

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
*Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa*

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# Assessing the U.S. – Qatar Relationship

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Washington, DC  
July 26, 2017

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My testimony today will look at the substance behind the current Gulf spat, with a focus on Qatar's support for a range of extremist groups and the grievances that the other Arab states harbor against Qatar. At the end, I will address the question of U.S. military assets in Qatar, as well as several policies that Washington should consider.

## Context

Members of the committee, as you know, FDD has been producing research and analysis on Qatar since the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011. Our critique of Qatari foreign policy has been consistent. We have pointed to Qatari support for Hamas, the Taliban, jihadists in Syria, jihadists in Libya, and the Muslim Brotherhood. We have been critical of the Qataris for the invective that is too often broadcast on state-owned Al-Jazeera. And we have noted through the excellent work of my colleague David Andrew Weinberg that Qatar has failed to take action against numerous U.S.- and UN-designated terrorist financiers living in Qatar.<sup>1</sup>

We have not singled out Qatar. Indeed, we have produced work that is critical of the other Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, when it has been warranted. FDD's David Andrew Weinberg testified about Saudi Arabia's troubling educational curriculum before the House Foreign Affairs Committee just last week.<sup>2</sup> But Qatar has been an obvious area of interest in light of its incredibly brazen and open support for terrorist groups designated by the United States.

This support for terrorist groups is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that Qatar is home to the al-Udeid air base, the launch point for thousands of strikes carried out by the U.S. in the war on terrorism. When confronted over its support for extremists, Qatar's response has been lax or dismissive, with little in the way of new commitments or follow-through. The fact is, Qatar has wielded its immense wealth and soft power to undermine U.S. interests, including America's allies in the region.

FDD has worked hard to educate Congress, the executive, and the American public on the challenge of Qatar. We found that the previous administration was generally willing to listen, but was unwilling to redress the problem. Having failed to gain much traction for six years, we decided to hold a conference on U.S. Qatar policy with the arrival of a new administration. We held our event on May 23 here in Washington, DC.<sup>3</sup>

Our conference was, I believe, the first major conference to shine a light on Qatar. It featured current and former officials, figures from both sides of the aisle, who expressed deep concerns

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<sup>1</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Qatar and Terror Finance, Part II: Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, January 2017.

([http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717\\_Weinberg\\_Qatar\\_Report.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717_Weinberg_Qatar_Report.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Saudi Arabia's Troubling Educational Curriculum," *Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs*, July 19, 2017. (<http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20170719/106289/HHRG-115-FA18-Wstate-WeinbergD-20170719.pdf>)

<sup>3</sup> "Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood's Global Affiliates: New U.S. Administration Considers New Policies," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 23, 2017. (<http://www.defenddemocracy.org/events/qatar-and-muslim-brotherhood/>)

about Qatar, its support for extremist groups, and its long-term viability as a U.S. ally if that support continued. Shortly after the conference concluded, we learned that the Qatar News Agency was hacked. The Qatari response intimated that Doha saw our conference as part of a coordinated assault.<sup>4</sup> To be clear: We had nothing to do with it. FDD strongly condemns hacking. Now, according to the *Washington Post*, the U.S. intelligence agency allegedly believes that the UAE was behind the hack against Qatar, although the Emirati ambassador to Washington vehemently denies this.<sup>5</sup>

Several days after the Qatar News Agency hack, the Emirati ambassador was himself hacked. His emails were leaked to journalists worldwide. The U.S. intelligence community has yet to determine who was behind that attack. Several stories emerged featuring emails between my colleagues at FDD and the ambassador. The implication was that we were coordinating our efforts with the UAE or that we take Emirati money.<sup>6</sup> For the record, FDD took no direction from a foreign government. Nor did we take any foreign government money. Although many think tanks engage in this practice, we never have and never will.

The hack and hack-back has since yielded a full-blown spat among the Gulf states. The Gulf and other Arab states cut diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, blocking maritime, land, and air routes for both traffic and trade.<sup>7</sup> Qatar's financial ratings have dropped,<sup>8</sup> and its currency has been under strain.<sup>9</sup>

Qatar has been defiant, insisting that its definition of terrorism differs greatly from its critics. Qatar's alternate view of reality and morality is a poor defense. It is reminiscent of the so-called "affluenza" teen who was charged with a drunk driving crash that killed four people, but whose defense team argued that the teen's life of privilege made it difficult for him to determine right from wrong.<sup>10</sup> A country of great wealth, Qatar is now effectively arguing the same thing. But the Qataris fully grasp the list of grievances against them. I will summarize them below.

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<sup>4</sup> "Qatar faces hostile media campaign, particularly in US: FM," *The Peninsula* (Qatar), May 25, 2017, (<https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/25/05/2017/Qatar-faces-hostile-media-campaign,-particularly-in-US-FM>)

<sup>5</sup> Aya Batrawy and Fay Abuelgasim, "Qatar suggests cyberattack emanated from a Gulf neighbor," July 20, 2017, *The Washington Post*, ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/qatar-suggests-cyberattack-emanated-from-gulf/2017/07/20/18522be6-6d64-11e7-abbf-a53480672286\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.f4908db5e65a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/qatar-suggests-cyberattack-emanated-from-gulf/2017/07/20/18522be6-6d64-11e7-abbf-a53480672286_story.html?utm_term=.f4908db5e65a))

<sup>6</sup> Akbar Shahid Ahmed, "Someone Is Using These Leaked Emails To Embarrass Washington's Most Powerful Ambassador," *The Huffington Post*, June 3, 2017, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/otaiba-ambassador-uae-leaked-emails\\_us\\_5932bf04e4b02478cb9bec1c](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/otaiba-ambassador-uae-leaked-emails_us_5932bf04e4b02478cb9bec1c))

<sup>7</sup> "Saudi Arabia, Egypt lead Arab states cutting Qatar ties, Iran blames Trump," *Reuters*, June 5, 2017. (<http://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/04/saudi-arabia-bahrain-and-egypt-cut-diplomatic-ties-with-qatar.html>)

<sup>8</sup> Alec Macfarlane, "Qatar hit by ratings downgrade over blockade crisis," *CNN*, June 8, 2017, (<http://money.cnn.com/2017/06/08/investing/qatar-rating-downgrade/index.html>)

<sup>9</sup> Alanna Petroff, "British banks have stopped selling Qatari cash," *CNN*, June 30, 2017 (<http://money.cnn.com/2017/06/30/investing/qatar-riyal-uk-currency/index.html>)

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Maria Garza and Timothy Williams, "Teenager Who Used 'Affluenza' Defense Is Sentenced to Jail," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2016. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/14/us/teenager-who-used-affluenza-defense-is-sentenced-to-jail.html>)

## Support for Hamas

Qatar is a top headquarters for Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist group designated by the State Department in 1997.<sup>11</sup> Hamas operatives work out of Qatar with impunity, where they fundraise and even plan terrorist attacks.

When the Syrian civil war forced Hamas leaders like Politburo chief Khaled Meshal to flee, Qatar offered him refuge, along with several other Hamas political leaders now living in Doha.<sup>12</sup> This includes Hamas' spokesman, Ezzat al-Rishq.<sup>13</sup>

Husam Badran, a Hamas terrorist responsible for taking dozens of Israeli lives, has been living in Qatar since 2011 after being released from Israeli prison.<sup>14</sup> According to an Israeli Defense Forces website, Badran directed from Doha a 2013 Hamas plot to kidnap Israeli soldiers.<sup>15</sup> He also was responsible for directing the activities and recruitment for a Hamas headquarters in the West Bank that was broken up in 2015, and from providing that network with hundreds of thousands of dollars from his perch in Qatar.<sup>16</sup> He still appears to be residing in Qatar today.<sup>17</sup>

Hamas military official Saleh Arouri lived for a time in Qatar after being expelled from Turkey (he is now believed to be in Lebanon). Arouri is widely believed to have plotted the abduction and murder of the three Israeli teens in 2014. That event led to a war between Israel and Hamas in the summer of 2014.<sup>18</sup> He is under U.S. sanctions for funding and directing Hamas terror operations,<sup>19</sup> and also stands accused of plotting a Hamas coup against the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," accessed July 24, 2017.

(<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>)

<sup>12</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Qatar vs. Saudi Arabia: How Iran and the Brotherhood Tore the Gulf Apart," *The National Interest*, June 8, 2017. (<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/qatar-vs-saudi-arabia-how-iran-the-brotherhood-tore-the-gulf-21068>)

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Schanzer and Kate Havard, "By Hosting Hamas, Qatar is Whitewashing Terror," *Newsweek*, May 11, 2017. (<http://www.newsweek.com/qatar-hosting-hamas-whitewashing-terror-606750>)

<sup>14</sup> David Barnett, "Hamas terrorist in Qatar helps Hebron terror cell plan kidnappings," *FDD's Long War Journal*, January 31, 2013. (<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/01/israeli-authorities-uncover-ha.php>)

<sup>15</sup> "IDF & ISA Uncover Hamas Terrorist Assets in Hebron," *Israeli Defense Forces* (Israel), January 31, 2013. (<https://www.idfblog.com/2013/01/31/idf-isa-uncover-hamas-terrorist-assets-in-hebron/>)

<sup>16</sup> Yoav Zitun, "Shin Bet arrests 40 Hamas members in Nablus," *Ynet News* (Israel), July 1, 2015. (<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4674956,00.html>)

<sup>17</sup> See Facebook profile at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010044737611&fref=nf>.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Schanzer, "Time for the US to stop Qatar's support for terror," *New York Post*, April 20, 2017. (<http://nypost.com/2017/04/20/time-for-the-us-to-stop-qatars-support-for-terror/>)

