

“America First” Defends the Indefensible. Trump Family Financial Ties to the Saudi Royals

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Besides longstanding US geopolitical interests, Trump’s Saudi Arabia agenda reflects his family’s financial ties to the kingdom, including distress sales to royal family member for cash to meet debt obligations.

In 2015, he created and registered eight companies to do business in Saudi Arabia.

During an August 2015 campaign rally, he said

“Saudi Arabia, I get along great with all of them. They buy apartments from me. They spend \$40 million, \$50 million. Am I supposed to dislike them? I like them very much.”

He’s hugely beholden to Riyadh. As head of the Trump Organization’s many businesses, he actively pursued deals with Saudi investors on building hotels in the kingdom. At least two of his US properties benefitted hugely from Saudi business.

In January 2016, he vowed to “protect Saudi Arabia.” As president, he chose the kingdom as his first foreign trip. Most of the highly touted \$110 billion arms deal was agreed on earlier, most yet to be fulfilled.

Whether it turns out as claimed remains very much uncertain. Trump’s claim about deals with Riyadh “bring(ing) many thousands of jobs to our country...millions of jobs ultimately” is pure nonsense.

Some deals with the Saudis may never be fulfilled, others way overblown. Still others may create more jobs in the kingdom than in the US.

Jared Kushner courted a Saudi investor to bail out his troubled 666 Fifth property – after failing to close a deal with Chinese and Russian investors.

Leaked intelligence reports revealed that the Saudis, UAE, China, Israel and Mexico targeted Kushner as an easy mark to manipulate because of “his complex business arrangements, financial difficulties, and lack of foreign policy experience.”

MBS reportedly told his Emirati counterpart and others that he has Kushner “in his pocket.” Trump’s absolving the crown prince of Jamal Khashoggi’s murder he clearly ordered got Rep. Tulsi Gabbard to tweet:

“Hey @realdonaldtrump: being Saudi Arabia’s bitch is not “America First.” Hawaii’s 2nd

congressional district voters overwhelmingly reelected her on November 6 with over a 70% majority.

She supports congressional action to end “genocidal” war in Yemen, a resolution rejected by majority Republicans. She blasted what happened, saying:

“If Congress and (Trump) were concerned about the plight of the Yemeni people and peace, all US support for Saudi Arabia’s atrocities would end now. Instead...Republicans voted to shutdown debate.”

Gabbard stopped short of explaining that Yemen is Washington’s war, launched for strategic reasons, ongoing endlessly with no near-term prospect for resolution because the White House and Congress reject resolving it diplomatically.

On Thursday, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir turned truth on its head, calling Khashoggi’s well-planned murder an “unfortunate accident,” adding:

“We will not tolerate any discussion of anything that is disparaging towards our monarch or our crown prince.”

“We have made it very clear that Saudi Arabia’s government is not involved in this and the crown prince is not involved in this at all.”

“The crown prince has the confidence of every Saudi citizen, including King Salman. The crown prince is the architect and driving force behind the reform program in Saudi Arabia and the Vision of 2030.”

All of the above are bald-faced lies fooling no one. Jubeir and other Saudi officials are mouthpieces for kingdom atrocities – supported by Trump, Kushner, and DLT regime hardliners, letting nothing stand in the way of firm US ties to the kingdom.

Congressional rumbling about cutting off US arms sales to Riyadh is more bluster than anything with real teeth being firmed up legislatively – something far less than what’s needed, short-term, amounting to nothing.

Republicans and Dems, supporting all US wars of aggression, are preparing a measure to impose fake sanctions and other punitive actions on the kingdom.

It calls for prohibiting arms sales used for warmaking, excluding whatever is considered defensive. The fine line between offense and defense is too thin to be meaningful.

If veto-proof legislation passes both House and Senate, suspending designated arms sales to the kingdom will only be short-term – dirty business as usual to be resumed once the current furor ends, the way things always work in Washington.

When it comes to committing atrocities and other egregious human rights abuses, Saudi high crimes are a drop in the ocean compared to Washington’s.

Imperial wars of aggression rage endlessly, the Saudis a valued US partner. Khashoggi’s murder won’t change longstanding bilateral relations – not as long as America is a warrior state, a fantasy democracy, not the real thing.

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