

Saudi arabia: history of relationship to us

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Although the United States and Saudi Arabia present the United States and Saudi Arabia's relationship as excellent, there are actually two nations who have bitter disagreements but who allies through oil. The only thing that has held this alliance together is the US dependence on Saudi oil. The United States has felt and still feels that it is a necessity to have bases present in the Middle East to protect oil, and silently to protect Israel. The relationship began in 1933 when Standard Oil of California signed an agreement with the Saudi government. In 1943 FDR affirmed that the defense of Saudi Arabia was a vital interest to the United States and moved troops into the region. Future presidents would emulate this declaration and mobilization of troops to Saudi Arabia. Again in 1945 Abd al Aziz, the Saudi king, and FDR would cement this alliance, on a US warship in the Suez Canal. Soon after, airfields were constructed at Dhahran and other spots over Saudi Arabia; beginning a long tradition of US military facilities in Saudi Arabia. Abd al Aziz was the first of his line of successors to meet with US presidents. The relationship was only strengthened with the onset on the Cold war, as the US used the bases in Saudi Arabia as potential air force launch sites to the USSR and constructed more military facilities. In 1941 Harry S. Truman made another assertion of Americas protection and alliance with Saudi Arabia to Abd Al Aziz. Truman stated that " support for Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity and political independence was a primary objective of the United States." (Countrystudies. com) Another stipulation of this pact was that the US established a permanent military training mission in the Saudi Arabia. That mission lasted until 1992. Soon after the pact between Truman and Aziz was agreed upon the US-Saudi relationship would endure its first major

disagreement. On May 14th, 1948 Israel was declared an independent state in the former Arab dominated Palestine. Israel's independence was backed the United States. Saudi Arabia refused to acknowledge the country of Israel and to engage in any relations with them. The Saudis concerns of the Israel-US relationship were reinforced in the 1970's and 1980's when the US sold arms to Israel, but refused to sell arms to Saudi Arabia. In some cases congressional leaders refused to sell arms to Saudi Arabia on the grounds that Saudi Arabia might use them against Israel. Even after assurances from Saudi Arabia they would only be used for defense of their country, most arms sales were canceled or postponed. Theses disagreements had an adverse affect on the US-Saudi relationship, symbolizing a weakening interest of the United States to protect Saudi Arabia since it already had an ally in the region, Israel. It wasn't until the Iraq conflict that Saudi Arabia was assured of their importance to the United Sates. In 1990 Saddam Hussein and Iraq invaded Kuwait and was on the verge of invading Saudi Arabia, for that reason and the promise of increased oil control the United States dispatched more than 400, 000 to the area to stop any more aggression by Hussein and drive him back to Iraq. The United States mission went very smoothly, due in large part to logistical support of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was used as launching pad for both ground and air troops into Iraq, and the military equipment sold and military facilities constructed by the US to Saudi Arabia were used by the US in the operation. Specifically, four sophisticated AWACS aircraft loaned by Jimmy Carter to Saudi Arabia. Even after the operation ended, and the help of Saudi Arabia was recognized Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's leader, was denied his request to buy 20 billion in US military equipment.

The denial of Saudi Arabia's request, "eroded the positive feelings created during the war and revived Saudi resentment about being treated as a less than equal ally." (Countrystudies. com) While the US denial of selling of military equipment on the surface is surprising; in actuality it follows the principles of relationship. Best described in a Thomas L. Friedman editorial on August 12, 1990 the US protected Saudi Arabia not because they like the country but because of business: "The United States has not send troops to the Saudi desert to preserve democratic principles. The Saudi monarchy is a feudal regime that dose not even allow women to drive cars. Surely it is not American policy to make the world safe for feudalism. This is about money, about protecting governments loyal to America and punishing those that are not about who will set the price of oil." Then on September 11th, 2001 the US-Saudi Relationship endured another strain, as 15 of the 19 hijackers of were Saudi. From the interrogation of Sheik Mohammed, Bin laden goal having the hijackers be Saudi was to drive a wedge between the US and Saudi Arabia. Even though it was proven that the Saudi hijackers story was all part of an elaborate plan, it could not stop the distressing change in the way Americans perceived Saudi Arabia. Today the US- Saudi relationship again is at a crossroads. Bibliography: 1. Examining the Relationship: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal. <http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/newsletter2004/saudi-relations-interest-04-28.html> 2. Sifry, Micah. The Gulf War Reader. Times Books, 1991. 3. Saudi Arabia- Relations with the United States. <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/59.htm>