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# **Qatar: Issues for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress**

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## **Qatar: Issues for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress**

The State of Qatar is a small, energy-rich emirate strategically located near the center of the Persian Gulf. Defense and diplomatic cooperation have anchored close U.S.-Qatari relations: Qatar hosts thousands of U.S. troops, allows U.S. military use of Qatari facilities, and consults with U.S. officials on engagements with third parties in the Middle East region and beyond. In 2022, President Joseph Biden and Emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani reaffirmed the multifaceted partnership between the United States and Qatar, and the Biden Administration designated Qatar as a Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally.

Qatar holds the third-largest proven natural gas reserves in the world, and is a major exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG): LNG revenues have fueled economic and social change in Qatar and enabled Qatar's active foreign policies. Qatar's fewer than 300,000 citizens enjoy one of the world's highest per capita income levels, and, as in other Gulf states, a large expatriate population is critical to Qatar's domestic economy. Since the mid-1990s, Qatari leaders have overseen rapid, expansive economic growth; transformed the global media environment through the founding of the Al Jazeera satellite networks; engaged in complex and at times controversial diplomacy with U.S. partners and adversaries; and pursued a course of limited domestic political liberalization.

While Qatar supports many U.S. priorities, its leaders' pursuit of Qatar's sovereign interests and initiatives have presented both opportunities and challenges. Successive U.S. Administrations have sought to expand military, security, diplomatic, and economic cooperation with Qatar. Issues of immediate priority for the United States include coordinating with Qatar on negotiations to sustain a ceasefire and continue hostage-prisoner exchanges in the Israel-Hamas war, maintaining U.S.-Qatari defense cooperation, encouraging stability in Qatar's relationships with fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Arab states, and leveraging Qatar's diplomatic engagement with the Taliban government in Afghanistan, new leaders in Syria, and with neighboring Iran. Prior to the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, Qatar had not joined the Abraham Accords between some Arab states and Israel but had instead conditioned normalization of relations with Israel on substantial progress toward resolving Israel-Palestinian disputes.

Qatar voted to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations; stated its "respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity"; and called for a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to the conflict in accordance with international law. Emir Tamim met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Qatar in June 2024. The Emir met Russian President Vladimir Putin in July 2024 in conjunction with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Kazakhstan; Qatar joined the SCO as a Dialogue Partner in 2023. Emir Tamim and People's Republic of China (PRC) leader Xi Jinping met in Saudi Arabia in December 2022 in conjunction with the Arab States-China Summit and the GCC-China Summit. PRC state-owned firms have provided infrastructure and construction services for some major projects in Qatar. Qatar exports oil products and LNG to China.

Since 2012, successive Administrations have proposed several major U.S. arms sales to Qatar, including items for air defense and missile defense. Qatar is investing in its military facilities to meet current and potential future needs, with planned Qatar-funded development projects at Al Udeid Air Base valued at \$8.4 billion through 2033.

Qatar's constitution had provided for elections to a consultative *Shura* Council, but in November 2024, Qataris adopted amendments proposed by the Emir to end legislative elections and return to an appointed national consultative body. The government limits freedom of assembly, expression, religion, the press, and association. Labor and migrants' rights concerns have long drawn public and official attention as Qatar builds out physical infrastructure. The U.S. State Department notes reports of human rights violations in Qatar and credits Qatar with taking some steps to improve human rights and labor conditions.

In Congress, foreign affairs, defense, and intelligence committees monitor Qatar's foreign and domestic policies, while Qatar's resources, sovereign wealth, and associated geo-economic clout fuel congressional interest in Qatar's energy and investment policies and in U.S.-Qatari trade and investment ties. In the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, a Congressional Caucus on Qatari-American Strategic Relationships is active. Various Members of Congress and congressional staff frequently visit Qatar to attend conferences, consult with U.S. civilian and military personnel, and conduct oversight of U.S. regional policy and U.S. military operations.

## Contents

Overview and Bilateral Relations.....	1
U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Relations .....	3
Arms Sales .....	5
Al Udeid Air Base and Military Construction .....	5
Qatari Facilities and U.S. Relocation of Evacuees from Afghanistan .....	6
Counterterrorism Issues .....	6
U.S. Security Assistance .....	7
U.S.-Qatar Economic Relations .....	8
Congress and Qatar .....	9
Qatar and Hamas-related Legislation in the 118 <sup>th</sup> Congress .....	9
Qatar and Iranian Funds-related Legislation in the 118 <sup>th</sup> Congress .....	10
Qatari Politics and Government .....	11
Human Rights.....	12
Women’s Rights .....	12
Labor Issues and Trafficking in Persons .....	13
Religious Freedom .....	14
Qatar’s Foreign Policy.....	14
Qatar and Russia’s War Against Ukraine .....	15
Qatar and China.....	16
Qatar and Afghanistan.....	17
Qatar and Its Neighbors .....	17
Gulf Cooperation Council and Other Arab States.....	17
Syria .....	18
Iran .....	18
Israel and the Palestinians .....	20
Fiscal, Economic, and Energy Issues .....	22
Outlook.....	25

## Figures

Figure 1. Qatar at-a-Glance .....	2
Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure, 2015 .....	23

## Tables

Table A-1. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022 .....	26
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## Appendixes

Appendix. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022 .....	26
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## **Contacts**

Author Information.....	27
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## Overview and Bilateral Relations

The State of Qatar is a small, energy-rich monarchy, strategically located near the center of the Persian Gulf (see **Figure 1**); its natural resources and active foreign policy give it global influence. Qatar holds the third-largest proven natural gas reserves in the world, and is a major exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).<sup>1</sup> From 2000 to 2021, Qatar's gross domestic product (GDP) increased tenfold from \$17 billion to an estimated \$179 billion.

The country's population, including expatriates, more than quadrupled between 2000 and 2023, growing to over 2.9 million in 2023.<sup>2</sup> One-tenth of those are citizens. Qatar's fewer-than-300,000 citizens enjoy one of the world's highest per capita income levels, and, as in other Gulf states, a large expatriate population is critical to Qatar's domestic economy. Since the mid-1990s, Qatari leaders have overseen rapid, expansive economic growth; transformed the global media environment through the founding of the Al Jazeera satellite networks; engaged in complex and at times controversial diplomacy with U.S. partners and adversaries; and introduced constitutional changes to formalize succession and limited consultative governance. International attention focuses on Qatar's roles as an energy exporter and diplomatic catalyst.

U.S. officials recognized Qatar's independence in September 1971 and established diplomatic relations in 1972. Since the 1990s, successive U.S. Administrations have sought to expand military, security, diplomatic, and economic cooperation with Qatar. Qatari leaders' pursuit of Qatar's sovereign interests and initiatives have presented both opportunities and challenges over time. Past U.S. Administrations have scrutinized Qatari policy with regard to some armed conflicts and political unrest in the Middle East and North Africa region and some Qataris' relationships with Islamist groups: at present Qatar supports many U.S. priorities and U.S. officials have welcomed Qatar's partnership (see below).

Biden Administration officials thanked Qatar in 2023 and 2024 for its role as an intermediary to Hamas in the wake of the group's October 7, 2023, terrorist attacks and taking of hostages in Israel. U.S. officials engaged with Qatari, Egyptian, and Israeli counterparts in efforts to achieve a ceasefire and free remaining hostages held in Gaza, leading to the ceasefire reached in January 2025. President Donald Trump's Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff travelled to Qatar and met with Qatari leaders in support of U.S. negotiations prior to the President's inauguration. In January 2025, he called Qatar "enormously helpful" and said that Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani's "communication skills with Hamas were indispensable."<sup>3</sup> In February 2025, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth called Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and "thanked Qatar for hosting U.S. and coalition forces at Al Udeid Air Base and urged continued support for Trump Administration efforts to secure the release of the hostages from Gaza."<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. government continues to engage with Qatar on negotiations to sustain a ceasefire and continue hostage-prisoner exchanges in the Israel-Hamas war. U.S. officials also have sought to

<sup>1</sup> In 2015, Qatar National Bank estimated that at then-prevailing production rates, Qatar's gas reserves could last 138 years. Sergio Chapa, "U.S. Holds World's Top LNG Exporter Spot on European Energy Crisis," *Bloomberg*, February 1, 2022; and Agence France-Presse, "Qatar Vast Gas Reserves 'to Last 138 Years': Report," June 21, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Based on figures available from Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, "World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision," accessed March 2025.

<sup>3</sup> "FNC Interview with Steve Witkoff, U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East," *Bloomberg News*, January 22, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Readout of Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's Call With Qatar Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs, His Excellency Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali Al Thani, February 15, 2025.

leverage Qatar's diplomatic engagement with neighboring Iran and actors in Lebanon and Syria. Prior to the October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel, Qatar had not joined the Abraham Accords that some other Arab states had signed with Israel beginning in 2020, but has instead conditioned normalization of relations with Israel on substantial progress toward resolving Israel-Palestinian disputes.

**Figure 1. Qatar at-a-Glance**



<b>Area</b>	11,586 sq. km (slightly smaller than Connecticut)
<b>People</b>	Population: ~2.9 million, of which nearly ~90% are expatriates Religions: Muslim 65.2%; Christian 13.7%; Hindu 15.9%; 3.8% Buddhist; and 1% other. Figures include expatriates. (2020 est.)
<b>Economy</b>	Gross Domestic Product (GDP): \$249 billion on purchasing power parity (PPP) basis (2021 est.) GDP per capita: \$92,900 on PPP basis Inflation: 2.3% (2021) GDP Growth Rate: 1.59% (2021)
<b>Oil and Gas</b>	Oil Exports: ~900,000 barrels per day (2022) Gas (LNG) Exports: 127.9 billion cubic meters per year (2021)

**Sources:** Graphic created by CRS using data from U.S. State Department and Esri. At-a-glance information from CIA, *World Factbook* (March 2023), UN Population Division (March 2023), International Monetary Fund, and Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Annual Statistics Bulletin (October 2022).

Qatar continues to host a political office of the Palestinian Islamist armed group Hamas (a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization [FTO]), though Hamas representatives have at times left Qatar for extended periods, possibly as a means of avoiding Qatari-facilitated engagement on

issues of dispute with Israel and other countries.<sup>5</sup> On October 13, 2023, then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken said while in Qatar that “there can be no more business as usual with Hamas,” and press reports citing unidentified diplomats suggested that month that the United States and Qatar “agreed to revisit the Persian Gulf state’s association with Hamas” following the resolution of the Hamas hostage crisis.<sup>6</sup> More than 100 Members of Congress wrote to President Biden in October 2023 urging him to “put significant pressure on Qatar and Türkiye to cease their support for Hamas and expel Hamas leadership that they host.”<sup>7</sup> Qatar condemned the July 2024 killing in Iran of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh.<sup>8</sup> Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar reportedly contacted officials in Qatar shortly before being killed by Israeli forces in Gaza in October 2024.<sup>9</sup>

In September 2024, Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and Prime Minister met with President Donald Trump in Florida during their visit to the United States for the United Nations General Assembly. President Trump praised the Emir as “someone also who strongly wants peace in the Middle East, and all over the world,” writing in a social media post, “We had a great relationship during my years in the White House, and it will be even stronger this time around!”<sup>10</sup>

Through 2024, U.S. priorities in the bilateral relationship have included sustaining and strengthening U.S.-Qatari defense cooperation, sustaining and strengthening U.S.-Qatari defense cooperation, and encouraging stability in Qatar’s relationships with fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Arab states.

