



Saudi Arabia in 2007 threatened to pull out of a multi-billion dollar Texas oil refinery investment unless the U.S. government intervened to stop state company Saudi Aramco being sued in U.S. courts for alleged oil price fixing, according to U.S. diplomatic cables seen by Wikileaks.

Deputy Saudi Oil Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud at a July 8 meeting with U.S. embassy staff in Riyadh said he wanted the U.S. to grant Saudi Arabia sovereign immunity from lawsuits by ordering a Dept. of Justice statement of interest (SOI) on its behalf, one cable said.

"(Abdulaziz) told us that King Abdullah specifically had raised the lawsuit issue with Vice President (Dick) Cheney during his May visit ... and that the Saudi government would judge the Administration's willingness to file an SOI as a test of good faith," the cable said.

"Prince Abdulaziz perceives the lawsuits as a threat right now, one that could derail the expansion of the Port Arthur refinery, possibly by the end of the summer," it said.

At a meeting on July 16 in Riyadh, U.S. ambassador Ford M. Fraker told Abdulaziz that the Saudi request was "receiving serious consideration."

The cable reported Abdulaziz saying: "Our final decision hinges on what reasons we have to pursue investment. We are facing daunting (court) cases. We are pursuing the engineering but we need solid intervention from the USG (U.S. government) to have the comfort we need for this project."

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