

BREAKING; Qatar Military Coup “Rumours” Stir Bad Blood With House of Saud

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The rumour mill is churning in the Persian Gulf with unconfirmed reports of a failed military coup against the Qatari ruler.

There were even media reports that American military helicopters had whisked the Emir and his wife to a safe unknown destination in the aftermath of the failed putsch, said to have been attempted by high-ranking officers.

Saudi news channel Al Arabiya reported earlier today a coup bid against Qatari Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani. However, by midday, the story appeared to have been removed from Al Arabiya's English-language website.

Iranian news channel Press TV toned down its early headlines of a coup and later speculated that Saudi-owned Al Arabiya may have been engaging in disinformation to undermine the Qatari regime, indicating a power struggle between the Houses of Saud and Thani.

The FARS semi-official Iranian news channel, however, insisted that sources within the Qatari royal entourage had confirmed earlier this week that there was a foiled coup in Doha.

Not surprisingly, Qatari-owned Al Jazeera news site ran no information on the alleged plot.

Whether the reports of this week's failed coup turn out to be rumour or something more sinister, there is nevertheless no disguising the fact of underlying bad blood in the Gulf Arab enclave, both between and within the Gulf monarchies.

That may at first seem at odds with the “thick as thieves” appearance of the six states that form the Gulf Co-operation Council: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman. All are Sunni monarchies that have aligned with the US-led NATO powers' aggressive policy of isolating Shia Iran.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have emerged in particular as militant allies of US/NATO geopolitics across the Middle East. They played instrumental roles in paving the way for NATO's aerial bombardment and regime change in Libya; and they have been most strident in denouncing the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad, calling for his overthrow and arming mercenary forces that are accused of committing atrocities and sabotage.



But herein lies the potential for rivalry and enmity. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, and Qatar, the number one exporter of liquefied natural gas, are bankrolling mercenaries and jihadis from Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and elsewhere in a bid to be top dog in a fissile region. The region is being inflamed with sectarian tensions precisely because of self-serving Saudi and Qatari power politicking.

The Gulf monarchs have also been funding election campaigns of Islamist parties in Egypt and Tunisia, aligned to the conservative Muslim Brotherhood, in line with Western powers using these same parties to shunt and blunt popular calls for greater democracy.

The rapid growth of Saudi-backed satellite TV channels broadcasting across the region – several of them spouting Saudi theocratic rhetoric – is indicative of a rivalry for influence with Qatar, which originally pioneered the Arab medium with the Al Jazeera station.

While on the surface, Riyadh and Doha may appear joined at the hip in terms of advancing the US-led Western imperialist agenda for hegemony, that service generates tensions between and within the royal houses.

In Qatar, there are reported tensions within the Al Thani ruling family and other powerful clans over what critics of the Emir call "his excessive alignment with US foreign policy and breaking of Arab ranks". There are also domestic problems of corruption owing to the Al Thanis monopolising Qatar's lucrative property market.

And despite the apparent alliance with Saudi Arabia, the present Qatari Emir will be mindful that the Saudi rulers have been implicated in previous suspected coup attempts against him in February 2011, 2009, 2002 and 1996.

The present Qatari ruler came to power after he led a coup against his own father in 1995 while the latter was holidaying in Europe. The following year, the Saudi and Bahraini rulers

backed a failed counter-coup to reinstall the older Emir.

In 2010, the coup plotters were released from jail by Emir Hamad after a request was made by Saudi King Abdullah.

So in the Arab enclave of the NATO camp, all is not as cosy as it may seem. Washington and the other Western powers no doubt think they have a clever Arab cover from the Gulf autocrats to redraw the Middle East political map according to their imperialist designs. But in all such intrigues of deception and power lust, the band of thieves have to watch their backs.

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