



CBN02
07 | 2018

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Arab Gulf

C O U N T R Y
B U L L E T I N S
July 08 - 12



The Last Thing to Read this Week

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Kingdom of Bahrain



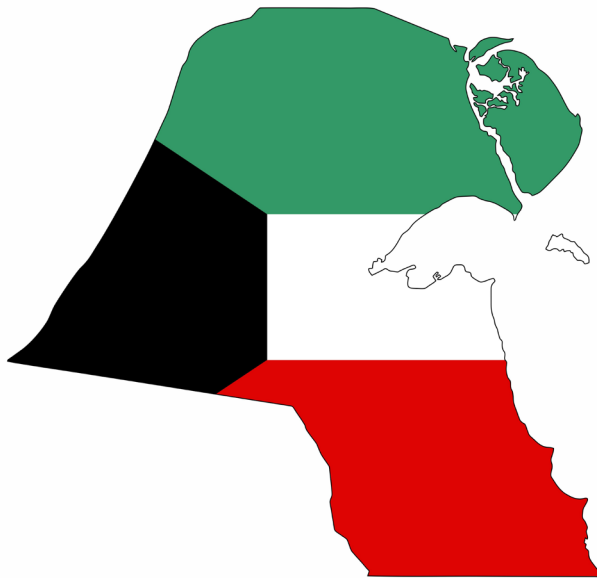
Monday, 9 July—Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, confirmed that the Kingdom's government has provided Ayatollah Isa Qassim, a Shia cleric, a one-year passport to allow him to get medical treatment in the UK. Qassim lost his passport after a Bahraini court stripped him of citizenship in 2016 for promoting sectarian tensions which led to deadly violence in 2011.

Tuesday, 10 July—Bahrain expressed its gratitude to the US Department of State for the designation of the Al-Ashtar Brigades as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Group. The group has claimed responsibility for several attacks against Bahrain's security forces and civilians. The brigades receive weapons and funding from Tehran and training at Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) campsites.



State of Kuwait

Sunday, 8 July—Kuwait’s Court of Cassation sentenced 3 lawmakers to 3 years in jail. The sentence ended a lengthy trial commenced following the 2011 storming of parliament led by the convicted politicians.



Tuesday, 10 July—A “Cargo City” has been constructed in Kuwait City by the US Air Force. The construction of a \$32 million (USD) port will produce a hub for operations in the Middle East, for transporting supplies, equipment, and personnel from regional militaries.

Wednesday, 11 July—The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) signed a cooperation agreement with China’s Shandong Refining and Chemical Group to expand the market Kuwaiti crude oil. The deal was inked on the sidelines of Kuwait’s Emir, Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah’s visit to China.



Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 9 July—Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi, travelled to Beijing where he met China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi. The two sides discussed joint support for the Belt and Road Initiative, a development strategy proposed by the Chinese government which focuses on connectivity and cooperation between Eurasian countries.

Tuesday, 10 July—Oman's Ministry of Oil and Gas announced it will host the world's largest heavy oil congress, the World Heavy Oil Congress & Exhibition (WHOC), in Muscat, Oman, in September. More than 500 delegates from over 40 countries are expected to attend the 2018 edition of the WHOC.





State of Qatar



Monday, 9 July—Qatar's Minister of Culture and Sports, Salah bin Ghanem Al-Ali, outlined how Qatar's media outlets are successfully waging an information war against Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE. In June 2017 the 4 countries interrupted relations with Qatar to pressure Doha to stop its support to nefarious groups across the Middle East. This statement reinforces the suspicion that Qatar continues to work against Gulf unity and interests.

Monday, 9 July—Qatar's ambassador to Gaza, Mohammed Al-Emadi, declared that Israel should grant the Palestinians in Gaza Strip work permits to end protests along the Strip's borders. Despite Qatar's influence in Gaza and among Hamas, Doha is weary of growing Egyptian influence. Cairo is regarded by Gaza's leaders as a more credible mediator with Israel.

Tuesday, 10 July—Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sultan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, met China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi in Beijing. The two Ministers signed an agreement on the mutual exemption of entry visa for citizens of both countries and discussed the upcoming eighth session of the Arab-China Cooperation Forum.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sunday, 8 July—Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, received France's Minister of the Armed Forces, Florence Parly, at the Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah. The two discussed military co-operation and the latest developments in the Middle East.

Sunday, 8 July—A member of Saudi Arabia's security forces and a Bangladeshi resident were killed in an attack on a security checkpoint in Buraidah, in the Kingdom's Qassim Province. Saudi Arabia has seen an increasing number of attacks against security forces by militants of terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and an assortment of Iran-backed Shia groups.

Tuesday, 10 July—Saudi Arabia's government presented a draft law which aims to organise partnerships between the government and the private sector in preparation of launching multi-billion dollars

projects, and to attract new foreign investments to a range of sectors. This is in line with the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030 to increase the contribution of the private sector to GDP from 40% to 65% and is also part of the Kingdom's continuous efforts to diversify the economy.

Wednesday, 11 July—Saudi Arabia has announced the hosting of an international conference to be held among Muslim scholars on peace and stability in Afghanistan. Delegations from 57 Islamic countries are expected to

participate in the Jeddah conference. Attendees at the Saudi Arabia hosted conference hope to persuade the Islamic world to unanimously reject violence in Afghanistan and encourage the Afghan Taliban to accept Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's offer for unconditional peace talks.

Thursday, 12 July—The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) forecasted that demand for its crude will decline next year as growth in consumption slows. Saudi Arabia Energy Ministry predicts that the drop



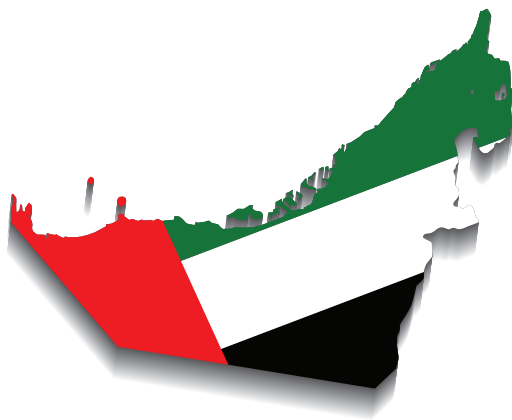


in demand for OPEC crude means there will be less strain to make up for supply losses related to falling Venezuelan and Libyan output, and to imminent drops in Iranian exports as US sanctions return.



United Arab Emirates

Monday, 9 July—The UAE extended compulsory military service for Emirati men to 16 months from 12. This comes amid increasing UAE military efforts in Yemen. Abu Dhabi is a key member of the Saudi-led military coalition that entered Yemen in 2015 to roll-back the Iran-aligned Houthi movement which overthrew the internationally recognised Yemeni government.



Tuesday, 10 July—US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, travelled to Abu Dhabi to outline the new Iran containment strategy of the Trump administration. Pompeo discussed the recent threats by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani over the Strait of Hormuz and reaffirmed the US commitment to “deny Iran the financial capacity to continue this bad behaviour.” US allies such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait have been key to prevent the rise of global oil prices—through increased production—following expectations that the US would push its allies to stop importing Iranian crude oil—further tightening the world’s energy supplies.



The Arabian Gulf is rapidly becoming a geopolitical pivot. As a result, it is important to understand the internal and international dynamics unfolding in the region and the countries that compose it. We at EGIC are proud to present “The Last Thing to Read this Week” segment which contains a small, carefully selected, batch of the most important events unfolding in the countries of the Arab Gulf to help you map the region’s trends.

