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Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations

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Summary

In recent years, the ruler of Qatar, Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, has embarked upon a limited course of political liberalization and aligned Qatar firmly with the United States. In 1992, Qatar and the United States concluded a Defense Cooperation Agreement that has been progressively expanded. In April 2003, the Bush Administration announced that the U.S. Combat Air Operations Center for the Middle East will be moved from Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia to Qatar's Al-Udeid airbase, which served as a logistics hub for U.S. operations in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom, as well as a key center for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Camp As-Sayliyah, the largest pre-positioning facility of U.S. equipment in the world, served as the forward command center for CENTCOM personnel during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Qatar also has aided the United States in the war on terrorism by stepping up its efforts to prevent Al Qaeda from engaging in money laundering. With the third largest proven gas reserves in the world, U.S. companies, such as ExxonMobil, have worked to increase trade and economic ties with Qatar. Qatar has the highest per capita income of any country in the Middle East.

On March 19, 2005, an Egyptian national carried out a suicide car bomb attack at a theater popular with Western expatriates on the outskirts of the capital city of Doha. The car bombing, the first terrorist incident of its kind in Qatar, killed one British citizen and wounded twelve others. The suicide bomber was an engineer employed at Qatar Petroleum, and authorities are investigating his ties to Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. The attack came on the 2nd anniversary of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" and a week after an Al Qaeda leader in Saudi Arabia called for a new wave of attacks against Western interests in the Persian Gulf.

As part of Qatar's experiment with limited political liberalization, the Qatari monarchy started Al Jazeera, the Arab world's first all-news network. In a national referendum in April 2003, Qatari voters approved a new constitution that provides for a partially elected national assembly and grants women the right to vote and run for office. This report will be updated when significant changes occur. For further information, see CRS Report RL31889, *The Al-Jazeera News Network: Opportunity or Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East?*, and CRS Report RL31533, *The Persian Gulf: Issues for U.S. Policy, 2004*.

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Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations

Domestic Political Structure

Qatar, a small peninsular state bordering Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf, is a constitutional monarchy governed by the Al-Thani family and headed by the Emir, Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.¹ The country gained full independence from Britain on September 3, 1971. The Emir is head of the executive branch and appoints members of the Al-Thani family and other notables to a governing Council of Ministers (cabinet), which is headed by the monarch's brother, Prime Minister Abdallah bin Khalifa Al-Thani. The country's newly approved constitution (April 2003) stipulates that the rule of the state is hereditary within the Al-Thani family and that future successors to the throne follow the line of the Emir's male offspring.² The constitution also states that legislative authority reside in the hands of a

45-member Advisory Council (*Majlis al-Shura*), two-thirds of which is directly elected and one-third appointed by the Emir from among ministers or others.³ The Advisory Council has oversight authority over the Council of Ministers and can propose legislation and review budgets. The constitution also empowers the Advisory Council to issue motions of no-confidence against a government minister; the motion must be approved by two-thirds of the Advisory Council. Women have the right to vote in elections and can run for office. Council members serve four-year terms.

Figure 1. Qatar and Its Neighbors



¹ The term “Shaikh” (or Sheikh or Shaykh) is an honorific title, which can mean a ruler, a tribal leader, or a venerable religious figure. It should be pronounced with a long A (as in “say”), not a long E (as in “see”). The term “Emir” (or Amir), often translated as prince, can also mean a monarch or a ruler in the Gulf region.

² The constitution was approved in a nation-wide referendum in which 96.6% of the voters (68,987) approved the constitution and only 3.3.% opposed it (2,145).

³ Prior to the establishment of a partially elected national assembly, Qatar had a fully-appointed, 35-member advisory council that could only make recommendations to the Council of Ministers. Qatar's old Provisional Constitution provided for a modified electoral procedure in choosing members of the Council and a three-year term; nevertheless, the Council remained appointive in practice, and terms of the Council members were extended in three or four-year increments since 1975.

National elections for the new Advisory Council will most likely take place in late 2005.