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions Major Hamas Leaders, Financial Facilitators and a Front Company," September 10, 2015. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/j10159.aspx>)

<sup>20</sup> Yaakov Lappin, "Hamas in West Bank 'planned to topple Palestinian Authority,'" *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), August 18, 2014. (<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Massive-Hamas-infrastructure-in-West-Bank-planned-to-topple-the-Palestinian-Authority-371409>)

Qatar is further believed to be hosting Talal Ibrahim Abd al-Rahman Sharim, a member of Hamas' armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who reportedly played a role in financing Hamas cells in the West Bank from Qatari territory.<sup>21</sup>

In 2014, the Kuwaiti daily newspaper *Al-Seyassah* reported that Hamas was moving its financial operations to Qatar.<sup>22</sup> And there is ample evidence to support this. For example, it was reported that "Bakri Hanifa, who is a major financial operative for Hamas ... moved 'tens of millions of dollars' to Turkey from Qatar before being sent onward to Hamas's political and military wings."<sup>23</sup>

Zahir al-Jabareen is another Hamas official who worked out of Qatar to send money from Gulf countries to Hamas."<sup>24</sup>

Maher Ubeid, "a member of Hamas's politburo who reportedly was put in charge of laundering tens of millions of euros from Turkish territory ... to Hamas's military and political wings in Gaza," was also based in Qatar.<sup>25</sup>

Video footage from 2015 showed Mohammed al-Qawasmi, whom *Al-Seyassah* identified as a Hamas official,<sup>26</sup> was allowed to fundraise on state-controlled Qatari television.<sup>27</sup>

According to a leaked cable attributed to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the U.S. government pressed the Qatari government in 2009 on "terror finance related to Hamas."<sup>28</sup> Five years later, former Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen noted in 2014 that "Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally, has for many years openly financed Hamas, a group that continues to undermine regional stability."<sup>29</sup> However, Husam Badran told *Al-Monitor* in 2014,

<sup>21</sup> Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Shin Bet Busts Palestinian Footballer For Meeting With Hamas Terrorist in Qatar," *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), June 11, 2014. (<http://www.jpost.com/Sports/Palestinian-soccer-player-admits-to-meeting-with-Hamas-operative-while-in-Qatar-356003>)

<sup>22</sup> «ول أنشطتها المالية من السعودية إلى قطر وتركيا» (Hamas moves Its Financial Network from Saudi Arabia to Qatar and Turkey)," *Al-Seyassah* (Kuwait), April 7, 2014. (<http://al-seyassah.com/-أنشطتها-المالية-السعودية/>)

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Schanzer, "Hamas Still Finds Harbor in Turkey," *The Weekly Standard*, June 8, 2016. ([www.weeklystandard.com/hamas-still-finds-harbor-in-turkey/article/2002746](http://www.weeklystandard.com/hamas-still-finds-harbor-in-turkey/article/2002746))

<sup>24</sup> «.. القصة الكاملة للغامض الذي يدير أموال حركة حماس في مصر» (Abu Aref: The Complete Story of the Mysterious Man Who Manages Hamas Movement's Money in Egypt)," *El-Mogaz* (Egypt), December 21, 2013. (<http://www.elmogaz.com/node/119383>)

<sup>25</sup> «40 مليون يورو من تركيا لـ"حماس" لتعزيز سيطرتها على غزة» (40 Million Euros from Turkey to Hamas for Strengthening Its Control over Gaza)," *Palestine Press News Agency* (UK), November 6, 2011. (<http://www.palpress.co.uk/arabic/?Action=Details&ID=65344>)

<sup>26</sup> «بعد اعتقال قطر أحد كوادرها المالية» (Mashal Faces Sharp Criticism inside Hamas after Qatar Arrests One of Its Financial Officers)," *Al-Seyassah* (Kuwait), January 28, 2015. (<http://al-seyassah.com/-يوواجه->)

<sup>27</sup> AlrayyanTV, "الحلقة الحادية و الاربعون - 2014-08-06" (Summary Program - Episode 41 - 2014-08-06)," *YouTube*, August 7, 2014. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAFcUhneLHE&t=2324s>)

<sup>28</sup> "Terrorist Finance: Action Request for Senior Level Engagement on Terrorism Finance," *WikiLeaks Cable: 09STATE131801\_a*, accessed July 20, 2017. ([https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE131801\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE131801_a.html))

<sup>29</sup> Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen, "Confronting New Threats in Terrorist Financing," *Remarks at the Center for a New American Security*, March 4, 2014. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2308.aspx>)



“There is no suspension of the Qatari financial support for the movement, since their relationship is ongoing.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Qatari Support for al-Qaeda in Syria**

As a Gulf country seeking to influence the post-Arab Spring politics of the Middle East, Qatar is not unique. However, Qatar’s desire to bring down the Assad regime ultimately gave way to backing al-Qaeda in Syria.

As early as 2012, al-Qaeda’s Jabhat al-Nusra commanders met with senior Qatari military officials and financiers in Doha.<sup>31</sup> In 2013, certain Qatari weapons shipments to militant groups were winding up in the hands of Jabhat al-Nusra. It was for this reason that the Obama administration requested that Qatar halt the export of heat-seeking shoulder-fired missiles to Syrian militants.<sup>32</sup>

In one very strange episode, a financier named Abd al-Aziz bin Khalifa al-Attiyah reportedly travelled to the Syrian-Lebanese border via Beirut to distribute funds to Jabhat al-Nusra militants. Lebanese authorities arrested him but released him following a Qatari protest. Al-Attiyah is a Qatari sheikh and cousin of former Qatari Foreign Minister Khalid al Attiyah.<sup>33</sup> Upon his return, he received a lifetime achievement award from the Qatar Olympic Committee and appeared in a video for a Syria fundraising campaign with another Qatari who would later be sanctioned by the U.S. for funding al-Qaeda.<sup>34</sup>

Broadly speaking, Qatar has worked to normalize al-Qaeda in Syria. Qatar reportedly promised additional financial backing should Jabhat al-Nusra rebrand and cosmetically distance itself from al-Qaeda.<sup>35</sup> This likely explains the two rebrands of the al-Qaeda affiliate, first as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS) in July 2016,<sup>36</sup> and again as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in January 2017.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Adnan Abu Amer, “Egypt-Qatar rapprochement rattles Hamas,” *Al-Monitor*, December 30, 2014. (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/egypt-qatar-rapprochement-hamas.html>)

<sup>31</sup> Jay Solomon and Nour Malas, “Qatar’s Ties to Militants Strain Alliance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2015. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/qatars-ties-to-militants-strain-alliance-1424748601>)

<sup>32</sup> Mark Mazzetti, C. J. Chivers, and Eric Schmitt, “Taking Outsize Role in Syria, Qatar Funnels Arms to Rebels,” *The New York Times*, June 29, 2013. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/world/middleeast/sending-missiles-to-syrian-rebels-qatar-muscles-in.html>)

<sup>33</sup> Jay Solomon and Nour Malas, “Qatar’s Ties to Militants Strain Alliance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2015. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/qatars-ties-to-militants-strain-alliance-1424748601?tesla=y>)

<sup>34</sup> “43 new designations specifically address threats posed by Qatar linked and based Al Qaida Terrorism Support Networks,” *Emirates News Agency* (UAE), June 9, 2017. (<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302618259>); “كلمتي لحملة مدد أهل الشام” (Sheikh Dr. Wagdy Ghoneim - My Speech for the Madad Ahl al-Sham Campaign), *YouTube*, June 29, 2013. (<https://youtu.be/IncUorGGzI?t=11m>)

<sup>35</sup> Mariam Karouny. “Insight - Syria’s Nusra Front May Leave Qaeda to Form New Entity,” *Reuters*, July 19, 2017. (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-nusra-insight-idUKKBN0M00G620150304>)

<sup>36</sup> “Syria war: Who are Jabhat Fateh al-Sham?” *BBC News* (UK), August 1, 2016. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36924000>)

<sup>37</sup> “Tahrir Al-Sham: Al-Qaeda’s latest incarnation in Syria,” *BBC News* (UK), February 28, 2017. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38934206>)

## Impunity for Designated al-Qaeda Financiers in Qatar

Qatar also has failed to prosecute many of the designated terrorist financiers, primarily al-Qaeda financiers, within its borders. FDD's David Andrew Weinberg has painstakingly documented this.<sup>38</sup>

The problem has also been well documented by successive senior Treasury Department officials. For example, in March 2014, then-Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen called Qatar, as well as Kuwait, “permissive jurisdictions” for terrorist finance,<sup>39</sup> and that October, he accused Doha of giving legal impunity to Khalifa al-Subaiy and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nu’aymi, Qatari nationals under U.S. and UN charges for raising millions of dollars for al-Qaeda. Al-Subaiy was identified as having close ties to 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammad before the latter’s capture in 2003 and had apparently worked as a senior employee at Qatar’s central bank.<sup>40</sup>

Cohen’s successor at Treasury, Adam Szubin, stated in October 2016 that Qatar “still lacks the necessary political will and capacity to effectively enforce their CFT (combating the financing of terrorism) laws against all terrorist financing threats regardless of organization or affiliation.”<sup>41</sup> And in February 2017, the former Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing, who had just stepped down, noted that designated terror financiers were still “operating openly and notoriously” in Qatar, as well as Kuwait.<sup>42</sup>

Hajjaj al-Ajmi is one figure who regularly visited Doha to fundraise for Jabhat al-Nusra. He encouraged Qataris to “Give your money to the ones who will spend it on jihad, not aid.” The Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs reportedly invited al-Ajmi to speak.<sup>43</sup> The U.S. Treasury designated al-Ajmi as a Jabhat al-Nusra funder in August 2014.<sup>44</sup> According to the UAE, two Qatari nationals based in Qatar helped al-Ajmi with his fundraising there.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, “Qatar and Terrorism Finance, Part II: Private Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, January 2017.

