



**The address of His Highness the Prime Minister at Elliot School of
International Affairs – George Washington University
18th September 2008**

President Knapp, faculty members, distinguished guests, and students, thank you for your warm welcome.

President Steve Knapp, thank you very much for your generous gesture in awarding me the president's Medal. I have the pleasure to receive this distinguished medal, especially since our head of the state H.H Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received his honorary PhD from This distinguished institution three years ago, I also have the pleasure to be here to talk with you about this historic relationship between our two peoples, a relationship which has endured from more than 100 years, and was ultimately tested over eighteen years ago when Saddam Hussein invaded and occupied my country.

I want personally to extend to you the deep gratitude of the government and especially the young men and women in your armed forces played in 1991 when they were called upon to help save the people of a small nation far from the brutal aggression of a ruthless neighbour.

The relationship between the United States of America and Kuwait has grown tremendously and withstood much since 1951 when an American Consulate was first opened in Kuwait. Ten years later when Kuwait became independent in June 1961, the consulate became the first American Embassy. At that time, in our early years of independence , the United Kingdom was Kuwait's most important ally. So when we faced our first major foreign policy problem arising from Abdul-karim Kassem of Iraq's claims to Kuwait territory, the British responded to the Amir's request for assistance to prevent Iraqi invasion. The U.N. also supported Kuwait's sovereignty, ultimately the British troops were replaced by Arab League forces until 1963, when they were asked to withdraw.

During the years between 1961 and 1980,our countries conducted normal relations primarily focused on commercial ad energy cooperation with a modest bilateral military assistance program. During those tears, Kuwait sought to maintain a balance in its foreign policy with regard to the West, the then Soviet Union and its neighbours.

As a member of the Arab League, which had supported us in our hour of need, we often took positions we deemed to be in our interests which Washington did not always find helpful, including our support for the PLO against Israel's occupation of Arab land, and our participation in the Arab Oil Boycotts in 1967



and 1973. However, Kuwait also maintained its relationship with Washington throughout the period over the objections of a number of Arab States.

Our security relationship began to deepen in 1980 as a result of the Iran-Iraq war which lasted 8 years. Eleven of our super-tankers were allowed to fly the American Flag and be placed under the protection of the U.S Navy. The refueling effort, known as the Operation Earnest Will, began in January 1987, with financial support from our government. Operation Earnest Will would mark the beginning of strategic partnership between the United States and Kuwait, and a strengthening of our bilateral relations which ultimately was tested a few years later when, on August 2, 1990 Saddam Hussein invaded and occupied my country.

Through the tireless efforts of the 41st president of the United States, George Bush, and his government, the historical multinational coalition was assembled under the U.N auspices . The coalition undertook a major military campaign, Operation Desert Storm, which ultimately liberated Kuwait. Kuwait's air force proudly participated in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait has not been idle since its liberation 18 years ago. U.S.-Kuwait security ties, which were formalized in 1922 in a defense cooperation agreement, have grown stronger and deeper in the Post-Gulf war period. Kuwait and the United States worked throughout the 1990s to monitor and enforce Saddam Hussein compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions failed, Kuwait provided the main platform for the U.S forces for Operation Iraqi freedom in 2003.

Kuwait also has worked with the U.S. to build its own defensive capabilities, acquiring over 8 billion Dollars of U.S. Military and Technical assistance, including Patriot Missiles, F-18 Fighters, M-1A2 Tanks, Apache Helicopters and U.S Navy Vessels. These systems give our armed forces the ability to operate with the U.S. forces in the event we should ever have to confront a common enemy again. In order to prepare for that possibility, we also are engaged in a formal security dialogue with senior United States Government officials in order to define, deter and ultimately defend against regional threats, including international Terrorism.

As a pro active partner in the U.S.-led campaign against Global Terrorism, we are providing Military, Diplomatic and Intelligence assistance as well as supporting efforts to block the financing of terrorist groups.

Kuwait has resumed its role in regional Diplomacy- we are active and strong allies of the United States, in the Global War on Terror. We also are in close consultation with the U.S. and our neighbors in considering new threats that emerge in the Gulf region and beyond.



And another critical part of our regional role is to develop a new relationship with the new Iraq.

Obviously we are closely watching the developments there, and we also look forward to the return of our Ambassador to Baghdad, who was sworn in last Tuesday, 16th of September, and welcoming an Iraqi Ambassador in Kuwait.

For Kuwait, like everyone else, the impact in our territory, but throughout the Middle East and the rest of the world. For that reason, we will continue to do our part to support the effort of the United States and the Iraqi Government to stabilize the situation there and lay the ground-work for an Iraq which can be a full contributor to stability, peace and prosperity in the Gulf and the Middle East.

Regional crisis and tensions also have pointed out the stark reality that the world has grown more dependent on the vital oil resources in the Gulf Region, and this dependence is likely to continue in to the foreseeable future, since almost 47% of the world's proven oil reserves lies underneath the sands of the Arabian Peninsula. What this means is the need for closer cooperation between the producer and consumer nations to avert future disruptions of the oil supply and their economic consequences.

Because of the constant focus on security problems in the Gulf, very little is known about the solid trade relations that exist between the United States and Arab Gulf States. The DCC-Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, The U.A.E. and Oman – is America's sixth largest trading partner. For several years in the past decade, it was in the GCC region alone, among all the other major trade areas in the world where America annually has had an overall trade surplus.

After the war in 1991, on the Domestic front, we did not just restore the country to what it was before.

Specifically, we revived our parliamentary democracy.

Kuwait's politics have always been very active and vibrant with all plusses and minuses that brings.

Our succession process in 2006 was unprecedented, and was commended internationally as a process to be emulated. Since 2005, Kuwait women have the right to vote and are serving as Cabinet Ministers with a place in parliament, where we hope to have a woman elected one day soon. With these successes, we have become a model of political progress and democracy for the Middle East and the Arab World. Also Kuwait has adopted free-enterprise as a model for our economic future. We have placed increased emphasis on the private sector to achieve sustained economic growth for our people. We are aggressively pursuing U.S. business participation in the technology, products and services.



Beyond the threat of global terrorism, there are other persistent problems which threaten global peace and stability and which need to be engaged before it is too late – issues like helping emerging nations get through their difficult transition, improving the quality of life in poor nations, creating stable energy and trade markets, finding solutions to environmental issues like Global Warming and Climate Change. In this effort, some nations will be able to contribute manpower and expertise, and others financial resources.

But only one country can contribute the key ingredient – the leadership – necessary to make this effort a global success – and that country is the United States.

For this country – Your country – has been endowed with unique and valuable resources – the most precious one being the will and generous spirit of its people that is what America and Americans are all about.

For you, the students of Elliot School of international Affairs, as you venture out to pursue careers in international Policy or Economics, you will find that the world has grown smaller and more interdependent, and that an awareness of issues abroad is as important as those at home. But most importantly, you will have the chance to contribute in resolving these difficult issues and influence the direction the new world order is taking.

So again, I thank you for asking me to be here today, and no matter what field you pursue in your international studies, I hope it will bring you to Kuwait where you will be warmly welcomed by the many friends you have yet to meet there.