

UAE Crown Prince Asked US to Bomb Al Jazeera, Says 2003 Cable

Diplomatic cable, published by Wikileaks, refers to Mohammed bin Zayed asking for Qatari channel to be targeted

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Featured image: UAE crown prince Mohammed bin Zayed (Source: Wikipedia)

Abu Dhabi's crown prince asked the US to bomb Al Jazeera as America was planning its invasion of Iraq, according to a diplomatic cable detailing his conversation with a top US state department mandarin.

According to the [cable](#), **Mohammed bin Zayed** (MBZ) “laughingly recalled” to **Richard Hass** a conversation between his father, **Sheikh Zayed**, and the emir of Qatar, **Hamad Al-Thani**, in which Hamad had complained MBZ had asked for the US “to bomb Al Jazeera”.

“According to MBZ, Zayed [his father] derisively responded: ‘Do you blame him?’”

In his comments, made in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, MBZ warned that public opinion in the Arab world over the invasion – which he described as “containable” if the war was short and efficient – could be heavily inflamed by the Qatar TV network’s coverage and advised that its influence be reined in.

MBZ said

“it was a mystery to him why the Qataris continued to inflame public opinion” through Al Jazeera... “and suggested that the US use its weight to pressure Doha”.

The cable added that MBZ had “emphasised the need for US engagement with the Qataris to rein in Al Jazeera”.

In April 2003, the Al-Jazeera office in Baghdad was [struck by a US missile](#) killing one staff member and wounding another, though a US Central Command spokesman told BBC News the station “was not and never had been a target.” In 2001 the station’s Kabul office [was hit](#) by two bombs in another US attack, although there were no casualties.

The statement appears to show decades-long enmity between Qatar and the UAE over Al Jazeera, which has boiled to the surface once again with a Saudi, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt-

led blockade of Qatar and demands to close the network down.

Last week Riyadh laid down a list of 13 demands for Qatar, which also included ending Doha's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, a downgrade of diplomatic ties with Iran and the shutting of a Turkish military base outside Doha.



According to the cable, however, MBZ downplayed tensions between the Saudis and Qataris, noting the two populations "share Wahhabi roots".

More concerning, he said, were UAE-Saudi relations, which MBZ reportedly described as "far more complex".

He drew his attention to Abu Dhabi's "nagging bilateral border dispute with Riyadh (the al-Shayba oil field)".

"Nevertheless, the ever pragmatic Emiratis recognised the need to deal with the Saudis and have thus maintained good relations with Riyadh."

However, the cable noted that MBZ took a "dim view" – in one case literally – of some senior members of the Saudi government – "sardonically noting that interior minister Nayef's bumbling manner suggested that 'Darwin was right'," and went on to say that **King Fahd** was not "in complete control of his faculties".

Nayef bin Abdulaziz al-Saud is the father of **Mohammed bin Nayef** – who was last week stripped of his position of crown prince by the king, Salman, who instated his son **Mohammed bin Salman** as heir.

Bin Nayef is thought to have held personal antipathy to MBZ.

[Recently leaked emails sent from the Emirati ambassador to the US](#) indicated that the UAE was involved in trying to move bin Salman into a position of power in Saudi Arabia.

"I think we should all agree these changes in Saudi are much needed," said **Yousef al-Otaiba**, the UAE's ambassador to the US.

"Our job now is to do everything possible to ensure MBS succeeds."

The 2003 cable also highlights MBZ's then apparent tacit support for the government of **Bashar al-Assad** in Syria, whose removal from power the Gulf nations are now officially committed to.

MBZ "encouraged continued USG (US government) engagement with Bashar, noting that otherwise, 'the wrong guys' will fill the vacuum."

"In MBZ's estimation, Bashar is active and 'wants to do good,' although his relative youth and inexperience are real drawbacks."

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