([http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717\\_Weinberg\\_Qatar\\_Report.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717_Weinberg_Qatar_Report.pdf))

<sup>39</sup> Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen, “Confronting New Threats in Terrorist Financing,” *Remarks at the Center for a New American Security*, March 4, 2014. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2308.aspx>)

<sup>40</sup> Robert Mendick, “Terror financiers are living freely in Qatar, US discloses,” *The Telegraph* (UK), November 16, 2014. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11233407/Terror-financiers-are-living-freely-in-Qatar-US-discloses.html>)

<sup>41</sup> Under Secretary Adam Szubin, “Countering the Financing of Terrorism,” *Remarks at The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies*, October 20, 2016. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0590.aspx>)

<sup>42</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, “Terror Financiers ‘Operating Openly’ in Qatar and Kuwait,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, February 14, 2017. (<http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/david-weinberg-terror-financiers-operating-openly-in-qatar-and-kuwait/>)

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Gilligan, “The ‘Club Med for terrorists,’” *The Telegraph* (UK), September 27, 2014.

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11125897/The-Club-Med-for-terrorists.html>)

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, “Treasury Designates Three Key Supporters of Terrorists in Syria and Iraq,” August 6, 2014. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2605.aspx>)

<sup>45</sup> “43 new designations specifically address threats posed by Qatar linked and based Al Qaida Terrorism Support Networks,” *Emirates News Agency* (UAE), June 9, 2017. (<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302618259>)

Another Kuwaiti national, Shafi al-Ajmi, reportedly boasted on Twitter that he raised \$52,000 for Jabhat al-Nusra in Qatar. He instructed Qataris to route donations through the Foundation Sheikh Thani Ibn Abdullah for Humanitarian Services (RAF), a Qatari royal charity.<sup>46</sup> The U.S. Treasury designated al-Ajmi as a Jabhat al-Nusra funder in August 2014.<sup>47</sup>

The U.S. Treasury designated Abd al-Rahman bin Umayr al-Nu'aymi for transferring \$600,000 to al-Qaeda in Syria.<sup>48</sup> Al-Nu'aymi previously served as an advisor to the Qatari government and founding member of Sheik Eid bin Mohammed al-Thani Charitable Foundation, and he served for a number of years as the chairman of a state-funded Qatari think tank.<sup>49</sup>

The U.S. Treasury designated Hamid Abdullah al-Ali in 2006 for financially supporting al-Qaeda in Iraq.<sup>50</sup> He was added to the UN's al-Qaeda sanctions list as well in 2008, and would have been added sooner but Qatar blocked his designation while it was a member of the Security Council. In 2012, the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs invited him to deliver a Friday sermon at Doha's Qatar Grand Mosque, in which he extolled the jihad in Syria.<sup>51</sup>

The U.S. Treasury designated Sa'd bin Sa'd Muhammad Shariyan Al-Ka'bi in August 2015 for facilitating terrorist funding social networks and ransom payment benefiting al-Qaeda in Syria.<sup>52</sup> He reportedly still resides in Qatar.<sup>53</sup>

According to the State Department's country reports on terrorism released last week, Qatar never prosecuted and convicted terror financiers before 2015.<sup>54</sup> According to the *Associated Press*, five UN-designated terror financiers have since been prosecuted by Qatar, but for some reason "are not imprisoned."<sup>55</sup> This subcommittee might consider requesting an explanation from Qatar about its justice system relating to terrorist financiers.

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew Gilligan, "The 'Club Med for terrorists,'" *The Telegraph* (UK), September 27, 2014.

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11125897/The-Club-Medfor-terrorists.html>)

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designates Three Key Supporters of Terrorists in Syria and Iraq," August 6, 2014. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2605.aspx>)

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designates Al-Qa'ida Supporters in Qatar and Yemen," December 18, 2013. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2249.aspx>)

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Gilligan, "The 'Club Med for terrorists,'" *The Telegraph* (UK), September 27, 2014.

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11125897/The-Club-Medfor-terrorists.html>)

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designations Target Terrorist Facilitators," December 7, 2006. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp191.aspx>)

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Gilligan, "The 'Club Med for terrorists,'" *The Telegraph* (UK), September 27, 2014.

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11125897/The-Club-Medfor-terrorists.html>)

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Rubinfeld, "U.S. Targets Alleged Qatari Financiers of Terrorism," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 5, 2015. (<https://blogs.wsj.com/riskandcompliance/2015/08/05/u-s-targets-alleged-qatari-financiers-of-terrorism/>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designates Financial Supporters of Al-Qaida and Al-Nusra Front," August 5, 2015. (<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0143.aspx>)

<sup>53</sup> Yaya J. Fanusie and Alex Entz, "Al-Qaeda's Branch in Syria: Financial Assessment," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 2017. ([http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/CSIF\\_TFBB\\_AQIS.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/CSIF_TFBB_AQIS.pdf))

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Chapter 2. Country Reports: Middle East and North Africa," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, July 2017. (<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272232.htm>)

<sup>55</sup> Aya Batrawy, "Qatar crisis raises questions about defining terrorism," *Associated Press*, July 7, 2017.

(<https://apnews.com/de239a64452f402ca6e08a0e734c347a/Qatar-crisis-raises-questions-about-defining-terrorism>)



## Kidnapping for Ransom

Qatar has repeatedly been accused of paying ransoms to terrorists. Former Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi often engaged in this practice as a means to send funds to terrorist groups under legitimate cover.<sup>56</sup> Of course, Qatar's government denies this.<sup>57</sup> But FDD has identified eighteen different episodes in the last six years in which Qatar was reported as a participant in hostage talks.<sup>58</sup>

In 2012 and 2013, Qatar and Oman were accused by sources cited by the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* of paying roughly \$20 million in ransoms for European hostages held by al-Qaeda in Yemen.<sup>59</sup> In 2013, *McClatchy* cited a Lebanese security official saying that Qatar paid a ransom for Lebanese pilgrims and Turkish pilots, the former of which was reportedly held by al-Qaeda in Syria.<sup>60</sup> In 2014, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Qatar paid a \$16 million ransom for Syrian nuns held by al-Qaeda in Syria.<sup>61</sup> The same year, Qatar reportedly paid \$25 million to Jabhat al-Nusra for the release of 45 Fijian UN peacekeepers kidnapped near the Golan Heights.<sup>62</sup> Qatar also was accused of facilitating a ransom to al-Qaeda related to the release of U.S. journalist Peter Theo Curtis, according to sources cited by the *Daily Beast*.<sup>63</sup> In 2015, Qatar was accused by Lebanese and Syrian sources of paying \$25 million as part of a hostage deal Doha mediated between al-Qaeda's Nusra Front and Beirut for kidnapped Lebanese security officials.<sup>64</sup>

According to a source quoted by the *Financial Times*, "ransom payments are the straw the broke the camel's back" leading up to the current Gulf crisis with Qatar. That piece cited sources alleging that in April, Qatar had paid up to a billion dollars for the release of its citizens, including members of Qatar's royal family, who had been taken hostage by an Iraqi terrorist group. The sources stated that Qatar had given \$200-\$300 million to Sunni jihadists in Syria who were holding hostages, with most of the money going to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Another \$700 million reportedly went to

<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Schanzer, "Terrorism's Back Door," *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 2003.

(<http://articles.latimes.com/2003/aug/26/opinion/oe-schanzer26>)

<sup>57</sup> Peter Kovessy, "Foreign minister: Qatar does not pay ransoms," *Doha News* (Qatar), September 30, 2014.

(<https://dohanews.co/foreign-minister-qatar-pay-ransoms/>)

<sup>58</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Qatar and Terrorism Finance, Part II: Private Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria,"

*Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, January 2017.

([http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717\\_Weinberg\\_Qatar\\_Report.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717_Weinberg_Qatar_Report.pdf))

<sup>59</sup> Rukmini Callimachi, "Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2014.

([https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/world/africa/ransoming-citizens-europe-becomes-al-qaedas-patron.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/world/africa/ransoming-citizens-europe-becomes-al-qaedas-patron.html?_r=1));

Ellen Knickmeyer, "Al Qaeda-Linked Groups Increasingly Funded by Ransom," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 29, 2014. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ransom-fills-terrorist-coffers-1406637010>)

<sup>60</sup> Mitchell Prothero, "Lebanese pilgrims held for year by Syrian rebels back in Beirut," *McClatchy*, October 19,

2013. (<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24757552.html>)

<sup>61</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, "Al Qaeda-Linked Groups Increasingly Funded by Ransom," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 29,

2014. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ransom-fills-terrorist-coffers-1406637010>)

<sup>62</sup> "Report: UN Had Qatar Pay Off Al-Qaida Fighters for Release of Fiji Peacekeepers," *Haaretz* (Israel), October 11,

2014. (<http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.620228>)

<sup>63</sup> Shane Harris, "US Pays Off Hostage Takers," *The Daily Beast*, April 29, 2015.

