

The Ridiculous Nature of Saudi Intelligence: What the Saudi Cables Released by WikiLeaks Say and Don't Say


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WikiLeaks released the first batch of the so-called "Saudi cables" on June 19, 2015. By June 22, a total of 61,214 of the documents were released online. More than half a million of these cables are in the hands of WikiLeaks.

The documents are believed to have been hacked from the Saudi Foreign Ministry in May 2015 by a group calling itself the Yemen Cyber Army as retaliation to the House of Saud's war against Yemen. The Yemen Cyber Army probably is not Yemeni and almost certainly is an outward show for another actor wishing to either penalize Riyadh or even possibly manipulate it.

In the Arab World there is great interest about the documents. The Lebanese newspaper *Al-Akbar* has also partnered itself with WikiLeaks to release the so-called Saudi cables, as it has with previous leaks. The Saudi cables, however, do not tell the world and Wikileaks readers anything new about Saudi Arabia.



The Saudi Cables

Over half a million cables and other documents from the Saudi Foreign Ministry.
A total of 61195 published so far

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معالي السيد /وليام هيغ

وزير خارجية المملكة المتحدة

تهية طرة *

يطيب لي ان ابعث لمعاليتكم بخالص تحياتي وتمنياتني الطيبة . وبمسعتي رئيسا للدورة الجمعية للمجلس الوزاري لمجلس التـ .اون لدوا . الخليج العربية اود ان انش سالتكم شكر وتقدير دول مجلس التـ .اون على جهودكم الطيبة في ت عاونكم . ع مجلس التـ .اون لدول الخليج العربية الذي اصبحت .ن خاشي تعاونه ا لستمر مع شركاءه الدوليين عنصرا فاعلا يجمع بين الاستقرار في المنطقة والرؤية الواضحة في التوجه نحو المستقبل . ومن اجل استمرار قيام المجلس بدور . الما .ول منه ففني اود ان اولشج لمعاليتكم بان سلكة البحرين وهي البوا به الرئيسية في الحفاظ على امن واستقرار وسامعة ليل المجلس والركيزة ا لاساسية في تكامل منظومة مجلس التـ .اون الدفاعية والاشية والسياسية وت ركيبته السككية . اصبحت مؤخرا تواجه العديد من التحديات والاعمال العدوان

Original picture: (click for original size)



The Buying Influence of Riyadh's Petro-Dollar

The House of Saud has characteristically tried to buy influence. It wrongly believes that loyalty can be bought. Call them subsidies, grants, bursaries, or business contracts: they are all forms of bribery.

The documents released by WikiLeaks confirm that the House of Saud has used bribery as a major foreign policy tool by financing political figures in other countries—such as the pro-Israeli warlord Samir Geagea in Lebanon—and buying off individuals and organizations to secure its interests. This bribery includes co-opting and recruiting both Arabic and non-Arabic media outlets.

Additionally, the cables confirm that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been spying on its citizens abroad, closely following Saudi university students to see if they want changes in Saudi Arabia, watching dissidents, trying its hardest to handicap Iranian interests, destabilizing Iraq, helping the dictators of Bahrain, and using Saudi-financed media to sanitize its image and deceive Arab audiences. Again, none of this tells us anything new that we did not know about the Kingdom and its decadent rulers.

The House of Saud's Information War

The documents depict the House of Saud as waging a perpetual and systematic campaign to influence and manage the media as part of a vulgar perception management strategy. Not only are Saudi-owned media outlets like *Al Arabiya* and *Asharq Al-Awsat* part of this, the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information has been central to this policy of “buying influence” using the revenues from Saudi Arabia's oil sales.

The Saudi cables show that Riyadh's rulers have used a gradient strategy. The House of Saud's media strategy starts with co-optation through bribery by what we can call “agents of influence.” Agents of influence can include diplomats, public relations firms, and lawyers. The House of Saud has teams of lawyers, consultants, and public relations firms constantly working for it and monitoring the media and the House of Saud's public image at all times.

It is the task of the agents of influence to find and contact the media outlets reporting negatively about the House of Saud. In some cases the agents of influence find them and in others Saudi officials in Riyadh order the agents of influence to contact the third parties. The preliminary task of the agents of influence is to “neutralize” the negative reporting about the House of Saud. This is primarily done through bribery. Riyadh has paid for massive subscriptions of Arab newspapers in countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Syria, and Mauritania as a means of inducing the publications to self-censor themselves or to provide positive coverage about the House of Saud.

If bribery does not work then a strategy of “containment” involving slander is applied followed by a strategy of “confrontation” that involves litigation and sabotage. Both the containment and confrontation strategies of the House of Saud involve falsely planting stories under what is generally categorized as black propaganda. Aside from promoting the image of the House of Saud, co-opted media outlets are important for the strategies of containment and confrontation because they launch attacks on those targeted by the House of Saud. Targets have included Arab activists, Iran, Russia, Hezbollah, the newspaper *Al-Akbar*, and Syria.

The Obvious versus the Unmentioned

Again, it has to be noted that it is widely known that bribery has been an important and central policy tool for the morally bankrupt Saudi princes. It also has to be emphasized that the information about the Saudi media strategy released by WikiLeaks is not a new revelation. These Saudi activities have widely been recognized.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has reacted to the release of the cables by WikiLeaks by warning its citizens to refrain from reading the documents. Riyadh has emphasized that ignoring the documents is a matter of national security. It has also declared that the documents being released by Wikileaks are doctored fabrications without even providing one example.

