

Saudi Arabia to restructure intelligence operations

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Saudi Arabia's intelligence operations are set to undergo restructuring to cope with international information challenges, head of the Saudi Intelligence Prince Muqrin said yesterday at a press conference held to announce an upcoming national security conference.

Under the new system he said, "Saudi Intelligence will compete with international intelligence agencies ... This requires that we restructure our work to cope with global information and knowledge."

The prince announced details of the international symposium, which will take place on Dec. 1-4.

Prince Muqrin said that initially the event was planned as a low-key forum, but that Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah wanted this to be an international conference. "He allowed me to invite the heads of intelligence bodies from brotherly and friendly countries," said Muqrin.

He said King Abdullah had given him explicit instructions to develop and restructure the intelligence agency according to the needs of national security. "King Abdullah's words were candid and vivid: 'People have moved and we should not remain still,'" he quoted the king as saying.

"Our research has shown that the world in the new millennium is moving toward space security," he said, adding that it was important for Saudi Arabia to be a "participant" rather than a "consumer" in information technology relating to national security.

Prince Muqrin said the government of Saudi Arabia has issued legislation that serves the electronic domain. "This new environment obliges us in the Presidency of Saudi Intelligence to cope with such changes and study their effects on national security on a wide-scale," he said.

The prince added that there was a link between the usage of modern technology and the political, social, economic and security situations worldwide.

He said the Saudi Intelligence was cooperating with intelligence agencies abroad. "We do not live alone in this world," he said. "Globalization requires that we work together for the good of the international community."

He further said the Kingdom had been cooperating with other intelligence bodies exchanging vital information in the war against terrorism. "I do not think that any intelligence body would accept that harm be in the way of another country as a result of terrorist activities," he said.

Asked what impact the security conference would have on Saudi Intelligence, Muqrin said the first benefit was for the citizens to see that Saudi Intelligence does not have closed doors. "The presidency is 'open' to society and works for the benefit of citizens and the country," he said.

The second benefit of organizing such an international event was the cooperation with the media and the intelligentsia in creating awareness about the positives and negatives of using modern technology, Muqrin said. He said intelligence agents would also benefit from the recommendations of the conference.