing incitement on Al Jazeera if it ever wants to win the trust of the United States and Israel.

With regards to his conversations with Muzin, Klein said the PR maven “made it clear to me that he wouldn't take on the job of working for Qatar unless he was assured by the leaders of Qatar that their goal is to make Qatar a more free and civilized society, and to do something about the problems with Al Jazeera.”

Qatar still faces significant criticism on Capitol Hill. Last October, two Republican members of Congress published an article titled “It’s Up to Congress to Hold Qatar Accountable.” Reps. Dan Donovan and Brian Fitzpatrick – both members of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa – wrote that “Qatar is the master of playing all sides. The same country that served as the U.S. Central Command headquarters during the invasion of Iraq and still hosts a critical American air base today also sponsors Hamas’s anti-Israel agenda, gives sanctuary to terrorist leaders and spreads its wealth to terrorist and extremist groups throughout the Middle East.”

In November, a Democratic consulting firm, Bluelight Strategies, which has also worked with Qatari opposition leaders opposing the country’s regime, circulated a political memo among Democrats in Congress urging them to attack Republicans and the Trump administration for turning a blind eye to Qatar’s ties with Hamas and other terror groups. The memo, titled “Emerging GOP Vulnerability on Terrorism, Iran and Israel,” highlighted the Trump administration’s confusing policy regarding the Gulf crisis, and urged Democrats to speak out on the issue: “The more the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans are called out for embracing Hamas state sponsorship of terrorism, the more the message will penetrate.”

This view of Qatar as a country that tries to have it both ways is still prevalent in Washington and, as of now, it remains the main challenge standing in the way of the emirate’s charm offensive.
Qatar Restores Full Relations With Iran, Deepening Gulf Feud

Declan Walsh – August 24, 2017

(London) – Qatar restored full diplomatic relations with Iran on Thursday, the latest volley in an 11-week-old geopolitical feud that has set the tiny yet fabulously wealthy Persian Gulf nation against its neighbors and rattled a previously placid part of the Middle East.

Qatar’s Foreign Ministry announced that it was sending its ambassador back to Tehran after a 20-month hiatus that started in January 2016, when Qatar broke off relations after attacks on two Saudi diplomatic facilities in Iran.

The Qataris gave no explanation for the sudden move. But the timing suggested a purposeful snub of Saudi Arabia, which along with three other countries began a punitive boycott of Qatar in June, accusing it of supporting terrorism and having a too-cozy relationship with Iran. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut their air and sea routes to Qatar, and closed its only land border, with Saudi Arabia.

Mediation by the United States, Kuwait and Germany has failed to resolve the feud in the gulf, the one corner of the Middle East that has been largely free of war, refugees or political turmoil in recent years. Analysts said the partial blockade has badly weakened the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council and threatens to undermine regional stability.

The crisis lapsed into a stalemate after Qatar refused an initial list of 13 demands, which included cutting all ties with Tehran. But things took a turn for the worse this week after a visit by a minor Qatari royal, Sheikh Abdullah al-Thani, to the Saudi ruler, King Salman, at his holiday villa in Morocco.

Sheikh Abdullah, who lives in London and comes from a wing of the ruling family that was ousted in a 1972 coup, posed for pictures with King Salman at his lavish coastal palace outside Tangiers. (Estimates of the cost of the king’s holiday run as high as $100 million — expensive even for a monarch who typically travels with an entourage of 1,000 or more.)

Although there was no official explanation for the visit, the Saudi news media played up Sheikh Abdullah’s visit as the beginning of a potential challenge to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Few analysts believe the emir faces a serious threat, but some Qataris took the move as a provocation, and as further evidence that the true intention of the Saudi- and Emirati-led boycott is to engineer leadership change in Doha.

The diplomatic skirmishes are the latest moves in a crisis that, until now, has largely played out in the news media, amid accusations of hacked emails and fake news stories, and in fruitless efforts at conciliation led by worried Western allies like Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson.

President Trump’s role in the crisis has been hotly debated since he openly sided with the Saudi-led bloc in June, although he has been silent in recent weeks.

The charge that Qatar is too close to Iran resonated with Mr. Trump, who during a summit meeting in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in May called on Muslim leaders to isolate Iran, a nation that he said “fueled the fires of sectarian conflict and terror.”

Qatar insists that it maintains cordial relations with Iran out of commercial necessity, in that the two countries share the world’s largest gas field, the source of Qatar’s vast wealth, and notes that the United Arab Emirates has a far greater trading relationship with Iran.

Doha also says it has shown solidarity with its Sunni neighbors during disputes with Shiite-led Iran, particularly in the January 2016 attack on the Saudi mission in Iran, after which Qatar recalled its ambassador.

Still, Qatar’s payment last April of a huge ransom to Shiite militants in Iraq, in exchange for a group of hostages that included members of the Qatari royal family, was seen by critics as fresh proof of Qatar’s reckless approach to foreign policy. The incident further inflamed the already tender relations between Qatar and its neighbors.
Qatar Restores Full Relations With Iran, Deepening Gulf Feud (continued)

Since the dispute flared in June, Iran has provided Qatar with sea shipments of fresh food and allowed a stream of Qatari airplanes to cross its airspace. On Thursday, Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, Bahram Ghasemi, welcomed the return of Qatar’s ambassador to Tehran in a short statement. There was no immediate reaction from the four boycotting countries.

Qatar has taken a defiant stance, introducing a raft of measures to ensure the country, whose population is 90 percent foreign, remains attractive to outside investors and workers.

On Thursday, it enacted regulations that give greater protections to foreign domestic workers, many of whom work as nannies, cooks and cleaners. Their limited rights and often poor treatment in gulf countries like Qatar has frequently been a focus of Western human rights groups.

But the strain of the crisis is starting to show on Qatar’s economy and financial system. Depositors from boycotting countries withdrew billions of dollars from Qatari banks in June, forcing the treasury to step in. Qatar’s rating with international credit agencies has also taken a hit.

Qatar’s imports fell 38 percent in June and recovered only slightly last month, according to official figures released on Thursday.

Still, the sanctions have not affected Qatar’s gas exports, the primary source of its wealth, which grew by 7.8 percent in July compared with a year earlier. Analysts say the effect of the sanctions may lessen as Qatar develops alternate sea and air routes.
UAE orchestrated hacking of Qatari government sites, sparking regional upheaval, according to U.S. intelligence officials

Karen DeYoung and Ellen Nakashima – July 16, 2017

(Istanbul) – The United Arab Emirates orchestrated the hacking of Qatari government news and social media sites in order to post incendiary false quotes attributed to Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani, in late May that sparked the ongoing upheaval between Qatar and its neighbors, according to U.S. intelligence officials.

Officials became aware last week that newly analyzed information gathered by U.S. intelligence agencies confirmed that on May 23, senior members of the UAE government discussed the plan and its implementation. The officials said it remains unclear whether the UAE carried out the hacks itself or contracted to have them done. The false reports said that the emir, among other things, had called Iran an "Islamic power" and praised Hamas.

The hacks and posting took place on May 24, shortly after President Trump completed a lengthy counterterrorism meeting with Persian Gulf leaders in neighboring Saudi Arabia and declared them unified.

Citing the emir’s reported comments, the Saudis, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt immediately banned all Qatari media. They then broke relations with Qatar and declared a trade and diplomatic boycott, sending the region into a political and diplomatic tailspin that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has warned could undermine U.S. counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State.

In a statement released in Washington by its ambassador, Yousef al-Otaiba, the UAE said the Post article was “false.”

“The UAE had no role whatsoever in the alleged hacking described in the article,” the statement said. “What is true is Qatar’s behavior. Funding, supporting, and enabling extremists from the Taliban to Hamas and Qadaffi. Inciting violence, encouraging radicalization, and undermining the stability of its neighbors.”

The revelations come as emails purportedly hacked from Otaiba’s private account have circulated to journalists over the past several months. That hack has been claimed by an apparently pro-Qatari organization calling itself GlobalLeaks. Many of the emails highlight the UAE’s determination over the years to rally Washington thinkers and policymakers to its side on the issues at the center of its dispute with Qatar.

All of the Persian Gulf nations are members of the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State. More than 10,000 U.S. troops are based at Qatar’s al-Udeid Air Base, the U.S. Central Command’s regional headquarters, and Bahrain is the home of the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet. All are purchasers of U.S. defense equipment and tied to U.S. foreign policy priorities in numerous ways.

The conflict has also exposed sharp differences between Trump — who has clearly taken the Saudi and UAE side in a series of tweets and statements — and Tillerson, who has urged compromise and spent most of last week in shuttle diplomacy among the regional capitals that has been unsuccessful so far.

“We don’t expect any near-term resolution,” Tillerson aide R.C. Hammond said Saturday. He said the secretary had left behind proposals with the “Saudi bloc” and with Qatar including “a common set of principles that all countries can agree to so that we start from … a common place.”

Qatar has repeatedly charged that its sites were hacked, but it has not released the results of its investigation. Intelligence officials said their working theory since the Qatar hacks has been that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt or some combination of those countries were involved. It remains unclear whether the others also participated in the plan.

U.S. intelligence and other officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment, as did the CIA. The FBI, which Qatar has said was helping in its investigation, also declined to comment.
A spokesman for the Qatari Embassy in Washington responded by drawing attention to a statement by that government’s attorney general, Ali Bin Fetais al-Marri, who said late last month that “Qatar has evidence that certain iPhones originating from countries laying siege to Qatar were used in the hack.”

Hammond said he did not know of the newly analyzed U.S. intelligence on the UAE or whether Tillerson was aware of it.

The hacking incident reopened a bitter feud among the gulf monarchies that has simmered for years. It last erupted in 2013, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain accused Qatar of providing safe haven for their political dissidents and supporting the pan-Arab Muslim Brotherhood; funding terrorists, including U.S.-designated terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah; and using its state-funded media outlets to destabilize its neighbors.

Qatar — an energy-rich country ruled by its own unelected monarchy — saw the Saudi-led accusations as an attempt by neighboring autocrats to stifle its more liberal tendencies. Separately, the United States warned Qatar to keep a tighter rein on wealthy individuals there who surreptitiously funded Islamist terror groups — a charge that Washington has also made in the past against the Saudis and other gulf countries. While Qatar promised some steps in response to the charges in a 2014 agreement with the others, it took little action.

During his two-day visit to Riyadh, Trump met with the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar — and held individual closed-door meetings with several GCC leaders, including the Qatar emir. The day before his departure on the morning of May 22, Trump delivered a speech, focused on the need for religious tolerance and unity against terrorism, to more than 50 Muslim leaders gathered from around the world for the occasion.

But he devoted most of his attention to Saudi King Salman, praising as a wise leader the man who controls his country’s vast oil reserves. In what the administration hailed as a high point of the visit, the Saudis agreed to purchase $110 billion in U.S. arms and signed letters of intent to invest hundreds of billions in deals with U.S. companies.

He had told the Saudis in advance, Trump said in an interview Wednesday with the Christian Broadcasting Network, that the agreements and purchases were a prerequisite for his presence. “I said, you have to do that, otherwise I’m not going,” Trump recounted.

The statements attributed to the emir first appeared on the Qatar News Agency’s website early on the morning of May 24, in a report on his appearance at a military ceremony, as Trump was wrapping up the next stop on his nine-day overseas trip, in Israel. According to the Qatari government, alerts were sent out within 45 minutes saying the information was false.

Later that morning, the same false information appeared on a ticker at the bottom of a video of the emir’s appearance that was posted on Qatar News Agency’s YouTube channel. Similar material appeared on government Twitter feeds.

The reports were repeatedly broadcast on Saudi Arabian government outlets, continuing even after the Qatari alert said it was false. The UAE shut down all broadcasts of Qatari media inside its borders, including the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera satellite network, the most watched in the Arab world.

