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SAUDI ARABIA: RECORDS OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 1930-1959



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Date Range: 1930-1959

Content: 14,261 images

Source Library: U.S. National Archives

Detailed Description:

This archive divides into two distinct parts. The first part, 1930-1944, documents a critical period in the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the second part, 1955-1959, illustrates the day-to-day workings of the oil-rich state. Saudi Arabia, which extends over most of the Arabian peninsula, absorbed several tribal groups that had previously been dependent on the Ottoman empire. The creation of a centralized state expressed the interests of all classes, including the nobility, the merchant class, and most of the population, ensuring security and putting an end to tribal feuds. Although fixing the boundaries of the country remained a problem, by 1930 most of the frontiers with Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait, had been established. In 1932 Hijaz (the western portion of the country containing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina), Najd, and other districts under the control of Ibn Saud were united to form the modern kingdom. In the late 1930s Saudi Arabia became rich in oil and was courted both by allied and axis powers in the years leading up the Second World War. Export of oil began in 1938 and within one year 500,000 barrels of oil had been produced. In the 1940s exploitation of oil brought great prosperity and transformed the social fabric of the country. To reciprocate the warm reception in Washington, D.C., in 1957, King Saud endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine and renewed a deal giving the United States airbase rights in his country. The records in the second portion of the archive detail internal political

and national defense affairs; economic, financial, industrial, and social affairs; among other topics.