

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.

The 13 demands by Saudi Arabia

- 1** All diplomatic ties with Iran to be pulled back, and all diplomatic missions there closed. Members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards must be expelled and all joint military cooperation with Iran to be shut down. The only trade and commerce with Iran that complies with US and international sanctions will be permitted.
- 2** All ties to "terrorist organisations" must be severed - these specifically include the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State, al-Qaida and Hezbollah. These entities must also be formally declared terrorist groups.
- 3** Al-Jazeera and its affiliates must be shut down.
- 4** All media outlets funded by Qatar must be shut down - directly or indirectly. These include Arabi21, Rassd, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed and Middle East Eye.
- 5** Turkish military presence in Qatar must be immediately terminated, and all military cooperation with Turkey in Qatar must be ended.
- 6** Stop all means of funding for individuals, groups or organisations that have been designated as terrorists by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, US and other countries.
- 7** Hand over "terrorist figures" and wanted individuals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain to their countries of origin. Freeze their assets, and provide any desired information about their residency, movements and finances
- 8** End interference in sovereign countries' internal affairs. Stop granting citizenship to wanted nationals from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Revoke Qatari citizenship for nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws.
- 9** All contact with political opposition in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain must be stopped. Revoke Qatari citizenship for existing nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws.
- 10** Pay reparations and compensation for loss of life and other, financial losses caused by Qatar's policies in recent years. The sum will be determined in coordination with Qatar.
- 11** Consent to monthly audits for the first year after agreeing to the demands, then once per quarter during the second year. For the following 10 years, Qatar would be monitored annually for compliance.
- 12** Align itself with the other Gulf and Arab countries militarily, politically, socially and economically, as well as on economic matters, in line with an agreement reached with Saudi Arabia in 2014.
- 13** Agree to all the demands within 10 days of it being submitted to Qatar, or the list becomes invalid.



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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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