(<http://www.thedailybeast.com/us-pays-off-hostage-takers>)

<sup>64</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Wrong Way: The Problem With Al Qaeda Prisoner Swaps," *The National Interest*,

January 4, 2016. (<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/wrong-way-the-problem-al-qaeda-prisoner-swaps-14794>)

the Iranian-backed bloc in the region, with \$300 million going to IRGC-backed Shiite militias in Iraq and Tehran taking a \$400 million cut.<sup>65</sup>

### Support for the Taliban

In December 2009, the State Department listed Qatari cooperation on terrorism finance among “the worst in the region,” noting that, “the Taliban ... and other terrorist groups exploit Qatar as a fundraising locale.”<sup>66</sup> In 2010, members of the Taliban reportedly began to arrive in Qatar to establish an official presence. In 2012, the Taliban established a political office in Qatar to “spread understanding with the international community.”<sup>67</sup> When the Obama administration began its dialogue in 2013 with the Taliban, Qatar permitted the group to open a diplomatic office in Doha.<sup>68</sup>

The Taliban presence increased further with a May 2014 Qatari-facilitated prisoner swap<sup>69</sup> involving Bowe Bergdahl, an American soldier captured by the Taliban after “wandering off an American outpost in the Paktika province in June 2009,”<sup>70</sup> in exchange for five Taliban figures with “high-ranking positions in Mullah Omar’s organization” and “noteworthy connections to Al Qaeda.”<sup>71</sup> The Taliban Five were released to Qatar “in coordination with the Qatari government, which pledged to enforce a temporary travel ban and provided assurances the men would not pose a threat to the US.”<sup>72</sup>

Troubling questions have been raised about the extent to which Qatar is monitoring or politicking the activities of the Taliban Five. *Fox News* reported in 2015 that “at least three of the five Taliban leaders ... have tried to plug back into their old terror networks.”<sup>73</sup> Reports indicate that at least one of the former Taliban detainees may have been in contact with fighters from the Afghan terror group in January 2015 and encouraged attacks on U.S. forces.<sup>74</sup> A top fundraiser for the Haqqani

<sup>65</sup> Erica Solomon, “The \$1bn hostage deal that enraged Qatar’s Gulf rivals,” *Financial Times* (UK), June 5, 2017. (<https://www.ft.com/content/dd033082-49e9-11e7-a3f4-c742b9791d43?segmentid=acee4131-99c2-09d3-a635-873e61754ec6>)

<sup>66</sup> “US fears on Taliban cash revealed,” *Al-Jazeera* (Qatar), December 6, 2010.

(<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/12/20101251936167112.html>)

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, “Afghan Taliban announces new ‘political office’ in Qatar,” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, January 3, 2012. ([http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/01/afghan\\_taliban\\_annou.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/01/afghan_taliban_annou.php))

<sup>68</sup> Paul Alster, “Qatar’s terror funding makes it more foe than friend to U.S., critics say,” *Fox News*, September 16, 2014. (<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/09/16/qatar-cozies-up-to-us-while-funding-terror-say-critics/>)

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, “Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl exchanged for top 5 Taliban commanders at Gitmo,” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, May 31, 2014. ([http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/sgt\\_bowe\\_bergdahl\\_ex.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/sgt_bowe_bergdahl_ex.php))

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, “Taliban touts Bergdahl swap as key ‘achievement,’” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, April 22, 2016. (<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/04/taliban-touts-bergdahl-swap-as-key-achievement.php>)

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, “Afghan peace council reportedly seeks talks with Taliban commanders held at Gitmo,” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, March 17, 2011.

([http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/03/afghan\\_peace\\_council\\_1.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/03/afghan_peace_council_1.php))

<sup>72</sup> Jeremy Diamond, “House report accuses Obama of violating law in Bergdahl exchange,” *CNN*, December 10, 2015. (<http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/09/politics/taliban-5-bowe-bergdahl-congress-report/index.html>)

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Herridge, “Official: At least 3 members of ‘Taliban 5’ tried to reconnect with terror networks,” *Fox News*, March 25, 2015. (<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/03/25/official-at-least-3-members-taliban-5-trying-to-reconnect-with-terror-networks.html>)

<sup>74</sup> Spencer Ackerman, “One of ‘Taliban Five’ in Bowe Bergdahl swap allegedly returned to militancy,” *The Guardian* (UK), January 30, 2015. (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/30/taliban-five-bowe-bergdahl-swap-return-militancy>)

group was purportedly able to fly to Qatar, meet one or more of the five men, and fly out before he was captured in a third country.<sup>75</sup>

According to one Afghan official recently cited by the *New York Times*, “Doha is now is home to about 100 Taliban officials and their relatives, who live comfortably at Qatari state expense.”<sup>76</sup>

Under fire in recent weeks for its support of terrorist groups, the government in Doha insists that it hosted the Taliban with the permission, or even encouragement, of the Obama administration.<sup>77</sup> This may have been the case. But that does not mean that Qatar has upheld its end of the bargain. It also does not mean that the office has helped achieve U.S. objectives. One senior U.S. official told me earlier this year that he heard repeatedly from Afghan officials that the Taliban office in Doha directly undermined the Afghan government.<sup>78</sup> This committee might consider investigating whether the Taliban presence in Qatar ultimately helps or hurts our interests.

### Support for Libyan Islamists

On June 5, 2017, Libya’s eastern-based government joined other Arab countries in cutting ties with Qatar, with Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Deri asserting that Doha was “harboring terrorism.”<sup>79</sup> The move reflected a longstanding frustration with Qatar’s sponsorship of Islamist extremists in the war-torn country. Since the 2011 revolution, Libya has been the site of a Gulf proxy war. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have backed the eastern-based government and Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA). By contrast, Qatar, Sudan, and Turkey have backed the Tripoli-based Presidency Council/Government of National Accord.

Qatar’s interference in Libya dates to the revolution against the Qaddafi regime, when Doha provided robust support to the rebels.<sup>80</sup> Since then, Qatar has reportedly sent massive amounts of weapons to Islamist militants battling the Western-backed government in Libya.<sup>81</sup> A March 2013 UN report noted that in 2011 and 2012, Qatar violated the UN arms embargo by “providing military material to the revolutionary forces through the organization of a large number of flights and the deliveries of a range of arms and ammunition.”<sup>82</sup> And according to the *Libya News Agency*,

<sup>75</sup> Margherita Stancati and Ehsanullah Amiri, “Haqqani Leaders Detained in Persian Gulf, Not Inside Afghanistan,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 19, 2014.

(<https://www.wsj.com/articles/haqqani-leaders-detained-in-persian-gulf-not-inside-afghanistan-1413733878>)

<sup>76</sup> Declan Walsh, “Qatar Opens Its Doors to All, to the Dismay of Some,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2017.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/16/world/middleeast/doha-qatar-blockade.html>)

<sup>77</sup> Qatar hosted Taliban ‘at request of US government,’” *Al-Jazeera* (Qatar), June 11, 2017.

(<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/qatar-hosted-taliban-request-government-170611114833584.html>)

<sup>78</sup> Conversation with U.S. official, April 28, 2017.

<sup>79</sup> “Libya government cuts relations with Qatar,” *Economic Times* (India), June 5, 2017.

(<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/libya-government-cuts-relations-with-qatar/articleshow/59004515.cms>)

<sup>80</sup> David Roberts, “Behind Qatar’s Intervention in Libya,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 28, 2011.

(<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2011-09-28/behind-qatars-intervention-libya>)

<sup>81</sup> Feras Bosalum and Ayman al-Warfalli, “Libyan PM accuses Qatar of sending planes with weapons to Tripoli,” *Reuters*, September 15, 2014. (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/14/uk-libya-security-qatar-idUKKBN0H90WE20140914>)

<sup>82</sup> United Nations Security Council, “Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya,” March 9, 2013. ([http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2013\\_99.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2013_99.pdf)); Karim Mezran and Elissa Miller, “Resolving the Gulf crisis

Doha has provided more than 750 million euros to extremist groups in Libya since 2011.<sup>83</sup> Arab officials I spoke to believe that these deliveries of arms and cash arrive to Western Libya by way of a commercial airline that is owned by Qatar.<sup>84</sup>

According to Kristian Coates Ulrichsen of the Baker Institute for Public Policy, “Qatar developed close links with key Islamist militia commanders [in Libya] such as Abdelhakim Belhadj, once the head of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and, in 2011, the commander of the Tripoli Brigade.”<sup>85</sup> According to Arab officials, Belhadj was the Libyan apostle of Osama bin Laden who maintained close and continuing ties to Qatar.<sup>86</sup> Belhadj launched Hizb al-Watan in 2012,<sup>87</sup> which Arab officials believed have maintained close ties to LIFG and received continued support from Qatar.<sup>88</sup>

Ulrichsen also notes the connection between Qatar and “Ismael al-Salabi, the leader of one of the best-supplied rebel militias, the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies. Qatar was widely suspected of arming and funding al-Salabi’s group, whose sudden munificence of resources in 2011 earned it the nickname of the ‘Ferrari 17 Brigade.’”<sup>89</sup>

Ismael al-Salabi’s brother, Ali al-Salabi, is a prominent Libyan cleric close to the emir of Qatar. One Egyptian source claims that he maintains close ties to the LIFG.<sup>90</sup> This is a claim echoed by Arab officials familiar with the situation in Libya.<sup>91</sup>

On June 8, 2017, the LNA held a press conference alleging proof of Qatar’s malign role in Libya. The LNA charged that Qatari intelligence General Salim Ali al-Jarboui supported al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Muslims Brotherhood by transferring \$8 billion from the Qatari Tunisian National Bank to the Housing Bank of Tataouine Governorate in southern Tunisia. According to the LNA, Qatar supported the assassination of senior officials, facilitated training of Islamist extremists by Hamas, and helped transport Libyan Islamists to Syria. Mesmari also presented a letter by Mohammed Hamad Al Hajri, acting charge d’affaires at the Qatar Embassy in Libya, supporting the notion that Qatar had deployed military units to the country.<sup>92</sup>

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through Libya,” *The Hill*, July 1, 2017. (<http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/foreign-policy/340089-resolving-the-gulf-crisis-through-libya>)

<sup>83</sup> “Qatar’s support to terrorist groups in Libya ‘will not pass without charge’: Hafter,” *Egypt Independent*, June 1, 2017. (<http://www.egyptindependent.com/qatar-support-terrorist-groups-libya/>)

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Arab officials, Summer 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The United Arab Emirates: Power, Politics and Policymaking*, (London and NY: Routledge, 2017), page 197.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Arab officials, Summer 2017.

