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Trump's foreign policy

# Trump Visits Arab Kings: Making Deals, Accepting Bribes, Shifting Policy

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**President Donald Trump visited three of the Persian Gulf monarchies last week, receiving adulation, praising the feudal regimes, making deals, and accepting bribes while also carrying out a significant shift in U.S. Middle East policy. Amidst beautiful palaces and mosques, surrounded by Arabian horses, and watching sword dances, Trump and the monarchs heaped praise on each other.**

Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's responsibility for the gruesome murder of reporter Jamal Ahmad Hamza Khashoggi, in a visit to the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, as previously reported by the CIA, was never mentioned. Nor were Saudi Arabia's or Qatar's or the United Arab Emirates authoritarian governments and human rights violations. Instead, Trump praised MBS for bringing Saudi Arabia into the modern age. Trump rejected previous American governmental criticism of the monarchies saying, "It's God's job to sit in judgement, my job is to defend America, and to promote the fundamental interests of civility, prosperity, and peace."

The focus of Trump's trip was on deals for U.S. corporations. Trump claimed he had made \$2 trillion in deals for things like the sale of Boeing aircraft and G.E. engines. He also signed an agreement to make the UAE the largest AI facility outside of the United States. He also claimed the Gulf monarchies would make trillions of dollars of investment in America. And, of course, this is an alliance of petroleum powers. The Emir of Qatar adopted Trump's slogan, "Drill baby, drill." The monarchies have for decades hosted U.S. military bases and thousands of U.S. troops that make the United States the dominant military power in the region.

## Trump Family Deals

Trump corruption, his willingness to take bribes was on full display. Qatar gave Trump a \$400 million Boeing 747-8 luxury airplane intended to replace the current Air Force One. Or maybe, was it a gift to the U.S. Defense Department? In any case, Trump said he will take it and at the end of his term put the plane in his presidential library. Critics say it is a bribe that violates the emoluments clause of the Constitution that says the president can't accept gifts from foreign governments. The UAE agreed to a \$2 billion cryptocurrency deal with World Liberty Financial, owned by Trump's sons Donald Jr. and Eric.

While the topic was avoided, the Trump visit also reinforced his family's many other investments in the region: a residential tower in Riyadh, a 47-floor Trump Tower in Jeddah. Trump International Hotel and Tower in Dubai, Trump International Golf Course in Doha and the Trump International Hotel & Golf Club in Oman.

## Foreign Policy

The trip, however, wasn't all bribes and business deals. Trump used the occasion to carry out a serious shift in U.S. foreign policy. First, it is notable that he didn't visit Israel or meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, nor did he tailor his decisions to please him. Trump announced that he was lifting sanctions on Syria and met with Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, who was formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda and had a \$10 million price on his head until December. Netanyahu, however, fears Syria will become an aggressor and has attacked Syria over 600 times since Assad was ousted in December 2024.

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Trump also announced that the United States and Iran had “sort of” agreed on a nuclear deal, which might lead to a normalization of relations. Here too. Netanyahu will not be happy with this development, since he wants the United States to join Israel in bombing Iran.

And while Israel continued its bombing of Gaza and moved ahead with its plans for a new invasion and occupation, Trump mentioned in passing to his hosts and the media the starvation in Gaza that Israel denies.

Trump is mercurial, so it is hard to know what will happen in the end, but at the moment it seems the U.S. president is putting his faith in the Gulf monarchies, not in Israel.

18 May 2025

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