On June 27, 1995, in a bloodless palace coup, Shaikh Hamad replaced his father, Shaikh Khalifa, who had ruled Qatar for 23 years. The former ruler had been living out of the country in Cannes, France most of the time and had turned over many routine affairs of state to his son, Shaikh Hamad, then crown prince and commander of the small armed forces. The ruling Al-Thani family rallied behind the new ruler, who quickly consolidated control. In February 1996, supporters of Shaikh Khalifa unsuccessfully attempted a counter-coup.⁴ The coup attempt prompted Shaikh Hamad to initiate civil proceedings against his father to retrieve an alleged \$3-\$12 billion of state assets supposedly in his possession. Saudi Arabian mediation facilitated an out-of-court settlement, and the Emir and his father have reconciled, although the former Emir has not returned to Qatar.

Shaikh Hamad, at age 54,⁵ has been described as representative of an emerging new generation in Gulf leadership. Like King Abdullah II of Jordan, Shaikh Hamad is British-educated, with degrees from Cambridge University and Sandhurst Military Academy. As part of his modernizing agenda, Shaikh Hamad helped establish the satellite news network, Al-Jazeera in 1996. In a major departure from his more conservative-minded father, Shaikh Hamad has borrowed heavily from foreign banks in order to modernize Qatar's energy infrastructure. Shaikh Hamad and his younger generation of advisers have pressed for social, political, and economic liberalization. Qatar also has invested heavily in education reform. In October 2003, Sheikha Mozah, the wife of Sheikh Hamad, helped launch Qatar's new "Education City," a new campus that offers degrees from several U.S. universities including Weill Cornell Medical College, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Carnegie Mellon University. Qatar hired the RAND Corporation to evaluate and recommend reform options for Qatar's educational system. RAND also is monitoring the progress of reform in Qatar's schools.

In November 2002, Qatar established diplomatic ties with the Holy See. Qatar plans to grant the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian denominations designated plots of land for the building of churches. However, the government has not yet issued building permits for church construction. Qatar does not ban alcohol, which is available in licensed premises such as the bars of major hotels and clubs. Qatar, like Saudi Arabia, officially adheres to the Wahhabi brand of Sunni Islam; however, in contrast with Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi tenets are not strictly enforced.

⁴ Some Qataris believe that Saudi Arabia supported Shaikh Khalifa in his attempt to return to power in Qatar. See, Craig S. Smith, "A Tiny Gulf Kingdom Bets its Stability on Support for U.S.," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2002.

⁵ In 1997, the Emir underwent kidney transplant surgery. Since then, there have been no new reports regarding the Emir's health.

Economic Overview

Oil and natural gas production is the mainstay of Qatar's robust economy, which has experienced an average annual growth rate of 7.5% over the last five years. Income from oil sales accounts for nearly 70% of government revenues. Japan, South Korea, and Singapore are the leading importers of oil from Qatar. Qatar Petroleum (QP), the state-owned oil company, has increased its output significantly from 593,000 barrels per day (b/d) in 1999 to 1,023,000 b/d in 2004.⁶ However, with oil reserves likely to be exhausted by 2026 at current production rates, Qatar is rapidly moving to exploit its natural gas reserves.⁷ As part of a long-term development strategy, Qatar has tapped international financial markets and invited foreign investment in recent years in order to finance the expansion of its liquified natural gas (LNG) production.⁸ Qatar intends to expand its yearly LNG output, which is not subject to OPEC production quotas, from 4.5 million tons per annum in 2002 to 14 - 18 million tons per annum by 2010. Although Qatar's LNG industry has low capital costs due to government investment, it has high operational costs, requiring Qatar to develop economies of scale in order to be more competitive with established LNG exporters such as Indonesia and Nigeria.⁹

Qatar has signed several agreements with U.S. energy companies (ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil) and other international companies to develop facilities to export LNG to the United States, the UK, Spain, Italy, South Korea, Taiwan, and India. Qatar also is in the midst of building the largest gas to liquids (GTL) plant in the world. Under Project Dolphin, Qatar is planning to build underwater pipelines to export natural gas to Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. Qatari government officials estimate that by 2007, gas revenue will outstrip oil income for the first time.¹⁰

Human Rights and Political Liberalization

The U.S. Department of State Country Report on Human Rights for 2004 states that "although there were some improvements [in Qatar] in a few areas, serious

⁶ Qatar is the smallest oil producing member of OPEC. Revenues from petroleum exports account for 60-70% of government revenues.

