



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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NATIONAL U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (NUSACC) NAMES BAHRAIN'S SHAIKH ABDULLA BIN RASHID ALKHALIFA AS 2022 “AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR”

*“Top 100” Leaders, Including 10 Arab Chiefs of Mission,
Join the Festivities at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Washington DC*

**“In Bahrain, the United States has a stalwart friend and partner, nurturing an
enduring relationship over decades, one that continues to grow.”**

- Hon. Jose Fernandez, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth

Washington, DC – The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) this week named H.E. Shaikh Abdulla Bin Rashid AlKhalifa, the Kingdom of Bahrain’s Ambassador to the United States, as the 2022 “Ambassador of the Year.” The award ceremony and luncheon, held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Washington DC, was limited to a “top 100” leaders from business, government, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This is the first time in the 19-year history of the award that it was bestowed on a Bahraini diplomat.

The high-level ceremony attracted many senior diplomats, including former U.S. Ambassadors to Bahrain, as well as Chiefs of Mission from ten Arab nations: Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. In addition, *The Washington Diplomat*, which covers Washington DC’s diplomatic community and beyond, profiled Bahrain’s award-winning Ambassador [here](#).

Three senior officials from the U.S. Department of State participated: Hon. Jose Fernandez, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment; Hon. Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; Hon. Daniel Benaim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs.



H.E. Shaikh Abdulla AlKhalifa (center), Bahrain’s Ambassador to the USA, is flanked by: Hon. Jose W. Fernandez, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth; Hon. Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; David Hamod, NUSACC’s President & CEO.



The Ambassador of the Year Award attracts high-level leaders from government, business, media, and the NGO community. Participating in this year's event were many senior diplomats, including Chiefs of Mission from ten Arab nations.

Twelve sponsors supported the award ceremony, including premium Bahraini and American companies and agencies. The event attracted leaders from across the United States and as far away as the Kingdom of Bahrain itself. For example, President of the [American Chamber of Commerce in Bahrain](#), Mr. Qays H. Zu'bi, flew in from Manama for the occasion.

“We are pleased and proud to recognize the extraordinary work that H.E. Shaikh Abdulla has done on behalf of the Kingdom of Bahrain,” noted David Hamod, President & CEO of NUSACC. “Few ambassadors have traveled as extensively in the USA as he has, building bridges at all levels: in government circles, within the business community, and with civil society. The partnerships that he has formed will positively influence Bahrain – U.S. relations for decades to come.”



Ambassador H.E. Shaikh Abdulla Bin Rashid AlKhalifa.

Ambassador AlKhalifa said he accepted the award on behalf of Bahrain's leadership and the people of the Kingdom. “It is a great honor to be recognized by NUSACC, which has proven to be an invaluable partner to both of our peoples,” he noted. “Increasing bilateral trade between our two nations is an ongoing goal, supported not only by the tireless efforts of those in the Kingdom of Bahrain, but also through the stalwart support of our friends here in the United States, like NUSACC. Commerce, trade, and communications serve as the foundations on which the prosperity and security of all civilizations are supported.”



David Hamod,
President & CEO of NUSACC.



“Top 100” leaders from business, government, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended the event.



Hon. Steven C. Bondy,
U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain.

The **U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain, Hon. Steven C. Bondy**, sent a [video message](#) from Manama. Shaikh Abdulla “is a most deserving recipient of NUSACC’s Ambassador of the Year honor,” Bondy said. “During his more than five years leading the Bahraini diplomatic mission, he has taken the relationship between Bahrain and the United States to historic new heights.”

Bondy went on to say, “From cultural exchanges and women’s empowerment, to economic growth and regional security, Ambassador Sh. Abdulla has broadened and deepened the scope of the partnership and friendship between our two countries, thereby strengthening the cause of peace and prosperity in Bahrain and the region. The U.S. - Bahrain friendship is a model relationship, and Ambassador Sh. Abdulla drives it forward on a daily basis.”

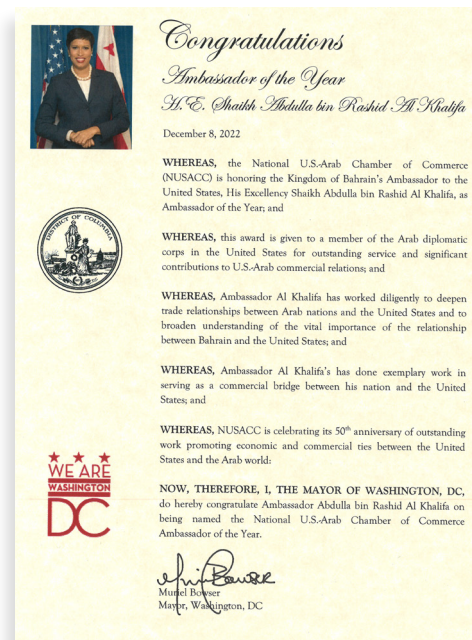
Ambassador of the Year 2022

The “Ambassador of the Year” award, begun in 2004, is given annually to a member of the Arab diplomatic corps for his or her outstanding contributions to U.S. - Arab commercial relations.