## U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Relations

Qatar hosts U.S. military forces under the terms of a defense cooperation agreement, including the forward headquarters of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). U.S.-Qatar security ties deepened from the mid-1990s onward, and, in 2022, the Biden Administration designated Qatar as a Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally.

In the late 1980s, the United States and Qatar engaged in a years-long diplomatic dispute regarding Qatar’s black market procurement of U.S.-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.<sup>11</sup> The dispute froze then-planned economic and military cooperation, and Congress approved a ban on

<sup>5</sup> Agence France-Presse (AFP), “Hamas leader speaks in Iran of Israel’s ‘political isolation,’” March 26, 2024; AFP and Times of Israel, “Hamas Leader Haniyeh Said to Meet Turkish FM to Discuss Hostages, Ceasefire,” January 21, 2024; and Parisa Hafezi, “Iranian State Media Confirm Meeting Between Khamenei, Hamas’ Haniyeh in Tehran,” Reuters, November 5, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> John Hudson, “U.S., Qatar to Revisit Doha’s Ties to Hamas After Gaza Hostage Crisis,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 2023; and Humeysra Pamuk, “Qatar Open to Reconsidering Hamas Presence in Qatar, US Official Says,” Reuters, October 27, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Rod, “Lawmakers Reject De-escalation, Urge Strong Action Against Iran, Qatar, Turkey,” *Jewish Insider*, October 17, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The State of Qatar Condemns Assassination of Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas,” July 31, 2024, at <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/statements/the-state-of-qatar-condemns-assassination-of-head-of-the-political-bureau-of-hamas>.

<sup>9</sup> *Times of Israel*, “After speculation he was killed, Sinwar said to renew contact with Qatar,” October 7, 2024; and, Ellie Grant, “Sinwar said to have contacted Qatar mediators to seek deal for his safety,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, October 9, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> President Donald J. Trump, Truth Social post, September 22, 2024, 11:23 AM, at <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/113181892397857719>.

<sup>11</sup> Qatar defended its procurement of the missiles in protest of the sale of similar missiles by the United States to Bahrain, with which Qatar had an unresolved border dispute until 2001. Elaine Sciolino, “Qatar Rejects U.S. Demand for Return of Illicit Stingers,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1988; Patrick E. Tyler, “U.S. Drawn into Gulf Dispute—Stray Stingers Tied to Qatar-Bahrain Tiff,” *Washington Post*, October 6, 1988.



arms sales to Qatar (§566(d), P.L. 100-461) that lasted until the months leading up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when Qatar allowed coalition forces to operate from Qatari territory and agreed to destroy the missiles in question.<sup>12</sup> In January 1991, Qatari armored forces helped coalition troops repel an Iraqi attack on the Saudi Arabian town of Kafji, on the coastal road leading south from Kuwait into Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province.<sup>13</sup>

Deep U.S. defense and security relations with Qatar did not begin until after the 1991 war. In 1992, Qatar signed a defense cooperation agreement with the United States, opening a period of close coordination in military affairs that has continued to the present. In 1995, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa deposed his father and became Emir. The United States promptly recognized Shaykh Hamad's assumption of power, and welcomed his decision to subsequently expand U.S.-Qatar defense cooperation. Shaykh Hamad faced a counter-coup attempt in 1996.

With its small territory and narrow citizen population base, Qatar relies to a large degree on external cooperation and support for its security. With 16,500 personnel, Qatar's armed forces are the second smallest in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup> Since 2013, the government has imposed mandatory short-term (3-4 month) military training and service for Qatari males.

Qatari-U.S. defense relations have expanded since 2001 to include cooperative defense exercises, equipment pre-positioning, and base access agreements. Qatar hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command. In 2013, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel visited Doha, met with Emir Tamim, and signed a 10-year bilateral defense cooperation agreement. The text of the agreement is classified.<sup>15</sup> Unnamed U.S. defense officials told CNN in January 2024 that Qatar and the United States have renewed the agreement for a further 10 years.<sup>16</sup> Qatar is a member of the Combined Maritime Forces coalition, which operates Combined Task Forces (CTF) 150 (maritime security and counterterrorism), CTF 151 (counter piracy), CTF 152 (Gulf security and cooperation), and CTF 153 (Red Sea security). The Qatari military and the West Virginia National Guard cooperate under the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

Qatar's 2022 designation as a Major Non-NATO Ally qualifies Qatar to purchase certain U.S. arms, receive excess defense articles (EDA), and engage in defense research cooperation with the United States, for which it would not otherwise be eligible.

<sup>12</sup> The ban was formally repealed by the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1991 (§568(b), P.L. 101-513). The conference report on H.R. 5114, Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1991 (H.Rept. 101-968) inserted Senate language (Amendment No. 144) that repealed the ban based on information provided by the Secretary of Defense "that it is in the national interest to reestablish United States-Qatari security relations because of their support for United States troops in the Middle East."

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Ferraro, "Allies Retake Saudi City," *United Press International*, January 31, 1991; and Joseph Albright, "Marines Take Credit for Khafji Victory," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, February 3, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Bahrain's armed forces are the smallest. Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* 2022.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. State Department, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar," Fact Sheet, July 30, 2021. In addition to this agreement, as of 2021, the United States and Qatar had the following agreements for defense cooperation: 2012 General Security of Military Information Agreement, 2013 Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, 2013 Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence, 2016 Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement, and 2020 Maritime Implementing Agreement.

<sup>16</sup> Alex Marquardt and Natasha Bertrand, "US Quietly Reaches Agreement with Qatar to Keep Operating Largest Military Base in Middle East," CNN, January 2, 2024.



Over the past several years, the number of U.S. military personnel who are deployed at the various facilities in Qatar, including Al Udeid Air Base (see below), has ranged from about 6,500 to more than 10,000.<sup>17</sup>

## Arms Sales

Since 2012, successive Administrations have proposed several major U.S. arms sales to Qatar, marking a shift in Qatar's defense planning toward the use of advanced U.S. attack and transport helicopters and other weapons systems, including items for air defense and missile defense (see **Table A-1** in the **Appendix**). France previously had provided approximately 80% of Qatar's arms inventory. Qatar collaborates with Italy and Turkey in support of its naval development efforts.<sup>18</sup> Qatar's purchase of U.S. weapons systems, including U.S. air and missile defense systems, corresponds to increased interest in such systems from some other governments in the region, ostensibly to defend against and respond to potential attacks from Iran. In 2022, the State Department reported

Qatar has over \$26 billion in active government-to-government cases under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system making Qatar the United States' third largest FMS partner in the world. Recent and significant FMS sales focused on integrated air and missile defense and include the PATRIOT long-range air missile system, the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System, and the AN/FPS-132 Early Warning Radar; F-15QA fighter aircraft—the most advanced F-15 in production; and AH-64E Apache attack helicopters. Each of these programs includes facility construction and extended munitions, logistics, and training support.<sup>19</sup>

## Al Udeid Air Base and Military Construction

Qatar invested over \$1 billion to construct the Al Udeid Air Base southwest of Doha during the 1990s. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also awarded over \$100 million in Military Construction Air Force contracts for the initial construction of U.S. storage, housing, service, command, and communication facilities. Qatar's financing and construction of the runways and most of the facilities at Al Udeid and its granting of permission for the construction of U.S.-funded facilities underpinned gradually deeper cooperation with U.S. military forces.

In 2003, the U.S. military moved its Combat Air Operations Center for the Middle East from Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia to Al Udeid. Al Udeid then served as a logistics, command, and basing hub for U.S. operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the U.S. CENTCOM area of responsibility.<sup>20</sup>

Qatar has invested more than \$8 billion to support U.S. and coalition operations at Al Udeid since 2003, expanding and enhancing the facility in conjunction with U.S. military construction

<sup>17</sup> U.S. State Department, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Qatar," December 12, 2024, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2023/qatar>; U.S. State Department, "Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Nathan A. Sales Travels to Qatar," August 12, 2020; and Department of Defense, "U.S. and Qatar Sign MOU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S. Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base," January 14, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Agnes Helou, "Qatari Navy's New Amphibious Ship to Help Fulfill Nation's 'Unique' Needs," *Breaking Defense*, February 2, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. State Department, Qatar Integrated Country Strategy, July 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Rebecca Grant, "The Short, Strange Life of PSAB," *Air and Space Forces*, July 1, 2012.

funding.<sup>21</sup> From FY2003 to FY2011, Congress appropriated and authorized more than \$457 million for U.S. military construction activities in Qatar.<sup>22</sup>

Qatar plans further investment in its military facilities to meet current and potential future needs. Planned development projects under the Qatar Development of Al Udeid program are valued at \$8.4 billion with construction plans through 2033 set to adapt base facilities from an expeditionary to an enduring nature and to enable them to house more than 15,000 personnel and support additional fighter, transport, and helicopter aircraft.<sup>23</sup> Nearby Camp As Sayliyah housed significant U.S. military equipment pre-positioning and command facilities for the CENTCOM area of operations prior to its closure and a repositioning of U.S. equipment in mid-2021.<sup>24</sup>

## Qatari Facilities and U.S. Relocation of Evacuees from Afghanistan

U.S.-Qatar bilateral agreements have provided terms for the hosting in Qatar of evacuees from Afghanistan under U.S. auspices.<sup>25</sup> In April 2023, the Administration stated that facilities at Camp As Sayliyah then-served as the main processing center for U.S. resettlement efforts for evacuees from Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> In 2024, initiatives at the site continued under the auspices of the Office of the Coordinator of Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE).<sup>27</sup> In February 2025, a press report cited an unnamed U.S. official as saying the Trump Administration has directed CARE to plan for its closure by April 2025.<sup>28</sup> According to press reports citing unnamed U.S. officials and advocates for U.S.-associated Afghans, U.S. relocation operations were “essentially paused” as of March 2025.<sup>29</sup> See “Qatar and Afghanistan” below for information on the status of U.S. evacuation and Afghan nationals in Qatar.

## Counterterrorism Issues

U.S. policymakers have considered alleged material support for terrorist groups by some Qataris, including reported past support by members of the ruling family, alongside Qatar’s counterterrorism efforts and its broader, long-term commitment to host and support U.S. military forces.<sup>30</sup> U.S. officials have described Qatar’s counterterrorism cooperation since 2001 as

<sup>21</sup> U.S. State Department, “U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar,” Fact Sheet, July 30, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Specific legislative text available to congressional offices from CRS.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. CENTCOM response to CRS Inquiry, January 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Staff Sgt. Neil W. McCabe, “Curtain Falls on ASG-Qatar After Three Decades Supporting Readiness, Resilience,” U.S. Army 310<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Sustainment Command, June 24, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. State Department, Office of Treaty Affairs, *Qatar (22-919)—Protocol Amending the Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement of November 12, 2021*, September 19, 2022; and *Qatar (21-1112)—Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement*, November 12, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Akmal Dawi, “US Continues Relocating Afghans Even Under Taliban Rule,” Voice of America, April 4, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> See U.S. State Department, Office of the Inspector General, *Relocation and Resettlement Outcomes of Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Holders*, AUD-MERO-23-21, June 2023; and, Alexandria Haidara, “Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts,” *State Magazine*, August 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Landay, “Exclusive: Office overseeing Afghan resettlement in US told to start planning closure, sources say,” Reuters, February 18, 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Priscilla Alvarez, Haley Britzky and Jennifer Hansler, “Thousands of Afghans who helped the US lose access to critical resources following Trump directives,” CNN, January 27, 2025; and “US-bound Afghans left ‘without options’ as Trump travel ban looms,” AFP, March 11, 2025.

