

## Bush Delivers Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia



**"What happens in Crawford stays in Crawford."  
—Jay Leno**

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By ANNE GEARAN

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) –

President Bush, on his first visit to this oil-rich kingdom, delivered a major arms sale Monday to a key ally in a region where the U.S. casts neighboring Iran as a menace to stability.

Bush's talks with Saudi King Abdullah, which began over dinner and were continuing with late-night meetings, also were expected to cover peace between Israelis and Palestinians and democracy in the Middle East.

Coinciding with Bush's trip, the Bush administration in Washington notified Congress on Monday that it will offer Saudi Arabia the chance to buy sophisticated Joint Direct Attack Munitions - or "smart bomb" - technology and related equipment, the State Department said. The administration envisions the transfer of 900 of the precision-guided bomb kits, worth \$123 million, that would give the kingdom's armed forces highly accurate targeting abilities.

The proposed deal follows notification of five other packages to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, bringing to \$11.5 billion the amount of advanced U.S. weaponry, including Patriot missiles, that the administration has announced it will provide to friendly Arab nations, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. Administration officials say the total amount of eventual sales as part of the Gulf Security Dialogue is estimated at \$20 billion, a figure subject to actual purchases.

The arms packages are an important part of the U.S. strategy to bolster the defenses of oil-producing Gulf nations, such as Saudi Arabia, against threats from Iran. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, which have majority Sunni Muslim populations, harbor deep suspicions about Shiite Iran's apparent designs to establish itself as a major power.

Congress already has been briefed on all the packages, which also include the sale of the Navy's Littoral Combat system. Lawmakers mostly see the deals as critical to

maintaining relations with war-on-terror allies. Some are opposed to the JDAMs portion out of concern that it gives Saudi Arabia the ability to attack Israel, but are unlikely to muster the two-thirds majority needed, within an allowed 30-day period, to block the sales.

The administration has assured lawmakers in closed briefings in recent months that there would be proper restrictions on the JDAMs sales to ensure they would not threaten to Israel. Israel, which has been sold JDAMs technology by the U.S. as well, also has said it does not oppose the deal.

As for the topic of rising oil prices, Bush national security adviser Stephen Hadley would only say "we'll have to see" when asked whether Bush would raise the issue with the king. The Saudis are responsible for almost one-third of OPEC's total output.

Another item for discussion could be the democratic principles Bush has promoted during his trip. While Abdullah has tried to push some reforms on education and women's rights and there have been limited municipal council elections, the king has been cautious and limited in his efforts. He apparently has been hampered by others in the royal family worried that fast changes could upset the country's conservative clerics and citizens.

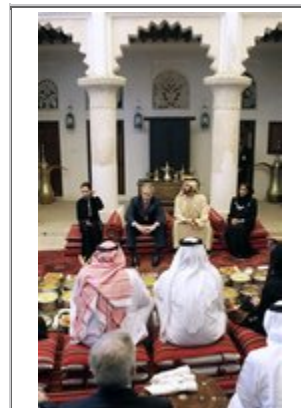
After arriving Monday afternoon in Riyadh from Dubai, Bush expected to hear Abdullah urge him to keep up the pressure on Israel to halt settlements in Palestinian territories. The administration was able to persuade the Saudis to participate in the U.S.- sponsored Mideast peace conference in Annapolis, Md., in November.

**Bush enjoyed a warm embrace from Abdullah. He was staying a night at the monarch's ranch - a rare show of hospitality to a visiting dignitary that reflects Bush's hosting of Abdullah twice at his own ranch in Crawford, Texas.**

And the king greeted Bush at the base of the steps of Air Force One - a gesture the president never affords foreign leaders visiting the U.S. A band played each country's national anthem as the leaders walked on a red carpet behind a high-stepping uniformed officer carrying a gold sword.

After dinner in the King's Palace, Bush and Abdullah walked through a large central atrium and picked up cups of Arabic coffee to take into their meetings. Sitting side by side in chairs, Abdullah presented Bush with a gold necklace adorned with a large medallion - the King Abdul Aziz Order of Merit, the country's highest honor, named after the founder of the modern Saudi state.

The award was placed around Bush's neck and the two exchanged the region's traditional double kiss. "I am honored," Bush said.



(AP) US President George W. Bush, left, and United Arab Emirates Vice President Mohammed bin Rashid Al...  
[Full Image](#)



(AP) US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, left, drinks strawberry juice during a visit to the Sheikh...  
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The hospitality masked Bush's deep unpopularity among ordinary Saudis.

A recent poll conducted for Terror Free Tomorrow, a bipartisan group whose goal is undermining world support for terrorism, found only 12 percent here view Bush positively - lower than Iran's president or even al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden - and more think warmly toward Iran than America. Top among the reasons are the chaos in Iraq that followed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and the widespread Arab feeling that the United States is biased toward Israel and not serious in seeking Mideast peace.

A rare cold front brought clouds and rain to Riyadh for the visit. Tight security was evident: Hundreds of police cars have deployed along major roads and sharpshooters are on some rooftops. In one neighborhood, police using loudspeakers demanded that cars be removed from some streets as two helicopters hovered overhead.

Earlier in Dubai, Bush got a flavor of the cosmopolitan banking and business hub, whose glass skyscrapers and booming construction have turned it into the capital of Middle East hustle. The soaring Persian Gulf city-state was Bush's second stop in the seven-state United Arab Emirates federation. On the first, in Abu Dhabi on Sunday, he delivered a gentle lecture on democracy to authoritarian Arab allies and attended an opulent picnic at a desert horse camp.

Bush engaged in a day of cultural diplomacy in Dubai. He stopped at the historic home of the city-state's former ruler, now a museum, where a group of girls performed to Arabic music. He had lunch on cushions set in a circle with students of the Dubai School of Government. And he attended a gathering of a young leaders' group, in a conference room atop one of Dubai's signature buildings, the luxury hotel Burj Al Arab that is shaped like a tall ship sail.

Dubai is caught in the middle of the West's efforts to crack down on business in and out of Iran to protest its nuclear ambitions. Dubai, with a powerful Iranian business community, is eager to maintain its lucrative financial ties with Tehran, but wary of angering the United States and the United Nations.

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Associated Press writers Donna Abu-Nasr in Riyadh and Anne Flaherty and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this story.