The first week in June, the Saudi-led countries severed relations, ordered all Qatari nationals inside their countries to leave, and closed their borders to all land, air and sea traffic with Qatar, a peninsular nation in the Persian Gulf whose only land connection is with Saudi Arabia.

In addition to charges of supporting terrorism and promoting instability inside their countries, they accused Qatar of being too close to Iran, Saudi Arabia’s main rival for regional power and, according to the United States, the world’s foremost supporter of global terrorism. Iran conducts robust trade with most of the gulf, including the UAE, and shares the world’s largest natural gas field with Qatar.

The day after the boycott was announced, Trump indirectly took credit for it. “So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with
King and 50 countries already paying off, “he tweeted. “They said they would take a hard line on funding extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar.”

At the same time, Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called for negotiations and a quick resolution of the dispute. When the Saudi-led group released a list of 13 “non-negotiable” demands for Qatar — including shutting down Al Jazeera and expelling a number of people deemed terrorists — the State Department suggested that they were unreasonable and that the terrorism funding issue was a smokescreen for long-standing regional grievances that should be resolved through mediation and negotiation.

Qatar rejected the demands. Tillerson appeared to agree that they were draconian. But when he called for the boycott to be eased, saying it was causing both security and humanitarian hardship, Trump said the measure was harsh “but necessary.”

The one concrete result of Tillerson’s stops in the region last week was a new bilateral agreement signed with Qatar on stopping terrorism financing, the only one of the gulf countries that had responded to an invitation to do so, Hammond said.

Speaking to reporters on his plane flying back to Washington on Friday, Tillerson said the trip was useful “first to listen and get a sense of how serious the situation is, how emotional some of these issues are.” He said that he had left proposals with both sides that suggested “some ways that we might move this forward.”

All of the countries involved, Tillerson said, are “really important to us from a national security standpoint. ... We need this part of the world to be stable, and this particular conflict between these parties is obviously not helpful.”

Asked about Trump’s tweets and other comments, he noted that being secretary of state “is a lot different than being CEO of Exxon,” his previous job, “because I was the ultimate decision-maker.” He knew what to expect from long-standing colleagues, he said, and decision-making was disciplined and “highly structured.”

“Those are not the characteristics of the United States government. And I don’t say that as a criticism, it’s just an observation of fact,” Tillerson said. While neither he nor the president came from the political world, he said, his old job put him in contact with the rest of the world and “that engagement ... is actually very easy for me.”

For his part, Trump agreed in the Christian Broadcasting Network interview that he and Tillerson “had a little bit of a difference, only in terms of tone” over the gulf conflict.

Qatar, Trump said, “is now a little bit on the outs, but I think they’re being brought back in.” Asked about the U.S. military base in Qatar, Trump said he was not concerned.

“We’ll be all right,” he said. “Look, if we ever have to leave” the base, “we would have 10 countries willing to build us another one, believe me. And they’ll pay for it.”
Qatar in the Media

prepared for
Rep. John Ratcliffe
Qatar: Year of Crisis Spurred Rights Reform

Human Rights Watch – January 18, 2018 3:23AM EST

(Getty) – Qatar announced a range of significant human rights reforms during 2017 that if carried out would usher in some of the most progressive human rights standards in the gulf region, Human Rights Watch said today in its World Report 2018.

The reforms include legislation that can dramatically improve labor standards for migrant workers, including a migrant domestic workers law, and to grant permanent residency to children born to Qatari mothers and foreign fathers and to some foreign residents living in the country.

“Qatar could have retreated into authoritarianism in the face of a political crisis but instead has responded to a breakdown in neighborly relations by raising the bar on human rights standards in the Gulf,” said Belkis Wille, senior Qatar researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Implementing its commitments to respecting the rights of Qatari women, millions of migrant workers, and vulnerable refugees in the country will be the real measure of its success in 2018.”

In the 643-page World Report, its 28th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that political leaders willing to stand up for human rights principles showed that it is possible to limit authoritarian populist agendas. When combined with mobilized publics and effective multilateral actors, these leaders demonstrated that the rise of anti-rights governments is not inevitable.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates cut diplomatic relations with Qatar citing political grievances and demands. The crisis precipitated a range of human rights violations against people living in Qatar, infringing on their right to free expression, separating families, and interrupting medical care and education.

On August 3, the Qatari cabinet moved to protect the legal status of foreign nationals in Qatar, approving a draft law that would allow permanent residence for children of Qatari women married to non-Qataris, as well as expatriates who “provide outstanding services to Qatar.” While the law falls short of granting women the same rights as Qatari men to pass citizenship to their children, it would help children of Qatari women secure resident status in Qatar even if they do not have valid passports from another country. The law could also help Emirati, Egyptian, Bahraini, and Saudi nationals who otherwise have no rights to legal residence in the country but who remain there for family or work reasons or because they fear persecution in their home countries.

The government’s most significant reform commitments came in protections for the nearly 2 million migrant workers in the country who make up 95 percent of the country’s workforce but are barred from unionizing or collective action. The government passed a new law to protect migrant domestic workers and pledged to end the sponsorship system of labor employment and to implement a minimum wage.

On August 22, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, ratified Law No.15 on service workers in the home. The law grants labor protections for the first time to Qatar’s 173,742 domestic workers. The new law guarantees domestic workers a maximum 10-hour workday, a weekly rest day, three weeks of annual leave, an end-of-service payment, and healthcare benefits. However, the new law is still weaker than the country’s general Labor Law and does not fully conform to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, the global treaty on domestic workers’ rights.

On October 26, Qatar committed to extensive reforms of its kafala (sponsorship) system, which ties workers to individual sponsors for their visa and employment, replacing it with a system of government-sponsored employment. It also promised to institute a nondiscriminatory minimum wage, improve the payment of wages, end passport confiscation, enhance labor inspections and occupational safety and health, including with a heat mitigation strategy, and improve labor recruitment procedures.

Qatar also unblocked local access to the Doha News website, the country’s only independent news website, which authorities had ordered Qatar’s two internet service providers, Vodafone and Ooredoo, to block on November 30, 2016.
Trump thanks Qatar for efforts to combat terrorism

Reuters – January 15, 2018 2:10PM EST
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-usa/trump-thanks-qatar-for-efforts-to-combat-terrorism-idUSKBN1F42HT

(Washington) – U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday thanked the ruler of Qatar for “action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms,” the White House said in a statement that suggested a warming of ties between the two countries.

In June, Trump had called on Qatar to stop funding groups that commit terrorism, saying the Gulf nation had historically done so “at a very high level.”

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, who along with Qatar are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, plus non-GCC member Egypt cut off diplomatic, travel and trade ties with Qatar last year, accusing it of supporting militants and their arch-foe Iran.

Qatar denies the charges and says their move is aimed at curtailing its sovereignty.

The White House statement on the call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani did not directly address the rift but said Trump “reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats.”

“The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism,” it said.

Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s Call with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar

White House – January 15, 2018

(Washington) – President Donald J. Trump spoke today with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to discuss ways to strengthen United States-Qatar bilateral relations on security and economic issues. President Trump reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats. The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding. The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.

Qatar signs security agreement with NATO

NATO – January 16, 2018

(Brussels) – The State of Qatar signed a security agreement with NATO at the Alliance’s Headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday (16 January 2018).

At a signing ceremony, Brigadier General Tariq Khalid M. F. Alobaidli, Head of the International Military Cooperation Department, Armed Forces of the State of Qatar, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, stressed the importance of NATO’s cooperation with Qatar in the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI).

This security agreement provides the framework for the protection of exchange of classified information, as defined by all 29 member countries. These agreements are signed by NATO partner countries that wish to engage in cooperation with NATO. All four ICI partner countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and U.A.E.) have now signed individual security agreements with NATO. This enables the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programmes (IPCP) of the ICI countries with NATO to be implemented as effectively as possible.
Qatar Doubles Down on PR Campaign Appealing to U.S. Jews and D.C. Insiders

Amir Tibon – January 18, 2018 7:01PM EST

(Washington) – Qatar has recently expanded its public relations effort aimed at improving its image in the United States, including within the Jewish community.

The wealthy emirate, often criticized for having ties to Hamas, has invited influential American public figures – some of them with close ties to the Trump administration – to visit and meet with its senior leadership, which denies providing support to the Gaza Islamist group and other terror organizations.

Last week, prominent New York attorney Alan Dershowitz published an article on the Hill website, following his visit to Qatar at the invitation of the country’s powerful emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. Dershowitz wrote that he was surprised to hear the Qatari response to many of the accusations hurled at the Gulf state, and urged the Trump administration and Congress to reexamine the issue.

Also last week, Qatar hosted former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, a leading right-wing media commentator and father of White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Huckabee tweeted that he found Doha, Qatar, to be “surprisingly beautiful, modern, and hospitable.”

Another recent visitor to the tiny emirate, whose wealth comes from its huge natural gas reserves, was conservative radio host John Batchelor. He took his popular audio show to Qatar last week at the behest of the country’s leadership, where he was joined by Thaddeus McCotter, a former Republican congressman from Michigan.

The emirate has also flown in representatives of various Washington think tanks on Qatar-funded trips.

Dershowitz, Huckabee and Batchelor all seem to be visiting as part of the Qatari leadership’s efforts to change its reputation among American politicians as a “problematic” nation associated with its support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar hosts some of Hamas’ senior leaders and funds the international media network Al Jazeera, whom neighboring Arab countries have accused of supporting Islamist movements and of destabilizing their regimes.

As part of the attempt to push back against these allegations, Qatar has hired the services of Nick Muzin, a public relations adviser who previously worked as a senior staffer to Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

An Orthodox Jew, Muzin has used his contacts within the Republican Party and the Jewish community to find an ear for Qatar’s arguments in Washington and New York – at a time when the emirate is facing a severe crisis because of attempts by Saudi Arabia to isolate it economically and diplomatically.

When Qatar’s hiring of Muzin’s Stonington Strategies firm was first revealed last summer – for a reported monthly fee of $50,000 – it raised eyebrows in Jewish and conservative circles because of Muzin’s professional background. Cruz, his former boss, has called for the Muslim Brotherhood to be designated a terrorist organization, yet Qatar is considered a major Brotherhood supporter in the Arab world.

Who are the good guys?

Muzin’s first attempts to organize meetings for the Qatari emir and crown prince with Jewish-American leaders ran into public opposition and became a source of debate in the Jewish press. Fast forward a few months, though, and it seems the Qatari public outreach effort is slowly beginning to change some minds in Washington and elsewhere.

Dershowitz’s article – titled “Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated?” – is a good example, especially in light of the author’s reputation as a staunch supporter of Israel.

He wrote he had “just returned from a private visit to Qatar, at the invitation of and paid for by the Emir. I do not represent..."
Qatar’s government and, to be honest, I was initially reluctant to accept his invitation because I had heard that Qatar was contributing to Hamas, which is a terrorist group, and that it was supporting Iran, which is the largest exporter of terrorism in the world. But then I did my own research and concluded that the Qatar issue was more complex and nuanced. So I wanted to see for myself.

One of the first things that surprised him, Dershowitz wrote, was that as soon as he got to Doha, Qatar’s capital, “I was surprised to read that an Israeli tennis player had been welcomed by the Qatari government to participate in a tennis tournament.” Dershowitz compared this recent event to Saudi Arabia’s refusal last month to allow Israeli chess players to attend the world chess championship held in Riyadh. “Moreover,” he added, “Saudi officials criticized Qatar for allowing an Israeli tennis player to participate in its tournament, and for ordering ‘the Israeli flag to be raised.’”

“This episode,” he concluded, “made clear to me that the Saudis were not necessarily the good guys in their dispute with Qatar.”