<sup>30</sup> In 2022, media reports described a lawsuit involving allegations of terrorist financing by Qatar Charity and Qatar National Bank, and a reported investigation of similar allegations concerning the Emir’s half-brother. See Alan Suderman, “Qatar, Key US Ally, Faces New Accusations of Terror Funding,” May 13, 2022; and *Sotloff et al. v. Qatar Charity et al.*, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, May 12, 2022. According to the 9/11 (continued...)

significant, and the State Department report on terrorism for 2023 states that “Qatar has made strides in addressing state-sourced internal support for educational and religious content espousing intolerance, discrimination, sectarianism, and violence.”<sup>31</sup> The report notes that a mutual evaluation on terrorist financing “identified major inconsistencies between the type and extent of terrorist financing (TF) activity prosecuted and convicted with its TF risk profile” and identified domestic and international challenges “which lead to many TF cases being acquitted or overturned on appeal.”

### ***Qatar and Hamas***

Qatar hosts a political office of the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated FTO). The U.S. government and government of Israel have engaged Qatari officials as interlocutors of Hamas prior to and in the wake of the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel. (See “Israel and the Palestinians” below.) In October 2023, the U.S. Department of the Treasury named Muhammad Ahmad ‘Abd Al-Dayim Nasrallah as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under Executive Order 13224, describing Nasrallah as “a longtime Hamas operative based in Qatar with close ties to Iranian elements,” who “in recent years ... was involved in the transfer of tens of millions of dollars to Hamas, including Hamas’s military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassim Brigades.”

### ***U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance***

Qatar uses its own funds to pay for participation of Qatari personnel in the State Department’s Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) training program, including training that was pertinent to Qatar’s preparations to host the 2022 International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) soccer World Cup. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security reached cooperative security agreements with Qatar related to the World Cup, and in July 2022 signed memoranda on border and cybersecurity cooperation.<sup>32</sup>

### ***U.S. Security Assistance***

The George W. Bush Administration requested \$10,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance funds for Qatar in FY2010, and requested an additional \$10,000 for FY2011 but did not allocate funds for Qatar during that fiscal year. The nominal IMET assistance had the administrative effect of making Qatar eligible to purchase other U.S. military training at the reduced cost level available only to IMET recipients.<sup>33</sup> The Obama, first Trump, and Biden

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Commission Report and former U.S. government officials, Qatari royal family member and later Interior Minister Shaykh Abdullah bin Khalid Al Thani provided support to Al Qaeda figures, including the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks, Khalid Shaykh Mohammed. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (The 9/11 Commission Report), pp. 73, 147-8, 488-9. See also, James Risen and David Johnston, “Qaeda Aide Slipped Away Long Before September 11 Attack,” *New York Times*, March 8, 2003; Josh Meyer and John Goetz, “Qatar’s Security Chief Suspected of Having Ties to Al Qaeda,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. State Department, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Qatar,” December 12, 2024, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2023/qatar>.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “DHS to Expand Security Cooperation with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates,” July 12, 2022.

<sup>33</sup> The Senate version of the FY2013 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 2467, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong.) would have amended existing law to make Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia eligible for such reduced cost purchases without having to receive IMET. §1204 of S. 2467 would have amended Section 546(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. §2347e(b)).

Administrations did not request IMET assistance for Qatar, though Qatari personnel continued to participate in IMET and other U.S. training programs.

## U.S.-Qatar Economic Relations

Qatar and the United States have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement, but Qatar has used a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) to undertake large investments in the United States. The joint statement of a 2018 U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue “recognized” the Qatar Investment Authority’s (Qatar’s sovereign wealth fund) commitment of \$45 billion in future investments in U.S. companies and real estate. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aerospace equipment. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products. Total bilateral trade in goods for 2023 was valued at \$6.69 billion.<sup>34</sup> Qatar Petroleum has jointly developed LNG export infrastructure at the Golden Pass facility in Texas with ExxonMobil.<sup>35</sup>

Qatar’s airline, Qatar Airways, has been a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft and in January 2022 announced that it would purchase up to 50 cargo aircraft and up to 50 737 Max passenger aircraft from Boeing.<sup>36</sup> Qatar Airways and Airbus in 2023 announced they had reached a settlement of their dispute over paint on Qatar Airways-purchased Airbus aircraft.<sup>37</sup> In the past, some U.S. airlines challenged Qatar Airways’ benefits under a U.S.-Qatar “open skies” agreement based on the Qatari government’s support for Qatar Airways aircraft purchases.<sup>38</sup> The United States and Qatar reached a set of “understandings” on civil aviation on January 29, 2018, committing Qatar Airways to financial transparency and containing some limitations on the airline’s ability to pick up passengers in Europe for flights to the United States. European officials reached an open skies agreement with Qatar in 2021, but not all European Union member states have ratified it.<sup>39</sup>

In August 2024, Qatar’s sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority, announced a \$180 million investment in the U.S. Development Finance Corporation-backed mining investment vehicle Techmet. A QIA official said: “We are delighted to partner with TechMet to invest in the responsible sourcing of critical minerals, which are crucial to the global green transition. This investment builds on QIA’s theme of diversified energy transition and critical minerals investments.”<sup>40</sup>

Several U.S. universities have established satellite faculty campuses in Doha at Qatar’s Education City, where Qatari, American, and other students pursue undergraduate and graduate coursework across a broad range of subjects: Carnegie Mellon University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Georgetown University, Weill Cornell Medicine, and Northwestern University. In February 2024, Texas A&M University announced plans to close its branch in Qatar by 2028

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<sup>34</sup> U.S. Census Bureau data, August 2024, at <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5180.html>.

<sup>35</sup> ExxonMobil, “QatarEnergy and ExxonMobil to Independently Market Golden Pass LNG,” October 27, 2022, and at <https://www.goldenpasslng.com/about/about-golden-pass>.

<sup>36</sup> “Boeing Lands Huge Airplane Order from Qatar Airways,” Associated Press, January 31, 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Airbus, “Qatar Airways and Airbus Reach Amicable Settlement in Legal Dispute,” February 1, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Kane, “Open Skies Dispute Between US and Gulf Airlines Escalates,” *The National*, January 30, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, “Aviation: EU and Qatar Sign Landmark Aviation Agreement,” October 18, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> *Financial Times*, “Qatar invests in US-backed fund to loosen China dominance of critical minerals,” August 7, 2024.

citing regional instability.<sup>41</sup> The Qatar Foundation (QF) criticized the decision saying it was “influenced by a disinformation campaign aimed at harming the interests of QF.”<sup>42</sup>

## **Congress and Qatar**

In Congress, legislative action related to Qatar has been relatively limited with the exception of appropriations and authorization legislation that affects U.S. defense programs and congressional review of proposed foreign military sales to the Qatari military. Congressional foreign affairs, defense, and intelligence committees monitor Qatar’s foreign and domestic policies, while Qatar’s resources, sovereign wealth, and associated geo-economic clout fuel congressional interest in Qatar’s energy and investment policies and in U.S.-Qatari trade and investment ties.

Congress has acknowledged Qatar’s support for U.S. military operations, including efforts to evacuate U.S. personnel and third country nationals from Afghanistan. The Senate in 2022 adopted S.Res. 390, expressing appreciation for Qatar’s “pivotal role and support of Operation Allies Refuge; and ... support to temporarily house thousands of evacuees [from Afghanistan] until they are cleared for follow-on movement.” In 2022, Congress designated U.S. veterans who served on active duty in Qatar and several other countries on or after August 2, 1990, as “covered veterans” under the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-168), which expands health care eligibility for veterans subject to toxic exposure. In the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, S. 302 would have provided for related cancer screening.

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 118-31) directed the Administration to report to Congress on the legal protections afforded to U.S. service personnel in Qatar and other countries. The act also directed the Administration to report on efforts by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to increase its influence in the Middle East, including in Qatar.

In the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, a Congressional Caucus on Qatari-American Strategic Relationships is active.

Since October 2023, some in Congress have increased their scrutiny and/or criticism of Qatar for its relationships with Hamas and Iran, including scrutiny of Iranian funds transferred to Qatar pursuant to U.S. sanctions waivers.

## **Qatar and Hamas-related Legislation in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress**

In April 2024, Congress enacted the Hamas and Other Palestinian Terrorist Groups International Financing Prevention Act (Division M of P.L. 118-50), which requires the executive branch to impose sanctions on foreign states or persons that the President determines provide certain types of support to Hamas, PIJ, some other groups, or their affiliates. The act provides for a waiver that the executive branch could use if the President were to determine that the continued operation in Qatar of Hamas figures constituted activity targeted by the act.

Other bills, such as H.R. 6431, H.R. 8190, and S. 4093, would have suspended or directed the review of Qatar’s major Non-NATO Ally designation absent presidential certifications related to Qatar’s relationships and interactions with foreign terrorist organizations.

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<sup>41</sup> Susannah George and Mohamad El Chamaa, “Texas A&M to Close Qatar Campus, Citing Regional Instability,” *Washington Post*, February 9, 2024.

<sup>42</sup> Qatar Foundation (@QF), X post, February 9, 2024, at <https://twitter.com/qf/status/1755827488364564599>.

### ***Required Report on Al Udeid Air Base***

In the Senate, Section 1287 of the Senate Armed Services Committee-reported version of the NDAA for FY2025 (S. 4638) would have required the Department of Defense to provide a briefing to congressional defense committees on “the operational value of the Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, taking into consideration the relationship of the Government of Qatar with Hamas and other terrorist organizations.”<sup>43</sup> The provision was not included in the final bill, but the joint explanatory statement on the FY2025 NDAA (House Committee Print 119-2 on P.L. 118-159) directs the Secretary of Defense

to submit a report and provide a briefing to the congressional defense committees, not later than June 1, 2025, on the operational value of the Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, taking into consideration the presence of Hamas and other United States-designated terrorist organizations in Qatar. The report and briefing shall include:

- (1) Whether the presence of Hamas and other United States-designated terrorist organizations in Qatar undermines the national security interests of the United States;
- (2) The operational value of the Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar;
- (3) The effect on United States Air Force operations in the Middle East if the United States were to redeploy members of the United States Air Force from Al-Udeid Air Base; and
- (4) The resources that would be required to redeploy members of the United States Air Force from Al-Udeid Air Base.

