

NOW CAN WE DITCH THE SAUDIS?

Mohammed bin Salman, the third ranking royal Saudi, is in the US – ostensibly to visit John Kerry, Ash Carter, and Barack Obama.

But as FP reports, the latter hasn't happened, and may not.

It was billed by Riyadh's state media as a trip for Saudi Arabia's powerful deputy crown prince to meet with President Barack Obama and other senior U.S. officials. But now that Prince Mohammed bin Salman has arrived in Washington, it's still unclear if the president or any White House officials will meet with him, a spokeswoman said Tuesday.

"No confirmation at this time for any WH meetings," White House spokesperson Dew Tiantawach told Foreign Policy.

The absence of any scheduled meetings with even National Security Adviser Susan Rice is fueling speculation among Gulf experts about a diplomatic snub. It comes amid sharp policy differences between Washington and Riyadh, and unease among U.S. officials about overplaying alliances with the 30-year-old prince, who some view as locked in a power struggle with the older Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef.

"Very unusual for the Saudis to come out saying he is meeting with Obama and White House not confirming it," said David Ottaway, a Saudi expert at the Wilson Center in Washington. "They certainly knew he was coming."

Meanwhile, Haykal Bafana, a usually reliable commentator on events in Yemen, has suggested

that not just the one UAE helicopter reported more broadly, but two more, have been downed in recent days, by Saudi missiles. And the UAE tweeted out yesterday that it was withdrawing from the war in Yemen.

UAE, of course, was supporting (or headlining?) our efforts to continue targeting AQAP even as the Saudi invasion empowered the group, one the US has just added new resources to. If UAE withdraws we'll be alone fighting AQAP.

Or, alternately, they may go back to benefitting wildly from the Saudi invasion of Yemen.

Are we getting closer to the point where we admit the Saudis are not our friends?