

MOHAMMED BIN NAYEF'S REMARKABLE PRESCIENCE ABOUT OBAMA'S SECOND TERM CABINET

Department of Energy Secretary Steven Chu just resigned.

Which got me thinking about my latest obsession: the Technical Cooperation Agreement between Saudi Arabia and the US, under which (as far as the agreement admits publicly) the US helps the Saudis protect their critical infrastructure (read, oil fields) and borders. While the TCA is managed by State, it includes significant involvement on the part of DOD – particularly CentCom, DOE (because in Saudi Arabia infrastructure is energy), and Treasury (which handles the magic bank account at its core). In addition, a new focus on cybersecurity (presumably a response to the recent Aramco hack) gives DHS and NSA an increasing role.

So check out the list of people MbN met with while he was in DC from January 14 to 16, in significant part to “renew” the TCA (four months before the old one expired).

Prince Mohammad also met with a number of senior U.S. officials throughout his visit, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Attorney General Eric Holder, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Director of National Intelligence James Robert Clapper, Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns, Treasury Deputy Secretary Neal Wolin, National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, John Brennan, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Robert Mueller, and Director of the
National Security Agency General Keith
B. Alexander.

Remarkably, MbN didn't waste his time with any outgoing cabinet member – not TurboTax Timmeh, not Chu, not Panetta – except for Hillary, with whom he was signing this agreement. While TurboTax Timmeh and Panetta's departure was known, Chu's was only rumored.

John Brennan is moving, sure, but I suspect his move won't change his interactions with MbN – who has been a key stovepipe for Brennan – one whit.

The most interesting person MbN managed to not waste his time with on the visit, apparently, was General James Mattis, who was about to be, but had not yet been, ousted several months early the week MbN was in town.

I'm not suggesting this is all that meaningful, mind you. I just find it notable that MbN seemed to have a better sense of what was going on with Obama's top national security leadership than most of the journalists in DC.