

EMAIL Feedback on Repatriation of Saudi Remains (SBU)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6) Col, JCS J5  
[mailto:(b)(2),(b)(6)]  
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2006 6:11 AM  
To: (b)(2),(b)(6)  
Cc: (b)(2),(b)(6)  
(b)(2),(b)(6)

Subject: FW: Feedback on DMO 59

Classification: SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

Sir,  
Feedback provided by our (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §424 in Riyadh on the repatriation of the remains to Saudi Arabia last week.

V/r,  
(b)(2),(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §424  
[mailto: (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §424]  
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2006 5:31 AM  
To: (b)(2),(b)(6)  
Subject: Feedback on DMO 59

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----- Forwarded by (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §424 on 06/22/2006 12:48 PM -----

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(b)(6)

Sir -- I just wanted to provide feedback to you on the repatriation of the remains last week. (b)(6) suggested this would be helpful.

BOTTOM LINE: The Saudi government repeatedly expressed its appreciation for the efficient and professional way in which the remains of two of its citizens were returned to Saudi soil. The Saudi consular official from Washington traveled with the bodies all the way to Riyadh; he repeatedly expressed his complete satisfaction with all of the arrangements. In addition, Saudi government officials in Riyadh emphasized their gratitude to both US Embassy officials and to the aircrew of the DoD-chartered aircraft.

DETAILS: As with all detainee issues, the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) handled the repatriation of remains on the Saudi side. In talking to an MOI official during the day on 16 June, I learned that the Saudi government wished to take care of all transportation and lodging needs of the aircrew on REACH 969. As MOI is able to provide

24-hour police escort and protection, and also in order to let them express their appreciation, we agreed to cancel Embassy transportation and lodging arrangements.

Three of us from US Embassy Riyadh (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC § Dept of State Political-Military Officer, and myself -- (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §424 arrived at the Private Aviation Terminal of King Khaled International Airport at about 2330 local time on 16 June. Officials from MOI were present to welcome us, and we waited together for the arrival of REACH 969. At no time was there any feeling of hostility from any of the approximately 15 MOI officials. When the aircraft parked, (b)(2),(b)(3):10 (b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §4 and I boarded the aircraft to inform the aircrew of the Saudi plans for lodging and transportation. They were in complete agreement.

Once the aircrew deboarded, the Saudis provided all transportation and lodging as promised. The aircrew opened the cargo hold, and MOI immediately removed the two bodies. The Saudis opened the shipping containers and unwrapped the upper bodies while they were still on the cargo conveyer/loader. MOI unwrapped each of the two bodies in turn, photographed and filmed the faces (for archival purposes), reclosed the shipping containers, and loaded the bodies onto an MOI van. MOI officials informed me that the families would be allowed to receive the bodies in the next day or two.

After the aircraft was secured and all aircrew were on their way to the hotel, we departed the airport about 0215 on 17 June 2006.

You probably have seen some of the press reporting on this. From our perspective here in Saudi Arabia, reporting has spanned the distance from criticism and disbelief of the suicide story to simple statement of fact, and publication of the POTUS' expressed sorrow for the suicides. In other words, all sides have been represented. I'm sure that opinion "on the street" leans more towards disbelief of the suicide story. Opinion among the elites probably leans towards just wanting the situation to go away. There has been no widespread public reaction. Our assessment is that it is in the interests of the Saudi royal family to not overplay the detainee story in the news, since some of the anger could easily be shifted to them.

Let me know if you want more information. Hope this is helpful.

(b)(2),(b)(3):10 USC §424

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