<sup>87</sup> Katerina Nikolas, “Libya’s Abdel Hakim Belhaj to launch Hizb al-Watan Islamic party,” *Digital Journal*, May 24, 2012. (<http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/325423>)

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Arab officials, Summer 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The United Arab Emirates: Power, Politics and Policymaking*, (London and NY: Routledge, 2017), page 197.

<sup>90</sup> “Ali Mohamed Mohamed Al-Salabi: Tamim’s man in Libya,” June 11, 2017. (<http://www.albawabaeg.com/93180>)

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Arab officials, Summer 2017.

<sup>92</sup> “Libyan army provides documentary proof of Qatar’s crimes in country,” *Al-Arabiya* (UAE), June 9, 2017. (<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/north-africa/2017/06/09/Libyan-army-provides-documentary-proof-of-Qatar-s-crimes-in-country-.html>); Andrew McGregor, “Qatar’s Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who’s on the Lists of Terrorists and Why,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 14, 2017. (<https://jamestown.org/program/qatars-role-libyan-conflict-whos-lists-terrorists/>)

When Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt issued a “terrorist list” of 59 individuals and 12 entities linked to Qatar, it included one entity (the Benghazi Defense Brigades) and five individuals from Libya.<sup>93</sup> On June 12, the LNA released a second list of 75 Libyan individuals and 9 organizations tied to Qatar.<sup>94</sup> One highlight of the first list includes Al-Sadiq Abd al-Rahman Ali al-Ghiryani, who previously served the Grand Mufti of Libya, who has called for the destruction of the eastern government.<sup>95</sup>

## The Muslim Brotherhood

Much of the current conflict between Qatar and its neighbors can be traced back to Qatari support for the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood’s presence in Qatar dates back to 1974, when students studying in countries like Kuwait and Egypt returned and wanted to form their own chapter of the organization. Since then, Qatar has hosted the movement’s leaders and supported its regional activities, particularly since the eruption of the Arab Spring.<sup>96</sup> That was when Qatar began to actively support Muslim Brotherhood branches in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and beyond.<sup>97</sup>

In Libya, Doha became the first Arab government to recognize the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the only legitimate representation of the people. It provided military and financial support to the rebels fighting against Moammar Qaddafi and created a pro-revolutionary channel that balanced Qaddafi’s propaganda. Some Libyans, however, like the former NTC Deputy Prime Minister Ali Tarhouni, suspected that Qatar was providing support to the Brotherhood.<sup>98</sup>

Qatar invested \$18 billion in Egypt shortly after Morsi’s election to support his Brotherhood regime, and it reportedly supplied funds to the Islamist Tunisian Nahda Party, as well.<sup>99</sup> It also backed the Brotherhood-dominated Syrian National Council, founded in late 2011, despite other Arab states’ hesitation.<sup>100</sup>

## Al-Jazeera

<sup>93</sup> “Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt issue Qatar-linked terrorism list,” *The National* (UAE), June 9, 2017.

(<https://www.thenational.ae/world/saudi-arabia-uae-and-egypt-issue-qatar-linked-terrorism-list-1.51035>)

<sup>94</sup> “HoR promotes hatred and violence with list of ‘terrorists’ says Libya’s Uganda ambassador; full list published,” *Libya Herald*, June 12, 2017. (<https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/06/12/hor-promotes-hatred-and-violence-with-list-of-terrorists-says-libyas-uganda-ambassador-full-list-published/>)

<sup>95</sup> Andrew McGregor, “Qatar’s Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who’s on the Lists of Terrorists and Why,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 14, 2017. (<https://jamestown.org/program/qatars-role-libyan-conflict-whos-lists-terrorists/>)

<sup>96</sup> “Shedding light on the Qatari-Muslim Brotherhood connection,” *The Arab Weekly* (UK), July 9, 2017.

(<http://www.thearabweekly.com/Highlights/8808/Shedding-light-on-the-Qatari-Muslim-Brotherhood-connection>)

<sup>97</sup> Hanin Ghaddar, “Qatar Bets on Islamists,” *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, February 7, 2013. (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/qatar-bets-islamists>)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Jonathan Schanzer and David Andrew Weinberg, “How Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the Tortoise and the Hare of the Middle East,” *The Atlantic*, August 27, 2013. (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/how-saudi-arabia-and-qatar-are-the-tortoise-and-the-hare-of-the-middle-east/279090/>)

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



Qatar's Arab neighbors are also deeply concerned about the broadcasts of Qatar-owned Al-Jazeera. Some of the concerns are shared here in Washington, as well.

After the Egyptian coup against Mohammed Morsi, Al-Jazeera hosted exiled Brotherhood leaders at a five-star hotel in Doha and gave them airtime to advocate for their cause. Al-Jazeera also heavily aired the Brotherhood's protests against the new Egyptian government.<sup>101</sup>

The channel has a long history of incitement to violence, biased reporting, supporting Islamist ideologies, and acting as a tool of the Qatari government. I do not believe that the demand issued by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt to shut down Al-Jazeera is realistic.<sup>102</sup> But I do believe Qatar needs to do more to ensure that the content on this state-backed channel is addressed.

For example, in Syria, the channel has provided a platform to presenters who call for violence against Alawites. One host, Faisal al-Qassem, said of Alawites: "The Alawites don't need demonization, they are demons, even Satan, the Devil himself, is ashamed of them."<sup>103</sup>

Additional criticisms of Al-Jazeera include its reference to suicide bombers as "martyrs" and the Islamic State as "the state organization."<sup>104</sup> The channel has hosted figures who advocate for political Islam as well as more radical ones from al-Qaeda and Hezbollah who call for jihad.<sup>105</sup> One of the London Bridge bombers, Youssef Zaghba, reportedly was inspired by Al-Jazeera.<sup>106</sup>

Al-Jazeera's reporting on Israel has been consistently egregious. Recently, the network's English affiliate reported on "three Palestinians killed," omitting the fact that they were armed with guns and shot two Israeli police officers to death before being killed.<sup>107</sup> The network's Arabic station

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<sup>101</sup> Eric Trager, "The Muslim Brotherhood Is the Root of the Qatar Crisis," *The Atlantic*, July 2, 2017.

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/muslim-brotherhood-qatar/532380/>)

<sup>102</sup> Naser Al Wasmi, "UAE: Al Jazeera has gone beyond incitement to hostility and violence," *The National* (UAE), July 19, 2017. (<https://www.thenational.ae/world/uae-al-jazeera-has-gone-beyond-incitement-to-hostility-and-violence-1.530768>)

<sup>103</sup> "The Media's War: How the press is fueling Syria's conflict," *Syria Justice and Accountability Centre*, October 31, 2016. (<https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2016/10/31/the-medias-war-how-the-press-is-fueling-syrias-conflict/>)

<sup>104</sup> Graham Ruddick, "Al-Jazeera: the Qatar broadcaster at centre of diplomatic crisis," *The Guardian* (UK), June 24, 2017. (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/jun/24/al-jazeera-the-qatar-broadcaster-at-centre-of-diplomatic-crisis>)

<sup>105</sup> Ben Lynfield, "Al Jazeera Journalists Urge Israel Not to Close Bureau," *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), June 13, 2017. (<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Al-Jazeera-Journalists-urge-Israel-not-to-close-bureau-496754>)

<sup>106</sup> "How Qatar's Al Jazeera promoted extremism and violence," *Gulf News* (UAE), July 12, 2017.

(<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-crisis/how-qatar-s-al-jazeera-promoted-extremism-and-violence-1.2057646>)

<sup>107</sup> "Al Jazeera fails to mention attack as it reports on 'three killed Palestinians,'" *Ynet News* (Israel), July 14, 2017. (<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4989220,00.html>)

went further, calling the three assailants “martyrs.”<sup>108</sup> Al-Jazeera Arabic does this virtually every time a Palestinian is killed in the act of attacking Israeli civilians or armed forces.<sup>109</sup>

Al-Jazeera has often featured Yousuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, who called the Holocaust “divine punishment,” and has advocated on air for killing Jews.<sup>110</sup>

In Israel’s most recent war with Hamas in 2014, Al-Jazeera Arabic’s reporting mirrored Hamas’ directives to observers on how to report on the conflict. The network followed Hamas’ instructions to describe Palestinians as “martyrs” or “victims” of “Israeli oppression.” Al-Jazeera called all Palestinian casualties “innocent civilians,” even if they were known combatants.<sup>111</sup>

During the Iraq War, Al-Jazeera received criticism for airing videos by al-Qaeda’s leadership, who called for violence against the U.S. and its allies. It promoted the Islamist ideology of groups like al-Qaeda by describing suicide bombings as “paradise operations” and terrorist activities as acts of “resistance.”<sup>112</sup> In April 2013, Iraq suspended the licenses of Al-Jazeera due to accusations of incitement. At that point, more than 170 people had been killed due to sectarian fighting, which the Communication and Media Commission attributed in part to Al-Jazeera’s reporting. The regulatory group argued that the sectarian language used in their reporting created “criminal acts of revenge by attacking the security forces.”<sup>113</sup>

These, of course, are just a few representative examples of the controversial material aired on Al-Jazeera.