After going over Qatar’s reaction to allegations that it supports Hamas and other terror organizations (allegations that Qatar’s leadership denies), Dershowitz wrote: “After hearing these different accounts, I observed that Qatar is quickly becoming the Israel of the Gulf States, surrounded by enemies, subject to boycotts and unrealistic demands, and struggling for its survival. I heard a lot of positive statements regarding Israel from Qatari leaders as well as hints of commercial relationships between these isolated nations.”

In a conversation with Haaretz on Tuesday, Dershowitz emphasized that he has “not come to any firm conclusions” about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Iran and other problematic actors in the region. He did, however, leave the emirate with “somewhat more nuanced” views, as “there appear to be two sides to the story.”

Dershowitz explained that he asked the emir and other senior Qatari officials to assist with the release of two Israeli citizens currently being held in Gaza, as well as the return of the bodies of two slain Israeli soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, killed in action during the 2014 Gaza war. “They told me they’re trying,” he said, stopping short of providing more details on the sensitive subject.

Coincidentally, on Monday – shortly after the publication of Dershowitz’s article and the culmination of Huckabee’s Qatar visit – U.S. President Donald Trump talked with the emir by phone. A White House readout of that conversation stated: “The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.” It continued: “The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.”

One person unmoved by Dershowitz’s article was Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of the D.C. think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He has written extensively in recent years about Qatar’s ties to Hamas and other terror organizations. “Stick to what you know,” Schanzer tweeted Dershowitz. “Happy to brief you sometime on Qatar. Doha is bad news.” And in a subsequent tweet, Schanzer added: “The man [Dershowitz] defends Israel until he’s blue in the face and then normalizes Hamas’s top patron.”

Dershowitz responded, “Happy to hear facts. Not conclusions. I make up my own mind based on facts.”

Schanzer told Haaretz on Wednesday that “there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they’re not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors.”

Schanzer previously called to designate Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism for its ties to these groups. “If you really want to
see all sides of the story,” he told Haaretz, “you’re not going to get it in Doha.”

The problem with Qatar

Qatar is not only inviting opinion formers to Doha – it is also working to bring its arguments to Washington. Last week, the Qatari minister in charge of aid and assistance to Gaza, Mohammed al-Emadi, visited the U.S. capital, where he met with, among others, members of Congress and diplomats. Emadi came to Washington partly because he is the rare example of an Arab diplomat who, according to press reports, works on a regular basis with Israeli security officials as part of Qatar’s efforts to help reconstruct the Gaza Strip following the 2014 war. By presenting him to decision-makers and influencers in the U.S. capital, the emirate is hoping to convince them it has a positive impact in Gaza and is working with Israel to improve the situation there.

“The frustration with Qatar,” said an Israeli official who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue, “is that they do some good things in Gaza. But at the same time, there are problems arising from their use of Al Jazeera and their ties with Hamas. It’s a complicated situation. They are one of the only countries in the world that truly cares about improving the situation in Gaza. They’re also one of the only countries that has ties to all the bad guys in the region – Hamas, Sunni Islamists and Iran.”

Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein told Haaretz that he has discussed Qatar’s policies with Muzin, whom he has “known and worked closely with for a number of years – ever since he was an important staffer for Sen. Cruz.”

Last September, Klein refused to meet with the Qatari leadership, accusing the regime of funding “Islamic terrorists who aim to murder Jews, Americans, Christians and even fellow Muslims.”

This week, though, Klein said that while he still has many doubts about Qatar’s role in the region, he is open to hearing the arguments being fleshed out by Dershowitz and others. “I think Dershowitz’s article was totally reasonable,” Klein said. “I think we should check out their claims. If they’re true, then there’s no reason not to go there and engage in dialogue with them. But if they’re lying, then we should have nothing to do with them.”

Klein added, though, that Qatar has to stop airing incitement on Al Jazeera if it ever wants to win the trust of the United States and Israel.

With regards to his conversations with Muzin, Klein said the PR maven “made it clear to me that he wouldn’t take on the job of working for Qatar unless he was assured by the leaders of Qatar that their goal is to make Qatar a more free and civilized society, and to do something about the problems with Al Jazeera.”

Qatar still faces significant criticism on Capitol Hill. Last October, two Republican members of Congress published an article titled “It’s Up to Congress to Hold Qatar Accountable.” Reps. Dan Donovan and Brian Fitzpatrick – both members of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa – wrote that “Qatar is the master of playing all sides. The same country that served as the U.S. Central Command headquarters during the invasion of Iraq and still hosts a critical American air base today also sponsors Hamas’s anti-Israel agenda, gives sanctuary to terrorist leaders and spreads its wealth to terrorist and extremist groups throughout the Middle East.”

In November, a Democratic consulting firm, Bluelight Strategies, which has also worked with Qatari opposition leaders opposing the country’s regime, circulated a political memo among Democrats in Congress urging them to attack Republicans and the Trump administration for turning a blind eye to Qatar’s ties with Hamas and other terror groups. The memo, titled “Emerging GOP Vulnerability on Terrorism, Iran and Israel,” highlighted the Trump administration’s confusing policy regarding the Gulf crisis, and urged Democrats to speak out on the issue: “The more the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans are called out for embracing Hamas state sponsorship of terrorism, the more the message will penetrate.”

This view of Qatar as a country that tries to have it both ways is still prevalent in Washington and, as of now, it remains the main challenge standing in the way of the emirate’s charm offensive.
US praises Qatar ties, calls for Gulf unity

Posted Jan 30, 2018 by Dave Clark (AFP)

The United States praised Qatar for its improved counterterrorism cooperation Tuesday and warned that its rift with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbors has hurt the fight against extremism.

The United States praised Qatar for its improved counterterrorism cooperation Tuesday and warned that its rift with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbors has hurt the fight against extremism.

Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a diplomatic boycott of Qatar and closed their frontiers last year, accusing the gas-rich emirate of cosying up to Iran and sponsoring Islamist groups.

US President Donald Trump, fresh from a successful trip to Riyadh, seemed at first to take the Saudi side in the dispute and demanded that Qatar, which denies the charges, change its behavior.

But US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have been working to bring the dispute to an end and bind both Qatar and its opponents into a deeper mutual alliance.

On Tuesday, these diplomatic efforts produced the first of what may become an annual US-Qatari Strategic Dialogue, hosted by Tillerson and Mattis for their counterparts from Qatar.

In opening remarks, neither side criticized Saudi Arabia or its ambitious crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman by name, but both sides stressed the importance of unity in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"As the Gulf dispute nears the eight-month mark the United States remains as concerned
today as we were at its outset," Tillerson said, opening the meeting of senior US and Qatari officials.

"This dispute has had direct negative consequences economically and militarily for those involved as well as the United States."

Saudi Arabia is also a long-time ally of the United States and is bigger, richer and more influential than Qatar, which lies on a peninsula off its neighbor’s Gulf coast in gas-rich waters.

But Qatar has parlayed its riches into an outsize influence with key economic investments in Western countries underpinning ties and winning prizes like hosting rights for the 2022 World Cup.

It has also annoyed its neighbors by funding and hosting the Al-Jazeera satellite network, which broadcasts Arabic news and views across the region that make some governments uncomfortable.

And it has fostered ties with some Islamist groups, giving it a role in regional crises that is unwelcome to some leaders.

Sometimes this is helpful to the United States: The Taliban has an office in Qatar, which serves as a back-channel for the US to get messages to their Afghan foe even as their troops fight.

But Qatar’s ties to groups like the Palestinian movement Hamas, who the United States views as terrorists, have hurt ties.

Nevertheless, Qatar is also host to the huge Al-Udeid air base, a hub for allied aircraft in many Middle East conflict and home to thousands of US personnel and a forward command center.

Tillerson and Mattis both praised Qatar’s improved cooperation in counterterrorism and praised the military relationship, while expressing the hope that the spat with Saudi would end.
Qatar signs $12 billion deal to buy F-15 jets from U.S.

(Reuters) - Qatar’s Ministry of Defense said on Wednesday the country signed a deal to buy F-15 fighter jets from the United States for $12 billion.

The deal was completed despite the Gulf country being criticized recently by U.S. President Donald Trump for supporting terrorism.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and representatives from Qatar were set to meet Wednesday to seal the agreement, a source familiar with the deal told Reuters. Bloomberg News reported the deal was for 36 jets.

The sale will increase security cooperation and interoperability between the U.S. and Qatar, the Pentagon said in an emailed statement on Wednesday.

Defense Secretary Mattis and Qatari Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid al-Attiyah also discussed the current state of operations against the ISIS and the importance of de-escalating tensions so all partners in the gulf region can focus on next steps in meeting common goals, the Pentagon added.

In November, the United States approved possible sale of up to 72 F-15QA aircraft to Qatar for $21.1 billion. Boeing Co is the prime contractor on the fighter jet sale to the Middle East nation.

Boeing declined to comment.

Trump on Friday accused Qatar of being a “high-level” sponsor of terrorism, potentially hindering the U.S. Department of State’s efforts to ease
heightening tensions and a blockade of the Gulf nation by Arab states and others.

Reporting by Ankit Ajmera in Bengaluru and Mike Stone in Washington; Editing by Chris Sanders and Lisa Shumaker
ZOA's Morton Klein Secretly Visited Qatar This Month. Here's Why He Went – and What He Did There

The Zionist Organization of America leader denounced Qatar just last year, but flew to Doha this month at the Emir's invitation: 'I spoke truth to power about anti-Semitism,' he explains in an interview with Haaretz

Amir Tibon (Washington, D.C.) Jan 30, 2018 2:55 PM

WASHINGTON – When Qatar's public relations efforts to change its reputation within the U.S. Jewish community were first published in
September, one of the first Jewish-American leaders to attack the rich Emirate was Mort Klein of the Zionist Organization of America. Klein, like many other Jewish leaders, was offered an opportunity to meet with the Emir of Qatar during the UN General Assembly. He refused the invitation, and put out a press release explaining why:

"ZOA has decided that, at this point, we can’t allow the imprimatur of ZOA to be involved with the potential of legitimizing in any way Qatar’s disgraceful activities. ZOA would be interested in meeting with them if they first take explicit steps to change their monstrous behavior."

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Earlier in January, however, Klein had visited Qatar at the invitation of the Emir, and had a private meeting with him in Doha, the Emirate's capital city. The visit, which had not previously been reported, took place at the same time that other prominent public figures who are known as supporters of the Israeli government, such as Alan Dershowitz and Mike Huckabee, visited Doha. Their visits attracted strong criticism from other supporters of Israel, who warned that the Qataris were using "pro-Israel" names to whitewash their support for Hamas and other terror organizations.

Haaretz independently confirmed through three different sources that Klein visited Qatar. When reached for comment on Monday, Klein explained what caused him to change his mind and visit the Emirate. "They invited me to go a number of times – in September, October, November and December," he said. "At first I refused, because of their support for Hamas and the anti-Semitism being broadcast on Al Jazeera. But over time, I saw that more and more Jewish leaders were going there, and I realized that at this point, they won't be able to use me for propaganda, because everyone is already going, but I might use the visit to push them on these issues."

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Klein's explanation shows the extent to which Qatar has succeeded, in just a few months, to make inroads into the right-wing segments of the U.S. Jewish community. The list of Jewish leaders who have visited the country in recent months includes Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations; Jack Rosen of the American Jewish Congress (Rosen told Haaretz that "I have been travelling to Qatar and the region for many years ... I pay my own way and I am not part of this new group of leaders who have been going recently."); Rabbi Menachem Genack of the Orthodox Union; Martin Oliner of the Religious Zionists of America; and the latest, Dershowitz – who is active on many fronts as a vocal supporter of Israel – and Klein.

What these leaders share is that none of them are considered critics of the
right-wing Netanyahu government in Israel or the Trump administration in Washington.

