

Remnants of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia: Current Assessment

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Counter-Terrorism in the Kingdom

- Since May 2003, Saudi security forces have captured ~845 individuals with direct or indirect links to al-Qaeda.
- Over 400 have attended “ideological re-education programs.”
- 264 al-Qaeda commanders, logisticians, theologians, financiers and fighters have been captured or killed.
- Of 26 members that comprised first “most wanted” list, all but one have been killed or captured and all five initial al-Qaeda cells have been identified, infiltrated and decimated.
- Of 36 second-tier operatives comprising second “most wanted” list:
 - 20 had already fled the Kingdom when list was published
 - Of remaining 16, only 4 have not been killed or captured
 - This group carried out recent failed attack on Abqaiq
- Over 25 major terrorist attacks have been foiled since May 2003.

Counter-Terrorism in the Kingdom (cont.)

- Four of the main routes used by terrorists to smuggle themselves, fighters, weapons and drugs have been identified.
- Close surveillance had resulted in hundreds of interceptions on the Saudi-Yemeni border.
- The largest of the al-Qaeda safe houses used for logistical support has been destroyed. As have three in Riyadh, two in Qassim, two in the Eastern Province, one in Najran and three in the Western Province (Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah).
- Several arrests of fighters returning from Afghanistan and Pakistan have been made over the past several months. **Important Note:** They had no attack plan and no clear command structure, focused exclusively on avoiding Saudi security services.
- Al Qaeda has not been able to re-organize and re-group in the Kingdom. No coherent command structure has been re-established.

Saudi Security Budget Estimates

- **2004: \$8.5 billion**
 - \$1.2 billion allocated to Petroleum Security (includes National Guard).
- **2005: \$10 billion**
 - \$1.5 billion allocated to Petroleum Security (includes National Guard).
- **2006: \$12 billion (projected)**
 - \$2.0+ billion allocated to Petroleum Security (includes National Guard)

Security and Intelligence

- More than \$2.5 billion has gone directly into the Saudi counter-terrorism program. The specialized services of the Interior Ministry have received major budget increases for equipment purchases, increased troop hiring, and the construction of state of the art training installations.
- **Special Emergency Forces (SEF):** Estimated 35,000 troops.
- **Special Security Forces (SSF):** Estimated 10,000 troops.
- New specialized units in Energy Security have been deployed to coordinate with the National Guard and the four services of the armed forces. They will act as special “preemptive” forces when the situation warrants it.