What is missing from the Saudi cables that WikiLeaks released heretofore are any documents about the House of Saud's support for Al-Qaeda and the other armed gangs that are wreaking havoc inside Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. This is important and noteworthy.

The Timing of the Release: Targeting Rapprochement between Moscow and Riyadh?

There are some very important questions to be asked and thought over about the Saudi cables. Are the release of the Saudi cables retaliation for Saudi aggression in Yemen or punishment for efforts by the House of Saud to exert itself independently from Washington? Why is the crisis in Syria and Saudi support for the foreign fighters ravaging Syria largely left out of the leaks? If Saudi involvement in the fighting in Syria was seriously mentioned in the cables released by WikiLeaks it could incriminate other countries, such as the US, Britain, France, and Turkey.

The release of the Saudi cables may hurt Saudi Arabia economically and weaken its media strategy, which will lead to both economic and political instability for the Kingdom as it increasingly fails to control more information about the House of Saud's actions. Furthermore, the Saudi cables have been released on the eve of important talks and negotiations between Saudi and Russian officials that follow agreements and earlier talks between the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. The bilateral talks are set to consolidate a series of agreements made on cooperation and trade between the Kingdom and the Russian Federation that will help boost the besieged Russian economy that Washington is trying to crash. This is why it is important to think over the origins and motives of the Yemen Cyber Army and ask who is pulling its strings? Is a genuine Saudi adversary behind the Yemen Cyber Army or an unhappy ally that wants to prevent any rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Russia?

One of the [documents that is getting increasing](#) focus is an agreement between Russia and Saudi Arabia to vote for one another to join the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Is it a mere coincidence that UN Watch decided to focus on this agreement to criticize Russia and even refers to it as [a dictatorship in an article published](#) by Hillel Neuer on June 21, 2015? Conversely, UN Watch has remained silent about the multitude of similar agreements made by the US with the House of Saud and other dictatorships. What has UN Watch said about Bahrain or Gaza? Why does it oppose the Venezuelan government? In reality, the goal of UN Watch has been to use the United Nations Human Rights Council to further the interests of the US and Israel while it undermines the body for criticizing Israeli human rights violations. [UN Watch even helped legitimize the war on Libya](#) by NATO in 2011 and has pushed for a war with Syria. Now it is targeting Russia.

Although Riyadh could be manipulating Moscow for Washington, joint funds, space

cooperation, nuclear agreements, investments, and arms deals all seem to be in the works. The last time Saudi Arabia made major deals with the Kremlin nothing came out of them, either because the House of Saud was toying with the Russians or due to orders being sent from the US to Riyadh.



The Ridiculous Nature of Saudi Intelligence

Another point that is worth mentioning is the unprofessional nature of the Saudi intelligence structure. This is not new information either, but it still worth mentioning. Reading the leaked documents it becomes very clear that the Saudi intelligence structure is sloppy, unsophisticated, and badly trained. The analyses made in the Saudi intelligence reports are ridiculous and even rely on both tabloids and unverified internet research from open sources.

A case in point is the [Saudi intelligence report that mentions this author](#). As one of the subjects inside the initial batch of Saudi cables that WikiLeaks released, I took particular interest in looking over the Saudi intelligence memorandum that I was wrongly mentioned in as “Mahdi Nazemroaya Darius.” This particular Saudi intelligence memo relies on internet research to look at the background of myself and several colleagues who have pointed out how Saudi Arabia has supported terrorism and worked with the US and Israel in a destabilization campaign in the Middle East and North Africa.

Probably based on an assumption that I am of Iranian origin based on the name Darius, the memo ambiguously and wrongly speculates that I could “be working for Iran” without giving any context to what that could mean. The description of others are also all vulgar caricatures that simply refer to them as “anti-American” or “anti-Western.”

A Deficit of Critical Thinking in the Information Age

The type of misanalysis that is exemplified by Saudi intelligence analysts is increasingly endemic of intelligence services and the consultative firms that governments around the world, including in the United States, are increasingly relying on. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that this is actually the second time that I found myself mentioned in a document released by WikiLeaks; the first time was in 2013 when WikiLeaks released a [hacked email about the possible whereabouts of Muammar Qaddafi](#) from the Texas-based

intelligence consultation company Strategic Forecasting (Stratfor). Stratfor was also off. The Texas-based company mistakenly listed me as an employee of the Associated Press inside Libya during NATO's bombing campaign while it was discussing the situation in the Rixos Al-Nasr and making arguments based on association fallacies.

In regards to the Saudi intelligence memo, it is clear that no real efforts were made to do proper background checks outside of the internet. It makes one cynically ask if Saudi Arabia's intelligence structure does much more than police the Kingdom's local population and if it is the intelligence bodies of the US and other countries, including Britain and Israel, that are doing most the important intelligence work for Riyadh.

Looking over the documents released by WikiLeaks it becomes clear that they confirm what is already known about the House of Saud and that there is a serious problem of analysis in the organizational structures of Saudi Arabia. A lack of critical thinking is not a problem that money and bribery can solve either. With this type of mentality and lack of analytical thinking about the world, it is of little wonder that Riyadh got itself in a quagmire in Yemen. There, however, remain important questions about the motives for the release of the Saudi cables and about the background of the Yemen Cyber Army.

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