### **Qatar and Iranian Funds-related Legislation in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress**

In December 2023, the House adopted H.R. 5961, the “No Funds for Iranian Terrorism Act,” which would have imposed U.S. sanctions on financial institutions that transact in Iranian funds that were transferred in September 2023 from South Korea via Europe to a restricted Qatari account for potential humanitarian use by Iran in conjunction with Iran’s release of U.S. detainees (see “Iran” below). The act as adopted in the House would state the “sense of Congress that the Government of Qatar should publicly condemn Hamas, turn Hamas leadership over [to]<sup>44</sup> the United States or Israeli control, and pledge never to facilitate the transfer of any covered Iranian funds to Iran or any agency or instrumentality of Iran.”

In April 2024, the House adopted H.R. 5826, the “No Paydays for Hostage-Takers Act,” which would have required reporting and certification on the Iranian funds transferred to Qatar, and H.R. 5947, which would have rescinded the September 2023 waiver.

Other bills introduced in the House and Senate (H.R. 6000 and S. 3049) would have directed the Secretary of the Treasury to act to remove exemptions on transactions involving Iranian funds via Qatar or rescinded the related September 2023 waiver.

<sup>43</sup> The committee report (S.Rept. 118-188) noted “that the State of Qatar, a major non-NATO ally of the United States, continues to host Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization responsible for the deaths of more than 33 Americans and the kidnapping of 12 Americans on October 7, 2023. The committee notes that the hosting of Hamas was originally undertaken in full coordination by multiple, sequential U.S. administrations. The committee further notes that 8 months into this crisis, Hamas has not changed its negotiating position, despite reasonable offers from Israel that would result in the release of all the hostages, including all eight Americans, increase humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza, and provide a pathway for a sustainable end to the conflict. Therefore, if Hamas refuses reasonable negotiations, the committee directs that the Secretary of Defense urge his Qatari counterparts to expel senior Hamas officials.”

<sup>44</sup> H.R. 5961 may contain a drafting error.



Other proposed bills would have directed the President to confiscate any of the Iranian funds subject to U.S. jurisdiction (S. 3081) or to reimpose the threat of U.S. sanctions on transactions involving the funds (S. 3041).

Similar bills have not, to date, been introduced in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## Qatari Politics and Government

Qatar declared its independence from the United Kingdom on September 3, 1971.<sup>45</sup> It is a constitutional monarchy governed by the Al Thani family; in an April 2003 referendum, Qatari voters approved a new constitution that outlined plans to elect some members of the consultative National Assembly (*Majlis al Shura*) and recognized women's right to vote and run for national office. The Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (age 42), began his rule in June 2013 when his father, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa, abdicated, marking the first voluntary and planned transition of power in Qatar since its independence.<sup>46</sup> Al Thani family members lead several government ministries and hold board seats on important state and private companies; the ruling family retains ultimate political authority but its relationships with other leading families appear cooperative. In March 2023, Emir Tamim bin Hamad announced a cabinet reshuffle and named Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani as Prime Minister: Sheikh Mohammed has served as Qatar's Foreign Minister since 2016.<sup>47</sup>

Qatari authorities delayed the holding of national elections envisioned in the 2003 constitution until October 2021, when Qatari voters selected 30 members for the 45-seat National Assembly. The onset of political unrest in other regional countries from 2011 onward, the 2013 transition from former Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to his son Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and the 2017-2021 confrontation between Qatar and some neighboring states may have contributed to Qatari decisions to delay the election. Turnout in the 2021 election exceeded 63% of eligible voters. Citizens categorized as naturalized, including members of the numerous Al Murra tribe, were ineligible to stand as candidates or vote, leading to some protests and arrests in the run up to the election.<sup>48</sup> Qatari officials argued that procedural remedies were available to challenge election-related complaints and that the new Shura Council could review "any amendments to the laws governing the elections process."<sup>49</sup> None of the female candidates who stood for office were elected, but the Emir appointed two women among the 15 additional members whose appointments he controls in accordance with the constitution. Qatar last held Central Municipal

<sup>45</sup> Treaties signed in 1868 and 1916 between the Al Thani family and the United Kingdom recognized the Al Thani family's authority in Qatar but placed mutually agreed restrictions on Qatari sovereignty from 1868 through 1971.

<sup>46</sup> The former Emir, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa, raised Qatar's global profile and influence after replacing his own father in a palace coup in 1995. Qatar's constitution reflects the previously contested principle that successors to the throne will follow the hereditary line of Shaykh Hamad's male offspring (Article 8).

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Mills, "Qatar's Emir Names Top Diplomat as Premier, Reappoints Energy and Finance Ministers," Reuters, March 7, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Some members of the Al Murra tribe have contested the leadership of Emir Tamim bin Hamad and his father, and Qatari authorities have stripped some members of the tribe of their Qatari nationality in related disputes. In 2017, some Al Murra tribal figures supported Saudi efforts to isolate Qatar. Human Rights Watch, "The Shura Council Elections," September 9, 2021; and Reuters, "Qatar's New Electoral Law Stirs Up Tribal Sensitivities," August 12, 2021. For more background see Jill Crystal, "Tribes and Patronage Networks in Qatar" in Uzi Rabi (ed.), *Tribes and States in a Changing Middle East*, Oxford University Press, June 2016, pp. 37-56.

<sup>49</sup> Qatar Government Communications Office statement in response to HRW report regarding "The Shura Council Elections," September 9, 2021.



Council elections in 2019. Qatar convicted four elections protestors on related charges in May 2022, sentencing two individuals to life terms.<sup>50</sup>

In 2024, Qatar's Emir proposed a series of constitutional amendments to end the country's experiment with a partially elected National Assembly, citing concerns that the holding of the 2021 election had undesirably amplified social tensions.<sup>51</sup> In November 2024, Qatari voters approved amendments in a referendum, reverting the Assembly to fully appointed status.<sup>52</sup>

Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the Emir appoints all judges.

## Human Rights

The 2023 State Department Country Report on Human Rights in Qatar cites

credible reports of: enforced disappearance; arbitrary arrest; political prisoners; serious restrictions on free expression, including the existence of criminal libel laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; restrictions on freedom of movement; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully in free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation; extensive gender-based violence; existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct, which were not systematically enforced; and the prohibition of independent trade unions and significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.<sup>53</sup>

A National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) investigates allegations of human rights abuses and appears to operate independently. It is funded largely by the QF that is run by the Emir's mother, Shaykha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned. The nongovernmental organization Freedom House classifies Qatar as "not free."<sup>54</sup>

The European Parliament (EP) in December 2022 suspended consideration of Qatar-related legislation pending resolution of allegations of corruption involving Qatari nationals, the NHRC, and some EP Members.<sup>55</sup>

## Women's Rights

Women in Qatar drive and own property, and work in the government and private sector. Qatar's constitution recognizes the right of women to vote and hold office. According to the State Department, social and legal discrimination against women continues, despite the constitutional assertion of equality.<sup>56</sup> The application of Islamic law, which is not gender-neutral on marriage, divorce, child custody and guardianship, and inheritance, contributes to this gender inequality, as

<sup>50</sup> Reuters, "Qatar Jails Four Election Protesters, Including Three for Life," May 13, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Mills, "Qatar to hold referendum on measure to abandon legislative elections, Emir says," Reuters, October 15, 2024.

<sup>52</sup> "Qatar votes overwhelmingly to scrap legislative polls," AFP, November 6, 2024.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. State Department, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights: Qatar*, April 22, 2024.

<sup>54</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 2024, at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/qatar/freedom-world/2024>.

<sup>55</sup> Joshua Posaner, Mari Eccles, and Hanne Cokelaere, "EU Parliament to Stop Work on Qatar Airline, Visa Laws," *Politico*, December 15, 2022; and Eddy Wax and Ana Fota, "How Qatar Used a Secret Deal to Bind Itself to the EU Parliament," *Politico*, February 17, 2023.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. State Department, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights: Qatar*, April 22, 2024.

does a lack of laws against domestic violence.<sup>57</sup> Guardianship laws require young women to obtain permission from their male guardians to travel alone, as well as “to marry, obtain a government scholarship to pursue higher education, work in government, and obtain some reproductive health care.”<sup>58</sup> As of 2023, 64% of women (citizens and expatriates) in Qatar participated in the workforce.<sup>59</sup> The World Economic Forum’s 2024 Global Gender Gap Report ranked Qatar 130 out of 146 countries assessed and seventh among assessed countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The report ranked Qatar among countries that have made the most progress in closing the gender wage gap and in women’s educational attainment, but also found that health and survival outcomes in Qatar demonstrate a 3% or more gap between men and women based on Qatari men’s longer life expectancy.<sup>60</sup> Qatar is a member of the executive board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) through 2025.

## Labor Issues and Trafficking in Persons

Domestic and international observers and officials have raised labor and migrants’ rights concerns for decades as Qatar has implemented large-scale infrastructure projects, including works that were completed in preparation for hosting the 2022 FIFA soccer World Cup. Press analysis citing government data from labor source countries reported in 2021 that thousands of foreign workers had died while employed in Qatar since 2011, but cited statistics that were not categorized “by occupation or place of work.”<sup>61</sup> Amnesty International has said some labor conditions have amounted to the equivalent of “forced labor”; Qatari officials have highlighted labor law changes, acknowledged some shortcomings, and rejected some foreign criticism.<sup>62</sup> Qatari officials emphasize their commitment to ending abusive and exploitative labor practices and have established minimum wage rules and banned some components of the *kafala* (migrant labor sponsorship) system. Official enforcement reportedly has remained uneven and some reports suggest continuing abuses by private employers, including firms that supported World Cup-related projects.<sup>63</sup>

According to the State Department’s 2023 human rights report, “Some elements of the kafala employer-based sponsorship system—such as the exit requirement and legal requirement for the no objection certificate—were removed in 2020, but the sponsorship system gave employers broad control over foreign workers, and the government did not consistently implement reforms and ensure access to justice.” The State Department’s 2024 Trafficking in Persons report classifies Qatar as a Tier 2 country and describes increased investigations, the establishment of a specialized court, and improved victim assistance measures. The report states that “Courts convicted all traffickers under the anti-trafficking law and the penal code and sentenced the

<sup>57</sup> For more information and sources, see CRS Report R46423, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Issues for Congress*, by Zoe Danon and Shannon L. Smith.

<sup>58</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Women and Qatar’s Male Guardianship Rules*, March 29, 2021.

<sup>59</sup> World Bank, Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled International Labor Organization estimate)—Qatar, August 2024.

<sup>60</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2024, Tables 1.1 and 1.3 and page 303, June 2024.

<sup>61</sup> “Revealed: 6,500 Migrant Workers Have Died in Qatar Since World Cup Awarded,” *The Guardian*, February 23, 2021.

<sup>62</sup> Amnesty International, “Qatar: Security Guards Subjected to Forced Labour,” April 7, 2022; Reuters, “Qatar Minister Slams Hypocrisy of People Calling for World Cup Boycott,” November 4, 2022.