Dershowitz identifies himself as a Democrat, but over the past year he has published articles and offered commentary in favor of both Trump and Netanyahu – not just on policy issues, but also regarding their legal troubles and corruption investigations. All the other names come from organizations that support Israeli settlements and have reacted positively to Trump's policy toward Israel.

Klein told Haaretz that the Qatari choice to engage with "right-of-center Zionists" was noticeable. "They didn't invite people from J Street, Americans for Peace Now or the Reform Movement," he said. "I think it's interesting." Klein said another factor in his decision to go to Qatar was the fact that U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin praised Qatar publicly for signing a memorandum with the United States against terror funding.

Like most of the other Jewish leaders invited to Qatar, Klein's trip was paid for by the Emirate ("I didn't take anything else from them," he emphasized). During his visit, he met with a number of senior officials in the country, including the Emir. "They knew that I'm a very tough critic of them," he said. Just this past June, ZOA called on the Trump administration to cancel the license of Qatar Airways to fly into the United States because of Qatar's support for terrorism.

"I came there with a 50 page report written by our research department, with all the problems related to Qatar," Klein said. "From their ties to Hamas to the anti-Semitic contents on Al Jazeera, and the anti-Semitic books in the Doha International Book Fair. I brought this with me to the meeting with the Emir. We sat for close to two hours and I shared everything with him. I told the Qataris that it's good to have verbal assurances of change, but that it will require many months of actions from them, to convince me that something has truly changed. They denied supporting Hamas and said their work in Gaza was being coordinated with Israel."
Klein said that he "decided it was important for me to speak truth to power, especially when the Emir repeatedly invited me to give them my views on what they needed to do." He added that "our organization's mission is to help Israel and the Jewish people. There is a long history of Jewish leaders going to speak to bad actors on behalf of our people." Among the examples, he mentioned that "Yitzhak Shamir met the Palestinians in Madrid. [Menachem] Begin met with Anwar Sadat." Klein also emphasized that "this is the head of a country, not the head of Hamas." According to him, the visit was an important opportunity "to tell them what they need to do better."

On the Palestinian issue, Klein said, "I told the Emir why his speech on Jerusalem before the UN was wrong. I said that Jerusalem has been a Jewish city for thousands of years. I also said that the Arab Peace Initiative, which they support, would be a total disaster. He said that on this issue, we'll have to respectfully disagree. The Qataris pointed out that many Israelis, such as Shimon Peres, supported this initiative."
Other Jewish leaders who have traveled to Qatar, such as Hoenlein and Dershowitz, offered somewhat similar explanations for their decision to visit the Emirate. Hoenlein claimed he was trying to assist with returning the bodies of two Israeli soldiers held by Hamas; Dershowitz said he want to "investigate" whether Qatar had truly changed its stance on Hamas and other issues.

Rosen, who told Haaretz his visit to Qatar was separate from the wave of other Jewish leaders' visits, noted that "I can’t speak to their objectives or motives but I believe that positive results in these matters are better obtained by using discretion."

The visits by Jewish leaders to Qatar have been met with strong criticism from within the Jewish community. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, an Orthodox leader from New Jersey who made headlines in recent years for his harsh attacks on the Obama administration, published a number of articles criticizing the Jewish leaders who have gone to Qatar. One of them, published in November in Breitbart, carried the headline "Jewish Community for Sale to Qatar?"

Boteach wrote in it that "It has been dispiriting to watch how some in our community are seemingly up for sale. There has been no demand that before embracing Qatar they first stop funding Hamas terrorists. And those Jewish individuals hired by Qatar and accepting Qatari money are no doubt aware that their embrace will lessen the pressure on Qatar, which is currently experiencing a severe boycott because of its terror-funding activities."

Yigal Carmon of the Middle East Media Research Institute, a pro-Israel organization that monitors Arab media outlets, published an article recently under the headline "Qatar – the Emirate That Fools Them All – and Its Enablers", in which he warned that "It is sad to see American Jewish leaders
bolstering anti-Semitic stereotypes by ignorantly intervening in internal conflicts that do not concern them, complex inter-Arab conflicts which are difficult to assess even as observers."

Carmon specifically criticized Dershowitz for comparing Qatar's regional isolation in the Gulf to that of Israel in the broader Middle East. He called Dershowitz "one of the enablers of Qatar", before listing the Emirate's support for Hamas and other terror organizations.

Jonathan Schanzer of the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies told Haaretz two weeks ago that "there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they're not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors.”

Coincidentally, the argument within the Jewish community on Qatar is happening at the same time that the Trump administration is getting closer to the Emirate. This week, a senior Qatari delegation is visiting Washington. Two weeks ago, Trump had a phone call with the Emir, in which he thanked him for Qatar's "action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.”

**Gone Viral**
Muzin and Dershowitz are on the right side of history

SHMULLY HECHT | JANUARY 25, 2018, 11:49 PM |

It is easy for ignorant observers to mischaracterize behind the scenes negotiations. All too often, pundits trade measured speculation for sensationalized, libelous, and condescending accusations – after all, it sells better. But this is not how diplomacy works and is certainly not how real political change is ever achieved. The informed person knows that commentary from the overhyped peanut gallery is at best foolish and at worst intellectually dishonest.

A few months ago, Nick Muzin asked me to attend meetings with influential global thought leaders who are also prominent in the Jewish world, and the Emir of Qatar. I have known Nick for over 15 years. We have studied Jewish texts together, celebrated Shabbos at each other’s homes, and shared events with world leaders at Shabtai, the Jewish Society at Yale. Nick is a dear friend, a Jewish leader, and an inspiration for those who seek to reconcile a traditional Jewish life with the modern world. So needless to say, I was astounded that he was asking me to meet with the head of a country that funds Hamas, a terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of the State of Israel, had founded Al Jazeera, and was consistently flirting with Iran.

I consulted both a former National Security Advisor and a former Ambassador of Israel. Both were now at liberty to speak freely and give candid advice. They told me that I should engage with Qatar. Unlike Iran, they explained, Qatar had the potential to amend its ways and align itself with the West. If Qatari leaders wanted to meet with every prominent Jew they could get into a room, that was a good sign. For unlike others in the region, (and the list is shrinking) they were willing to engage. Why should we fight our enemies when we could possibly turn them into allies? A mere cursory reading of world history compels us to try.

I attended the meeting expecting a full charm offensive from the Emir. I was pleasantly surprised. While there was no shortage of controversy and contention between many of us and the Qatars, we were still able to have a deep and thoughtful dialogue. Don’t get me wrong. Between Qatar’s ties to Hamas, the routine anti-Semitism on Al Jazeera, and their friendliness with Iran, there was a lot of work to be done to come to some kind of understanding. The Emir at times, referred to Israel as Palestine. Yet it was clear that everyone around the table was there to try and bridge the very wide gaps.
Over the past few months, I have seen sentiments on Qatar within the Jewish community shift dramatically from mostly negative to cautiously optimistic. This shift doesn’t come from an aggressive white-washing public relations campaign or on the heels of bribery, as some have suggested. These shifting sentiments are in response to Qatar’s outreach to the Jewish community. Many prominent Jewish leaders have flown to Qatar and have spent quality time with the country’s leadership. There they have discussed their concerns, built personal relationships, and have made suggestions about how the Qatars can improve their relationship with the United States and Israel. And from what I’ve heard, the Qatars have begun to listen and engage. That’s more than can be said for many other countries in the region.

Recently, Harvard Professor Alan Dershowitz — a man who needs no introduction but will get one from me anyway — went to Doha to talk with the Qatars. Alan is the undisputed defender of the Jewish people and State of Israel. While much of his work reaches the public eye, it is the phone calls with desperate families, sleepless nights and sincere emotional commitment to anxious parties, and his indefatigable courage, that truly define his character. I have personally worked with him to successfully bring many of the so-called enemies of the Jewish people to the table. He has been the architect of the strategy to have them retract their hostile actions. He is our generation’s greatest proponent of democracy and rights for all. Not to mention his intellectual prowess, and tireless commitment to Justice. He is certainly not a man who changes his mind or values, on a whim.

Upon his return from Doha, he wrote an op-ed in which he called for a greater attempt at understanding on both sides and a fact-finding commission to resolve conflicting factual claims — something that is very much needed if we are going to make any progress in this conflict. In fact, several publications (including The New York Times) have recently begun looking into the complexity of the situation. They have noted that Qatar’s relationship with terrorist organizations is often exaggerated and that in many cases they have a better track record than other countries in the region (particularly Saudi Arabia). The media, no doubt, will pay increasing attention to the facts of the case as events unfold. But already, with some brief investigation, we see that the conventional wisdom on Qatar is perhaps more simplistic than the reality.

Alan also noted that the Qatars were taking some good steps in order to improve relations with Israel and to help reunify the Gulf States to present a united front to Iran. After all, we certainly do not want to force Qatar into the arms of Iran — a likely possibility if the Gulf Cooperative Council continues its economic sanctions on Qatar. One good step that the Qatars took, that Alan didn’t mention, was their decision to invite and speak with Alan Dershowitz. Qatar’s willingness to engage with people they disagree with will serve them well.

If you want to know what’s really going on with Qatar, or frankly with any serious matter, ignore the speculation of brash bystanders who have been left out of these engagements. In some instances they have been ignored precisely due to their inability to dialogue with anyone in strict confidence. Concerned citizens must step away from the worn-out soapboxes of uninformed commentators who (desperate to cling to any form of prominence) will repeat the same talking points, over
and over again, in absolute denial of which way the wind is actually blowing.

No amount of noise from those seeking fame and unwarranted relevance can ever achieve what a group of earnest and open-minded people can. The stakes are high. In Alan Dershowitz and Nick Muzin, America and Israel have our greatest advocates at the helm. The winds may have actually begun to blow Westward.
This material is distributed by Stonington Strategies LLC on behalf of the State of Qatar. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
Qatar in the Media

prepared for
Rep. Mark Sanford
(Beirut) – Qatar announced a range of significant human rights reforms during 2017 that if carried out would usher in some of the most progressive human rights standards in the gulf region, Human Rights Watch said today in its World Report 2018.

The reforms include legislation that can dramatically improve labor standards for migrant workers, including a migrant domestic workers law, and to grant permanent residency to children born to Qatari mothers and foreign fathers and to some foreign residents living in the country.

“Qatar could have retrenched into authoritarianism in the face of a political crisis but instead has responded to a breakdown in neighborly relations by raising the bar on human rights standards in the Gulf,” said Belkis Wille, senior Qatar researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Implementing its commitments to respecting the rights of Qatari women, millions of migrant workers, and vulnerable refugees in the country will be the real measure of its success in 2018.”

In the 643-page World Report, its 28th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that political leaders willing to stand up for human rights principles showed that it is possible to limit authoritarian populist agendas. When combined with mobilized publics and effective multilateral actors, these leaders demonstrated that the rise of anti-rights governments is not inevitable.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates cut diplomatic relations with Qatar citing political grievances and demands. The crisis precipitated a range of human rights violations against people living in Qatar, infringing on their right to free expression, separating families, and interrupting medical care and education.

On August 3, the Qatari cabinet moved to protect the legal status of foreign nationals in Qatar, approving a draft law that would allow permanent residence for children of Qatari women married to non-Qataris, as well as expatriates who “provide outstanding services to Qatar.” While the law falls short of granting women the same rights as Qatari men to pass citizenship to their children, it would help children of Qatari women secure resident status in Qatar even if they do not have valid passports from another country. The law could also help Emirati, Egyptian, Bahraini, and Saudi nationals who otherwise have no rights to legal residence in the country but who remain there for family or work reasons or because they fear persecution in their home countries.

