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Interview

His Excellency, Joseph Lebaron **US Ambassador to Qatar**

How would you characterize general relations between the United States and Qatar?

- ✧ Bilateral relations are strong and expanding.
- ✧ The United States was among the first countries to recognize Qatar when it achieved independence in 1971. The U.S. Embassy was opened in March 1973 and the first resident U.S. ambassador arrived in July 1974.
- ✧ Qatar and the United States coordinate closely on regional diplomatic initiatives, cooperate to increase security in the Gulf, and enjoy extensive economic links, especially in the hydrocarbons sector.
- ✧ Qatar sees the development of a world-class educational system as key to its continued success. As a result, hundreds of Qataris study in the United States each year and Embassy staff do all they can to ensure that the process of applying for a visa and traveling to the United States is as smooth as possible.
- ✧ Qatar’s leaders have also invested in bringing U.S. educational opportunities right here to Doha. There are now six branch campuses of U.S. universities operating in Education City, granting degrees in everything from engineering to medicine to journalism.
- ✧ These are some of the best schools America has to offer, and the Embassy is actively engaged in advising high school students on strategies for applying to these universities as well as institutions in the United States.

What are U.S. policy priorities in Qatar?

- ✧ The U.S. Government’s priority for the bilateral relationship is to work with Qatar in promoting a secure, stable Middle East that is integrated both regionally and globally. Stability and security provide the best platform for good governance, economic growth, and

a flourishing society – all goals that benefit both of our countries.

What are your thoughts and opinions on the state of Qatar’s advancement into the 21st century and how do you envision it in 10 years?

- ✧ The Amir’s vision for Qatar is to transform it from a natural resources-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, and he is rare among world leaders in not only envisioning that goal, but also in possessing the resources needed to reach it.
- ✧ The source of those resources – the country’s economic growth is stunning.
- ✧ Qatar’s GDP, \$71 billion in 2007, has recently been growing at an average of 12-15%. Qatar’s per capita GDP is \$67,000, and projected to soon be the highest in the world. The Qatari Government’s strategy is to invest its wealth in diversifying the economic base of the country beyond hydrocarbons.

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- ✧ Oil production averaged 835,000 barrels per day in 2008, and is expected to reach 1.1 million by 2009, though continued OPEC production cuts could keep that number contained. At the current production pace, oil reserves are expected to last more than 40 years.
- ✧ Qatar’s proven reserves of gas are the third-largest in the world, exceeding 900 trillion cubic feet (14% of the world’s total proven gas reserves). Qatar shares with Iran the largest single non-associated gas field in the

world, the North Field. Qatar is now the world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with a capacity of more than 31 million metric tons per annum. It expects to reach 77.5 mmta of LNG exports by 2010. By 2010, Qatar will account for one-third of the world's LNG supply.

- ❖ As Qatar's wealth continues on its upward trajectory, there will be increasing exchange of investment and trade between our two countries. Already, the United States is Qatar's main import partner, and we are also the largest source of foreign investment in the country.
- ❖ The bilateral future is bright in education and training. There will also be continued opportunities for American businesses in hydrocarbons; health and medical services; science and technology; franchising and licensing; and research and development. As Qatar continues to invest in infrastructure, the United States will also be well positioned to help in the fields of construction, engineering, safety, and security.

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U.S. companies invested more than \$7 billion in Qatar and America became Qatar's top import partner with U.S.-Qatar trade topping \$3.2 billion. What factors have been most important in bringing about this trade success between both countries?

- ❖ U.S. firms are key partners in Qatar's energy sector and have invested billions of dollars in the country across oil, gas, petrochemicals, and other related energy projects. These companies bring operational, financial, human resources, and technical expertise through their participation in joint venture projects with Qatar Petroleum.
- ❖ This is a long-term, strategic partnership. For example, ExxonMobil has had an affiliation with the state of Qatar since 1935. U.S. firms are always looking at new opportunities in Qatar due to the country's tremendous energy-driven growth.

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- ❖ Several U.S. firms are anchor tenants at the new Qatar Science and Technology Park. ConocoPhillips is establishing a Water Sustainability Center, ExxonMobil will conduct liquefied natural gas (LNG)-related research projects, and GE will undertake regional R&D efforts focused on aviation and energy.
- ❖ U.S. companies strive to be good corporate citizens and are active in Qatar's educational, social, cultural, and sporting life. For example, several U.S. firms provide support to Education City programs, the American School in Doha, and various local institutions providing help to the needy and disabled. U.S. companies also operate under strict environment, safety, and health standards and have an excellent track record in Qatar.
- ❖ These companies recruit and train Qatari students to play a key role in their operations in Qatar, and are striving to implement the 50 percent Qatarization target set by the state of Qatar in the oil and gas industry.
- ❖ The U.S. Embassy strongly supports the participation of U.S. companies in Qatar's energy sector. Through our Department of Commerce's Foreign Commercial Service office, we stand ready to assist. The Foreign Commercial Service in Doha partners U.S. sellers with overseas buyers, through counseling, matchmaking, advocacy, participation in trade events, and much more.
- ❖ We also consult closely on a regular basis with Qatar's key energy leaders, including the Minister of Energy and the managers at the joint ventures.
- ❖ Senior U.S. officials are regular visitors to Qatar and in the past year we have hosted visits by the U.S. Secretary of Energy, Secretary of the Treasury, and the Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, among others.