<sup>63</sup> Migrant Rights, “Job Mobility in Qatar Is Still a Mirage Despite Reforms; Domestic Workers Most Affected,” October 5, 2021; and Pramod Acharya, “Months Before World Cup, Workers Forced to Return Home Early and with Pending Dues,” Migrant Rights, September 4, 2022.

traffickers to imprisonment ranging from one to five years.” It noted, however, that “the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas,” and said, “officials did not consistently consider labor complaints or violations where trafficking indicators were present as potential trafficking crimes.”<sup>64</sup>

In November 2022, the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued a report describing “significant progress” in Qatar’s efforts to reform its labor system and noting “universal recognition that the work is not complete.”<sup>65</sup> In March 2023, the ILO rejected allegations that “lobbying” and financial support from the government of Qatar had altered its reporting on conditions in the country.<sup>66</sup>

## Religious Freedom

Qatar’s constitution guarantees the freedom to practice religious rites in accordance with “the maintenance of public order and morality.” Islam is the state religion and *sharia* is “a main source” of legislation. Most citizens are Sunni Muslims, and some citizens are Shia Muslims. Non-Muslims comprise most of Qatar’s non-citizen expatriate population, including Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Copts, Orthodox Christians, Baha’i, and others. Expatriate non-Muslim religious groups must register with the government. The law prohibits public worship or proselytization by non-Muslims. The State Department’s report on religious freedom conditions in Qatar during 2023 reported that Qatar

continued to host the headquarters of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), a group widely viewed in the press and academia as being affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni transnational organization that promotes political Islam. Although the IUMS stated it was an independent association of scholars, observers said its close relationship with the government helped it to serve as an instrument of the country’s soft power. .<sup>67</sup>

The 2023 State Department human rights report states that “under sharia, homosexuality was punishable by death; there were no reports of executions for this reason.”<sup>68</sup>

## Qatar’s Foreign Policy

Qatar’s multidirectional foreign policy, financial resources, and unique international relationships have raised its global diplomatic profile since the early 2000s, and appears to lead other governments to view Qatari initiatives variously as useful or vexing depending on their discrete perspectives and interests. Qatar’s 2011 deployment of military aircraft to support NATO-led operations in Libya signaled a new assertiveness, as did reported Qatari support for armed elements of the Syrian opposition during the height of Syria’s civil war. Some of Qatar’s positions have drawn U.S. attention and have been scrutinized by some of Qatar’s Arab neighbors, including its contacts with the government of Iran and groups such as Lebanon’s Hezbollah, the Palestinian group Hamas, various other Islamist groups (including members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement), and Afghanistan’s now-ruling Taliban.

<sup>64</sup> U.S. State Department, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Qatar*, June 2024.

<sup>65</sup> ILO, *Labour Reforms in the State of Qatar: Coming Together Around a Shared Vision*, November 3, 2022.

<sup>66</sup> ILO, “Statement Following the New York Times Story on the ILO’s Work in Qatar,” March 11, 2023; and Rebecca R. Ruiz and Sarah Hurtes, “In World Cup Run-Up, Qatar Pressed U.N. Agency Not to Investigate Abuses, *New York Times*,” March 11, 2023.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. State Department, *2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Qatar*, June 24, 2024.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. State Department, *2023 Country Report on Human Rights: Qatar*, April 22, 2024.

## Qatar and Russia's War Against Ukraine

In response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Qatar has stated its "respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders" and called for a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to the conflict in accordance with international law.<sup>69</sup> Qatar has voted in favor of UN General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but abstained, along with other GCC members, in the April 2022 vote on expelling Russia from the UN Human Rights Council.

Qatar has provided \$5 million to support humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons and in July 2023 pledged \$100 million in humanitarian support to Ukraine.<sup>70</sup> Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also has acknowledged a Qatari donation of \$20 million to Ukraine's "Grain from Ukraine" initiative.

Qatar's diplomatic statements on the Russia-Ukraine war and related humanitarian crises outline the Qatari government's "full readiness to contribute to any international and regional effort aimed at alleviating the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and is in line with its position supporting peaceful solutions through dialogue and mediation."<sup>71</sup> Qatar has had close energy related ties to fellow natural gas exporter Russia, and has reportedly considered closer security cooperation with Russia at times in the past.<sup>72</sup>

Qatar's Emir and Prime Minister have offered mediation to Ukraine and Russia, and continue to engage with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin in related talks.<sup>73</sup> Russia has released several Ukrainian children through mediation by Qatari officials at the request of the government of Ukraine.<sup>74</sup> Presidents Zelenskyy and Putin have thanked the Emir for Qatar's engagement in mediation, humanitarian issues related to the war, and the return of children.<sup>75</sup>

Qatar has committed to maintaining (and expanding as possible) its supplies of natural gas to Europe during the crisis. However, Qatari officials have said they will not divert to Europe gas already contracted for delivery to Asia, emphasizing that, "Qatar is absolutely committed to the sanctity of contracts."<sup>76</sup> Entities purchasing Qatari gas may have discretion to divert gas to Europe, which Qatari officials have not said they oppose. Qatari energy officials have stressed that no combination of major gas exporters can supply enough natural gas to Europe, on short

<sup>69</sup> Qatar "calls for a ceasefire and the start of seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict, based on its keenness on the Charter of the United Nations and the well-established principles of the international law, its obligations stipulated in the Charter to settle international disputes by peaceful means, and its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of states." Qatar Foreign Ministry, "Qatar Participates in Humanitarian Meeting of Senior Officials on Ukraine," September 27, 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Qatar Information Office, "Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Affirms Qatar's Support for UNHRC in Facing Global Challenges," February 28, 2022; and Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatar Pledges USD 100 Million for Humanitarian Assistance to Ukraine," July 28, 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Qatar Foreign Ministry, "Qatar Participates in 'Solidarity with Ukrainian People' Conference in Paris," December 13, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> *Al Jazeera*, "Qatar FM: Doha Buying S-400s 'Not Anyone's Business,'" March 4, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> "Foreign Minister Meets Russian Foreign Minister." *The Peninsula*, March 14, 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Siobhán O'Grady, "Russia Releases Four Ukrainian Children After Mediation by Qatar," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2023; and O'Grady, "Russia to Release Six More Ukrainian Children After Qatar Mediation," *Washington Post*, December 5, 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Office of the President of Ukraine, "The President Met with the Amir of Qatar," June 5, 2024; Office of the President of Russia, "Meeting with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani," July 4, 2024.

<sup>76</sup> QatarEnergy CEO Saad Al Kaabi quoted in Andrew Mills, "QatarEnergy Expanding in LNG, Won't Divert Supplies to Europe," Reuters, October 18, 2022.

notice, to completely compensate for a shutoff of gas supplies from Russia. In December 2024, Qatar's Energy Minister threatened to suspend gas exports to the European Union if EU countries impose fines on QatarEnergy in conjunction with the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive on human rights and environmental effects.<sup>77</sup>

Qatar has announced plans to expand its gas output and exports in coming years and has discussed new long-term purchase agreements with European customers.<sup>78</sup> In October 2023, Qatar announced 27-year natural gas sale and purchase agreements with TotalEnergies of France and Shell of the Netherlands beginning in 2026.<sup>79</sup> (See "Fiscal, Economic, and Energy Issues" below.) In January 2023, Qatar announced it would replace a Russian firm in a joint natural gas exploration venture in Lebanese waters in partnership with ENI of Italy and TotalEnergies.<sup>80</sup> Delivery delays to Europe may result from shipping disruptions in the Red Sea associated with maritime attacks by the Yemen-based Houthi movement.<sup>81</sup>

Qatari officials at times have observed that multilateral financial sanctions could motivate some energy producers to develop alternative, non-U.S. dollar-based means of marketing oil and gas exports.<sup>82</sup>

## Qatar and China

Emir Tamim and PRC leader Xi Jinping met in Saudi Arabia in December 2022 in conjunction with the Arab States-China Summit and the GCC-China Summit and again in July 2024 during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of State meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan. PRC firm China Railway Construction Corporation partnered with Qatari firms to build the Lusail stadium that hosted the 2022 World Cup final. China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) played a central role in Qatar's Hamad Port and Emiri Naval Base construction projects.<sup>83</sup> In 2015, Qatar launched the first *renminbi* clearing hub in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, primarily to settle payments in China's currency for exports of oil and gas.<sup>84</sup> Oil, natural gas, and petroleum products comprise most of Qatar's exports to China. In November 2022, China's Sinopec and QatarEnergy agreed to a 27-year LNG supply deal. China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) and QatarEnergy signed a similar 27-year deal in June 2023.<sup>85</sup> In April 2024, QatarEnergy and China State Shipbuilding Corporation signed an agreement for a Qatari order of 18 LNG shipping carriers valued at \$6 billion.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Giedrė Peseckytė, "Qatar warns it will halt gas supplies to Europe if fined under EU due diligence law," *Politico*, December 22, 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Patrick Wintour, "Germany Agrees Gas Deal with Qatar to Help End Dependency on Russia," *The Guardian*, March 20, 2022.

<sup>79</sup> "QatarEnergy, TotalEnergies Sign 27-year LNG Supply Agreement," Reuters, October 11, 2023; and Yousef Saba, "Qatar Supplies Gas to Europe, Vying with US to Replace Russia Supply," Reuters, October 18, 2023.

<sup>80</sup> Bassem Mroue, "Qatar Boosts Influence in Lebanon amid Multiple Crises," Associated Press, February 4, 2023.

<sup>81</sup> Maha El Dahan, Emily Chow, and Andrew Mills, "QatarEnergy Halts Red Sea LNG Shipping amid Attacks, Seeking Security Advice," Reuters, January 15, 2024.

<sup>82</sup> "Ukraine-Russia Crisis Is Driving Countries to Explore New Ways of Pricing Oil, Qatar Says," *CNC*, March 26, 2022.

<sup>83</sup> Qatar New Port Project at <http://www.npp.com.qa/Construction.html>.

<sup>84</sup> SWIFT, "The United Arab Emirates and Qatar Drive RMB Adoption in the Middle East," press release, January 28, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Andrew Mills and Maha El Dahan, "Qatar Strikes Second Big LNG Supply Deal with China," Reuters, June 20, 2023.

<sup>86</sup> Bloomberg, "Qatar Places \$6 Billion Order for LNG Carriers From China," April 29, 2024.



## Qatar and Afghanistan

Following the Taliban's August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan, Qatari diplomats in Kabul helped U.S. evacuation efforts, including by escorting small groups of Americans into the Kabul airport.<sup>87</sup> Since the completion of the U.S. withdrawal on August 30, 2021, Qatar Airways charter flights have evacuated additional U.S. and other nationals. President Biden and senior U.S. officials thanked Qatar for its help in U.S. relocation efforts and for Qatar's engagement in talks with the Taliban on issues of mutual concern to Qatar and the United States. U.S. Embassy Kabul closed in conjunction with the U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover, and its diplomats transferred to Embassy Doha, where they operate an Afghan Affairs Unit. The Biden Administration sought \$41.9 million in FY2023 State Department funding to support the Protecting Power Arrangement (PPA) between Qatar and the United States to protect certain U.S. interests in Afghanistan.

