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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 14, 2008

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Dr. John J. DeGioia
President
Georgetown University
37th & O St NW
Washington DC 20057

Dear Dr. DeGioia:

I write today to share with you my long-standing concerns about the influence and activities of the Government of Saudi Arabia, both within its own borders, in America, and around the world. This concern was was heightened by the recent *The Washington Times* article (enclosed) reporting about Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's $20 million donation to Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. The article attempted to provide details about this donation and the center's operation, but I found that the story raised more questions than were answered. Some observers quoted in the article openly question whether the center's academic independence could be compromised by this gift.

I would appreciate your assistance in providing information about the center's mission at Georgetown in the context of its training program for U.S. foreign service personnel, but before I outline my questions in that matter, it may be helpful if I first explained my concerns about the Saudi government.

Despite agreements reached between the Saudi government and the U.S. to improve religious freedom and human rights in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government's promises remain unfulfilled. The Saudi government continues to permit textbooks to contain inflammatory language about other religions. Restrictions on civil society and political activists continue to be pervasive. No changes have been made to the underlying legal authority relating to non-Muslim worship that the Saudis have relied on to enforce these rules. The Saudis have cleansed their own country of religious liberties by severely restricting public religious expression to their interpretation and enforcement of wahhabism.

Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, there also have been reports of individuals and institutions associated with the Government of Saudi Arabia financing activities that allegedly support Islamic militants and extremists throughout the world. The majority of the 9/11 hijackers were Saudi nationals.

These concerns have led me to take a number of steps to identify and counter the level of negative influence that Saudi policies are having on the world. I have asked the Government

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Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the effectiveness of the revolving door that senior officials are required to go through before lobbying for the government of a country where they served.

I was so troubled after reading Lawrence Wright's "The Looming Tower," which illustrates in disturbing detail the nature of Saudi activities around the world, that I have begun circulating copies to my colleagues in Congress. Saudi Arabia only constitutes 1 percent of the world's Muslim population, and yet supports 90 percent of the expenses of the entire faith through its financing of wahhabist mosques and madrassas around the globe.

Given Saudi Arabia's record on human rights, women's rights and religious freedom, and the inconsistency of its policies with U.S. priorities and values, I do not support the sale of advanced weapons to the Saudi military. I am a cosponsor of Rep. Anthony Weiner's (D-NY) resolution of disapproval for this proposed $20 billion arms sale.

Because of the depth of my concern regarding Saudi activities and influence and as a graduate of Georgetown Law, I hope you can understand my dismay after reading *The Washington Times* article in light of Georgetown's role in training American foreign service personnel and diplomats. Former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes was recently quoted as saying she was influenced by the center.

I therefore feel compelled to seek further information and request your assurances that, as this center carries out its mission of "building a stronger bridge of understanding between the Muslim world and the West," it maintains the impartiality and integrity of scholarship that befits so distinguished a university as Georgetown and that is required by the exigencies of national security for training American officials.

Specifically, I would like to know if the center has produced any analysis critical of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for example, in the fields of human rights, religious freedom, freedom of expression, women's rights, minority rights, protections for foreign workers, due process and the rule of law.

It is also important to know if the center has examined Saudi links to extremism and terrorism, including the relationship between Saudi public education and the Kingdom-supported clerical establishment, on the one hand, and the rise of anti-American attitudes, extremism and violence in the Muslim world, on the other.

I also would ask whether the center has examined and produced any critical study of the controversial religious textbooks produced by the government of Saudi Arabia that have been cited by the State Department, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and

non-governmental groups for propagating extreme intolerance? Has it published anything on the impact of the Kingdom's dissemination of such texts throughout much of the world?

Finally, I request information on whether any of the Saudi-source funds have been used in the training, briefing or education of those going into or currently employed by the U.S. government.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW:mjm
enclosure