## The Current Gulf Crisis

Qatar’s neighbors are justified in their concern about the aforementioned policies, particularly if their interests are in a stable Middle East. Yet, Qatar’s Gulf neighbors are certainly not free from guilt. Based on conversations I have had with current and former Treasury officials, Kuwait ranks among the top terror finance concerns in the Gulf, alongside Qatar. According to the State Department’s Country Reports on Terrorism for 2016, which were released last week, “a number of UN-designated terrorist financiers continued to operate in Kuwait.”<sup>114</sup>

<sup>108</sup> جنديين إسرائيلييين بعملية دهس بالخليل (Martyrdom of a Palestinian and Injuring of Two Israeli Soldiers in Car-Ramming Operation in Hebron), *Al-Jazeera* (Qatar), July 18, 2017.

(<http://www.aljazeera.net/amp/news/arabic/2017/7/18/جنديين-إسرائيليين-بعملية-دهس-بالخليل-استشهاد-فلسطيني>)

<sup>109</sup> “عملية -جنديين إسرائيلييين-بعملية دهس بالخليل (Killing of Two Israeli Police in al-Quds Operation),” *Al-Jazeera* (Qatar), April 14, 2017. (<http://mubasher.aljazeera.net/news/عملية-جنديين-إسرائيليين-بعملية-دهس-بالخليل>)

<sup>110</sup> “How Qatar’s Al Jazeera promoted extremism and violence,” *Gulf News* (UAE), July 12, 2017.

(<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-crisis/how-qatar-s-al-jazeera-promoted-extremism-and-violence-1.2057646>)

<sup>111</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, Oren Adaki, and Grant Rumley, “The Problem with Al Jazeera,” *The National Interest*, September 10, 2014. (<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-problem-al-jazeera-11239?page=show>)

<sup>112</sup> Osama Heikal, “Qatar’s Dangerous Al Jazeera Backing is Indefensible,” *Newsweek*, July 18, 2017.

(<http://www.newsweek.com/qatars-dangerous-defense-al-jazeera-indefensible-637460>)

<sup>113</sup> “Iraq Suspends Al Jazeera, Others, Accusing Them of Inciting Violence,” *Reuters*, April 28, 2013.

([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/28/iraq-al-jazeera-others-inciting-violence\\_n\\_3173848.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/28/iraq-al-jazeera-others-inciting-violence_n_3173848.html))

<sup>114</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Chapter 2. Country Reports: Middle East and North Africa,” *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, July 2017. (<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272232.htm>)

Saudi Arabia continues to finance institutions that teach Wahhabi Islam and also foments religious incitement, thereby ensuring continued radicalization of Muslim youth. And all of the Gulf states suffer from a significant democracy deficit.

To understand the current crisis, it is important to understand that the Saudis and the Emiratis have been engaged in a rather ruthless competition with Qatar for years. These three countries have wielded their immense wealth in an attempt to outdo one another through soft power by way of foreign investment, domestic businesses, media interests, lobbying in Western capitals, and more. In the wake of the Arab Spring, as noted above, they began to throw their support behind various proxies representing their interests in the Middle East. Over the last six years, the rivalry has boiled over.

Right now, Qatar's opponents say that Doha has broken its agreement, signed in November 2013, in which signatories pledged not to intervene in the internal affairs of other Gulf states, not to support the Muslim Brotherhood, and not to back opposition groups in Yemen. A second agreement also included provisions ensuring the stability of Egypt. The Gulf states say that Doha has given support to Hezbollah as well as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>115</sup> The Gulf states recalled their ambassadors temporarily from Doha in protest in March 2014.<sup>116</sup>

Through Kuwaiti mediation, the countries signed the Riyadh Agreement in April, and then an extension of the Riyadh Agreement in November, which led to the reinstatement of the ambassadors and the GCC summit being held, as initially planned, in Doha.<sup>117</sup>

But Qatar's Arab neighbors are unsatisfied with Qatar's track record. Doha continues to support the aforementioned terrorist groups and extremists. Their focus has been on the Muslim Brotherhood, but Qatar has also failed to end the impunity of terror financiers and to stop promoting the ideology that underpins extremist groups, as it pledged it would do under the U.S.-led Jeddah Communiqué of September 2014.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, the grievances run deeper. As far back as 2009, Abu Dhabi's crown prince complained to the U.S. officials that Qatar is "part of the Muslim Brotherhood." Other UAE officials privately described Qatar as "public enemy number 3," after Iran and the Brotherhood.<sup>119</sup>

Tensions escalated dramatically in the wake of the Arab Spring. In 2012, Yusuf Qardawi criticized the UAE on Al-Jazeera, leading to a diplomatic spat with Qatar. Tensions worsened when the UAE arrested a number of Emirati members of the Muslim Brotherhood, a group known as the Association for Reform and Guidance (Jamiat al-Islah wa Tawjih). That crackdown was followed by the arrest of eleven Egyptians on January 1, 2013 who were suspected of being members of the

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<sup>115</sup> Jim Sciutto and Jeremy Herb, "The secret documents that help explain the Qatar crisis," *CNN*, July 11, 2017. (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/10/politics/secret-documents-qatar-crisis-gulf-saudi/index.html>)

<sup>116</sup> Jay Solomon and Nour Malas, "Qatar's Ties to Militants Strain Alliance," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2015. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/qatars-ties-to-militants-strain-alliance-1424748601>)

<sup>117</sup> Habib Toumi, "GCC endured its worst diplomatic crisis in 2014," *Gulf News* (UAE), December 27, 2014. (<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/gcc-endured-its-worst-diplomatic-crisis-in-2014-1.1432568>)

<sup>118</sup> The Jeddah Communiqué, September 11, 2014. (<https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/09/231496.htm>)

<sup>119</sup> James M. Dorsey, "Wahhabism vs. Wahhabism: Qatar challenges Saudi Arabia," *M.E. Transparent*, July 25, 2014. ([http://metranspcm.cluster011.ovh.net/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=28932&var\\_lang=en&lang=en](http://metranspcm.cluster011.ovh.net/spip.php?page=article&id_article=28932&var_lang=en&lang=en))

Muslim Brotherhood and conspiring to destabilize the UAE. It was then learned that several Emirati members of Al-Islah had escaped a crackdown in the UAE and found refuge in Qatar.<sup>120</sup> In 2014, recordings acquired by Libyan rebels and subsequently posted to YouTube exposed the former emir of Qatar discussing with Moammar Gaddafi a plan to undermine and even overthrow the Saudi royal family.<sup>121</sup>

Most recently, reports have surfaced alleging that Qatar informed al-Qaeda of a military operation in Yemen, resulting in a suicide bomb attack that left Emirati troops injured. “Our Qatari allies informed al-Qaeda of our precise location and what we were planning to do. We then received four suicide bombers at our door,” UAE ambassador to Russia Omar Saif Ghobash told BBC.<sup>122</sup> Other claims, conveyed by Arab officials, suggest that Qatar may have also shared similar information with Iran-backed Houthi fighters and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, also directly leading to Emirati and Saudi deaths.<sup>123</sup>

In other words, there are deeper reasons Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt decided to cut ties with Qatar on June 5. The Arab states released a list of thirteen demands that included severing ties with the Brotherhood and Hamas, the Palestinian arm of the Brotherhood.<sup>124</sup> But even if Qatar complied, additional challenges would remain.

### **The Al-Udeid Air Base and Camp As Sayliyah**

Remarkably, despite the aforementioned Qatari support for jihadist groups, Qatar hosts America’s most significant base in the Middle East: al-Udeid Air Base. The dissonance between American and Qatari policy is palpable. George W. Bush administration officials openly questioned this arrangement,<sup>125</sup> as have Obama administration officials.<sup>126</sup>

Those pushing for a tougher line with Qatar, however, have met with stiff resistance from the U.S. military. Since 2001, Qatar has hosted a significant portion of the U.S. military’s forces and equipment in the Gulf.<sup>127</sup> Al-Udeid is home to a large number of the U.S. Air Force’s forward deployed strike, logistic, and intelligence assets, which conduct over 15,000 missions per year.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The United Arab Emirates: Power, Politics and Policymaking*, (London and NY: Routledge, 2017), pages 189-203.

<sup>121</sup> Faisal J. Abbas, “Qatar’s ‘Small State Syndrome,’” *The Huffington Post*, March 9, 2013.

([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/faisal-abbas/qatars-small-state-syndrom\\_b\\_4924001.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/faisal-abbas/qatars-small-state-syndrom_b_4924001.html))

<sup>122</sup> “Qatar ‘informed’ al-Qaeda bombers says UAE diplomat,” *BBC New* (UK), July 20, 2017.

(<http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-40673529/qatar-informed-al-qaeda-bombers-says-uae-diplomat>)

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Arab official, July 21, 2017.

<sup>124</sup> Asa Fitch, Nicolas Parasie, and Margherita Stancati, “Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Bahrain and Egypt Cut Diplomatic Ties With Qatar,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 5, 2017. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-bahrain-and-uae-cut-diplomatic-ties-with-qatar-1496633817>)

<sup>125</sup> Interviews with two Bush administration officials, May 2015.

<sup>126</sup> Jay Solomon and Nour Malas, “Qatar’s Ties to Militants Strain Alliance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2015. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/qatars-ties-to-militants-strain-alliance-1424748601>)

<sup>127</sup> Adam Schreck, “Coalition contributions hailed as vital, even as US handles most air strikes against IS,” *Associated Press*, March 13, 2015. (<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/03/12/in-coalition-of-many-us-air-power-does-the-heavy-lifting>)

<sup>128</sup> U.S. Air Force, 379<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, “Al Udeid Air Base: Newcomers Guide,” August 2015. ([http://www.afcent.af.mil/Portals/82/379thAEWimages/2015%20Visitor%20Welcome%20Guide\\_August.pdf](http://www.afcent.af.mil/Portals/82/379thAEWimages/2015%20Visitor%20Welcome%20Guide_August.pdf))

Nearby Camp As Sayliyah houses a major U.S. Army staging area and prepositioned stocks called Area Support Group-Qatar (ASG-Qatar).<sup>129</sup> Qatar also hosts the major command centers for U.S. and allied forces for the region, including CENTCOM's forward headquarters and the state-of-the-art Combined Air and Space Operations Center (CAOC).