Qatar has maintained contact with Taliban officials and in May 2023, in his capacity as Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani travelled to Kandahar, Afghanistan for a direct meeting with Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada. UN-led talks on Afghanistan in Doha in July 2024 were the first to include Taliban participants since the U.S. withdrawal.<sup>88</sup>

As noted above, Qatar and the United States have bilateral agreements regarding Qatar's hosting of Afghan nationals for a limited period to complete their vetting and processing for onward migration.<sup>89</sup> Qatar's CARE Doha, formerly known as the Camp As Sayliyah pre-positioning site for U.S. military equipment, has served as the primary overseas platform for processing applications for U.S. resettlement for individuals from Afghanistan. In February 2025, a press report cited an unnamed U.S. official as saying the Trump Administration has directed CARE to plan for its closure by April 2025.<sup>90</sup> According to press reports citing unnamed U.S. officials and advocates for U.S.-associated Afghans, U.S. relocation operations were "essentially paused" as of March 2025 and there were approximately 2-3,000 Afghan nationals in Qatar awaiting transit to the United States whose onward travel has been delayed by announced Trump Administration policy changes.<sup>91</sup> The Administration does not publicly report how many Afghans remain in Qatar awaiting onward travel.

## Qatar and Its Neighbors

### Gulf Cooperation Council and Other Arab States

The United States has encouraged intra-Arab rapprochement following a period from 2017 through 2020 in which Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt worked to isolate Qatar diplomatically and economically in the hopes of changing Qatari

<sup>87</sup> "Biden Says Safe Zone Around Kabul Airport to Expand, as Pentagon Enlists Commercial Airlines to Aid Evacuations," *Washington Post*, August 22, 2021.

<sup>88</sup> Associated Press, "UN-led meeting in Qatar with Afghan Taliban is not a recognition of their government, official says," July 1, 2024.

<sup>89</sup> U.S. State Department, Office of Treaty Affairs, *Qatar (22-919)—Protocol Amending the Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement of November 12, 2021*, September 19, 2022; and *Qatar (21-1112)—Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement*, November 12, 2021.

<sup>90</sup> Jonathan Landay, "Exclusive: Office overseeing Afghan resettlement in US told to start planning closure, sources say," Reuters, February 18, 2025.

<sup>91</sup> Priscilla Alvarez, Haley Britzky and Jennifer Hansler, "Thousands of Afghans who helped the US lose access to critical resources following Trump directives," CNN, January 27, 2025; and "US-bound Afghans left 'without options' as Trump travel ban looms," AFP, March 11, 2025.

officials' policies toward sensitive regional political issues.<sup>92</sup> By 2019, having realized few benefits from the blockade, Saudi Arabia and the UAE apparently began to look for a resolution—an outcome urged by the first Trump Administration.<sup>93</sup> At the 41<sup>st</sup> GCC summit in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia, on January 5, 2021, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and Egypt announced that they would restore diplomatic relations with Qatar, though Qatar did not commit to meeting any of their demands.

Following the Al Ula summit, Qatar reengaged with its former antagonists, and Emir Tamim visited Egypt in June 2022 and participated in the GCC+3 Summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he met with President Biden. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi visited Doha in September 2022. Qatari authorities reportedly requested that several Egyptian nationals affiliated with Islamist groups relocate from Qatar in June 2023. Qatar joined other Gulf states in announcing billions of dollars of planned investments in Egypt in 2022, as the Egyptian government sought Gulf-state financial support in exchange for Egyptian state assets, including Egyptian government-held stakes in several companies. In February 2023, Saudi Arabia hosted officials from Qatar and Bahrain to launch talks to resolve a series of outstanding issues between Qatar and Bahrain. Qatar's Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia in February 2024 for consultations with other Arab ministers on the Israel-Hamas war and conditions in Gaza (see below). The Emir attended the May 2024 Arab Summit in Bahrain.

## Syria

Qatar opposed the Asad regime's crackdown and use of military force against Syrians and declined to reestablish ties with the Asad government prior to Asad's ouster. Emir Tamim visited Saudi Arabia for the April 2023 Arab League summit, but reportedly departed before Syrian President Bashar al Asad spoke following his government's reinstatement by the League. The Emir was the first Arab head of state to travel to Syria following Asad's ouster, visiting with interim president Sharaa in February 2025. Qatar has pledged financial and energy support to Syria's interim government, and a March press report citing an unnamed U.S. official said that Qatar has U.S. approval to begin supplying or financing the supply of natural gas to Syria via pipelines from Jordan.<sup>94</sup>

## Iran

Qatar and Iran share the large North Field natural gas reserve in the Persian Gulf.

Qatari leaders have pursued dialogue with Iran, while cooperating with U.S. efforts to counter Iran strategically. Emir Tamim visited Iran in February 2025 after hosting Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in October 2024. Qatar previously hosted Iran's then-President Ibrahim Raisi in February 2022, and the two sides signed several agreements.<sup>95</sup> Qatar turned to Iran to help it cope with the GCC rift, including by importing Iranian foodstuffs and by overflying Iranian

<sup>92</sup> In June 2017, those countries cut diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. The group initially demanded that, as a condition for ending the boycott, Qatar close the Al Jazeera satellite network, sever relations with Muslim Brotherhood organizations, downgrade relations with Iran, and end the deployment of Turkish military personnel in Qatar. See "List of Demands on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, Other Arab Nations," Associated Press, June 23, 2017.

<sup>93</sup> "US Secretary of State in Qatar Urges End to Gulf Diplomatic Rift," *Deutsche Welle*, January 13, 2019.

<sup>94</sup> Timour Azhari and Andrew Mills, "Exclusive: Qatar to supply gas to Syria via Jordan with a US nod, sources say," Reuters, March 13, 2025.

<sup>95</sup> Anna L. Jacobs, *Qatar and Iran Expand Ties amid Broader Gulf De-escalation*, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, March 11, 2022.



airspace, a privilege for which Qatar Airways paid Iran over \$130 million per year in overflight fees.<sup>96</sup> Qatar did not support the May 8, 2018, U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear agreement, the JCPOA, instead stating that efforts to “denuclearize” the region should not lead to “escalation.”<sup>97</sup> Qatar and Iran exchanged mutual visits of high-ranking officials in 2019 in an initiative reported as seeking to de-escalate U.S.-Iran tensions,<sup>98</sup> and Qatar has encouraged dialogue between the GCC countries and Iran to lower Gulf tensions.<sup>99</sup>

Qatar supported Biden Administration efforts to restore full Iranian and U.S. adherence to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).<sup>100</sup> In September 2023, the United States and Iran conducted a mutual prisoner exchange and the U.S. government waived the potential imposition of sanctions to facilitate the transfer of \$6 billion in Iranian assets, accrued from petroleum sales to South Korea, to a financial institution in Qatar. The actions by the governments of Iran and the United States occurred in the context of broader diplomatic engagement to de-escalate tensions.<sup>101</sup> A Treasury FAQ published September 18, 2023, read

In partnership with the Government of Qatar and financial institutions operating the HC [humanitarian channel]—all of which have committed to stringent due diligence measures—the United States will closely monitor the HC and will take appropriate action should Iran attempt to use these funds for purposes other than permitted humanitarian purchases.<sup>102</sup>

An October 2023 press report said that then-Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo told legislators that, in the wake of Hamas’s assault on Israel, U.S. and Qatari officials had agreed to prevent the use of the funds to finance the purchase of humanitarian goods for export to Iran for an unspecified period of time.<sup>103</sup> Going forward, the United States could impose sanctions on any foreign financial institution or entity involved in a transaction involving the funds, including restricting access to the U.S. financial system. As noted above (“Congress and Qatar”), the House in 2023 and 2024 adopted bills that would have rescinded U.S. waivers related to the transferred funds and would have directed the President to impose sanctions on foreign financial institutions determined to transact in the funds.

The Qatari Prime Minister said in October 2023 that Qatar was “always committed to any agreement” that Qatar has entered into, a likely reference to the Qatari government’s position that it has made commitments both to the United States and Iran in relation to the transfer and potential future use of the funds. Later that month, Secretary of State Blinken said in Senate testimony

The money in that South Korean account that accrued from the sale of these proceeds, for technical reasons related to Korean banks, was unable to be used even though it lawfully could be. So, it was moved to an account in Qatar where it could be used for humanitarian purposes, just as the previous administration established another account in another country for these very purposes. The money never goes and would never go to Iran. It can only be

<sup>96</sup> “UN Aviation Ruling Could Deny Iran Hundreds of Millions of Dollars,” *Fox News*, July 14, 2020.

<sup>97</sup> Qatar Foreign Ministry Statement, May 9, 2018.

<sup>98</sup> “The Latest: Qatar Trying to Defuse Tensions amid Iran Crisis,” *Fox News*, May 16, 2019.

<sup>99</sup> Erin Cunningham, “Qatar Urges Dialogue Between Persian Gulf States,” *Washington Post*, January 19, 2021.

<sup>100</sup> Amwaj Media, “Qatar Carries US ‘Message’ to Tehran as IAEA Chief Set to Visit Iran,” January 31, 2023.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Karen DeYoung et al., “U.S. and Iran in Indirect Talks over Nuclear Program and Prisoners,” *Washington Post*, June 20, 2023; and Chase Winter et al., “What’s Driving Biden’s Iran Sanctions Policy,” *Energy Intelligence*, September 7, 2023.

<sup>102</sup> Treasury FAQ 1134, at <https://ofac.treasury.gov/faqs/1134>.

<sup>103</sup> Jeff Stein and Jacob Bogage, “U.S., Qatar Agree to Stop Iran from Tapping \$6 Billion Fund After Hamas Attack,” *Washington Post*, October 12, 2023.

used for authorized transactions overseen by our Treasury Department and only for things like food, medicine, and other authorized humanitarian purposes. To date, not a single dollar has been expended from that account. There are currently no plans to expend a single dollar from that account. And in any event, that money never touches Iran directly.<sup>104</sup>

In October 2024, Iranian President Pezeshkian said Qatar and Iran had “reached a good understanding” regarding Iranian funds held in Qatar during his visit to Doha.<sup>105</sup>

Some Members of Congress have urged or sought to compel the executive branch to act in a demonstrable, transparent way to ensure the funds in Qatar are not used for Iran-related transactions. If Qatar or the United States acts with regard to the funds in ways that the government of Iran perceives as violating the understanding previously reached, Iran could decide to no longer engage Qatar as an intermediary for the United States on issues such as Iran’s nuclear program, U.S. or other foreign nationals unjustly detained in Iran, negotiations with Hamas or other Iran-backed groups, and/or other regional security matters.<sup>106</sup>

## Israel and the Palestinians

Qatar’s policies toward Israel and the Palestinians are receiving additional international attention following the October 7, 2023, terrorist attacks by the U.S.-designated FTO Hamas on Israel, the seizure by Hamas and other armed groups of hostages from Israel, and Israel’s military campaign in the Gaza Strip, which Hamas has controlled since 2007.