⁷ With proved oil reserves of 15.2 billion barrels, Qatar has far less oil than the major Persian Gulf producers, such as Kuwait (96.5 billion barrels), Iraq (112 billion barrels), and Saudi Arabia (252 billion barrels). However, Qatar has the third largest natural gas reserves behind Russia and Iran. Qatar's supply of natural gas doubled in 2002, when surveyors discovered new gas deposits in Qatar's north field.

⁸ Qatar's government has a 60-70% stake in two joint partnerships with foreign firms, including ExxonMobil (USA), TotalFinaElf (France), KoGas (South Korea), and Matsui (Japan). In February 2005, Qatar Petroleum signed a \$7billion agreement with Shell and a \$12 billion agreement with ExxonMobil to export natural gas to the United States and Europe.

⁹ Interview with Qatari executives at Ras Laffan, Qatar's LNG industrial city, January 14, 2003.

¹⁰ "Squaring the Circle," *Middle East Economic Digest*, October 18, 2002.

problems remained.”¹¹ According to the report, the rights of non-citizens are at times abused, particularly among domestic servants from the Philippines and South East Asia. As in other Gulf countries, expatriate laborers are vulnerable to exploitation by employers who capitalize on their fear of deportation. Citizenship is withheld from foreign workers, who outnumber native Qataris in the labor force by an estimated ratio of more than 5 to 1.¹² In December 2004, Qatar announced that it was banning the use of children as camel jockeys, a practice long decried by the international community.

Although the government in 1995 lifted formal censorship of the media, journalists tend to exercise a degree of self-censorship. Al-Jazeera devotes less air time to coverage of Qatari affairs. Al-Jazeera, which does not generate enough advertising revenue to be profitable, is partially dependent on the Qatari government for its financing.¹³ Internet service is monitored for pornography and other material considered insulting to Islam. The government maintains strict limits on the freedom of assembly and association, though a series of new laws allow for individuals to organize demonstrations and public assemblies. Organizers must obtain a permit from the government, and Qatari authorities may impose restrictions on the topics of discussion. Political parties are not allowed in Qatar, and private professional and cultural associations must register with and are monitored by the state.

Qatar in Brief

Area:	11,437 sq km (slightly smaller than Connecticut)
Population (2003):	840,290
Literacy:	82.5%
Religion:	95% Muslim
Ethnic Groups:	40% Arab, 18% Pakistani, 18% Indian, 10% Iranian, 14% other
GDP (2003):	\$21,500 per capita
Inflation (2003):	2.3%
Public Debt (2003):	72.7% of GDP
Oil Reserves:	14.5-15.2 billion barrels
Gas Reserves:	900 trillion cubic feet
Armed Forces:	11,800 active personnel, 34 tanks, 18 fighter aircraft

Source: The United States Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook 2004.

¹¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Department of State, “Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2004,” February 28, 2005.

¹² The new Qatari constitution does not address the rights of foreign guest workers.

¹³ Meeting with Al-Jazeera producer, Mr. Khalid Al Mahmoud, January 11, 2003. Qatar started Al-Jazeera with a \$140 million grant. Advertising revenue only covers 35-40% of Al-Jazeera’s operating expenses.

Since assuming power, Shaikh Hamad has embarked upon a limited course of political liberalization. In April 1998, he permitted about 3,700 business community leaders to elect a Chamber of Commerce, which selected 17 members from a slate of 41 candidates. In March 1999, the long-anticipated election for a Central Municipal Council occurred. 248 candidates (including 6 women) competed for 29 seats, and all adult Qatari citizens, with the exception of members of the police and armed forces, were allowed to vote and run for office. This was the first time a Gulf country enfranchised all male and female citizens in a nation-wide election.¹⁴ In April 2003, elections for the Municipal Council resulted in the first electoral victory for a Qatari female candidate, Sheikha Yousef Al-Jiffri, an appointed officer at the Education Ministry who ran unopposed.¹⁵ Although the council functions primarily in an advisory role to the Ministry of Municipal and Agricultural Affairs, some observers view it as a stepping-stone to wider political liberalization. On May 5, 2003, the Emir of Qatar appointed Sheikha bint Ahmed al-Mahmoud, daughter of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, as Education Minister. This appointment signified the first appointment ever of a female cabinet minister in any Persian Gulf state.