Qatar sees the U.S. presence on its soil as a significant asset. Following the first Gulf War, when Qatar realized how susceptible it was to regional aggression, the country's leaders sought closer defense ties to the United States. In 1992, the U.S. and Qatar signed a bilateral defense agreement granting America substantial access to facilities in Qatar.<sup>130</sup> As part of the deal, Qatar agreed to invest \$1 billion to build al-Udeid Air Base.<sup>131</sup> Doha, which was operating only about a dozen combat aircraft at the time,<sup>132</sup> welcomed the presence of the United States military to bolster its security. According to diplomatic cables, Qatar annually pays for 60 percent of al-Udeid's "upkeep costs."<sup>133</sup>

During the invasion of Iraq and subsequent operations there, thousands of sorties were flown from al-Udeid. As of August 2015, the base hosted the U.S. Air Force's 379<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing – the largest expeditionary air wing in the world.<sup>134</sup> U.S. B-1 bombers, originally stationed at the base to provide air support in Afghanistan, dropped nearly a third of all coalition weapons on the Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria from al-Udeid until they were rotated home in January 2016. Aerial refueling tankers and surveillance aircraft are still a constant presence at al-Udeid.<sup>135</sup>

The U.S. signed a 10-year defense cooperation agreement with Qatar in December 2013 to allow the U.S. to continue operating and stationing troops at al-Udeid through 2024.<sup>136</sup> But this should not bind the United States. It is incumbent upon Washington to assess whether there are opportunities to operate out of regional countries more aligned with American goals and values.

Such a move is not unprecedented. Once the most vital U.S. air installation in the region, Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base supported 5,000 troops and 200 aircraft at its peak.<sup>137</sup> The U.S. in 2003 decided to move its assets to al-Udeid. The move was prompted by a number of factors, including the Saudi refusal to allow American aircraft to launch strikes from the base during the

<sup>129</sup> U.S. Army Central, "ASG-Qatar Facts," February 9, 2015, accessed via Wayback Machine July 24, 2017. (<http://web.archive.org/web/20150317233745/http://www.arcent.army.mil/about-us/fact-sheets/asg-qatar>)

<sup>130</sup> United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council," June 19, 2012. (<http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/746031.pdf>)

<sup>131</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard, "Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, January 30, 2014, pages 5-8. (<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31718.pdf>)

<sup>132</sup> "Qatar: Military Breakdown," *Military Edge*, October 26, 2014. (<http://militaryedge.org/countries/qatar/>)

<sup>133</sup> Jack Khoury, "WikiLeaks Cables: Qatar Okays Use of Airbase for U.S. Attack on Iran," *Haaretz* (Israel), November 30, 2010. (<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/wikileaks-cables-qatar-okays-use-of-airbase-for-u-s-attack-on-iran-1.328081>)

<sup>134</sup> U.S. Air Force, 379<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, "Al Udeid Air Base Newcomers Guide," August 2015. ([http://www.afcent.af.mil/Portals/82/379thAEWImages/2015%20Visitor%20Welcome%20Guide\\_August.pdf](http://www.afcent.af.mil/Portals/82/379thAEWImages/2015%20Visitor%20Welcome%20Guide_August.pdf))

<sup>135</sup> Robert Burns and Adam Schreck, "Tiny Qatar Plays Outsize Role in U.S. War Strategy," *Associated Press*, September 15, 2014. (<http://www.armytimes.com/article/20140915/NEWS08/309150052/Tiny-Qatar-plays-outsize-role-U-S-war-strategy>)

<sup>136</sup> "Qatar Signs Defense Accord with U.S.," *Reuters*, December 10, 2013.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/11/world/middleeast/qatar-signs-defense-accord-with-us.html>)

<sup>137</sup> "Prince Sultan Air Base," *Global Security*, May 7, 2011. (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/prince-sultan.htm>)



second Iraq War.<sup>138</sup> But in the end, the Saudis at the time were uncomfortable with the presence of American forces on their soil.

Just as the United States started building a backup CAOC in Qatar when its access to Saudi territory was become more tenuous, now would be the right time to begin thinking about a similar move. At the very least, it would give the U.S. sufficient latitude to get tougher on Doha when it misbehaves.

Below are some options:

*Al-Dhafra, UAE:* This base sits less than 20 miles southeast of Abu Dhabi.<sup>139</sup> Al-Dhafra has a number of attributes that make it a suitable location. With al-Dhafra only about 200 miles from al-Udeid, U.S. forces would retain the ability to quickly respond to crises throughout the Persian Gulf region. The base is also closer to the strategic Strait of Hormuz in the event of Iranian attempts to block the vital channel.

Al-Dhafra's capacity and value to U.S. operations is evident by the fact that in the first months of the campaign against the Islamic State in the fall of 2014, more coalition strike missions into Syria and Iraq were launched from the base than any other in the region.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, the base is regarded as the busiest in the world for U.S. Air Force surveillance missions.<sup>141</sup> Other missions conducted from al-Dhafra include: bombing missions into Afghanistan, air patrols over the Gulf, and logistics and ISR flights supporting operations throughout the Central Command area of responsibility.<sup>142</sup> The U.S. holds the base and its partnership with the UAE in such high regard that al-Dhafra is used to host some of the U.S.'s most secretive and advanced aircraft, including being one of the few foreign-owned bases to host F-22 stealth fighter deployments.<sup>143</sup>

*Shaheed Mwaffaq (Mwaffaq Salti) Air Base, Jordan:* This base has played a prominent role in the battle against the Islamic State. The base is located in Azraq, eastern Jordan, and was first used by U.S. aircraft in 1996 to support the no-fly zones over Iraq. Today, Mwaffaq supports a range of

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<sup>138</sup> Don Van Natta Jr., "Last American Combat Troops Quit Saudi Arabia," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2003. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/22/international/middleeast/22SAUD.html>)

<sup>139</sup> "Al-Dhafra Air Base, UAE," *Global Security*, May 7, 2011. (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/dhafra.htm>)

<sup>140</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed 'Little Sparta,'" *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2014. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67_story.html))

<sup>141</sup> Tara Copp, "Air Force part of the 'more' for Islamic State fight, Carter says," *Stars and Stripes*, April 17, 2016. (<https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/air-force-part-of-the-more-for-islamic-state-fight-carter-says-1.404911#.WNkI9G8rJeM>)

<sup>142</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed 'Little Sparta,'" *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2014. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67_story.html))

<sup>143</sup> Amy Butler and Robert Wall, "UAE-Based F-22s a Signal to Iran," *Aviation Week*, April 26, 2012. (<http://aviationweek.com/defense/uae-based-f-22s-signal-iran>)

coalition aircraft striking the Islamic State.<sup>144</sup> The base has two runways capable of accommodating all aircraft in the U.S. inventory.

A number of coalition partners have deployed aircraft to Jordan to support the fight against the Islamic State. Both the UAE and Bahrain deployed there to benefit from the country's proximity to the battlefield.<sup>145</sup> France, Belgium, and the Netherlands also deployed fighters to Jordan to conduct strikes within Iraq.<sup>146</sup>

In short, Mwaffaq is an ideal forward base geographically, and its facilities are robust, enabling a full spectrum of missions. No less important, Jordan is an eager partner in the fight against the Islamic State and its politics as a moderate Arab state are crucial for coalition building.

*Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain:* This is a relatively small air base; it has only one runway and limited ramp space. However, during the first Gulf War, as many as 250 Marine and Navy combat aircraft and 17,500 servicemen made use of the base.<sup>147</sup> It continued to support U.S. operations in the region during the 1990s, hosting F-15s and F-16s flying missions during Operation Southern Watch.<sup>148</sup> After the September 11 attacks, Bahrain permitted U.S. aircraft to fly combat missions out of the base to both Afghanistan and Iraq. The base additionally served as a key logistics hub, moving equipment for the U.S. "surge" in Iraq and operations in Afghanistan.<sup>149</sup> Most recently, the base hosted U.S. Marine Corps AV-8 Harriers and F/A-18 Hornets conducting strike missions against the Islamic State inside Iraq.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Douglas Jehl, "Jordan Allowing U.S. to Use Its Air Base for Flights Over Iraq," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1996. (<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/09/world/jordan-allowing-us-to-use-its-air-base-for-flights-over-iraq.html>)

<sup>145</sup> Adam Schreck, "From Jordan Base, UAE Resumes Airstrikes on Islamic State," *Associated Press*, February 10, 2015. (<https://japantoday.com/category/world/from-jordan-base-uae-resumes-airstrikes-on-islamic-state>); "Bahrain Deploys Warplanes to Jordan for War Against IS," *Agence France-Presse*, February 16, 2015. (<http://news.yahoo.com/bahrain-deploys-warplanes-jordan-war-against-094504678.html>)

<sup>146</sup> Janene Van Jaarsveldt, "Final Netherlands F-16s Headed to Jordan, ISIS Fight," *NL Times* (Netherlands), October 3, 2014. (<http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/10/03/final-netherlands-f-16s-headed-jordan-isis-fight/>); "France to Send 6 Mirage Jets to Jordan Against Islamic State," *Agence France-Presse*, November 26, 2014. (<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20141126/DEFREG04/311260043/France-Send-6-Mirage-Jets-Jordan-Against-Islamic-State>); "Belgium to offer fighter jets for ISIS strikes," *Agence France-Presse*, September 24, 2014. (<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/24/Belgium-to-offer-fighter-jets-for-ISIS-strikes-.html>)

