

Saudi royal says U.S. oil independence a myth

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The Bush administration's talk of breaking its dependency on foreign oil is a political myth, Saudi Arabia's former envoy to Washington and royal family member said on Sunday.

"It has become very fashionable for (U.S.) politicians to use the word 'energy independence' or 'independence from foreign oil', and that is basically a political canard politicians and technocrats use," Prince Turki al-Faisal told an economic forum.

Energy has been made into "a sensitive and a controversial political issue particularly in countries like the United States," Prince Turki said in his first public appearance after ending a relatively brief mandate in Washington.

"There is no way that people, whether in the United States or in the world, other countries that consume oil, would simply give up using oil in the next few decades at least, if not more than that," he said.

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President Bush said in the January 31 State of the Union speech the U.S. was "addicted to oil" and should cut Middle East oil imports by 75 percent by 2025.

Saudi Arabia, which has about a quarter of the world's oil reserves, is one of the top three crude suppliers to the United States.