Qatar has had high-level contacts with Israel since the mid-1990s, and has allowed some small-scale direct Israel-Qatar trade and visits to Doha by Israeli security officials, athletes, doctors, and other Israelis, despite abiding policy differences.<sup>107</sup> Emir Tamim and other Qatari officials have accused Israel of abuses against the Palestinians and express support for Palestinian efforts to establish a state with East Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>108</sup> Qatari officials say they have ruled out joining other Arab states in normalizing relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords until there is substantial progress toward resolving the Israel-Palestinian dispute.<sup>109</sup>

Following Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani’s February 9, 2024, meeting with Arab foreign minister counterparts in Saudi Arabia, the Qatari government said the ministers “emphasized the importance of taking irreversible steps to implement the two-state solution, recognizing the State of Palestine along the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant international resolutions.”<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> “Senate Appropriations Committee Holds Hearing on National Security Supplemental Request,” CQ Congressional Transcripts, October 31, 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Press TV, “Iran, Qatar reach ‘good understanding’ on \$6bn unfrozen funds, says Pezeshkian,” October 4, 2024.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. State Department, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at a Joint Press Availability,” October 13, 2023.

<sup>107</sup> Uzi Rabi, “Qatar’s Relations with Israel: Challenging Arab and Gulf Norms,” *Middle East Journal*, vol. 63, no. 3 (Summer, 2009), pp. 443-459; and Guy Azriel, “Qatar-Israel Talks Fail over Israeli Demand to Go Public,” *i24 News*, August 31, 2022.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, “Israel Doesn’t Want Peace: Emir,” *The Peninsula*, September 29, 2015. In March 2023, Qatar’s permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva stated Qatar’s position “supporting the Palestinian people and their just cause until they reclaim all their legitimate rights, and establish full sovereignty as independent state based on the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as the capital.” Qatar Foreign Ministry, “The State of Qatar Reiterates Position of Supporting Palestine,” March 3, 2023.

<sup>109</sup> “Interview: Qatar’s FM Rules Out Normalization with Israel, Syria,” *Axios*, February 2, 2022.

<sup>110</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Participates in Consultative Meeting in Riyadh to Discuss Developments in Israeli War on Gaza,” February 9, 2024.

The Emir joined other Arab leaders in May 2024 in issuing a joint declaration in Manama, Bahrain to reiterate the League of Arab States’

firm position and call for a just and comprehensive peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue, and we support the call of His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, to convene an international peace conference and to take irreversible steps to implement the two-state solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and resolutions of international legitimacy to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the lines of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to accept its membership in the United Nations as an independent and fully sovereign state in common with other countries in the world, and to ensure the restoration of all legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, in particular, the right to return and self-determination, empowerment and support.<sup>111</sup>

Since October 7, the Qatari government has been vocal in its calls for an immediate and lasting ceasefire,<sup>112</sup> has criticized the Israeli military’s conduct,<sup>113</sup> and has voiced opposition to attacks against civilians.<sup>114</sup> Qatar’s government said on October 7, 2023, that it held “Israel solely responsible for the ongoing escalation.”<sup>115</sup> Later that month, the Qatari government rejected “the attempts to forcibly displace the brotherly Palestinian people from Gaza Strip,” called for “lifting the blockade on the Strip and providing full protection to civilians under international law and international humanitarian law,” and affirmed the Palestinian right to statehood with East Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>116</sup> Qatari officials have repeated these views since October 2023.

Qatar joined other Arab states in rejecting President Trump’s statements in 2025 calling for the relocation of Gaza’s population and the territory’s redevelopment under U.S. auspices, and said “any efforts to encourage the transfer or uprooting of Palestinians from their land ... threaten the region’s stability, risk expanding the conflict, and undermine prospects for peace and coexistence among its peoples.”<sup>117</sup> Qatar joined other Arab League states in endorsing an Egyptian counterproposal in March 2025.<sup>118</sup>

For years, Qatari officials have asserted that their engagement with Hamas can help foster Israeli-Palestinian peace and contribute to de-escalation of conflict, a view they have reiterated since

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<sup>111</sup> Bahrain News Agency, “Bahrain Declaration of 33<sup>rd</sup> Arab Summit issued,” May 17, 2024.

<sup>112</sup> On October 8, Qatar’s Foreign Ministry called for “all parties to halt the escalation to attain calm and entirely halt the armed confrontations on all fronts.” Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Qatar Reiterates Call for Halting Escalation to Protect Region from Danger of Descending into a Wider Cycle of Violence,” October 8, 2023.

<sup>113</sup> On October 31, Qatar’s Foreign Ministry decried an Israeli attack that killed Palestinians in Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza as a “new massacre against the defenseless Palestinian people, especially children and women,” Israeli officials stated the strikes targeted Hamas facilities and personnel. See Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Qatar Strongly Condemns the Massacre at Jabalia Refugee Camp in Gaza,” October 31, 2023.

<sup>114</sup> Qatar joined other Arab League members states in endorsing an October 11 resolution that condemned the killing and targeting of civilians “by both sides” and acts contrary to international law. See League of Arab States Resolution 8987, “On Ways to Take Political Action to Stop Israeli Aggression and Achieve Peace and Security,” October 11, 2023.

<sup>115</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Qatar Expresses Concern over the Developments in Gaza Strip and Calls for Deescalation,” October 7, 2023.

<sup>116</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Qatar Announces Its Categorical Rejection of the Attempts to Forcibly Displace the Palestinian People from Gaza Strip,” October 13, 2023; and Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Holds Phone Call with UN Secretary-General,” October 13, 2023.

<sup>117</sup> Joint Statement by Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League, February 1, 2025.

<sup>118</sup> Samy Magdy and Mohammad Jahjough, “Arab leaders endorse Egypt’s plan to rebuild Gaza as an alternative to Trump’s proposal,” AP, March 4, 2025.

October 2023.<sup>119</sup> In an October 2023 press conference with then-Secretary of State Blinken, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman said the Hamas office in Doha “was started to be used as a way of communicating and bringing peace and calm into the region, not to instigate any war. And this is the purpose of that office.”<sup>120</sup> As of 2025, U.S. officials continue to travel to Doha to engage in indirect meetings with Hamas officials based there, and apparently had engaged in some direct talks that Secretary of State Marco Rubio characterized as “a one-off situation” that to date had not “borne fruit.”<sup>121</sup> Qatar-based Hamas official Khalil Al Hayya reportedly leads the group’s negotiation team.<sup>122</sup> The November 2023 and early 2025 pauses in the Israel-Hamas war negotiated with Qatari, Egyptian, and U.S. support have reportedly included the exchange of a large majority of the 250 hostages (including some deceased persons) that had been held in Gaza since October 2023 for more than 2,000 Palestinian prisoners previously detained by Israel. Qatar condemned the July 2024 killing in Iran of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh.<sup>123</sup> Haniyeh was buried in Lusail, Qatar.<sup>124</sup>

Qatar’s main engagement with the Palestinians prior to the October 7 attacks and ensuing conflict appeared to come through the substantial financial aid it has provided to the people of Gaza, which Israeli officials supported as a means of promoting calm on the Israel-Gaza border.<sup>125</sup> Aid efforts have been provided through a “Gaza Reconstruction Committee” headed by Qatari official Mohammad al Emadi, who serves informally as an envoy to Israel.

Qatar was a key mediator to end 11 days of clashes between Israel and Hamas in May 2021, efforts that were reportedly facilitated, in part, by additional Qatari pledges of aid to Gaza.<sup>126</sup> Before the 2021 conflict, Qatar had provided cash assistance for Gaza, but due to Israeli concerns about the potential for its diversion, Qatar agreed to arrangements in late 2021 to provide money transfers for needy families through the United Nations, and send fuel from Egypt into Gaza so it can be sold to pay for civil servants’ salaries.<sup>127</sup>

## Fiscal, Economic, and Energy Issues

Qatar’s active diplomacy is, at least in part, a result of its considerable financial resources and economic influence. In February 2025, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) praised Qatar’s resilience to external shocks, noted non-hydrocarbon growth in Qatar’s economy, and projected

<sup>119</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Press Conference of His Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris,” June 12, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> U.S. State Department, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at a Joint Press Availability,” October 13, 2023.

<sup>121</sup> U.S. State Department, “Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s Remarks to the Press,” March 10, 2025.

<sup>122</sup> Nidal Al Mughrabi, “Hamas’ Hayya seen in key role under new leader Sinwar, sources say,” Reuters, August 7, 2024; and Barak Ravid, “U.S.-Israel tensions over Hamas meetings simmer ahead of Gaza talks,” Axios, March 10, 2025.

<sup>123</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The State of Qatar Condemns Assassination of Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas,” July 31, 2024, at <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/statements/the-state-of-qatar-condemns-assassination-of-head-of-the-political-bureau-of-hamas>.

<sup>124</sup> Tala Ramadan, Jana Choukeir and Nidal Al-Mughrabi, “Slain Hamas leader Haniyeh buried in Qatar amid vows of revenge against Israel,” August 2, 2024.

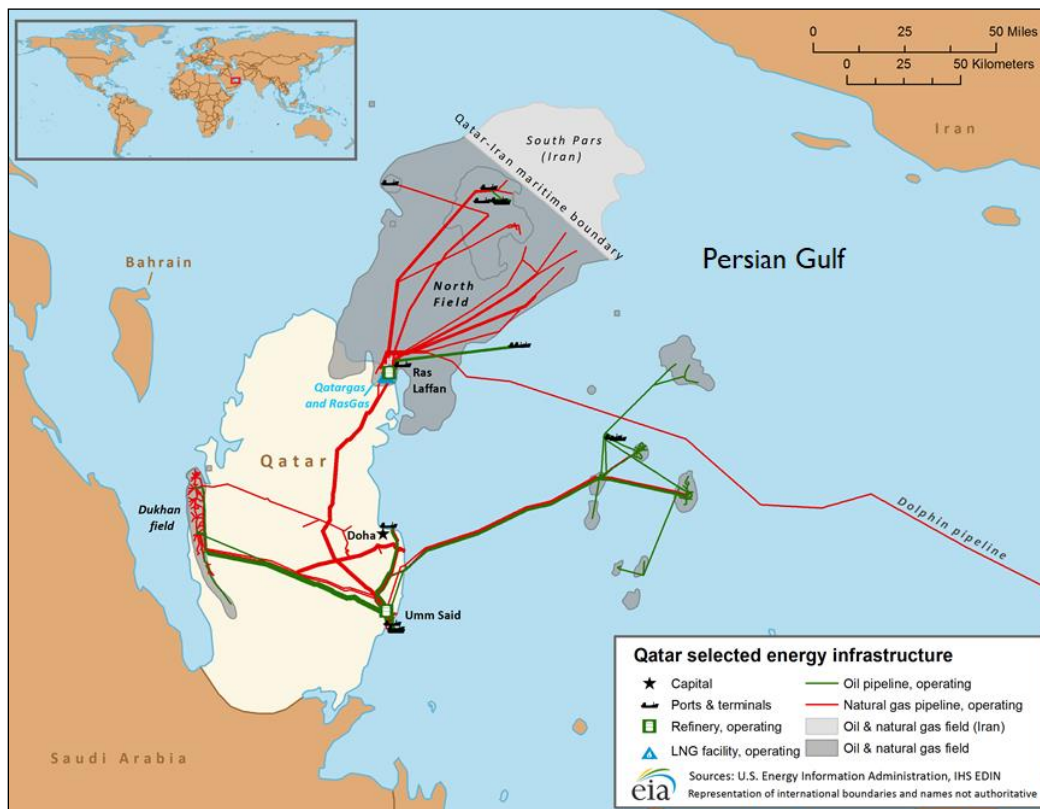
<sup>125</sup> Neville Teller, “What Do You Make of Qatar?” *The Jerusalem Post*, September 19, 2019.