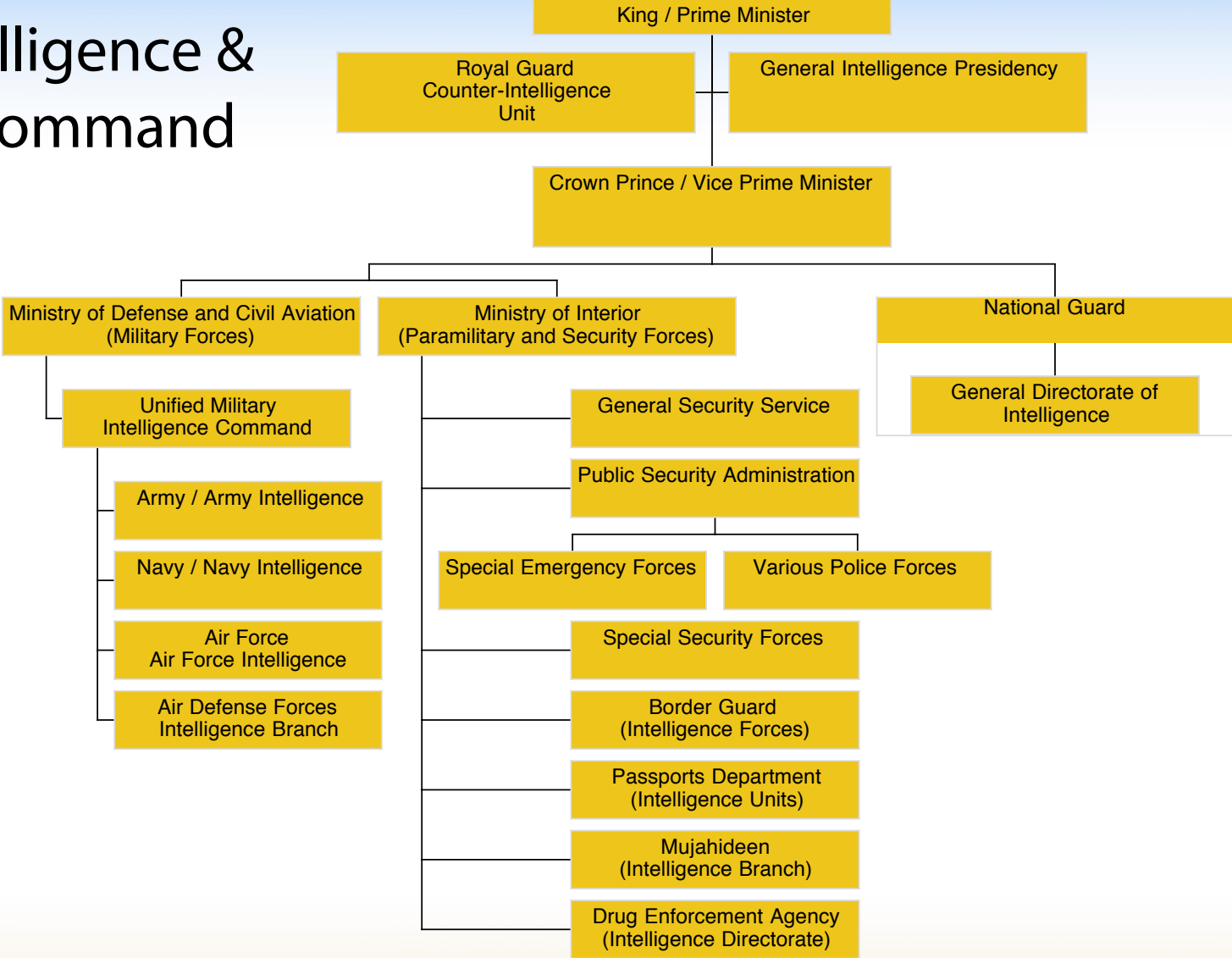
The Role of the General Security Service (GSS)

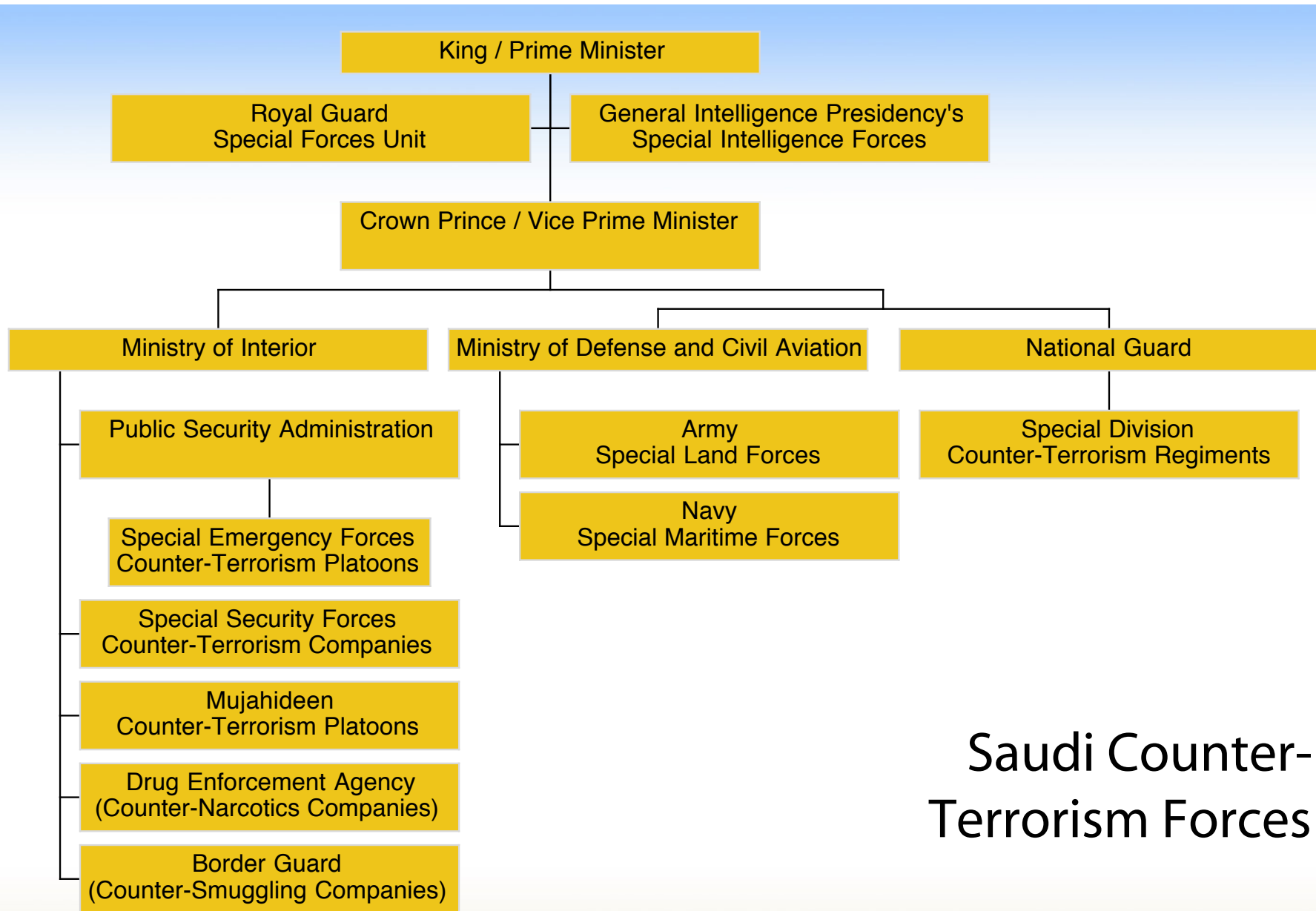
- A major element of the success of the Saudi counter-terrorism program has been the performance of the General Security Service (GSS), better known by its Arabic name, *Al Mabahith Al Amma*.
- The GSS has successfully deployed state-of-the art electronic systems that help it leverage its vast human intelligence assets in the Kingdom and the region.
- Intelligence collection, analysis and implementation have been merged into a new “Command & Control” structure that allows the GSS to act within minutes of major alerts, directing the SEF and SSF throughout the Kingdom.

