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BULLETIN

OCTOBER 28, 2011

SAUDI SUCCESSION DEVELOPMENTS

With his appointment of Interior Minister Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz as Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince by Royal Decree yesterday, King Abdullah set the stage for future successions in the Kingdom by assembling in his palace in Riyadh the chairman and members of the Allegiance Commission.

The King established the Allegiance Commission in October 2006 and named its thirty-five members in December 2007. When he established the Commission, he decreed that its statutory procedures would apply to "future cases" and not to the then-reigning King and Crown Prince. However, by assembling the Commission yesterday, the King also took the opportunity to swear in two new members before directing it to pledge allegiance to the new Crown Prince.

If the King dies before Crown Prince Naif, who is eleven years younger, the Commission would be bound to pledge allegiance to Naif as King. Thereafter, Naif could nominate between one and three candidates to become his Crown Prince after consultations with the Commission. If the Commission fails to reach a consensus on a nominee of the King's, it may nominate its own candidate for the King's approval. In case the King does not approve the Commission's choice, the Commission is to hold a vote, with the next Crown Prince chosen by a majority of the members of the Commission.

New Commission Members

The two new members of the Commission, whom the King swore in yesterday, are Prince Abdullah Bin Faisal Bin Turki al-Awwal bin Abdul Aziz, who replaced his brother Turki, who had died in March 2009, and Prince Bandar Bin Musa'id Bin Abdul Aziz, who also replaced a brother.

The original 35 "seats" on the Commission were held by sons, grandsons, or great-grandsons of the founder of the Kingdom, King Abdul Aziz. Since one of the sons of Abdul Aziz, Fawwaz, died without children in 2008, the number of seats has been reduced to 34.

Naif's Replacement on the Commission

With Naif's elevation to the rank of Crown Prince, the seat he held on the Commission is to be taken over by one of his sons, to be chosen by the King. The King's son, Khalid bin Abdullah, holds a seat on the Commission, as does the late Crown Prince's son, Khalid bin Sultan. (The late King Fahd's son, Mohammed, holds a seat; as does the late King Khalid's son, Faisal; the late King Faisal's son, Khalid; and the late King Saud's son Mohammed.) The most senior son does not necessarily hold the seat. Indeed, Crown Prince Naif has six older brothers on the Commission.

Ministerial Posts

Naif is to remain as Interior Minister. The King has yet to name a new Minister of Defense. In November 2010, the King appointed his son, Mit'ib, 58, as his successor as Commander of the National Guard after accepting the resignation of his brother, Badr bin Abdul Aziz, 81, who had served as Deputy Commander since 1967.

Also in November 2010, the King accepted the resignation of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Prince Mit'ib bin Abdul Aziz, 83, and appointed his son Mansur to replace him.

Ministry of Interior

At the Ministry of Interior, Prince Naif's brother, Ahmed, 71, serves as Vice Minister, while Naif's son Mohammed, 52, has been Assistant Minister for Security Affairs since 1999. Mohammed bin Naif has been widely credited for the success of the Ministry's counter-terrorism program. In July 2011, Mohammed's elder brother Saud was appointed as Assistant Minister for General, or Public, Affairs, having served as Ambassador to Spain since 2003.

Ministry of Defense

At the Ministry of Defense, the Vice Minister is Prince Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Aziz, who is older than Crown Prince Naif. The Assistant Minister is Khalid bin Sultan, 62, the late Crown Prince's eldest son, who rose to fame during the 1990-1991 Desert Shield/Desert Storm before being relieved in late 1991. He assumed his current post in 2001. Thus, at both the Interior and Defense Ministries, the number two position is held by a son of Abdul Aziz, as was the case in the National Guard before the member of that first generation retired and was replaced by the King's son.

When Fahd became Crown Prince in 1975, at the age of 53, he initially remained as Minister of Interior but elevated Prince Naif from Deputy Minister to Minister of State for Internal Affairs and then, within the year, to become Minister of the Interior.

Number Three Position

King Abdullah named Naif to the unofficial "number three" position in the government, the rank of second deputy prime minister, in March 2009. That position, which is unofficial since it is not mentioned in the country's Basic Law, had been vacant

from the time that King Abdullah had become King in August 2005. While the King could name someone to that position again, it is thought unlikely that he will. When the King named Naif to the position in 2009, at least one of Naif's older brothers, Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz, stated publicly that he did not want the position to be regarded as sure step to Naif's later becoming Crown Prince. Since the Allegiance Commission is likely to come into its full powers at the next succession, the naming by the King of a second deputy prime minister at this time could be viewed as an attempt by the King to preempt the mechanism he created.

Commission's Powers on Health Issues

The Allegiance Commission statute also has a complex procedure under which the Commission may find a King or Crown Prince unable to exercise his powers, either temporarily or permanently, for reasons of health. However, both the King and the late Crown Prince were not covered by these procedures, but Crown Prince Naif will be. If Sultan had been covered by these procedures during his extended illness, it would have been up to the Allegiance Commission to appoint a medical team to make the appropriate determination. During Sultan's illness, the King had the absolute power to dismiss him and name a replacement, but he elected not to do so.

Had King Abdullah pre-deceased Sultan, it is not clear whether or not the Allegiance Commission would have had the statutory authority to make a determination about his ability to exercise his powers. Crown Prince Abdullah was the effective ruler from 1995-2005 during the prolonged ill-health of King Fahd, but lacked the full powers of a King. Thus, with Crown Prince Naif now covered by the Commission's ability to intercede for reasons of incapacity, some of the uncertainties in succession matters which existed from 1995-2005 and for at least the last several years may be alleviated.

Abdullah is the sixth son of King Abdul Aziz to reign. Of the five successions since 1953, three were completely orderly. One, when Faisal succeeded Saud, was marked by a six-year period (1958-64) during which Saud was pushed aside, came back, and eventually was forced to abdicate. The lengthy incapacity of King Fahd (1995-2005) led to no such disorder, but was not as smooth as it could have been.