<sup>126</sup> Vivian Salama, Felicia Schwartz, and Jared Malsin, “Israel and Hamas Near Cease-Fire amid Mounting Pressure,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2021.

<sup>127</sup> Aaron Boxerman, “UN to Begin Dispensing Qatari Cash to Needy Gazan Families Monday Under New Deal,” *Times of Israel*, September 12, 2021; Ahmad Abu Amer, “Egypt, Qatar Agreement with Israel, Hamas Provides Boost for Gaza Economy,” *Al-Monitor*, November 23, 2021.

that the planned large-scale expansion of natural gas production and exports from Qatar's North Field in the Persian Gulf (**Figure 2**) would support state finances over the medium term.<sup>128</sup> The IMF estimated in 2024 that the "[North Field] expansion project is expected to increase Qatar's LNG production capacity by around 65 percent by 2028" and said in 2022 that it expects the project to "further increase Qatar's reliance on fossil fuel."<sup>129</sup> According to the IMF, oil and gas revenues directly provide roughly 53% of the government's revenue, and may contribute indirectly to investment and tax revenue.<sup>130</sup> Qatar does not have a value-added tax (VAT), but the IMF reports that "the tax authority has readied the infrastructure for VAT introduction."<sup>131</sup>

**Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure, 2015**



**Source:** U.S. Energy Information Administration, Qatar Country Analysis Brief, October 2015.

New challenges have accompanied Qatar's economic success in areas such as social cohesion; education; labor; preservation of local traditions; national infrastructure; and energy, water, and food supplies. To respond to these challenges, Qatari authorities have pursued a series of national development strategies based on a comprehensive national vision document that seeks balanced, sustainable growth by the year 2030.<sup>132</sup> Emir Tamim bin Hamad chaired the implementation

<sup>128</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), Qatar Article IV Consultation and Staff Report, IMF Country Report No. 2025/47, February 2025.

<sup>129</sup> IMF Country Report No. 2024/043 and Country Report No. 2022/175.

<sup>130</sup> IMF Country Report No. 2025/47, Table 3a, February 2025.

<sup>131</sup> IMF Country Report No. 2025/47, February 2025, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> According to Qatari authorities, Qatar's *National Vision 2030* initiative "aims at transforming Qatar into an advanced country capable of sustaining its own development and ensuring high living standards for its people for (continued...)"



oversight body for the *Qatar National Vision 2030* project in his former role as heir apparent. The national development strategy for 2024 through 2030 set targets for diversified economic growth, fiscal sustainability, workforce development, social cohesion, quality of life, environmental sustainability, and governance improvement informed by Qatar's experiences in implementing its first two national development strategies from 2011 to 2016 and from 2018 to 2022.<sup>133</sup> Qatar's isolation by neighboring Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE from 2017 through 2020 may contribute to Qatar's pursuit of greater self-sufficiency in some areas, and of extra-regional economic partnerships. Preparations for the 2022 World Cup and preservation of Qatari culture were core elements of the 2018-2022 strategy.

With proven oil reserves of 25.2 billion barrels, Qatar has far less oil than the major Persian Gulf producers. Crude oil output estimates were 580,000 barrels per day as of 2024.<sup>134</sup> Qatar withdrew from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as of January 2019.<sup>135</sup> Qatar also withdrew from the 25-member OPEC+ group in 2019. Qatar has not coordinated its production decisions with OPEC or OPEC+ since, as Qatari officials have prioritized LNG development and criticized both OPEC and OPEC+ as primarily reflecting the influence of larger producers.<sup>136</sup> Leading importers of Qatari oil include Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore.

Qatar has the third-largest natural gas reserves in the world, an estimated 23.86 trillion cubic meters (tcm).<sup>137</sup> Qatar borrowed internationally and invited foreign investment in order to expand gas extraction and LNG production and export facilities in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>138</sup> The Export-Import Bank of the United States provided more than \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support the early development of Qatar's gas production facilities in cooperation with a range of U.S., European, and Asian companies, banks, and export credit agencies.<sup>139</sup> Qatar expanded annual natural gas production from 29.6 billion cubic meters in 2002 to 167 billion cubic meters in 2019, and since 2020 has been the world's top exporter of LNG alongside the United States.<sup>140</sup>

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generations to come by seeking to develop a diversified economy coupled with diminishing dependence on hydrocarbons, where investment is moving towards a knowledge-based economy and the private sector is growing in importance.... The QNV 2030 identifies five main challenges: modernization and preservation of traditions; balance between the needs of this generation and those of future generations; managed growth and uncontrolled expansion; the size and quality of the expatriate labor force and the selected path of development; and economic growth, social development and environmental management." For more information, see the Qatar Government Communications Office at <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/about-qatar/national-vision2030/>, and Qatar Planning and Statistics Authority website at <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>133</sup> For Qatar's National Development Strategy documents, see <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/nds1/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>134</sup> Claudia Carpenter, "Qatar plans more drilling to expand oil production at its largest field," S&P Global, January 31, 2024.

<sup>135</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Opinion: Why Is Qatar Leaving OPEC?" *New York Times*, December 10, 2018; and Verity Ratcliffe and Simone Foxman, "Qatar Says Rejoining OPEC Would Not Fit with Its Strategy," *Bloomberg*, October 11, 2021.

<sup>136</sup> In 2020, Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi said, "The big players make the decisions in OPEC. We didn't see a place for us there because we are a gas producer, and we are really growing in gas." S&P Global, "INTERVIEW: Qatar Thrives Outside OPEC as Minister Warns over Market Flood Legacy," April 20, 2020.

<sup>137</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, 2021 estimate. Qatar's supply of natural gas doubled in 2002, when surveyors discovered new gas deposits in Qatar's North Field.

<sup>138</sup> See Kohei Hashirnoto, Jareer Ellass, and Stacy Eller, "Liquefied Natural Gas from Qatar: The Qatargas Project," Stanford University Program on Energy and Sustainable Development and Rice University James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, December 2004.

<sup>139</sup> See Export Import Bank of the United States, "Ex-Im Bank \$930 Million Guarantee Supports U.S. Exports to Build LNG Plant in Qatar," November 18, 2004; and Export Import Bank of the United States, "Ex-Im Bank Finances QatarGas 3 Liquid Natural Gas Complex," December 15, 2005.

<sup>140</sup> BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2022.

China, India, Pakistan, and Taiwan were the top importers of Qatari LNG by volume in 2023.<sup>141</sup> Qatar is a member of Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) and hosts the GECF headquarters.

Following a pause in development of gas production and LNG export infrastructure in the 2010s, Qatari authorities embarked in 2020 on a further expansion of North Field operations and LNG facilities under a \$30-\$50 billion initiative that seeks to expand LNG export capacity by 60% to 126 million tons per year by 2027. Qatar in 2021 raised \$12.5 billion for this expansion through a series of international bonds.<sup>142</sup> The North Field-East expansion project includes four LNG trains and the North Field-South expansion project includes two LNG trains.<sup>143</sup> U.S. companies, particularly ExxonMobil, have long been partners in Qatar's LNG operations: Qatari officials chose ExxonMobil to participate in the North Field-East project along with ConocoPhillips. In addition to its domestic expansion, QatarEnergy is increasing its presence globally, including through marketing, liquefaction, regasification, and shipping.<sup>144</sup>

## Outlook

Qatari-U.S. security cooperation appears likely to continue to anchor the bilateral relationship, with U.S. officials paying close attention to Qatar's energy exports and its multidirectional foreign policy. Congress may continue to conduct oversight of the U.S. military's presence and programs in Qatar and may monitor Qatari foreign and domestic policies, especially concerning China, Iran, Afghanistan, human rights, and Russia's war on Ukraine. Qatari officials may continue to seek defense, economic, and diplomatic coordination with the United States while pursuing Qatar's discrete interests and priorities.

Following the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel and ensuing Israeli military operations, developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Qatar's role as a host to and interlocutor with Hamas are playing a more prominent role in U.S.-Qatar relations. U.S. and Qatari leaders may reevaluate each other's approaches to Israel and the Palestinians when considering future cooperation, in parallel with other interests and goals.

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<sup>141</sup> Energy Institute, *Statistical Review of World Energy 2024*, "Natural gas Trade movements 2023 as LNG."

<sup>142</sup> Yousef Saba, "Qatar Petroleum Grabs \$12.5 bln in Emerging Market Bonds Record," Reuters, June 30, 2021.

<sup>143</sup> Andrew Mills and Maha El Dahan, "QatarEnergy Signs Deal with TotalEnergies for North Field South Expansion," Reuters, September 24, 2022.

<sup>144</sup> Rafiq Latta, "QatarEnergy 2.0: The New LNG Industry Hegemon," Energy Intelligence Group, February 28, 2023.



## Appendix. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022

**Table A-1. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022**

Items	Estimated Cost (\$ million)	Notification Date
UH-60M BLACK HAWK Helicopters	\$1,112	June 13, 2012
MH-60R and MH-60S SEAHAWK Helicopters	\$2,500	June 26, 2012
AH-64D APACHE Block III Longbow Helicopters; Related Missiles	\$3,000	July 12, 2012
HELLFIRE Missiles	\$137	July 12, 2012
Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) Fire Units	\$6,500	November 5, 2012
PATRIOT Configuration-3 Missile Fire Units and Missiles	\$9,900	November 7, 2012
M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS); M57 Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) Block 1A T2K Rockets; M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) Rockets	\$406	December 24, 2012
Javelin Guided Missiles	\$122	March 28, 2013
Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) Systems	\$110	May 15, 2013
C-17 Globemaster III Equipment and Support	\$35	June 27, 2013
A/N FPS-132 Block 5 Early Warning Radar	\$1,100	July 29, 2013
RIM-116C and RIM-116C-2 Rolling Airframe Missiles	\$260	April 21, 2016
Javelin Guided Missiles	\$20	May 24, 2016
Mk-V Fast Patrol Boats	\$124	August 23, 2016
Logistics Support Services and Equipment Continuation	\$700	December 8, 2016
Spare C-17 Engines	\$81	December 8, 2016
F-15QA multirole fighter aircraft	\$1,100	November 1, 2017
Upgrade of Qatar Air Operations Center	\$197	March 7, 2018
Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems (APKWS) II Guidance Sections	\$300	April 9, 2018
Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) for National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS)	\$215	November 27, 2018
AH-64E Apache Attack helicopters and related equipment	\$3,000	May 9, 2019
AN/AAQ-24(V)N Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) systems for Head of State Aircraft	\$86	September 24, 2019
Fixed Site-Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Aircraft System Integrated Defeat System (FS-LIDS)	\$1,000	November 29, 2022

**Source:** U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Does not reflect Direct Commercial Sales approved by U.S. State Department.

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