

Headlines:

- **Saudis to Accept Payment in Yuan for Oil**
- **Iranian missile strikes Iraq**
- **Declassified Report Show CIA Used Prisoner as a Torture Training Prop**
- **Al-Assad Makes Historic Visit to UAE**

Details:

Saudis to Accept Payment in Yuan for Oil

Saudi Arabia has revealed it is considering accepting the Chinese Yuan instead of Dollars for oil Sales. Talks between Riyadh and Beijing have been on and off for years but have accelerated this year as the Saudis have grown increasingly unhappy with the US. The Saudis are angry over America's lack of support in Yemen and over the Biden administration's nuclear deal with Iran. Saudi officials have said they were shocked by the sudden US withdrawal from Afghanistan last year. It would be a profound shift for Saudi Arabia to price oil exports in anything other than dollars. 80% of global oil sales are done in dollars, and the Saudis have traded oil exclusively in dollars since 1974. The dynamics of the US-Saudi relationship are changing. President Biden, said in the 2020 campaign that the kingdom should be a "pariah" for the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

The US economic relationship with the Saudi is also diminishing. The US is now the world's largest oil producer, not Saudi Arabia. By contrast, China now is Saudi Arabia's number one customer buying a quarter of Saudi's oil.

Iranian Missile Strikes Iraq

Iran claimed responsibility for a missile strike that struck early on Sunday 13 March, near a sprawling US consulate complex in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil. Iranian officials said it was retaliation for an 'Israeli' strike in Syria that killed two of its Revolutionary Guards. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on their website that they launched the attack against an 'Israeli' "strategic centre of conspiracy" in Erbil. The strike took place as nuclear negotiations are coming to fruition and it would seem the strike took place to influence the final terms.

Declassified Report Show CIA Used Prisoner as a Torture Training Prop

Newly declassified documents reveal a CIA black site detainee served as training prop to teach interrogators torture techniques. Ammar al-Baluchi was repeatedly slammed against a wall while naked until all trainees received 'certification.' The details of the torture of Ammar al-Baluchi are in a 2008 report by the CIA's inspector general, newly declassified as part of a court filing by his lawyers aimed at getting him an independent medical examination. Baluchi, a 44-year-old Kuwaiti, is one of five defendants before a military tribunal on Guantánamo Bay charged with participation in the 9/11 plot, but the case has been in pre-trial hearings for 10 years, as testimony was obtained through torture. The technique of "walling" was approved by the "enhanced interrogation technique" guidelines sent by CIA headquarters. The inspector general's report also concluded that Baluchi's treatment did not yield any useful intelligence.

Al-Assad Makes Historic Visit to UAE

In a major reversal of fortune, Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad made a historic visit to the UAE this week, his first visit in over a decade. He was photographed with the Royal family reportedly discussed how the UAE could provide political and humanitarian support for Syria, as well as how to promote economic trade between the nations. With Syria in ruins and with the leadership in Damascus isolated in recent years, relations with the wider Arab world are gradually improving, with the UAE spearheading efforts. In 2018 the UAE reopened its embassy in Syria's capital, Damascus, and in November last year, diplomats were sent there to there to meet President Assad.

This improvement of ties boost to Mr Assad's government, which has been crippled by sanctions and war.