

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022*

**Remarks Following Meetings With King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and an Exchange With Reporters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

*July 15, 2022*

*The President.* I know it's late, but thank you for being here. I had a good series of meetings. I just finished more than two hours of meetings with Saudi leadership here in Jeddah, meeting with the King for about a little over half an hour, a working session with the Crown Prince and all the Ministers from the—from the Energy Minister to the Sports Minister, all the way down the line. And got the chance to talk to basically the entire Saudi Government.

And thanks to many months of quiet diplomacy by the staff, we've accomplished some significant business today.

First, as you saw this morning, the Saudis will open their airspace to all civilian carriers. That is a big deal. A big deal. Not only symbolically, but substantively, it's a big deal. It means Saudi airspace is now open to flights to and from Israel. This is the first tangible step in the path of what I hope will eventually be a broader normalization of relations.

Second, we concluded a historic deal that—to transform a flashpoint at the heart of the Middle East wars into an area of peace. International peacekeepers, including U.S. troops, will leave Tiran Island in the Red Sea, where they've been for over 40 years since the Camp David Accords. Five American soldiers died on this strategically located island in 2020, and it's important to remember them today.

Now, thanks to the break—this breakthrough, this island will be open to tourism and economic development while retaining all the necessary security arrangements and the present freedom of navigation of all parties, including Israel.

Third, we agreed to work together to deepen and extend the Yemen cease-fire. And you know there's been—there's carnage been in Yemen of late. And it's been in place more than 3 months, resulting in the most peaceful period in Yemen in 7 years.

We further agreed to pursue a diplomatic process to achieve a wider settlement in Yemen. The Saudi—and Saudi leadership also committed to continue to facilitate the delivery of food and humanitarian goods to civilians. In this context, we discussed Saudi Arabia's security needs to defend the Kingdom, given very real threats from Iran and Iran's proxies.

Fourth, we concluded several new arrangements to better position our nations for the coming decades. Saudi Arabia will invest in new U.S.-led technology to develop and secure reliable 5G and 6G networks, both here and in the future, in developing countries to coordinate with the Partnership for Global Initiative—the Global Infrastructure and Investment, which I put together at the G-7. This new technology solution for 5G, called Open RAN, will outcompete other platforms, including from China.

Saudi Arabia will also partner with us on a far-reaching clean energy initiative focused on green hydrogen, solar, carbon capture, nuclear, and other projects to accelerate the world's clean energy transition and to help the U.S. clean energy industry set global standards.

And fifth, we had a good discussion on ensuring global energy security and adequate oil supplies to support global economic growth. And that will begin shortly. And I'm doing all I can to increase the supply for the United States of America, which I expect to happen. The Saudis

share that urgency, and based on our discussions today, I expect we'll see further steps in the coming weeks.

Finally, we discussed human rights and the need for political reform. As always—as I always do, I made clear that the topic was vitally important to me and to the United States.

With respect to the murder of Khashoggi, I raised it at the top of the meeting, making it clear what I thought of it at the time and what I think of it now. And it was exactly—I was straightforward and direct in discussing it. I made my view crystal clear. I said very straightforwardly: For an American President to be silent on an issue of human rights, is just consistent with—inconsistent with who we are and who I am. I'll always stand up for our values.

So that's a quick summary of tonight's outcomes.

Tomorrow, with nine leaders from around the region, we'll have more. One thing we will discuss is the multibillion-dollar commitment of the GCC to invest in the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment, which I announced at the G-7 last month, to help address infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income countries that don't have the wherewithal to borrow the funds to meet the needs of their people.

And after years of failed efforts, we have now finalized an agreement to connect Iraq's electric grid to the GCC grids through Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and deepening Iraq's integration into the region and reducing its dependence on Iran. And it was pointed out to me that—I was reminded by staff at the time, at the meeting, that I tried to do that back when I was—in the early days of my Vice Presidency. Finally, it's done—being done.

Tomorrow I'll also be laying out an affirmative framework for America's engagement in the Middle East to build on these important steps going forward.

The bottom line is, this trip is about once again positioning America in this region for the future. We are not going to leave a vacuum in the Middle East for Russia or China to fill. And we're getting results.

I'll take a couple of questions now.

*Q.* Sir, can I ask a question——

*Q.* Mr. President——

#### *2018 Death of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi/Human Rights*

*Q.* What was the Crown Prince's response to your comments about Khashoggi?

*The President.* He basically said that he was not personally responsible for it. I indicated that he probably [I thought he]<sup>\*</sup> was. He said he was not personally responsible for it, and he took action against those who were responsible. And we—and then I went on to talk more about how that dealing with any opposition to the—or criticism of the Saudi administration in other countries was viewed as, to me, a violation of human rights. There was no—[inaudible].

*Q.* Mr. President——

#### *2018 Death of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi/Gulf Cooperation Council Summit/Middle East*

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<sup>\*</sup> White House correction.

