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## Saudi Arabia, find another sucker

By Doug Bandow

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Saudi Arabia is angry with Washington. In Riyadh's view, the U.S. government isn't doing enough to support tyranny and war in the Middle East. The Obama administration should tell America's foreign "friends" that Washington acts in the interests of the American people, not corrupt dictators.

Repressive Riyadh long has been an embarrassment for the U.S. Some Americans justify Washington's sycophancy as necessary to protect access to Saudi oil, but energy is an international product which the sellers want to sell as much as buyers want to buy.

Washington's increased willingness to resist Riyadh's demands has led to reports that the King Abdullah is "angry." More dramatically, the Saudi government decided not to take one of the ten elected term seats on the Security Council to send a message to the U.S.

The Saudis apparently are upset because Washington did not bomb Syrian government forces after the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. Yet the very same royal regime subsidized Saddam Hussein's Iraq in its aggressive war, which included use of chemical weapons, against Iran.

Similarly, today Saudis oppose human rights in next door Bahrain, offering military backing for the repressive Sunni royal family against the Shia popular majority. The Saudis are irritated because Washington has offered less than fulsome praise for the Bahraini royals' willing to shoot and imprison demonstrators and dissidents alike.

Nor do the Saudis worry about the oppressed in Egypt. To the contrary, Riyadh is firmly on the side of Egypt's murderous military, and angry that the administration has cut aid to Cairo's killers.

Finally, the Saudi government is appalled that Washington is negotiating with rather than bombing Iran. The Wall Street Journal's Karen Elliott House noted that the royals were concerned that a deal would boost "Iran's prestige and influence at the expense of Saudi Arabia."

While Washington shouldn't be concerned about maintaining Saudi influence, the U.S. understandably prefers that Tehran not get a nuke. However, another war against another Muslim nation in the Middle East would be a disaster.

Alas, America's unhappy pampered allies are issuing threats. The Saudi regime reportedly has downgraded ties with the CIA in aiding Syrian rebels and threatened a "major shift" in dealing with America. Washington Post columnist David Ignatius noted that Saudi officials said "they increasingly regarded the U.S. as unreliable and would look elsewhere for their security." Moreover, the Saudis apparently announced they no longer will favor U.S. munitions makers.

Americans should respond, so what? Washington should encourage the Saudis to find another sucker to protect their exploitative regime. The Chinese? Good luck. How about the Russians? After years of war in Chechnya and terrorist attacks in Russia, helping the publicly pious royals isn't likely to top Moscow's list.

The Europeans? They ain't got much of a military and aren't likely to use it for a regime so at odds with liberal European values. Who else? Author Christopher Davidson argued that "Saudi Arabia is retreating into its shell of countries that surround it and who rely on its aid and good will." If so, why should Washington object?

Riyadh could limit intelligence sharing and anti-terrorism cooperation with Washington. However, doing so would increase the royals' vulnerability. Nor is Riyadh's refusal to serve on the Security Council a problem for America. As a U.S. diplomat told Foreign Policy blogger Colum Lynch, "Our interests increasingly don't align." In fact, the two nations' interests long have been substantially out of sync.

The Saudis support radical rebels in Syria who may be as interested in killing Americans as in killing Bashar al-Assad's soldiers. Riyadh was one of the few governments to recognize the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The royals made little effort to curb funding for al-Qaeda until the latter was foolish enough to challenge the House of Saud—for being corrupt, libertine hypocrites.

Admittedly, it isn't only Saudi Arabia which is upset with the Obama administration's inconsistent approach to the Middle East's endless complexities. The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Turkey, and even Israel have assigned Washington tasks which it has refused to carry out, much to their distress.

However, American policy should be designed to serve the interests of Americans.

Alliances should be a means to advance U.S. security. Alas, in recent years America's alliances have become ends in themselves, a measure of international popularity a bit like accumulating "friends" on Facebook.

Worse, undemocratic frenemies use alliances to manipulate U.S. policy for their own ends. Washington might not be able to stop the Saudis from promoting tyranny and war. But the U.S. shouldn't aid them in their quest.

*Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and a former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan.*