

Initiatives to Enhance Canadian Relations with the Gulf States:

Trade promotion has been the focus of Canada's relations with the Gulf. However, the importance of enhancing the political relationship with governments and elites of the region should not be underestimated. In some respects, trade with many of the countries is highly "politicized," ie. decisions to trade with one country over another can be heavily influenced by political factors. In this respect, the United States, as an economic and military superpower, enjoys a tremendous advantage, as does the United Kingdom, which has strong historical ties and high visibility in the region. However, the post September 11 environment does provide unique opportunities for enhancing our presence in the region. To take advantage of these opportunities requires a timely and focused incremental effort on behalf of the Government of Canada. It is important to again stress that both diplomacy and business in the Gulf is highly "personalised," that is, that sustained high-level personal contacts are essential in building a profile and sustainable relationship.

Political/Diplomatic:

Where deemed appropriate, MINA should make a series of personal phone calls to his counterparts in the region, seeking their views and guidance on the post-September 11 and post-Aghan war international environment. This personal interest by the Minister would be highly valued and would have an impact far in excess of the minimal time investment involved. Many governments of Gulf states feel neglected by the West during the campaign against terrorist forces in Afghanistan, and have a strong desire to be "consulted" rather than "told" what to do.

Parliamentary visits should be expanded. The establishment of an informal Canada-Kuwait Parliamentary Friendship Group is a major step forward. The visit to Canada of representatives of the Saudi *Majlis* following former Senate Speaker Molgat's visit to Saudi Arabia in January, 2000 should be actively pursued. Also of interest is further use of the Parliamentary Centre in Ottawa to expand regional contacts.

The Department should examine the possibility of regular policy talks with some of the key governments of the region. To date, the region has received relatively little attention, if any, from DFAIT policy planners. Policy dialogue on military, security and terrorism issues would pay solid dividends over the long-term.