The government’s most significant reform commitments came in protections for the nearly 2 million migrant workers in the country who make up 95 percent of the country’s workforce but are barred from unionizing or collective action. The government passed a new law to protect migrant domestic workers and pledged to end the sponsorship system of labor employment and to implement a minimum wage.

On August 22, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, ratified Law No.15 on service workers in the home. The law grants labor protections for the first time to Qatar’s 173,742 domestic workers. The new law guarantees domestic workers a maximum 10-hour workday, a weekly rest day, three weeks of annual leave, an end-of-service payment, and healthcare benefits. However, the new law is still weaker than the country’s general Labor Law and does not fully conform to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, the global treaty on domestic workers’ rights.

On October 26, Qatar committed to extensive reforms of its kafala (sponsorship) system, which ties workers to individual sponsors for their visa and employment, replacing it with a system of government-sponsored employment. It also promised to institute a nondiscriminatory minimum wage, improve the payment of wages, end passport confiscation, enhance labor inspections and occupational safety and health, including with a heat mitigation strategy, and improve labor recruitment procedures.

Qatar also unblocked local access to the Doha News website, the country’s only independent news website, which authorities had ordered Qatar’s two internet service providers, Vodafone and Ooredoo, to block on November 30, 2016.
Trump thanks Qatar for efforts to combat terrorism

 Reuters – January 15, 2018 2:10PM EST
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-usa/trump-thanks-qatar-for-efforts-to-combat-terrorism-idUSKBN1F42HT

(Washington) – U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday thanked the ruler of Qatar for “action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms,” the White House said in a statement that suggested a warming of ties between the two countries.

In June, Trump had called on Qatar to stop funding groups that commit terrorism, saying the Gulf nation had historically done so “at a very high level.”

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, who along with Qatar are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, plus non-GCC member Egypt cut off diplomatic, travel and trade ties with Qatar last year, accusing it of supporting militants and their arch-foe Iran.

Qatar denies the charges and says their move is aimed at curtailing its sovereignty.

The White House statement on the call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani did not directly address the rift but said Trump “reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats.”

“The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism,” it said.

Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s Call with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar

White House – January 15, 2018

(Washington) – President Donald J. Trump spoke today with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to discuss ways to strengthen United States-Qatar bilateral relations on security and economic issues. President Trump reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats. The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding. The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.

Qatar signs security agreement with NATO

NATO – January 16, 2018

(Brussels) – The State of Qatar signed a security agreement with NATO at the Alliance’s Headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday (16 January 2018).

At a signing ceremony, Brigadier General Tariq Khalid M. F. Alobaidli, Head of the International Military Cooperation Department, Armed Forces of the State of Qatar, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, stressed the importance of NATO’s cooperation with Qatar in the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI).

This security agreement provides the framework for the protection of exchange of classified information, as defined by all 29 member countries. These agreements are signed by NATO partner countries that wish to engage in cooperation with NATO. All four ICI partner countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and U.A.E.) have now signed individual security agreements with NATO. This enables the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programmes (IPCP) of the ICI countries with NATO to be implemented as effectively as possible.
Qatar Doubles Down on PR Campaign Appealing to U.S. Jews and D.C. Insiders

Amir Tibon – January 18, 2018 7:01PM EST

(Washington) – Qatar has recently expanded its public relations effort aimed at improving its image in the United States, including within the Jewish community.

The wealthy emirate, often criticized for having ties to Hamas, has invited influential American public figures – some of them with close ties to the Trump administration – to visit and meet with its senior leadership, which denies providing support to the Gaza Islamist group and other terror organizations.

Last week, prominent New York attorney Alan Dershowitz published an article on the Hill website, following his visit to Qatar at the invitation of the country’s powerful emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. Dershowitz wrote that he was surprised to hear the Qatari response to many of the accusations hurled at the Gulf state, and urged the Trump administration and Congress to reexamine the issue.

Also last week, Qatar hosted former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, a leading right-wing media commentator and father of White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Huckabee tweeted that he found Doha, Qatar, to be “surprisingly beautiful, modern, and hospitable.”

Another recent visitor to the tiny emirate, whose wealth comes from its huge natural gas reserves, was conservative radio host John Batchelor. He took his popular audio show to Qatar last week at the behest of the country’s leadership, where he was joined by Thaddeus McCotter, a former Republican congressman from Michigan.

The emirate has also flown in representatives of various Washington think tanks on Qatar-funded trips.

Dershowitz, Huckabee and Batchelor all seem to be visiting as part of the Qatari leadership’s efforts to change its reputation among American politicians as a “problematic” nation associated with its support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar hosts some of Hamas’ senior leaders and funds the international media network Al Jazeera, whom neighboring Arab countries have accused of supporting Islamist movements and of destabilizing their regimes.

As part of the attempt to push back against these allegations, Qatar has hired the services of Nick Muzin, a public relations adviser who previously worked as a senior staffer to Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

An Orthodox Jew, Muzin has used his contacts within the Republican Party and the Jewish community to find an ear for Qatar’s arguments in Washington and New York – at a time when the emirate is facing a severe crisis because of attempts by Saudi Arabia to isolate it economically and diplomatically.

When Qatar’s hiring of Muzin’s Stonington Strategies firm was first revealed last summer – for a reported monthly fee of $50,000 – it raised eyebrows in Jewish and conservative circles because of Muzin’s professional background. Cruz, his former boss, has called for the Muslim Brotherhood to be designated a terrorist organization, yet Qatar is considered a major Brotherhood supporter in the Arab world.

Who are the good guys?

Muzin’s first attempts to organize meetings for the Qatari emir and crown prince with Jewish-American leaders ran into public opposition and became a source of debate in the Jewish press. Fast forward a few months, though, and it seems the Qatari public outreach effort is slowly beginning to change some minds in Washington and elsewhere.

Dershowitz’s article – titled “Why is Qatar being blockaded and isolated?” – is a good example, especially in light of the author’s reputation as a staunch supporter of Israel.

He wrote he had “just returned from a private visit to Qatar, at the invitation of and paid for by the Emir. I do not represent...
Qatar’s government and, to be honest, I was initially reluctant to accept his invitation because I had heard that Qatar was contributing to Hamas, which is a terrorist group, and that it was supporting Iran, which is the largest exporter of terrorism in the world. But then I did my own research and concluded that the Qatar issue was more complex and nuanced. So I wanted to see for myself.”

One of the first things that surprised him, Dershowitz wrote, was that as soon as he got to Doha, Qatar’s capital, “I was surprised to read that an Israeli tennis player had been welcomed by the Qatari government to participate in a tennis tournament.” Dershowitz compared this recent event to Saudi Arabia’s refusal last month to allow Israeli chess players to attend the world chess championship held in Riyadh. “Moreover,” he added, “Saudi officials criticized Qatar for allowing an Israeli tennis player to participate in its tournament, and for ordering ‘the Israeli flag to be raised.’”

“This episode,” he concluded, “made clear to me that the Saudis were not necessarily the good guys in their dispute with Qatar.”

After going over Qatar’s reaction to allegations that it supports Hamas and other terror organizations (allegations that Qatar’s leadership denies), Dershowitz wrote: “After hearing these different accounts, I observed that Qatar is quickly becoming the Israel of the Gulf States, surrounded by enemies, subject to boycotts and unrealistic demands, and struggling for its survival. I heard a lot of positive statements regarding Israel from Qatari leaders as well as hints of commercial relationships between these isolated nations.”

In a conversation with Haaretz on Tuesday, Dershowitz emphasized that he has “not come to any firm conclusions” about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Iran and other problematic actors in the region. He did, however, leave the emirate with “somewhat more nuanced” views, as “there appear to be two sides to the story.”

Dershowitz explained that he asked the emir and other senior Qatari officials to assist with the release of two Israeli citizens currently being held in Gaza, as well as the return of the bodies of two slain Israeli soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, killed in action during the 2014 Gaza war. “They told me they’re trying,” he said, stopping short of providing more details on the sensitive subject.

Coincidentally, on Monday – shortly after the publication of Dershowitz’s article and the culmination of Huckabee’s Qatar visit – U.S. President Donald Trump talked with the emir by phone. A White House readout of that conversation stated: “The President thanked the Emir for Qatari action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding.” It continued: “The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism.”

One person unmoved by Dershowitz’s article was Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of the D.C. think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He has written extensively in recent years about Qatar’s ties to Hamas and other terror organizations. “Stick to what you know,” Schanzer tweeted Dershowitz. “Happy to brief you sometime on Qatar. Doha is bad news.” And in a subsequent tweet, Schanzer added: “The man [Dershowitz] defends Israel until he’s blue in the face and then normalizes Hamas’s top patron.”

Dershowitz responded, “Happy to hear facts. Not conclusions. I make up my own mind based on facts.”

Schanzer told Haaretz on Wednesday that “there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they’re not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors.”

Schanzer previously called to designate Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism for its ties to these groups. “If you really want to
see all sides of the story,” he told Haaretz, “you’re not going to get it in Doha.”

The problem with Qatar

Qatar is not only inviting opinion formers to Doha – it is also working to bring its arguments to Washington. Last week, the Qatari minister in charge of aid and assistance to Gaza, Mohammed al-Emadi, visited the U.S. capital, where he met with, among others, members of Congress and diplomats. Emadi came to Washington partly because he is the rare example of an Arab diplomat who, according to press reports, works on a regular basis with Israeli security officials as part of Qatar’s efforts to help reconstruct the Gaza Strip following the 2014 war. By presenting him to decision-makers and influencers in the U.S. capital, the emirate is hoping to convince them it has a positive impact in Gaza and is working with Israel to improve the situation there.

“The frustration with Qatar,” said an Israeli official who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue, “is that they do some good things in Gaza. But at the same time, there are problems arising from their use of Al Jazeera and their ties with Hamas. It’s a complicated situation. They are one of the only countries in the world that truly cares about improving the situation in Gaza. They’re also one of the only countries that has ties to all the bad guys in the region – Hamas, Sunni Islamists and Iran.”

Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein told Haaretz that he has discussed Qatar’s policies with Muzin, whom he has “known and worked closely with for a number of years – ever since he was an important staffer for Sen. Cruz.” Last September, Klein refused to meet with the Qatari leadership, accusing the regime of funding “Islamic terrorists who aim to murder Jews, Americans, Christians and even fellow Muslims.” This week, though, Klein said that while he still has many doubts about Qatar’s role in the region, he is open to hearing the arguments being fleshed out by Dershowitz and others. “I think Dershowitz’s article was totally reasonable,” Klein said. “I think we should check out their claims. If they’re true, then there’s no reason not to go there and engage in dialogue with them. But if they’re lying, then we should have nothing to do with them.”

Klein added, though, that Qatar has to stop airing incitement on Al Jazeera if it ever wants to win the trust of the United States and Israel.

With regards to his conversations with Muzin, Klein said the PR maven “made it clear to me that he wouldn’t take on the job of working for Qatar unless he was assured by the leaders of Qatar that their goal is to make Qatar a more free and civilized society, and to do something about the problems with Al Jazeera.”

Qatar still faces significant criticism on Capitol Hill. Last October, two Republican members of Congress published an article titled “It’s Up to Congress to Hold Qatar Accountable.” Reps. Dan Donovan and Brian Fitzpatrick – both members of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa – wrote that “Qatar is the master of playing all sides. The same country that served as the U.S. Central Command headquarters during the invasion of Iraq and still hosts a critical American air base today also sponsors Hamas’s anti-Israel agenda, gives sanctuary to terrorist leaders and spreads its wealth to terrorist and extremist groups throughout the Middle East.”

