

From: Finestone, Josh M.
Sent: Wed, 10 Jul 2019 11:02:32
To: curtis_swager@gardner.senate.gov; Khrestin, Igor (Gardner)
Cc: Aho, Loren K.
Subject: Good morning team Gardner
Sensitivity: Normal

Curtis and Igor,

As a staffer on the Hill with a portfolio of issues that encompasses foreign affairs and international relations, our team wanted to bring this recently published article to your attention.

Our team – which includes myself, former Congressman Bart Stupak and Josh Raymond from Venable; Chris Berardini from Iron Bridge Strategies; and John Ariale Gregg Hartley and Russ Orban from Husch Blackwell Strategies - represent the State of Qatar.

As their government relations team, we have talked to many of you about the subject matter of the article below – **the *Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha, Qatar*** – and this article goes into great detail on the important role this base plays in the United States' foreign policy strategy on security, counterterrorism and the ongoing international pressure on Iran to discontinue its nuclear programs.

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Al Udeid: Home to 11,000 U.S. troops and critical to winning the War on Terror

By POLITICO FOCUS CONTRIBUTOR, SPONSORED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF QATAR

07/02/2019 06:01 PM EDT

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Central to many of these discussions is the Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha, Qatar. One of the largest U.S. military bases outside of the U.S., Al Udeid has grown increasingly important to the U.S.'s ongoing military operations in the Persian Gulf, particularly as relationships with other Persian Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia have become increasingly complex.

Spurred by a Defense Cooperation Agreement signed by the U.S. and Qatar after Operation Desert Storm, Qatar built the Al Udeid Air Base in 1996 for \$1 billion.

After the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. secretly used the base for the first time to position Air Force aircraft in the leadup to the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Home to the U.S. Combined Air Operations Center, the U.S. Air Force Central Command Forward Headquarters, and U.S. Central Command's Forward Headquarters since 2003, the base's role in U.S. operations was revealed to the public in 2002, and it soon became crucial to air operations in Iraq.

By 2003, the U.S. began shifting more of its air operations from Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base to Qatar, as antagonism toward any U.S. presence in the country had already led to numerous terror attacks on U.S. soldiers in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s and eventually led to increased operational restrictions enforced by the Saudi government. Since the end of the first Persian Gulf War, Osama bin Laden had publicly demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the holy sites of Mecca and Medina, even citing this as the motivation behind numerous strikes against U.S. forces, including the twin embassy bombings in East Africa and the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen. This mounting pressure spurred the Saudi Arabian government to deny American planes access to launching any ground-attacks from its airfields, limiting air activities to non-strike missions only. These restrictions forced American commanders to position attack aircraft in various Gulf countries rather than at one major base, costing the U.S. more money and decreasing efficiency.

In the absence of a “status of forces” agreement, Saudi Arabia also subjected U.S. military members stationed in the country to its strict Islamic laws, as opposed to American military law, making it a less hospitable environment to operate within. “Moving to Al Udeid is sort of a natural progression for us as we look for a footprint that will be maintainable in the future,” Maj. Gen. Victor E. Renuart told The New York Times in 2003.

Even prior to this move, the U.S. government had long planned to reduce its reliance on Saudi Arabia. “Ever since the gulf war ended, we’ve been working to try to minimize the amount of time and size of the footprint that U.S. forces have in Saudi Arabia,” then White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr. told The New York Times in 2002. “They’ve been asking a long time, and we’ve been working with them for a long time—not just during this administration but during previous administrations—to reduce the footprint.”

While the Al Udeid Air Base has been Qatar’s largest contribution to U.S. military operations, the country also has a strong record of counter-terrorism efforts designed to help support the ongoing War on Terror. This military and intelligence cooperation is integral to achieving peace and stability in the region, with Qatar’s counter-terrorism efforts aiding U.S. missions in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The country also allowed the U.S. Department of Justice to install advisers in

Qatar’s General Prosecutor’s Office to help in rooting out and prosecuting domestic terrorism. Further, in June of 2018, Qatar’s National Counter-Terrorism Committee published a list of 28 individuals who are suspected of supporting terrorist operations in the region. The list included the targeting of Qatari nationals in an effort to crackdown on individuals and entities supporting terror operations.

Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis reflected on this critical relationship at the opening session of the inaugural U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue at the U.S. Department of State in early 2018, telling the crowd: “We are grateful to Qatar for their longstanding support of America’s present and continuing commitment to regional security, a commitment that includes information sharing and counter-terrorism training.”

Also in attendance was former U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who called Qatar “a strong partner and a longtime friend of the United States.” In a statement issued by the U.S. Department of State, he noted that following President Trump’s challenge to Gulf partners during the 2017 Riyadh summit, Qatar had made significant progress to improve its efforts to combat terrorism. He echoed that praise again at the event, specifically expressing appreciation for Qatar’s information sharing and recent completions of the Qatari Air Force’s first C-17 flights from the Gulf to Afghanistan and back, providing logistical support to the NATO counter-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan. “I look forward to a lasting Qatar-U.S. security relationship, a relationship that will continue to bolster our efforts against common security threats and violent extremism,” Tillerson stated.

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The two governments reaffirmed their commitment to a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation to promote peace and stability, while the U.S. applauded Qatar’s willingness to expand critical facilities like Al Udeid, to align operating procedures with NATO standards, thereby increasing the operational capability of U.S. and coalition forces based in Qatar.

Under the agreement, Qatar plans to improve the living conditions for military personnel, spending \$1.8 billion to build entertainment facilities and family compounds. Qatar estimates it has spent \$8 billion on the Al Udeid Air Base in its efforts to support the U.S. military to date. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo thanked Qatar for the support it provides through Al Udeid and called the defense relationship between the two countries, “extensive, important, and growing.”

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Sent: Wed, 10 Jul 2019 11:04:41
To: Chartan, Steve (Cruz); sean_mclean@cruz.senate.gov
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