The Role of the General Security Service (GSS)

- This new infrastructure has led to great success in the last two years, but improvements are still needed.
- The Interior Ministry has also consolidated the forces responsible for ultimately protecting the Kingdom's vast energy facilities and fields.

Saudi Intelligence & Security Command Structure





Saudi Counter-Terrorism Forces

The Kingdom's Approach to Counter-Terrorism

- The success of the various services can be attributed to proportionate and effective security investments and strong human intelligence.
- No expense has been spared and great care has been taken to avoid waste in the multi-billion Saudi security budget.
- The government has successfully enlisted the media, the religious authorities, and average citizens in its fight against terrorism.
- All counter-terrorism operations are carried out in such a way as to minimize the potential for collateral damage and the death of innocent civilians.

The Ideological Re-education Program

- This program was instituted by the Ministry of Interior to alter the ideological inclinations of individuals who had been jailed for their indirect affiliation or ideological sympathies with al-Qaeda.
- It is administered by a committee of religious scholars and university professors.
- Intellectual seminars engage the young men and utilize pure Islamic jurisprudence to prove that terrorism, suicide bombings, and the killing of innocents is un-Islamic.

The Ideological Re-education Program (cont.)

- Some seminars last over a year, and during this time the families of the individuals in the program receive financial support from the Ministry of Interior.
- In addition, the Ministry of Interior also provides monthly financial assistance to the poor young families left behind by terrorists killed by the security services.
- To date, no individual who has been released from this program (out of over 400) has been known to have engaged in any terrorist activities.

Lessons Learned

- There is no such thing as too much security.
- Security protocols and procedures must be continually assessed, improved, and adjusted to combat an ever-changing threat.
- Security plans must be part of a larger social, economic, and political program.
- The following played a key role in Saudi success to date:
 - Close coordination between ministries responsible for security
 - Close surveillance of energy facilities
 - Redundancy in all aspects of security at energy installations

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He is the author of *The Oil Kingdom at 100: Petroleum Policymaking in Saudi Arabia* (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000). He is also an Adjunct Fellow in the Office of the Arleigh Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC where co-authored with, Anthony Cordesman, *National Security in Saudi Arabia: Threats, Responses, and Challenges* (Praeger & CSIS Publications, September 30, 2005).

He has a BSFS from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, an MA in Public Policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and completed doctoral courses at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Security Studies Program.