Working closely with the leadership in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as well as implementing his “Beyond the Beltway” outreach, Ambassador AlKhalifa has so far helped to bring about such business-friendly achievements as:

- ✂ Extending Global Sea-Air Hub to the USA ([More here](#))
- ✂ Establishing a U.S. Trade Zone in Bahrain ([More here](#))
- ✂ Creating Business-Friendly Visas ([More here](#))
- ✂ Extending Global Entry to Bahrain ([More here](#))
- ✂ Adopting a Cloud-First Policy ([More here](#))
- ✂ Promoting Freedom of Navigation ([More here](#))

Because of innovative and business-friendly initiatives between Bahrain and the United States, the USA has now become the Kingdom’s largest trading partner beyond the Gulf Cooperation Council region.



Citation from the Mayor of Washington DC.

Perspectives from the U.S. Department of State



Hon. Jose Fernandez, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment.

Under Secretary of State Jose Fernandez focused on the *enduring* interests of the United States in the Middle East and North Africa region, including the Kingdom of Bahrain. He highlighted visits by senior U.S. Government officials in recent months to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jeddah, and Manama, to name just a few destinations.

He said, “In Bahrain, the United States has a stalwart friend and partner, nurturing an *enduring* relationship over decades, one that continues to grow. The gracious hosts of NAVCENT and the Fifth

Fleet, Bahrain served as a waystation for evacuees following the U.S. evacuation effort from Kabul last year; Bahrain’s assistance saved lives.”

Fernandez highlighted the U.S. – Bahrain Free Trade Agreement, which has increased U.S. exports to Bahrain by 166 percent since 2005. “Services are becoming an increasingly important sector for Bahrain,” he noted, “with Amazon Web Services opening in Bahrain in 2019, and Bahrain’s innovative laws regarding governance of ‘the cloud’ to provide customers with security over their data.”

Turning his attention to this year’s Ambassador of the Year, Fernandez said that Ambassador AlKhalifa has “worked tirelessly to further the bilateral relationship between the United States and Bahrain. He has been instrumental in ‘operationalizing’ the Abraham Accords . . . and has overseen the start of regular strategic dialogues between the United States and Bahrain.”

In March, Fernandez pointed out, “the Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister met with Vice President Kamala Harris and applauded Bahrain’s ascension to the Artemis Accords, which create a shared vision for facilitating the peaceful exploration of space.”



Citation from the Secretary of State of Maryland.

Hon. Jose Fernandez Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment

“I’d like to congratulate NUSACC on its 50th anniversary. Over the last fifty years, this great organization has served American and Arab business communities and provided an invaluable link between the Arab world and the United States.

It has the unique status of recognition from the League of Arab States, and its membership rolls include more than 50,000 companies. I can’t wait to see what you accomplish in the next fifty years – congratulations.”



The Under Secretary went on to say, “I would be remiss in my position, as economic Under Secretary, if I did not note [the Ambassador’s] engagement on bringing U.S. companies to Bahrain. In February, Bahrain held a stone-laying ceremony for the U.S. trade zone project, which is envisioned as a regional hub for U.S. companies in Bahrain and the Gulf market.”

Fernandez concluded, “Please join me in congratulating Shaikh Abdulla on this honor, and we can’t wait to see what he accomplishes next.”

Ambassador Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, characterized Shaikh Abdulla as a “close, trusted colleague and friend” who puts his heart into everything that he does. “Despite the high-profile, fast-paced, not-always-easy work we are called upon to do, Shaikh Abdulla always stands out as a gentleman: understated and dapper; soft spoken, well-read, and thoughtful.”



Ambassador Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

She continued, “Most recently, at the White House and now the State Department, I’ve come to see Shaikh Abdulla as a bulwark of our bilateral relationship Shaikha Aisha and Ambassador Abdulla have brought the best of Bahraini culture to Washington, from traditional Iftars to Formula 1 watch parties. He’s also made it a point to get *out* of Washington, traveling across the United States for outreach.”

Leaf concluded, “I’m thrilled that your hard work and dedication are being recognized with this prestigious award.”



Ambassador Barbara Leaf
Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs

“Despite the high-profile, fast-paced, not-always-easy work we are called upon to do, Shaikh Abdulla always stands out as a gentleman: understated and dapper; soft spoken, well-read, and thoughtful.”

Stakeholder Testimonials

In representing his or her country in the United States, an ambassador networks with a wide array of stakeholders “back home” and in the USA. Some, like the U.S. Department of State, represent America’s Executive Branch. Below are testimonial excerpts offered by a range of stakeholders.



H.E. Dr. Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani, Bahrain’s Minister of Foreign Affairs.

H.E. Dr. Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani
Bahrain’s Minister of Foreign Affairs

Please accept my warmest congratulations to all at NUSACC as you celebrate a half century of promoting U.S.-Arab trade and business relationships . . . [I extend] my very best wishes for many further years of success and achievement.

I thank you, also, for naming Bahrain’s Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashid Al Khalifa, as Ambassador of the Year for 2022. [Thank you for] recognizing his outstanding efforts in enhancing Bahraini - U.S. ties by strengthening the governmental, business, and people-to-people relationships between our two nations.