Some observers and Arab commentators have questioned the timing of Qatar's reforms, calling them symbolic and primarily geared toward satisfying U.S. policy goals of promoting democracy in the region. In response to this criticism, one Qatari politician wrote that "the truth is that this constitution is not a reaction to these events, and as a Qatari politician, I can assert that the democratic trend and the desire to establish a state of institutions and rule of law represents a deep conviction that the Prince of Qatar beholds ... even before he became a Prince."¹⁶

In May 2004, the Emir issued a new labor law, which gives Qatari nationals the right to form associations with legal status and allows workers to go on strike. The new legislation also bans employing youth under the age of 16, sets the working day at eight hours, and grants women equal rights with men, in addition to a paid 50-day maternity leave. Some observers have criticized the new legislation for not extending legal protections to Qatar's large foreign workforce. Critics charge that the labor law places additional restrictions on guest workers by prohibiting non-citizen workers from forming labor unions and restricting their ability to bargain collectively and strike.

¹⁴ All 6 female candidates were defeated in the elections.

¹⁵ "Qatar Elects First Woman to Council Doha," *Gulf News*, April 8, 2003.

¹⁶ "The Constitution's Referendum: Proof of the Democratic Experience in Qatar," *Dar Al-Hayat*, April 22, 2003.

Foreign Policy

Qatar is a member of the United Nations, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the latter a sub-regional organization consisting of six states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman) bordering the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is also a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Gulf States

Qatar's relations with its neighbors have fluctuated over the last decade. Territorial disputes have marred Qatar's relations with Bahrain. In the past, both Qatar and Bahrain have claimed the nearby Hawar island chain, along with the abandoned town of Zubarah on Qatar's northern border. On March 16, 2001, after seven years of deliberations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that Qatar has sovereignty over Zubarah, and that Bahrain has sovereignty over the Hawar islands.¹⁷ Since the resolution of the dispute, Qatar and Bahrain have discussed a plan to construct a 28-mile causeway, aptly named the "Friendship Bridge," which would connect the two kingdoms.

Relations between the new Emir of Qatar and Saudi rulers were strained in the first few years of his rule. Some Qatari officials accused Saudi Arabia of plotting to restore the former ruler of Qatar in 1996. Since then, Al-Jazeera's treatment of Saudi Arabia in its programming has been the largest point of contention between the two regimes. In protest, Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Doha in September 2002 in response to an Al-Jazeera program that criticized the kingdom's founder, King Abdul Aziz al-Saud. The following month, Kuwait closed Al-Jazeera's local office in response to an allegedly insulting report on a member of the Kuwait royal family.

Iraq

A combination of factors — strains with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and aspirations to a more influential role in regional affairs — has contributed to Qatar's increasingly independent foreign policy since 1992. Although it was an active member of the allied coalition formed during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and has been a participant in post-war security arrangements, Qatar adopted a conciliatory stance toward both Iraq and Iran before the other members of the GCC did. Qatar restored diplomatic ties with Saddam Hussein's regime shortly after the 1991 Gulf war, hosted visits by the Iraqi Foreign Minister, and called for relaxing economic sanctions against Iraq.

Nevertheless, Qatar played an important logistics role in Operation Iraqi Freedom, providing headquarters for the U.S. Central Command and pre-positioning facilities for U.S. tanks and armored personnel carriers. At the same time, the Al-

¹⁷ "The Islands Dispute - Resolved," *Middle East Economic Digest*, September 28, 2001.

Jazeera news network, which is privately owned but partially financed and based out of Qatar, was criticized by some U.S. officials for being sensationalistic and slanted in its coverage of the U.S. military operation. Qatar will most likely continue to serve as an important base of operations for U.S. forces in post-war Iraq, particularly after the transfer of the U.S. Combat Air Operations Center from Saudi Arabia to Qatar. On May 8, 2003, President Bush hosted the Emir of Qatar at the White House, thanking him for his steadfast support during Operation Iraqi Freedom and highlighting his role as a reformer.

