

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

August 17, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to ask for information regarding the People's Republic of China's reported transfers of nuclear and missile technology to Saudi Arabia, and the State Department's response to these sales.

On August 4, 2020, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Chinese government is building a yellowcake processing facility in Saudi Arabia.¹ This facility would enable Saudi Arabia to turn any uranium it mines into yellowcake, which raises nuclear non-proliferation concerns. Yellowcake could be converted into uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) and enriched to either power or weapons-grade purity. Saudi officials have previously said they want to enrich uranium domestically and, despite being a member of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), have publicly stated a willingness to acquire nuclear weapons "as soon as possible" if Iran were to develop a nuclear weapon.²

For this reason, we, along with several of our fellow members of Congress, have consistently raised concerns about Saudi Arabia's intentions for its nuclear program. Following congressional pressure, the Trump administration reportedly told the Saudi government that the Kingdom must forswear nuclear enrichment as part of any nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States.³ The recent revelation of Saudi-Chinese cooperation to construct essential nuclear

¹ Warren P. Strobel, Michael R. Gordon, and Felicia Schwartz, "Saudi Arabia, With China's Help, Expands Its Nuclear Program," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 2020. Some analysts believe Saudi Arabia may also be producing a UF₆ conversion plant; see Mark Mazzetti, David E. Sanger, and William J. Broad, "U.S. Examines Whether Saudi Nuclear Program Could Lead to Bomb Effort," *The New York Times*, August 5, 2020.

² Rania El Gamal and Alexander Cornwell, "Saudi Arabia Flags Plan to Enrich Uranium As U.S. Seeks Nuclear Pact," Reuters, September 19, 2019 and "Saudi Crown Prince Says Will Develop Nuclear bomb if Iran Does: CBS TV," Reuters, March 15, 2018.

³ Ari Natter, "U.S. Says Saudis Must Forgo Enrichment for Nuclear Sharing Deal," *Bloomberg*, September 18, 2019. Also see Marshall Billingslea's comments to Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 21, 2020.

facilities raises further questions about whether Riyadh's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

This is not the first time during the Trump administration when the Chinese government has significantly enhanced Saudi Arabia's ability to acquire a usable nuclear weapons capability. In 2019, U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that China was helping Saudi Arabia build a factory to produce its own ballistic missiles, according to media reports. Ballistic missiles can be used to deliver nuclear warheads.

Nuclear weapons proliferation in the region would further destabilize the Middle East. That is precisely why the international community works to constrain Iran's nuclear program. Saudi Arabia acquiring a nuclear weapons capability would be detrimental to U.S. interests and global security, and likely lead to other countries acquiring their own nuclear weapons. Furthermore, as a member of the NPT, Saudi Arabia would have to leave the treaty to build the bomb, which would undermine global nonproliferation efforts.

To address our mutual concerns over the government of Saudi Arabia's nuclear capabilities and inform public debate, as well as to fulfill our constitutional responsibilities to provide oversight over our nation's relationship with Riyadh and consider potential legislation to restrain its nuclear program, we ask that you respond to the following questions no later than August 31, 2020:

- Has the United States officially registered concerns with Saudi Arabia and China about the construction of the yellowcake processing facility and ballistic missile production factory? If so, have either or both countries responded?
- Is the State Department committed to taking actions to prevent Saudi Arabia from acquiring the nuclear fuel cycle—including to prevent them from acquiring uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) conversion and uranium enrichment plants—as we have done with other countries? Has the State Department warned Saudi Arabia about the kind of actions the United States would take if we discovered Saudi Arabia was building these facilities?
- In your conversations with the Saudi Arabian government, have you insisted that the yellowcake facility be under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards? If so, has the Saudi Arabian government agreed to do so?
- In your discussions with Saudi Arabian officials, have they agreed to rescind their Small Quantities Protocol to move to a fully implemented Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, as the IAEA has been urging Riyadh to do for years?
- Has the Saudi Arabian government committed to signing and implementing the Additional Protocol? Is it the State Department's position that Saudi Arabia must sign and implement the Additional Protocol?

In addition to answering these questions, because of the consequential nature of these questions, we ask for a briefing to discuss the actions that the United States has taken to address Saudi nuclear proliferation issues, its ballistic missile program, and Chinese involvement. Members will be ready to assemble for a briefing during the week of September 14, 2020, and we request that the briefing take place then. We also ask that you commit to holding the Saudi government accountable for its apparent pursuit of troubling nuclear capabilities in keeping with longstanding U.S. nonproliferation policy.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this concern.

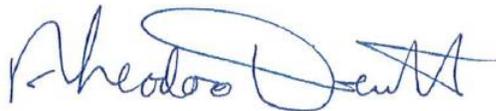
Sincerely,



JOAQUIN CASTRO
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
House Foreign Affairs Committee



AMI BERA, M.D.
Chairman, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation
House Foreign Affairs Committee



THEODORE E. DEUTCH
Chairman, Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism
House Foreign Affairs Committee