In November, a Democratic consulting firm, Bluelight Strategies, which has also worked with Qatari opposition leaders opposing the country’s regime, circulated a political memo among Democrats in Congress urging them to attack Republicans and the Trump administration for turning a blind eye to Qatar’s ties with Hamas and other terror groups. The memo, titled “Emerging GOP Vulnerability on Terrorism, Iran and Israel,” highlighted the Trump administration’s confusing policy regarding the Gulf crisis, and urged Democrats to speak out on the issue: “The more the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans are called out for embracing Hamas state sponsorship of terrorism, the more the message will penetrate.”

This view of Qatar as a country that tries to have it both ways is still prevalent in Washington and, as of now, it remains the main challenge standing in the way of the emirate’s charm offensive.
US praises Qatar ties, calls for Gulf unity

The United States praised Qatar for its improved counterterrorism cooperation Tuesday and warned that its rift with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbors has hurt the fight against extremism.

The United States praised Qatar for its improved counterterrorism cooperation Tuesday and warned that its rift with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbors has hurt the fight against extremism.

Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a diplomatic boycott of Qatar and closed their frontiers last year, accusing the gas-rich emirate of cosying up to Iran and sponsoring Islamist groups.

US President Donald Trump, fresh from a successful trip to Riyadh, seemed at first to take the Saudi side in the dispute and demanded that Qatar, which denies the charges, change its behavior.

But US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have been working to bring the dispute to an end and bind both Qatar and its opponents into a deeper mutual alliance.

On Tuesday, these diplomatic efforts produced the first of what may become an annual US-Qatari Strategic Dialogue, hosted by Tillerson and Mattis for their counterparts from Qatar.

In opening remarks, neither side criticized Saudi Arabia or its ambitious crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman by name, but both sides stressed the importance of unity in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"As the Gulf dispute nears the eight-month mark the United States remains as concerned
today as we were at its outset," Tillerson said, opening the meeting of senior US and Qatari officials.

"This dispute has had direct negative consequences economically and militarily for those involved as well as the United States."

Saudi Arabia is also a long-time ally of the United States and is bigger, richer and more influential than Qatar, which lies on a peninsula off its neighbor's Gulf coast in gas-rich waters.

But Qatar has parlayed its riches into an outsize influence with key economic investments in Western countries underpinning ties and winning prizes like hosting rights for the 2022 World Cup.

It has also annoyed its neighbors by funding and hosting the Al-Jazeera satellite network, which broadcasts Arabic news and views across the region that make some governments uncomfortable.

And it has fostered ties with some Islamist groups, giving it a role in regional crises that is unwelcome to some leaders.

Sometimes this is helpful to the United States: The Taliban has an office in Qatar, which serves as a back-channel for the US to get messages to their Afghan foe even as their troops fight.

But Qatar's ties to groups like the Palestinian movement Hamas, who the United States views as terrorists, have hurt ties.

Nevertheless, Qatar is also host to the huge Al-Udeid air base, a hub for allied aircraft in many Middle East conflict and home to thousands of US personnel and a forward command center.

Tillerson and Mattis both praised Qatar's improved cooperation in counterterrorism and praised the military relationship, while expressing the hope that the spat with Saudi would end.
Qatar signs $12 billion deal to buy F-15 jets from U.S.

(Reuters) - Qatar’s Ministry of Defense said on Wednesday the country signed a deal to buy F-15 fighter jets from the United States for $12 billion.

The deal was completed despite the Gulf country being criticized recently by U.S. President Donald Trump for supporting terrorism.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and representatives from Qatar were set to meet Wednesday to seal the agreement, a source familiar with the deal told Reuters. Bloomberg News reported the deal was for 36 jets.

The sale will increase security cooperation and interoperability between the U.S. and Qatar, the Pentagon said in an emailed statement on Wednesday.

Defense Secretary Mattis and Qatari Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid al-Attiyah also discussed the current state of operations against the ISIS and the importance of de-escalating tensions so all partners in the gulf region can focus on next steps in meeting common goals, the Pentagon added.

In November, the United States approved possible sale of up to 72 F-15QA aircraft to Qatar for $21.1 billion. Boeing Co is the prime contractor on the fighter jet sale to the Middle East nation.

Boeing declined to comment.

Trump on Friday accused Qatar of being a “high-level” sponsor of terrorism, potentially hindering the U.S. Department of State’s efforts to ease
heightening tensions and a blockade of the Gulf nation by Arab states and others.

Reporting by Ankit Ajmera in Bengaluru and Mike Stone in Washington; Editing by Chris Sanders and Lisa Shumaker
ZOA's Morton Klein Secretly Visited Qatar This Month. Here's Why He Went – and What He Did There

The Zionist Organization of America leader denounced Qatar just last year, but flew to Doha this month at the Emir's invitation: 'I spoke truth to power about anti-Semitism,' he explains in an interview with Haaretz.

Amir Tibon (Washington, D.C.) Jan 30, 2018 2:55 PM

WASHINGTON – When Qatar's public relations efforts to change its reputation within the U.S. Jewish community were first published in
September, one of the first Jewish-American leaders to attack the rich Emirate was Mort Klein of the Zionist Organization of America. Klein, like many other Jewish leaders, was offered an opportunity to meet with the Emir of Qatar during the UN General Assembly. He refused the invitation, and put out a press release explaining why:

"ZOA has decided that, at this point, we can’t allow the imprimatur of ZOA to be involved with the potential of legitimizing in any way Qatar’s disgraceful activities. ZOA would be interested in meeting with them if they first take explicit steps to change their monstrous behavior."

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Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani attends Qatar's National Day celebrations in Doha, Qatar, December 18, 2017. 

HANDOUT/REUTERS
Earlier in January, however, Klein had visited Qatar at the invitation of the Emir, and had a private meeting with him in Doha, the Emirate's capital city. The visit, which had not previously been reported, took place at the same time that other prominent public figures who are known as supporters of the Israeli government, such as Alan Dershowitz and Mike Huckabee, visited Doha. Their visits attracted strong criticism from other supporters of Israel, who warned that the Qatars were using "pro-Israel" names to whitewash their support for Hamas and other terror organizations.

Haaretz independently confirmed through three different sources that Klein visited Qatar. When reached for comment on Monday, Klein explained what caused him to change his mind and visit the Emirate. "They invited me to go a number of times – in September, October, November and December," he said. "At first I refused, because of their support for Hamas and the anti-Semitism being broadcast on Al Jazeera. But over time, I saw that more and more Jewish leaders were going there, and I realized that at this point, they won't be able to use me for propaganda, because everyone is already going, but I might use the visit to push them on these issues."

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Klein's explanation shows the extent to which Qatar has succeeded, in just a few months, to make inroads into the right-wing segments of the U.S. Jewish community. The list of Jewish leaders who have visited the country in recent months includes Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations; Jack Rosen of the American Jewish Congress (Rosen told Haaretz that "I have been travelling to Qatar and the region for many years ... I pay my own way and I am not part of this new group of leaders who have been going recently."); Rabbi Menachem Genack of the Orthodox Union; Martin Oliner of the Religious Zionists of America; and the latest, Dershowitz – who is active on many fronts as a vocal supporter of Israel – and Klein.

What these leaders share is that none of them are considered critics of the
right-wing Netanyahu government in Israel or the Trump administration in Washington.

Dershowitz identifies himself as a Democrat, but over the past year he has published articles and offered commentary in favor of both Trump and Netanyahu – not just on policy issues, but also regarding their legal troubles and corruption investigations. All the other names come from organizations that support Israeli settlements and have reacted positively to Trump's policy toward Israel.

Klein told Haaretz that the Qatari choice to engage with "right-of-center Zionists" was noticeable. "They didn't invite people from J Street, Americans for Peace Now or the Reform Movement," he said. "I think it's interesting." Klein said another factor in his decision to go to Qatar was the fact that U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin praised Qatar publicly for signing a memorandum with the United States against terror funding.

Like most of the other Jewish leaders invited to Qatar, Klein's trip was paid for by the Emirate ("I didn't take anything else from them," he emphasized). During his visit, he met with a number of senior officials in the country, including the Emir. "They knew that I'm a very tough critic of them," he said. Just this past June, ZOA called on the Trump administration to cancel the license of Qatar Airways to fly into the United States because of Qatar's support for terrorism.

"I came there with a 50 page report written by our research department, with all the problems related to Qatar," Klein said. "From their ties to Hamas to the anti-Semitic contents on Al Jazeera, and the anti-Semitic books in the Doha International Book Fair. I brought this with me to the meeting with the Emir. We sat for close to two hours and I shared everything with him. I told the Qataris that it's good to have verbal assurances of change, but that it will require many months of actions from them, to convince me that something has truly changed. They denied supporting Hamas and said their work in Gaza was being coordinated with Israel."
Klein said that he "decided it was important for me to speak truth to power, especially when the Emir repeatedly invited me to give them my views on what they needed to do." He added that "our organization's mission is to help Israel and the Jewish people. There is a long history of Jewish leaders going to speak to bad actors on behalf of our people." Among the examples, he mentioned that "Yitzhak Shamir met the Palestinians in Madrid. [Menachem] Begin met with Anwar Sadat." Klein also emphasized that "this is the head of a country, not the head of Hamas." According to him, the visit was an important opportunity "to tell them what they need to do better."

On the Palestinian issue, Klein said, "I told the Emir why his speech on Jerusalem before the UN was wrong. I said that Jerusalem has been a Jewish city for thousands of years. I also said that the Arab Peace Initiative, which they support, would be a total disaster. He said that on this issue, we'll have to respectfully disagree. The Qatars pointed out that many Israelis, such as Shimon Peres, supported this initiative."
Other Jewish leaders who have traveled to Qatar, such as Hoenlein and Dershowitz, offered somewhat similar explanations for their decision to visit the Emirate. Hoenlein claimed he was trying to assist with returning the bodies of two Israeli soldiers held by Hamas; Dershowitz said he want to "investigate" whether Qatar had truly changed its stance on Hamas and other issues.

Rosen, who told Haaretz his visit to Qatar was separate from the wave of other Jewish leaders' visits, noted that "I can’t speak to their objectives or motives but I believe that positive results in these matters are better obtained by using discretion."

The visits by Jewish leaders to Qatar have been met with strong criticism from within the Jewish community. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, an Orthodox leader from New Jersey who made headlines in recent years for his harsh attacks on the Obama administration, published a number of articles criticizing the Jewish leaders who have gone to Qatar. One of them, published in November in Breitbart, carried the headline "Jewish Community for Sale to Qatar?"

Boteach wrote in it that "It has been dispiriting to watch how some in our community are seemingly up for sale. There has been no demand that before embracing Qatar they first stop funding Hamas terrorists. And those Jewish individuals hired by Qatar and accepting Qatari money are no doubt aware that their embrace will lessen the pressure on Qatar, which is currently experiencing a severe boycott because of its terror-funding activities."

Yigal Carmon of the Middle East Media Research Institute, a pro-Israel organization that monitors Arab media outlets, published an article recently under the headline "Qatar – the Emirate That Fools Them All – and Its Enablers", in which he warned that "It is sad to see American Jewish leaders
bolstering anti-Semitic stereotypes by ignorantly intervening in internal conflicts that do not concern them, complex inter-Arab conflicts which are difficult to assess even as observers."

Carmon specifically criticized Dershowitz for comparing Qatar's regional isolation in the Gulf to that of Israel in the broader Middle East. He called Dershowitz "one of the enablers of Qatar", before listing the Emirate's support for Hamas and other terror organizations.

Jonathan Schanzer of the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies told Haaretz two weeks ago that "there is nothing wrong with analysts and intellectuals traveling to Qatar to learn about the situation there. The problem is that during those visits, they're not hearing the other side of the story. They are getting the government line and then they go home. They need to hear also from Qatar’s critics. There is a lot of material they should become aware of about Qatar’s ties to Hamas, Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood and other problematic actors."

