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**TAKING EXCEPTION: THE U.S. DEFENSE POLICY REVIEW BOARD'S BRIEFING ON  
SAUDI ARABIA -- AL JAZEERAH INTERVIEW WITH DR. JOHN DUKE ANTHONY**

=====GulfWire~~Perspectives=====

Today in the United States and in many places abroad, much commentary was generated by a lead article in the Washington Post, titled, "Briefing Depicted Saudis as Enemies." Reporter Thomas Ricks wrote about a recent meeting of the U.S. Department of Defense's Policy Review Board in which Laurent Murawiec, a Rand Corporation international security affairs analyst and former adviser to the Ministry of Defense in France, took issue with the notion that Saudi Arabia ought to be considered an American ally.

The Board's Chairman, Richard N. Perle, served in the Department of Defense during the Reagan Administration and is known to be the leading American advocate of the United States invading and occupying Iraq. Members of the Board include former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Congressman Newt Gingrich, former house Speaker Thomas Foley, former Defense and Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, and two previous vice chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar bin Sultan, and Adel Al-Jubair, foreign policy adviser to Crown Prince Abdallah, were quick, as were others, to challenge the accuracy of the Policy Review Board briefing's essence. Prince Bandar, stating that he did not take the report seriously, said, "It is a misguided effort that is shallow and not honest with the facts, adding that, "Repeating lies does not make them facts."

Mr. Al-Jubair noted that the alliance spans more than sixty years, that the relationship "has seen the coming and breaking of many storms in the region and, if anything, it goes from strength to strength." Former Secretary Kissinger was also at pains to disassociate himself from the overall tenor and conclusions of the briefing.

Soon after the report appeared, GulfWire Publisher Dr. John Duke Anthony addressed the significance of the Review Board's briefing in an interview for Al-Jazeera Satellite Television's Al-Hassad Al-Yawm [Harvest of the Day] Program. The prime time program, which airs daily at 11:00 p.m. in Qatar and most of the GCC countries, is watched by an audience estimated at 200 million, or 40 million households, throughout the Arab world. Via subscription, thousands more view the program in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas.

GulfWire provides herewith an unofficial transcription of the interview.

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AL-JAZEERAH: Dr. Anthony, as you are aware, today's Washington Post carried a prominent story on a briefing that recently took place at the Pentagon's Defense Policy Review Board. According to the report, the briefer at the meeting is said to have described Saudi Arabia not only as not an ally of the United States but, to use the words that were quoted, as "an enemy." What is one to make of this?

ANTHONY: One point to make is that this is not something new. The campaigns in which segments of the media and some Members of Congress have been bashing Saudi Arabia, and trying to drive a wedge between the United States' relationship with the Kingdom, are numerous. They've been underway for some time. If anything, they are increasing. What is different in this instance is that a report of such a nature appeared as a feature article on the front page of the Washington Post. That is new.

AL-JAZEERAH: But while the campaign itself may not be new, what is one to think in light of a report such as this coming at this time? I mean, is it possible that such a report will have an impact on policy? On the way the Administration is thinking? Could those who think this way be serious?

ANTHONY: Potentially, yes, but not likely -- certainly not in terms of the level of those in the Administration who are the ones most closely involved in the relationship. That is, I don't think it will make any difference at all at the key Executive Branch levels, either here or in the Kingdom. At this level, the relationship could hardly be stronger.

In the areas of economics, energy, and regional defense, the relationship is particularly strong. In the areas of trade and investment, and in technology and financial cooperation as well, it's a relationship in which there is extraordinary mutual benefit.

This is not to say that what this report and others have said, and what some Members of Congress have been saying, is not without effect. In many ways, it is reckless and irresponsible. But what's important is that, regarding substance, these reports are wide of the mark in terms of reality. This particular report is in defiance of established thought. It flies in the face of prevailing wisdom, of considered opinion.

AL-JAZEERAH: But it's said that these and other studies are among the views that are coming out of such organizations as the Rand Corporation. Institutions such as these are known to have substantial standing in the eyes of U.S. policymakers. An organization like Rand is one of the most prestigious in the United States. Are you saying that its reports are not likely to have an impact on U.S. policy?

ANTHONY: It's possible that they can. What I'm saying is that the Rand Corporation has among its staff not a small number of individuals who, shall we say, have not been known for being highly critical of U.S. ties to certain non-Arab Middle Eastern countries, such as Israel, Turkey, and, in the past, Iran, during the days of the Shah. Stated another way, it's not an organization known for being especially ardent in its support of U.S.

ties to the Arab Middle East, especially to countries like Saudi Arabia, but also Egypt, and from time to time other countries in Arabia and the Gulf.

What's also important in terms of what is taking place is that, for some who are involved in these campaigns that seek to drive a wedge between Saudi Arabia and the United States, there is a particular interest in taking on the Kingdom at this time. This has been the case especially since Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdallah issued his Middle East peace proposal [this past spring]. The proposal offered the Israeli leadership everything it has ever asked for, yet, to this day, the proposal is one regarding which Israel's leaders have been unable to provide "yes" for an answer.

AL-JAZEERAH: Dr. Anthony, thank you very much.

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O Dr. John Duke Anthony is President and CEO of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, Secretary of the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee, and Publisher of GulfWire. All three are nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the education of Americans and others about the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world.