

KING SALMAN DOUBLES DOWN ON THE AIRCRAFT ~~CARRIER~~ CRUISER

Friday, Saudi Arabia's King Salman came to DC to meet with Obama, renting out the entire Four Seasons hotel in a lavish display of extravagance as our joint policies in the Middle East foster a refugee crisis in Europe.

In a joint appearance on Friday, King Salman likened this meeting to the 1945 meeting on an aircraft carrier cruiser with FDR that laid the foundation for the oil-dollar-anti-Communist axis that has dominated post-war power.

I intended to make my first official visit to the United States as a symbol of the deep and strong relationship that we have with the United States that's indeed historical relations that go back to the day when King Abd alAziz met with President Roosevelt in 1945.

Our relationship is beneficial not only to our two countries, but to the entire world and to our region. And this is significant, and we must always affirm that and deepen such relations.

Obama was more circumspect in his comments (I've put the transcript below as I didn't find it posted on the White House site), speaking of specific things he'd like to accomplish in partnership with Saudi Arabia, several of which KSA has been only lukewarm at best in supporting. The official statement was even crazier, promising that KSA and the US would work on climate change together!

The one item with which KSA surely agreed was that the US would continue to help it to "counteract[] Iran's destabilizing activities in the region," which is actually code for the US continuing to help KSA to extend its influence

at the expense of Iran, even in spite of the fact that KSA is a more destabilizing influence in the Middle East.

So amidst a showy meeting at which the US promised to continue to side with KSA against Iran, all while paying mere lip service to fixing the humanitarian disasters that result (most urgently in Yemen), Salman pitched the meeting in geostrategic terms: the KSA would continue to exert outsized influence on world affairs because of its special relationship with the US (which of course would be impossible if the two were to work toward any positive response to climate change).

Meanwhile, al-Arabiya emphasized something else: an ambitious plan to expand commercial partnerships between the countries, masterminded in part by intelligence contractor Booz Allen Hamilton.

Saudi Arabia on Friday unveiled a giant raft of investment and partnership potential opportunities in sectors including oil and gas, civil infrastructure, and banking as part of a 21st century vision of the cooperation between the two long-term allies, sources told Al Arabiya News on Saturday.

[snip]

With the Saudi government ramping up investment in free zones, roads, and communication networks, the kingdom will soon “aim to employ and rely completely on U.S. construction companies,” sources told Al Arabiya News.

The proposals were based on studies conducted by leading business and technology consultants, including Booz Allen Hamilton and BCG.

I'm interested in this because of the way in which joint economic partnership have formed the

core of relations between KSA and the US – which was based on, and largely replaced, a similar partnership with Iran. It's partly a vehicle for laundering petrodollars. It always pretended to be about bringing development to KSA. But it also seems to be about ensuring US bodies were present and exposed in the region, in case anything goes haywire.

As I've noted, back in 2013, the US prematurely extended the current version of that agreement when Mohammed bin Nayef came to welcome in Obama's second-term cabinet. State was coy about releasing the terms of the agreement (underlying documents of which may show curious reporting structures for Americans in KSA), but eventually they did release what I suspect is a now-outdated agreement that nevertheless extends for 10 years (to 2023).

None of this is surprising. To placate the Saudis specifically, and the Gulf states generally, Obama is at least claiming he will sustain the preferential relationship with them, ignoring the damage that results. He is reassuring the Saudis they'll continue to be our favored petro-weapon – we won't pull a switcheroo like we did to the Iranians in 1976. And in response, Salman will bless the Iranian agreement (all while heating up the arms war in the Middle East that will expand instability).

But it is worth noting how Salman wants this to be perceived: as a continuation of KSA's ability to demand idiotic interventions from the US at its behest.

Update: Corrected cruiser for carrier, per b.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, it's a great pleasure to welcome His Majesty, King Salman, to the Oval Office. This is the latest of several meetings that I've had with His Majesty. And the fact that he has chosen to take this first visit to the United States is indicative of the longstanding friendship between the United

States and Saudi Arabia.

This is obviously a challenging time in world affairs, particularly in the Middle East, and so we expect this to be a substantive conversation across a wide range of issues. We share a concern about Yemen and the need to restore a functioning government that is inclusive and that can relieve the humanitarian situation there.

We share concerns about the crisis in Syria, and we'll have the opportunity to discuss how we can arrive at a political transition process within Syria that can finally end the horrific conflict there.

We continue to cooperate extremely closely in countering terrorist activity in the region and around the world, including our battle against ISIL. And we'll discuss the importance of effectively implementing the deal to ensure that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon, while counteracting its destabilizing activities in the region.

We'll also have an opportunity to discuss the world economy and energy issues. And I look forward to continuing to deepen our cooperation on issues like education and clean energy and science and climate change because His Majesty is interested, obviously, ultimately in making sure that his people, particularly young people, have prosperity and opportunity into the future. And we share those hopes and those dreams for those young people, and I look forward to hearing his ideas on how we can be helpful.

So, Your Majesty, welcome, and let me once again reaffirm not only our personal friendship but the deep and abiding friendship between our two peoples.

HIS MAJESTY KING SALMAN: (As interpreted.) Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for allowing us to enjoy your hospitality. I intended to make my first official visit to the United States as a symbol of the deep and strong relationship that we have with the United States that's

indeed historical relations that go back to the day when King Abd alAziz met with President Roosevelt in 1945.

Our relationship is beneficial not only to our two countries, but to the entire world and to our region. And this is significant, and we must always affirm that and deepen such relations. We always emphasize that we want to deepen our relations and further our cooperation in all fields.

As you know, Mr. President, our economy is a free economy, and therefore we must allow opportunities for businesspeople to exchange opportunities, because if people see that there are common interests, they will further themselves the relations between them. And our relationship must be beneficial to both of us, not only on the economic field but on the political and military and defense field, as well.

Once again, Mr. President, I'm happy to come to a friendly country to meet a friend. And we want to work together for world peace. Our region must achieve stability, which is essential for the prosperity of its people. And in our country, thank God we are prosperous, but we want prosperity for the entire region. And we are willing to cooperate with you in order to achieve that.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your hospitality. And I look forward to seeing you in Riyadh and seeing American officials coming to see us in Riyadh, and also Saudi officials coming to the United States.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you very much, everybody.