Coincidentally, the argument within the Jewish community on Qatar is happening at the same time that the Trump administration is getting closer to the Emirate. This week, a senior Qatari delegation is visiting Washington. Two weeks ago, Trump had a phone call with the Emir, in which he thanked him for Qatar's "action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms, including being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral memorandum of understanding."

**Gone Viral**
Muzin and Dershowitz are on the right side of history

SHMULLY HECHT | JANUARY 25, 2018, 11:49 PM |

It is easy for ignorant observers to mischaracterize behind the scenes negotiations. All too often, pundits trade measured speculation for sensationalized, libelous, and condescending accusations – after all, it sells better. But this is not how diplomacy works and is certainly not how real political change is ever achieved. The informed person knows that commentary from the overhyped peanut gallery is at best foolish and at worst intellectually dishonest.

A few months ago, Nick Muzin asked me to attend meetings with influential global thought leaders who are also prominent in the Jewish world, and the Emir of Qatar. I have known Nick for over 15 years. We have studied Jewish texts together, celebrated Shabbos at each other’s homes, and shared events with world leaders at Shabtai, the Jewish Society at Yale. Nick is a dear friend, a Jewish leader, and an inspiration for those who seek to reconcile a traditional Jewish life with the modern world. So needless to say, I was astounded that he was asking me to meet with the head of a country that funds Hamas, a terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of the State of Israel, had founded Al Jazeera, and was consistently flirting with Iran.

I consulted both a former National Security Advisor and a former Ambassador of Israel. Both were now at liberty to speak freely and give candid advice. They told me that I should engage with Qatar. Unlike Iran, they explained, Qatar had the potential to amend its ways and align itself with the West. If Qatari leaders wanted to meet with every prominent Jew they could get into a room, that was a good sign. For unlike others in the region, (and the list is shrinking) they were willing to engage. Why should we fight our enemies when we could possibly turn them into allies? A mere cursory reading of world history compels us to try.

I attended the meeting expecting a full charm offensive from the Emir. I was pleasantly surprised. While there was no shortage of controversy and contention between many of us and the Qatars, we were still able to have a deep and thoughtful dialogue. Don’t get me wrong. Between Qatar’s ties to Hamas, the routine anti-Semitism on Al Jazeera, and their friendliness with Iran, there was a lot of work to be done to come to some kind of understanding. The Emir at times, referred to Israel as Palestine. Yet it was clear that everyone around the table was there to try and bridge the very wide gaps.
Over the past few months, I have seen sentiments on Qatar within the Jewish community shift dramatically from mostly negative to cautiously optimistic. This shift doesn’t come from an aggressive white-washing public relations campaign or on the heels of bribery, as some have suggested. These shifting sentiments are in response to Qatar’s outreach to the Jewish community. Many prominent Jewish leaders have flown to Qatar and have spent quality time with the country’s leadership. There they have discussed their concerns, built personal relationships, and have made suggestions about how the Qataris can improve their relationship with the United States and Israel. And from what I’ve heard, the Qataris have begun to listen and engage. That’s more than can be said for many other countries in the region.

Recently, Harvard Professor Alan Dershowitz — a man who needs no introduction but will get one from me anyway — went to Doha to talk with the Qataris. Alan is the undisputed defender of the Jewish people and State of Israel. While much of his work reaches the public eye, it is the phone calls with desperate families, sleepless nights and sincere emotional commitment to anxious parties, and his indefatigable courage, that truly define his character. I have personally worked with him to successfully bring many of the so-called enemies of the Jewish people to the table. He has been the architect of the strategy to have them retract their hostile actions. He is our generation’s greatest proponent of democracy and rights for all. Not to mention his intellectual prowess, and tireless commitment to Justice. He is certainly not a man who changes his mind or values, on a whim.

Upon his return from Doha, he wrote an op-ed in which he called for a greater attempt at understanding on both sides and a fact-finding commission to resolve conflicting factual claims — something that is very much needed if we are going to make any progress in this conflict. In fact, several publications (including The New York Times) have recently begun looking into the complexity of the situation. They have noted that Qatar’s relationship with terrorist organizations is often exaggerated and that in many cases they have a better track record than other countries in the region (particularly Saudi Arabia). The media, no doubt, will pay increasing attention to the facts of the case as events unfold. But already, with some brief investigation, we see that the conventional wisdom on Qatar is perhaps more simplistic than the reality.

Alan also noted that the Qataris were taking some good steps in order to improve relations with Israel and to help reunify the Gulf States to present a united front to Iran. After all, we certainly do not want to force Qatar into the arms of Iran — a likely possibility if the Gulf Cooperative Council continues its economic sanctions on Qatar. One good step that the Qataris took, that Alan didn’t mention, was their decision to invite and speak with Alan Dershowitz. Qatar’s willingness to engage with people they disagree with will serve them well.

If you want to know what’s really going on with Qatar, or frankly with any serious matter, ignore the speculation of brash bystanders who have been left out of these engagements. In some instances they have been ignored precisely due to their inability to dialogue with anyone in strict confidence. Concerned citizens must step away from the worn-out soapboxes of uninformed commentators who (desperate to cling to any form of prominence) will repeat the same talking points, over
and over again, in absolute denial of which way the wind is actually blowing.

No amount of noise from those seeking fame and unwarranted relevance can ever achieve what a group of earnest and open-minded people can. The stakes are high. In Alan Dershowitz and Nick Muzin, America and Israel have our greatest advocates at the helm. The winds may have actually begun to blow Westward.
This material is distributed by Stonington Strategies LLC on behalf of the State of Qatar. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
Joint Statement Following U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin’s Meetings with His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, and Qatari Officials

10/30/2017

DOHA, QATAR – U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin has visited Doha and met His Highness the Emir and His Excellency the Prime Minister in which they have reaffirmed the joint efforts between Qatar and the United States to defeat terrorism and its financing.

This visit underscores the robust ties between the State of Qatar and the United States, and included meetings with H.E. the Minister of Finance Ali Shareef Al Emadi and other high-level Qatari officials to discuss further opportunities for expanded cooperation.

The United States and Qatar have a shared understanding that the improvements initiated in the past several months, outlined in the July 11, 2017 Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries on counterterrorism financing cooperation, form the first step of what must be a sustained and enduring campaign to counter terrorist financing, with a strong emphasis on threats posed by Hizballah, al-Qaeda, the Nusrah Front, ISIS, and other terrorist organizations.

Secretary Mnuchin

“We agreed to enhance our cooperation to counter the financing of terrorism in key areas of mutual concern including by substantially increasing the sharing of information on terrorist financiers in the region, placing greater emphasis on charitable and money service business sectors in Qatar to prevent terrorists from continuing to use those sectors for illicit financing purposes, developing a Qatari domestic designations regime in line with international standards and taking joint actions against terrorist financiers. We affirm that the United States and Qatar will significantly increase our cooperation on these issues to ensure that Qatar is a hostile environment for terrorist financing.”

H.E. Minister of Finance Ali Shareef Al Emadi

“Our talks with Secretary Mnuchin have been highly productive, and underline our nations’ shared determination to eradicate terrorism wherever it takes root. We agreed to further our high level of joint cooperation to counter terror financing in key areas of our mutual concern. Qatar is working closely with the United States to enforce financial sanctions against ISIS, AQAP and other terrorist groups. The MoU signed in July represents a commitment from Qatar to strengthen our combined counter-terrorism efforts with the United States through shared intelligence and coordination between government agencies. This is a clear indicator of our long-standing political commitment to combatting money laundering and terror financing.”

Source: US Department of the Treasury
Trump thanks Qatar for efforts to combat terrorism

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday thanked the ruler of Qatar for “action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms,” the White House said in a statement that suggested a warming of ties between the two countries.

In June, Trump had called on Qatar to stop funding groups that commit terrorism, saying the Gulf nation had historically done so “at a very high level.”

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, who along with Qatar are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, plus non-GCC member Egypt cut off diplomatic, travel and trade ties with Qatar last year, accusing it of supporting militants and their arch-foe Iran.

Qatar denies the charges and says their move is aimed at curtailing its sovereignty.

The White House statement on the call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani did not directly address the rift but said Trump “reiterated his support for a strong, united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats.”

“The leaders discussed areas in which the United States and Qatar can partner to bring more stability to the region, counter malign Iranian influence, and defeat terrorism,” it said.

Reporting by Tim Ahmann; Editing by Chizu Nomiyama and Bill Trott
The Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser al-Thani met yesterday with Scott Taylor, a Republican member of the US Congress, and his accompanying delegation, during their visit to the country. During the meeting, they reviewed the relations between both countries, in addition to a number of international issues of mutual interest.
Tentative Schedule for CODEL to Doha

Day 1
9:30am-11:30am
Meeting at the US embassy for general briefing on Qatar/US relationship. We can schedule specialized briefings on any particular topics of interests. These could include Qatar’s role in military operations and intelligence gathering, education and health care systems, their current economic expansion, their energy policy, or other topics of interest to the delegation. We just would need advanced notice on what they want to be briefed on.

11:45am-12:45pm
Lunch meeting with ExxonMobile representatives for conversation about experiences with liquefied natural gas production in Qatar and potential lessons that could be applied to similar ventures in the United States.

1:30am-5:30pm
Meeting at the Al Udeid Air Base for briefing on current military operations in the region. We can schedule specialized briefings on any particular topics of interests.

6:00pm-8:00pm
Meeting at the Emiri Diwan with His Highness the Emir and the Secretary for Investment Affairs to His Highness the Emir Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad.

8:30pm-9:30pm
Dinner with His Excellency Mohammed Al Emadi, the Qatari Ambassador to Gaza.

Day 2
9:30am-10:30am
Tour of the Museum of Islamic Art

11:00am-12:30pm
Meeting with the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) to discuss potential investment opportunities in the United States and continued partnerships between US and Qatari firms.

12:30pm-1:00pm
Tour of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy of the 2022 World Cup at the Al Bidda Tower to discuss effects of the World Cup and Qatar’s vision for sustained economic growth after the event.

1:30pm-2:30pm
Lunch with the strategic advisor for the Emir, Dr. Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali-Thani.

3:00pm-4:00pm
Tour of soccer stadium under construction for the 2022 World Cup.

4:30pm-7:00pm
Tour of the Qatar Foundation and meeting with students in Education City from the delegations’ respective states.

8:00pm
Dinner and Tour at Katara
American values are not always so dissimilar from those in conservative Muslim countries, posits Gary Wasserman (SFS ’66), a former professor of government at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Doha, Qatar, in his recent book reflecting on his experiences living and working in Doha.

Wasserman taught from 2006 to 2014, joining the SFS-Q faculty just one year after the institution opened its doors.

Since his return to the United States from Doha, Wasserman has dedicated his time to writing his book, “The Doha Experiment: Arab Kingdom, Catholic College, Jewish Teacher,” which was published Nov. 14 and discusses his eight years in the region.

Wasserman highlights his efforts to reach across boundaries and describes his experience administering a liberal education in a region of the world unfamiliar to many Americans. Through personal anecdotes, Wasserman discusses not only the lessons he sought to teach but also how his interactions with his students changed his own understanding of the world.

The Hoya sat down with Wasserman to learn more about his experience abroad.
You have previously mentioned the unusual nature of teaching as a Jewish professor at a Catholic school in a predominantly Muslim country, so what inspired you to go to Qatar?

I had been working mostly in Washington as a political consultant, then I taught for a year in China, and I enjoyed the experience of teaching overseas. It was frankly easier to get a job overseas, and I also thought this would be an interesting, challenging opportunity. Now, unfortunately, when I told my family and friends about this, they all looked at me like I was crazy, you know?

This was a few years after 9/11, and a Jewish professor going to the Middle East to teach sounded to many of them like an act of lunacy, and I began to wonder about my own sanity. I talk in the book about how you have to start out with a kind of “You’re going to do what?” to getting to know real people on the ground and finding that the categories that we use for understanding people we don’t know very well tend to fall away.