*Q.* Sir, two quick questions, if I may. First, we just heard from Jamal Khashoggi's wife, who said, "After this visit, the blood of MBS's next victim is on your hands." What do you say to Mrs. Khashoggi?

*The President.* I'm sorry she feels that way. I was straightforward back then. I was straightforward today.

What I—this is a meeting not—I didn't come here to meet with the Crown Prince. I came here to meet with the GCC and nine nations to deal with the security and the needs of the free world—and particularly the United States—and not leave a vacuum here, which was happening as it has in other parts of the world.

### *Gasoline Prices*

*Q.* On gas prices, if I may, you said that we'll see relief at some point in the not-too-distant future. What is the message to Americans who are looking for that relief now? When should they expect to see a real change in prices, though they've already been coming down?

*The President.* But there's been a real change.

*Q.* They've already been coming down.

*The President.* That's right. They've been coming down every single day, to the best of my knowledge.

*Q.* When will we see the impact of this visit?

*The President.* I suspect you won't see that for another couple weeks.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* And we'll see more when we see gas stations start to lower their price consistent with what they're paying for the oil. That's another issue.

### *Saudi Arabia-U.S. Relations/2018 Death of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you regret calling the Saudis a "pariah" during your campaign?

*The President.* I don't regret anything I said.

Next question.

### *Saudi Arabia-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Do you still feel that way though, Mr. President?

*The President.* I just answered your question, "Do I regret it?" I don't regret anything that I said. What happened to Khashoggi was outrageous.

### *Saudi Arabia-U.S. Relations/2018 Death of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi/China Human Rights*

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* You're coming under a lot of fire for your fist bump with the Crown Prince. [Laughter] Why—I just wanted to give you a chance to respond to that.

And—but also, how can you be sure that another incident, another murder like Jamal Khashoggi's won't happen again?

*The President.* Well—God love you. What a silly question. How could I possibly be sure of any of that? I just made it clear if anything occurs like that again, they'll get that response and much more.

The—look, you've heard me say before—and when I criticized Xi Jinping for slave labor and what they're doing in the east—in the western mountains of China, and they said I had no right to criticize China. And I said: "Look, I am President of the United States of America. For the United States President to remain silent on a clear violation of human rights is totally inconsistent with who we are, what we are, and what we would do, what we believe." And so I'm not going to remain silent.

Can I predict anything is going to happen, let alone here, let alone in any other part of the world? No. But I don't know why you're all so surprised the way I react. No one has ever wondered did I mean what I say. The question is, I sometimes say all that I mean.

*Q.* And what—

*The President.* That's the—

*Q.* But what about your response to the fist bumps?

*Q.* Did you manage to—

*The President.* Thank you.

### *Climate Change*

*Q.* On the issue of climate, Joe Manchin obviously made significant news right now, which appears to be torpedoing what was one of your biggest priorities as it relates to energy and to climate back at home. Your message to those Americans right now who are looking for that relief that would have a wide impact as it affects the climate and energy specifically?

*The President.* I am not going away. I'm going to use every power I have as President to continue to fulfill my pledge to move toward dealing with global warming.

Thank you very much.

### *Senator Joseph A. Manchin III*

*Q.* Mr. President, is Joe Manchin negotiating in good faith?

*The President.* I didn't negotiate with Joe Manchin. I have no idea.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Jeddah-Qasr Al Sharq hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Energy Abd al-Aziz bin Salman Al Saud and Minister of Sport Abd al-Aziz bin Turki al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia; Hanan Elatr Khashoggi, wife of Mr. Khashoggi; and President Xi Jinping of China. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 17.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Saudi Arabia :: King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud.

*Locations:* Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

*Names:* Abd al-Aziz bin Salman Al Saud, Prince; Abd al-Aziz bin Turki al-Faisal, Prince; Khashoggi, Hanan Elatr; Manchin, Joseph A., III; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King; Saudi Arabia : Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* China : Human rights issues; China : President; Commerce, international : Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Communications : Broadband and wireless technologies; Developing countries : Infrastructure development, international assistance; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Foreign policy, U.S. : Peace efforts, expansion; Iran : Regional involvement; Iraq : Energy infrastructure, international cooperation; Israel : Saudi airspace, opening to all civilian carriers for flights to and from; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Middle East : Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); Saudi Arabia : 2018 death of reporter in Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey; Saudi Arabia : Crown Prince; Saudi Arabia : Energy, Minister of; Saudi Arabia : Human rights issues; Saudi Arabia : Israel, opening airspace to civilian carriers for flights to and from; Saudi Arabia : King; Saudi Arabia : President Biden's visit; Saudi Arabia : Relations with U.S.; Saudi Arabia : Security cooperation with U.S. ; Saudi Arabia : Sport, Minister of; Science and technology : International cooperation; Turkey : 2018 death of Saudi reporter in Saudi consulate in Istanbul; Yemen : Civil war and sectarian conflict.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202200630.