Arab-Israeli Issues

Although Qatar and Israel do not have formal diplomatic ties, Qatar has been in the forefront of Arab-Israeli talks on expanding economic ties during periods of progress in the peace process. Qatar's position regarding the Arab boycott of Israel is governed by the September 1994 decision by the GCC to terminate enforcement of the indirect boycotts, while maintaining, at least in theory, the primary boycott. Qatar has hosted meetings of multilateral Arab-Israeli working groups and then Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres visited in April 1996. In addition, Qatar agreed to the establishment of an Israeli trade mission in Doha, Qatar's capital city, although relations cooled after the peace process slowed down in 1996. Since the beginning of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000, Qatar has claimed to have shut down the office; however, according to Qatari officials, it continued to operate at a very low level.¹⁸ Prior to the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Israeli Foreign Ministry closed the trade mission in Doha and evacuated three Israeli envoys and their families. Israel promised to reopen the office after the war.¹⁹ Despite pressure from some other Arab states, Qatar hosted the fourth annual Middle East/North Africa Economic Conference (MENA) in November 1997. This was a gathering that brought together some Arab and Israeli business and political leaders to discuss regional economic cooperation.

In May 2003, Qatari and Israeli Foreign Ministers met in Paris to discuss ways of reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The meeting took place only a week after the Emir's visit to Washington DC, prompting speculation that President Bush encouraged Qatari officials to take a more active role in the peace process. Shaikh Hamad has acknowledged that Qatar is keen to play a role in encouraging negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, but that it is too early to open full diplomatic ties with Israel.

¹⁸ Meeting with the Qatari Minister of State, Ahmed Abdullah al-Mehmood, January 12, 2003.

¹⁹ "Israel Shuts Qatar Mission, To Reduce Staff in Egypt, Jordan, Muaritiaania," *Yedi'ot Aharanot*, March 3, 2003, translated by the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS), Document ID: GMP20030311000208.

February 2004 Assassination in Doha

On February 13, 2004, a Chechen guerrilla leader named Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev was assassinated in a car bombing outside a mosque in Doha.²⁰ In the past, the Russian government had accused Yandarbiyev of funding Chechen terrorist activity. Soon after the bombing, Qatari authorities arrested two Russian agents and filed criminal charges against them. In July 2004, a Qatari court sentenced the two Russians to life in prison, though there is some speculation that Russian and Qatari officials have been conducting negotiations over the release of the two Russian detainees.

Defense and Regional Security

With its small territory and narrow population base, Qatar relies to a large degree on external cooperation and support for its security. Qatar, like other Gulf states, contributes military units to a small GCC rapid deployment force of 5,000 - 10,000 known as Peninsula Shield. With a personnel strength of 11,800, Qatar's armed forces are the second smallest in the Middle East. (Bahrain, with an estimated 11,000-member force, has the smallest) France has provided approximately 80% of Qatar's arms inventory. Since the 1991 Gulf war, Qatar has pursued a limited program of force modernization. To date, however, it has not been a purchaser of U.S. weapons.

Internal Security

Recent terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia have forced U.S. and Qatari officials to focus on Qatar's internal security, as analysts have expressed concern that Al Qaeda or other local terrorist cells could try to establish a presence and destabilize Qatar.²¹ On March 19, 2005, an Egyptian national carried out a car bomb attack at a theater popular with Western expatriates on the outskirts of the capital city of Doha. The car bombing, the first terrorist incident of its kind in Qatar, killed one British citizen and wounded twelve others. The suicide bomber was an engineer employed at Qatar Petroleum, and authorities are investigating his ties to Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. The attack came on the 2nd anniversary of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" and a week after an Al Qaeda leader in Saudi Arabia called for a new wave of attacks against Western interests in the Persian Gulf.

²⁰ "In Qatar, Standing Up to Putin, *Washington Post*, March 16, 2004.

²¹ In November 2004, the U.S. State Department issued a warning of a possible terrorist attack against a hotel or hotels used by Americans in Doha. The warning has since expired without incident. The Qatari Ministry of the Interior is responsible for internal security and is legally empowered to detain suspects without trial for up to two years.

U.S.-Qatari Relations

A U.S. embassy was established in Doha in 1973, but U.S. relations with Qatar did not blossom until the 1991 Gulf war. During the fighting in January 1991, Qatari armored forces helped coalition troops repel an Iraqi attack on the Saudi Arabian town of Kafji. The United States promptly recognized the assumption of power by Shaikh Hamad in June 1995. Analysts regard Qatar's exchanges with Israel, though limited, as broadly in accord with U.S. efforts to foster an expanding dialogue between Israel and Arab states.