Your book talks about the tension between Qatar’s traditional society and Georgetown’s mission of liberal education. Can you elaborate on that?

Georgetown was set up for foreign service, essentially to educate bureaucrats in becoming administrators, but Georgetown itself — the administrators and teachers — saw themselves as providing a liberal education.

Grounding in philosophy and economics and history and politics, which was more oriented to educating the whole person, they weren’t trying to train students into a certain profession. They were trying to educate young people in this tradition of liberal education. There was that disagreement and a kind of implicit misunderstanding, but I think the Qataris and the Qatari leaders were very welcoming of what Georgetown was doing, including courses like the “Problem of God” for instance, and respecting Georgetown’s scholars’ willingness to take on what they were doing. They gave Georgetown a lot of
You also talked about how Qatar was very different from its other Middle Eastern counterparts in terms of its willingness to globalize and its acceptance of Western cultural attitudes. Do you think that these schools that are coming in are a positive force in this regard?

Qatar and many of the nations are in flux. They’re very much sorting through what parts of their tradition they want to retain and what parts have to be adapted to the modern world. We’re not exactly the epitome of liberal societies now in the world. I think all countries adapt themselves in different ways to different pressures, different interests and different values. They are going through that adaptation, and I think they’re doing it with the resources they have. They have a lot of resources, a lot of money, and they have an enlightened leadership that I think understands that Qatar is going to prosper and survive in the world, and in the future they’re going to have to adapt to that globalized world.

Can you share one of those experiences that you thought was one of the more interesting ones you had there or that struck you?

I had a student in one of my classes who was always kind of bringing up Israel or Zionism in an international relations class; it seemed to always go back to the question of the involvement of Zionists in a little bit of conspiratorial stuff he was thinking. And it came out frequently in class, and we talked about it in private, in quiet, and of course, he didn’t quite see it that way. I suggested he look more into the topic, but I didn’t think it was a very successful discussion that we had.

About a year or two later, he came back, and he had spent a semester at Georgetown’s main campus, and he had taken a class in Jewish civilization. He came back and he said, “You know, I never would have taken this class if I hadn’t been in your course.” It was one of those unexpected benefits.
have those kind of encounters that you don’t think are having an impact, but in fact, they do.

**You mention you wanted this to be a positive, vital force in the region. Do you think we’re succeeding?**

I would say it’s incomplete. I think it’s succeeding in that it’s surviving and it’s adapting to the environment, and it’s succeeding in that it’s continuing to educate students. They’re continuing to graduate, and they’re continuing to think well of their experience at Georgetown and influencing the broader society.

I think it is succeeding. Whether it succeeds sufficiently and whether it is preserved remains to be seen, and part of it is how people kind of engage in what’s going on and spread some of the liberal ideas. Does press freedom expand in the society? Do women have more rights than they now have? There will be different markers, and I don’t think you go in there thinking your university is going to change the broader society or the broader region, but you do hope that over time, some of the ideas you’ve talked about have an impact.

**What is something that you would like to see mentioned, or focused on more?**

I would like to see more interaction between the campuses. I’d like to see more people not interacting on the basis of religion, but just more connections between the main campus and Doha, between the very active Jewish civilization groups on the campus and more student activities between the campuses — a little bit of understanding of the students — because I think the students there have something to offer the main campus and vice versa, kind of getting away from these stereotypes, getting to know real people.

**Is there anything you would like to add? Anything you think is important to you or to the book or to your experience in Doha?**
What we’re doing in Doha is lowering walls. I think we came with the idea of being a modern missionary. We were going to deliver the truth in our campuses, and I think over time we’ve seen the importance of listening and trying to lower the walls a little bit between us and the rest of the region.

Have a reaction to this article? Write a letter to the editor.
Additional Entities to be Involved

Throughout this roadshow, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce will be able to engage directly with businesses and export promotion entities in the United States. This will provide Qatar the opportunity to showcase its progress when it comes to economic openness and diversification.

USQBC requests that other business-related entities from Qatar participate in this roadshow. Given the reach of the roadshow having representatives from key parts of Qatar’s economy would be critical in showcasing it as a destination for business and trade.

Outlined below are additional Ministries/entities USQBC believes should participate in the roadshow:

**Manateq:** Manateq’s special economic zone could be a destination for companies USQBC engages with throughout the roadshow. Each destination on this roadshow includes manufacturing and industry in their primary sectors. USQBC hopes to be able to inform US companies and export promotion entities on Manateq’s offerings.

**Qatar Financial Centre:** Similar to Manateq, Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) offers US companies an additional method of operating in Qatar. It is critical to inform US companies on exactly how to do business in Qatar. It would be beneficial to have QFC representatives present to answer any questions US companies may have regarding the economic zone.

**Qatar Science & Technology Park:** Silicon Valley, included in this roadshow, is the world’s hub for science and technology development. Orlando has some of the largest simulation and IT facilities in the United States and is also included in this roadshow. These are critical destinations for an entity like QSTP that could encourage companies to use its facilities in Qatar and would provide QSTP a good platform to promote its platform.

**The Qatar Chamber of Commerce & Industry:** QCCI represents Qatar’s private sector. This roadshow could offer QCCI the opportunity to showcase Qatari companies that could do business in the United States and also present potential partners to American companies looking to do business in Qatar. QCCI’s representation would also allow for more discussion about specific sectors of the Qatari economy based on their membership. Further, QCCI is regularly engaged when USQBC brings trade missions to Qatar, thus, assisting them in building relationships in the United States is critical.
Additional Entities to be Involved

The Qatar Businessmen Association: Similar to QCCI, having the private sector represented in this business and economic roadshow is critical. USQBC wishes to engage the entirety of the Qatari private sector and an entity like QBA is a good representative in lieu of having a delegation with company representatives. USQBC would like to expand its work with QBA in connecting with American companies and export promotion entities.

Qatar Development Bank (QDB): QDB focuses on the development of the industrial, tourism, educational, and healthcare sectors of the Qatari economy. Several of the roadshow destinations have industries that focus on these sectors. It would be beneficial to both QDB and US entities to have representatives present to discuss the focus of QDB, especially as it pertains to new business opportunities in Qatar. QDB also works heavily in financing small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Qatar. These SMEs could benefit from engaging with US companies met on the roadshow.

Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC): Entrepreneurship is a key component of Qatar’s economic development. US companies wishing to do business in Qatar can assist further in the economic diversification that entrepreneurship is leading to in Qatar. Promoting QBIC as an incubation entity and showcasing Qatar’s diverse workforce would be beneficial for this roadshow. This is especially true regarding Silicon Valley, a destination on the roadshow, where entrepreneurship has build the tech industry there.

Qatar Investment Authority: Qatar Investment Authority committed to investing $45B in the United States over a period of approximately five years. This roadshow will engage with a number of entities in the United States with potential investment opportunities and will provide QIA representatives a great opportunity to engage with these entities.

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy: As Qatar’s Supreme Committee prepares for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, they are in need of US companies that may be able to provide products and services for the event. USQBC regularly engages with companies that may offer valuable products and services in preparation for the World Cup and this roadshow would provide the Supreme Committee with opportunities to engage with some of these companies.
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<td><strong>Miami, Florida</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday 1(^{st}) of April</td>
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<td>Wednesday 4(^{th}) of April</td>
<td>• Qatar-Miami Business &amp; Investment Forum, and B2B.</td>
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<td>• Dinner for the Qatari delegation and Miami VIP representing major sectors</td>
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<td>Thursday 5(^{th}) of April</td>
<td>• HE welcoming His Highness the Amir in Miami.</td>
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<td>• Sector Focus meetings for businessmen</td>
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<td>Friday 6(^{th}) of April</td>
<td>• Sector Focus meetings for businessmen</td>
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<td>• Bilateral meetings with the government and semi-governmental bodies</td>
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<td>Sat-Sun 7(^{th}) &amp; 8(^{th}) of April</td>
<td>• Weekend</td>
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<td>• Qatar Showcase in Miami</td>
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<p>| <strong>Washington D.C.</strong> |                                                                        |       |
| Monday 9(^{th}) of April | • Departure to Washington D.C.                                         |       |
|                        | • Bilateral meetings with the government and semi-governmental bodies |       |
| Tuesday 10(^{th}) of April | • B2B                                                                  |       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> of April | • Dinner according to the Amiri Diwan schedule  
• Businessmen meetings with the International organizations  
• Bilateral meetings with the government and semi-governmental bodies |
| Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> of April  | • Departure to Charleston                                               |
| Friday 13<sup>th</sup> of April  | • Qatar Business & Investment Forum, and B2B.  
• Bilateral meetings for HE the Minister with the government and semi-governmental bodies  
• Dinner for the Qatari delegation and Charleston VIP representing major sectors |
| Sat-Sun 14<sup>th</sup> &15<sup>th</sup> of April | • Weekend  
• Qatar Showcase in Charleston                                           |
| Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of April  | • Sector Focus meetings for businessmen  
• Bilateral meetings for HE the Minister with the government and semi-governmental bodies. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 17(^{th}) of April</td>
<td>• Departure to Raleigh</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Wednesday 18\(^{th}\) of April | • Qatar Business & Investment Forum, and B2B.  
  • Bilateral meetings for HE the Minister with the government and semi-governmental bodies  
  • Dinner for the Qatari delegation with Raleigh VIP representing major sectors. |
| Thursday 19\(^{th}\) of April | • Sector Focus meetings for businessmen  
  • Meeting with Bilateral meetings for HE the Minister with the government and semi-governmental bodies |
| Friday 20\(^{th}\) of April  | • Departure to Doha                                                                                                                      |
| Sat-Sun 21\(^{st}\) & 22\(^{nd}\) of April | • Weekend  
  • Qatar Showcase in Raleigh                                                                                                           |
Qatar- US Economic Forum

Wednesday, the 04th of April 2018 in Miami
8:00am – 16:00 pm
Venue: T/C

Provisional Program

Event Programme

08:00 – 09:00  Registration of US Companies
Welcome Coffee

9:00 – 09:45  Forum Opening

- H.E. Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani
  Minister of Economy & Commerce
  State of Qatar

- Mr. Wilbur L. Ross
  US Secretary of Commerce

Remarks by:

- H.E. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Jassim Al-Thani
  Qatar Chamber of Commerce

- H.E. Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani
  Chairman
  Qatari Businessmen Association

- Qatar US Business Council

- US Chamber of Commerce
09:45 – 12:00  Sessions

09:45 – 10:45
Session 1: Qatar Challenges, opportunities for Joint Projects & Investments, Tourism and Transportation.

Moderator: T/C

- H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Thani – CEO Qatar Investment Authority
- H.E Mr. Akbar Al Baker – CEO of Qatar Airways
- Mr. Hassan Al Ibrahim – Deputy CEO of Qatar Tourism Authority
- Mr. Nabeel Mohammed Al-Bouainain – CEO of Qatari Diar

Venue: Main plenary room.

11:00 – 12:00
Session 2: The 2022 World Cup, Program Delivery, challenges and Opportunities for Qatari – US Cooperation, logistics and Qatar challenges in the Food Security.

Moderator: T/C

- H.E. Mr. Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General, Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy
- Sheikh Meshal bin Jabr Al-Thani, Director of Energy Policies and International Cooperation, Qatar Petroleum
- Mr. Fahad Rashid al Kaabi – CEO of Manateq
- Mr. Abdulaziz bin Nasser Al-Khalifa - CEO of Qatar Development Bank (QDB),
- Mr. Mohamed Badr Hashem Al-Sada - CEO of Hassad Food

Venue: Main plenary room.

12:00 – 16:00  B2B Meetings and Networking

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