<sup>147</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, April 13, 2017, page 6. (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf>)

<sup>148</sup> Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense, "Air Expeditionary Force to Deploy to Bahrain," August 26, 1997. ([http://fas.org/news/iraq/1997/08/b08261997\\_bt439-97.html](http://fas.org/news/iraq/1997/08/b08261997_bt439-97.html))

<sup>149</sup> Tech. Sgt. Kevin Nichols, "Mission Complete: Isa Air Base Wraps Up M-ATV Surge," *U.S. Air Force, 379<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing*, October 15, 2010. (<http://www.afcent.af.mil/News/tabid/117/Article/350626/mission-complete-isa-air-base-wraps-up-m-atv-surge.aspx>)

<sup>150</sup> Richard Whittle, "SP-MAGTF Commander Details ISIL Strikes; Notes 1<sup>st</sup> Marines 'Could Clear' Iraq," *Breaking Defense*, May 20, 2015. (<http://breakingdefense.com/2015/05/past-magtf-commander-details-isis-air-strikes-notes-1st-marines-could-clear-iraq/>); Megan Eckstein, "U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet Pilot Killed in Crash in England," *USNI News*, October 21, 2015. (<http://news.usni.org/2015/10/21/u-s-marine-corps-fa-18-hornet-pilot-killed-in-crash-in-england>)

Bahrain has expressed interest in keeping a long-term American presence to ensure its own security. The monarchy approved NATO E-3 airborne warning and control system (AWACS) and U.S. Navy surveillance aircraft to be stationed at Shaikh Isa in 2010.<sup>151</sup>

With Bahrain, of course, there are drawbacks. In response to the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, Bahrain's government cracked down brutally on demonstrators, resulting in the U.S. halting certain security aid to the country until June 2015.<sup>152</sup> The forecast for future instability in Bahrain prompted further concerns from U.S. lawmakers, who requested in 2015 that the Defense Department explore alternative locations in the Gulf.<sup>153</sup> Additionally, Shaikh Isa is relatively small and not designed to serve as a major air force installation.

*Irbil International Airport, Iraqi Kurdistan:* The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), which maintains a long and warm relationship with the United States, controls this facility. The airport hosts two runways. The longer runway, at 4,800 meters (15,700 feet), is one of the longest runways in the world.<sup>154</sup> The facility is large enough to service the largest aircraft in U.S. military service (the C-5 Galaxy) and commercial service (the AN-225).<sup>155</sup> The Irbil airport reportedly serves as a CIA station, which has expanded in recent years, and hosts a U.S. Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) unit as of February 2015.<sup>156</sup>

However, with passenger and cargo traffic on the rise, there is potential for competition for limited resources.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, the airport's close proximity to Irbil, a major population center, raises operational security concerns that non-military personnel could observe sensitive American military activity and relay that intelligence to hostile forces.

I am happy to provide members of this subcommittee FDD's full assessment of the bases in the region. But it is important to be clear: We should not undertake such a move without carefully studying the alternatives. On the other hand, the time for starting to seriously evaluate our options is now.

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<sup>151</sup> Walter Pincus, "State Department Cables Detail U.S. Links to Bahrain," *The Washington Post*, February 22, 2011. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/21/AR2011022103251\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/21/AR2011022103251_pf.html))

<sup>152</sup> "US Lifts Hold on Military Aid to Bahrain," *Agence France-Presse*, June 29, 2015. (<http://gulffnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/us-lifts-hold-on-military-aid-to-bahrain-1.1543177>)

<sup>153</sup> Julian Pecquet, "Bahrain Bristles at Threat to Move 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet," *Al-Monitor*, May 18, 2015. (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/bahrain-fifth-fleet-relocation-bill-threat.html>)

<sup>154</sup> "Old & New," *Erbil International Airport*, accessed December 1, 2014. ([http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F\\_ABUT01\\_02\\_05.aspx](http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F_ABUT01_02_05.aspx))

<sup>155</sup> "AN-225 Mriya Basic Performance," *Antonov Company*, 2014. (<http://www.antonov.com/aircraft/transport-aircraft/an-225-mriya/an-225-performance>); Australia Defense Forces, 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Public Affairs Unit, Press Release, "Delivery of Military Stores to Erbil in Northern Iraq Continues," September 17, 2014. (<https://www.facebook.com/1stJointPublicAffairsUnit/photos/a.714169595338605.1073742116.349246661830902/714170705338494/>)

<sup>156</sup> Mitchell Prothero, "Expansion of 'secret' facility in Iraq suggests closer U.S.-Kurd ties," *McClatchy*, July 11, 2014. (<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24770413.html>); Jack Moore, "U.S. Stations Black Hawks in Kurdish Capital to Ire of Baghdad," *Newsweek*, February 6, 2015. (<http://www.newsweek.com/washington-stations-black-hawks-kurdish-capital-ire-baghdad-304916>)

<sup>157</sup> "Airport Statistics," *Erbil International Airport*, accessed July 23, 2017. ([http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F\\_ABUT01\\_02\\_06.aspx](http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F_ABUT01_02_06.aspx))

Should the U.S. redeploy assets from its bases in Qatar, it must be done in such a way that meets all the U.S. military's operational needs. One existing base may not be able to completely absorb all the manpower and assets. Indeed, dispersing U.S. assets across existing installations in the region could provide permanent solutions.

In the end, the Pentagon still may not wish to rebalance its assets in the Middle East. Should that be the case, the Pentagon will certainly have its reasons, and many of them may not be made public. But it is nevertheless valuable to ascertain whether other bases could better serve American interests. The House Armed Service Committee, Government Accountability Office, or the Congressional Budget Office have the opportunity to explore the strategic and budgetary costs of repositioning American forces in the region. Assessments and hearings would help air American concerns, and allow U.S. decision makers to gain a better understanding of the current challenges and opportunities. Above all, this exercise could send a message to our partners in Doha that our counterterrorism policies and strategic goals should align if they wish to continue cooperating.

### **Additional Policy Recommendations**

The news that Qatar has reportedly agreed to the insertion of two Department of Justice officials in its public prosecution office<sup>158</sup> is a step in the right direction as a result of the external pressure on Qatar as a result of the current Gulf crisis. The real question is whether there will be additional prosecutions and enforcement, and enough political will in Doha to empower prosecutors to go after all relevant suspects in terrorism-related cases. Congress should exercise oversight of the DOJ in this respect, as well as over Qatar's record in choosing and pursuing such cases.

More to the point, as Qatar takes steps to issue decrees and implement laws relating to terrorism and terrorism finance, it should be lauded. But it is the implementation of those laws and regulations that matter most. Qatar's efforts to combat terrorism finance must yield results. Congress should monitor those results.

To that end, Congress should also consider legislation that stipulates closer oversight of Qatar terror finance. Until now, the specific challenges associated with terrorism finance in Qatar have been largely a private, bilateral matter. It may be time to increase the public profile of this problem. One way to do this is through the Stop Terrorists Operational Resources and Money (STORM) Act of 2017, which was introduced in the Senate but not yet in the House. The bill would authorize the president to designate a country that is not adequately combating terrorism financing as a "Jurisdiction of Terrorism Financing Concern." Qatar would almost certainly qualify.<sup>159</sup>

Congress should also press the State Department, pursuant to the State Department Authorization Act, to issue its report on which states paid ransoms to terrorists over the last year.<sup>160</sup> Congress

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<sup>158</sup> Tom Finn and Sylvia Westall, "U.S. to deploy officials in Qatar in counter-terrorism accord: sources," *Reuters*, July 20, 2017. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-usa-idUSKBN1A51ZD>)

<sup>159</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Fifteen years since pivotal executive order, STORM Act could help fight terror finance," *The Hill*, September 23, 2016. (<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/homeland-security/297342-fifteen-years-since-pivotal-executive-order-storm-act>)

<sup>160</sup> Department of State Authorities Act, Fiscal Year 2017, Pub. L. 114-323, codified as amended at 114 U.S.C. §709. (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1635/text#toc-H8AE3FB2BCCA84E0C8463DCEBF33B2642>)

should further press for full implementation of the Export Administration Act, requiring countries like Qatar that host terrorist operatives to be subject to certain licensing requirements for dual-use goods we would not want falling into terrorists' hands.<sup>161</sup>

Moreover, even though Qatar remains the most brazen of the Gulf states in its support for terrorist groups, Congress must continue to monitor Qatar's neighbors. Indeed, even if Qatar's problems were resolved tomorrow, the Gulf would remain an area of major concern in the area of terrorism finance.

Finally, it is time to face the fact that there is simply too much Gulf money sloshing around in Washington. The Qataris have invested untold millions in think tanks and universities, not to mention lobbyists and other influencers, and they are not the only ones. Qatar's Gulf neighbors are also major players in this game. The end result is that those who feed from this trough are unable to engage in an honest conversation about the policies and behaviors of their benefactors – even when they fly in the face of U.S. interests. Indeed, policymakers have all but given up on the human rights violations, democracy deficits, and terrorism finance challenges associated with this troubled region. Nowhere is that more glaring than with Qatar. I would therefore argue that even an honest conversation here in Congress about the problem would represent a significant step forward.

Members of the committee, there are many issues that I did not address in this testimony. If I have missed anything you wish to discuss, I am happy to answer your questions.

On behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, I thank you again for inviting me to testify.

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<sup>161</sup> Export Administration Act of 1979, Pub. L. 108-458, 93 Stat. 503, codified as amended at 96 U.S.C. (<http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/ea79.pdf>)