Trade between the United States and Qatar has increased since the 1990-1991 Gulf war. U.S. exports to Qatar amounted to \$454 million in 2004, consisting mainly of machinery and transport equipment. U.S. imports from Qatar, mainly fuel and fertilizers, totaled \$387 million in 2004.²² Although the bulk of Qatar's trade continues to be with a few European countries and Japan, several U.S. firms, including ExxonMobil, Occidental, and Pennzoil are active in the development of Qatar's oil and gas resources. Despite the presence of U.S. firms in the Qatari hydrocarbon industry, the United States imports virtually no oil from Qatar.

Bilateral defense and security cooperation have expanded since the Gulf war. On June 23, 1992, the United States and Qatar concluded a Defense Cooperation Agreement that provided for U.S. access to Qatari bases, pre-positioning of United States materiel, and combined military exercises.²³ Qatar built Al-Udeid airbase in 1996 at a cost of more than \$1 billion. The U.S. government also has invested considerable amounts to upgrade the base in order to handle U.S. aircraft, equipment, and personnel. This investment was rapidly expanded following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As part of Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. Air Force has conducted approximately 14-16 supply flights per day to Afghanistan out of Al-Udeid.

The airbase houses between 5,000-6,500 U.S. troops and civilian contractors. The United States has constructed a 76,000 square foot hangar at Al-Udeid airbase, which can hold a maximum of 40 aircraft. Al-Udeid can accommodate a total of 10,000 troops and 140 aircraft. The base is home to the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, which includes 17 KC-135 Stratotankers and KC-10A Extenders for in-flight refueling of attack aircraft and fuel shipments to Afghanistan, which is 2.5 hours away.²⁴ Most importantly, Al-Udeid now features the region's main combat air-operations center, which had originally been built as a backup to U.S. operations in Saudi Arabia.

²² United States International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, TradeStats Express - National Trade Data, available online at [http://tse.export.gov/ITA2003_NATIONAL/TSEIntro.htm]

²³ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division (Helen Chapin Metz, ed.) *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies*, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994, p. 194. In December 2002, the United States and Qatar signed an agreement to upgrade Qatari military facilities and expand U.S. access to them.

²⁴ Meeting at Al-Udeid Air Base, January 13, 2003.

Qatar also has allowed the United States to construct the As-Sayliyah Army base, the largest pre-positioning facility of U.S. equipment in the world. The climate-controlled warehouses at As-Sayliyah held hundreds of M1 tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles prior to the recent Iraq war.²⁵ As-Sayliyah also features a new command center for CENTCOM personnel. Currently, there are approximately 3,400 troops and civilian contractors at As-Sayliyah. After the base received warnings of a potential threat in 2000, U.S. personnel were confined to the base for 45 days.

War on Terrorism

In addition to increased military cooperation, Qatar has assisted the United States in the war on terrorism. Qatar has passed a money laundering law, which closed all bank accounts for foreign charities. Also, Qatar National Bank has provided its entire staff with a four-day course on fighting money laundering and terrorist financing.

According to the 9/11 Commission Report and other terrorist experts, Qatar's current Interior Minister and royal family member, Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalid Al-Thani briefly harbored Al Qaeda terrorists in 1996, including the suspected mastermind of the September 11th hijacking plot, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed.²⁶ The Emir of Qatar appointed Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalid Al-Thani to the post of Interior Minister during an expansion of the cabinet in January 2001. It is unclear what types of discussions the United States has conducted with the government of Qatar regarding the allegations against Qatar's Interior Minister.

Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Qatar

Emir	Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Heir Apparent	Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani ²⁷
Prime Minister	Abdallah bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Deputy Prime Minister	Muhammad bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Foreign Minister	Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani
Energy Minister	Abdallah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah
Finance Minister	Youssef Hussein Al-Kamal
Ambassador to the United States	Badr Umar Al-Dafa

²⁵ Meeting at As-Sayliyah Army Base, January 13, 2003.

²⁶ "Qatar's Security Chief Suspected of Having Ties to Al Qaeda," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2003.

²⁷ In August 2003, the Emir named his fourth son as heir apparent, replacing his third oldest son, Jassem bin Hamad Al-Thani, who reportedly was either dissatisfied with his lack of responsibilities, or did not have an interest in continuing to serve as crown prince. The Emir has two other sons, one of whom is a businessman and the other is involved in Islamic charities.

Figure 2. Country Map of Qatar



Source: Shaded Relief Country Map of Qatar, Central Intelligence Agency, 1995.