U.S. Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis

We share many things in terms of the areas that we represent. Both of us represent islands, and both of us also have United States military installations. And I have a United States Coast Guard station, and so does he.

We live in a world obviously that is very different from what it was 20 years ago. The fact that we have friends and allies – such as His Excellency the Ambassador, and the Kingdom of Bahrain – means we have a better chance for peace and prosperity, something that previous generations did not experience.



Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis.

We recently saw the historic visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Kingdom of Bahrain. He sought to deepen the dialogue between Muslims and Christians, a true testament to people of faith around the world . . . It is my hope that leaders from around the world have been watching and seeing all the steps that have been taken to foster peace in the region, and I really look forward to working with you to build and expand the Abraham Accords in my role on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Hon. Adam Ereli, U.S. Ambassador (retired)



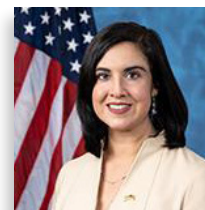
Hon. Adam Ereli,
U.S. Ambassador (retired).

At the heart of being an ambassador is filling the role of a salesman and CEO. You’re selling your country -- its people, its policies, its culture, and its business. As CEO, you’re responsible for an organization -- personnel, procurement, planning and performance. You can’t succeed without a great team, but at the end of the day, you’re the one who is accountable for results.

Just like it’s hard to find a top-notch CEO in business, great ambassadors are truly rare. It requires a skill set that very few individuals possess. . . . Today’s ceremony honors someone who, in my opinion, has beaten the odds and put Bahrain on the map in a way that few others could do.

Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis (Legislative Branch)

“Today, the two-way trade between our two nations exceeds \$2 billion, and I truly believe that there is much more opportunity to build upon that, particularly in the areas of tourism, energy, tech, security, and all areas and industries that the membership of the Chamber would benefit from.”



He has upped Bahrain's presence in Congress. He has won the hearts and minds of the State Department, the White House, and administrations of both political parties. And perhaps most importantly, he has forged a remarkable network of relationships with Americans beyond the beltway.

Business, commerce, and trade are the lifeblood of both the United States and Bahrain. They are the keys to the strength of our two nations. Ambassador AlKhalifa understands this fact, and he has made it the hallmark of his tenure here.



H.E. Jasem Albudaiwi, Kuwait's Ambassador to the USA, greets the Hon. Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State. Looking on are H.E. Moosa Al Tai (left), Oman's Ambassador to the USA, and Hon. Daniel Benaim (right), Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

Shaikh Daij Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Chairman, Aluminium Bahrain



Shaikh Daij Bin Salman Al Khalifa,
Chairman, Aluminium Bahrain.

On behalf of Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), allow me to express our pride and great pleasure to endorse such a prominent event that celebrates the strong relations between the U.S. and the Arab world.

On this occasion, I would like to express my warmest congratulations to H.E. Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Ambassador to the United States, on being the first Bahraini diplomat to ever receive the Ambassador of the Year Award. This recognition speaks volumes about His Excellency's outstanding efforts in promoting the strong ties of friendship and cooperation that distinguish American - Bahraini relations.

Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel, Vice President International Government Affairs, Lockheed Martin

Ambassador AlKhalifa has been a consistent ally and a strong advocate for the bilateral security relationship with the United States, and I've been fortunate to work with him since 2017.

At that time, Lockheed Martin was trying to close a deal to help the Royal Bahraini Air Force with new F-16s. You may not know this, but Bahrain was the first country in the Arab Gulf region to fly the F-16. And today, Bahrain is the first country to purchase the latest and most advanced version of the F-16, the Block 70.



Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel, Vice President of
International Government Affairs,
Lockheed Martin.



HRH Princess Reema Al-Saud (left), Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States, congratulates H.E. Shaikh Abdulla (right) as Ambassador Barbara Leaf (center) looks on.

Not only is Bahrain's decision helping that nation and other global friends and allies, but I can assure you that our workforce and our supply chains across the United States are aware and appreciate the leadership role of Bahrain and Ambassador AlKhalifa.

The Ambassador has been very effective in promoting the Kingdom of Bahrain's interests here in Washington, building friendship and cultural understanding. I was pleased just a few weeks ago to be in Manama, speaking on a panel with some fabulous Bahraini women leaders in aviation. I've been so impressed with the talent and the capabilities in Bahrain, and it's been a privilege to have the support and the focus of the Ambassador in promoting understanding across our two countries.

**Alfred Zucaro, President
World Trade Center Palm Beach, Florida**

Your Excellency, let me thank you for helping to realize WTC Palm Beach's theme of "Vision and Imagination" for Palm Beach and the Kingdom of Bahrain.



Alfred Zucaro, President of World Trade Center Palm Beach, Florida.

Palm Beach and Bahrain are remarkably suited as portals into each other's geographic spheres of influence: Bahrain as the Gateway to the Gulf, and Palm Beach as the Gateway to the Americas. South Florida, particularly Palm Beach, is the ideal location for the expansion of cross-border business and cultural relationships with the Kingdom of Bahrain.



H.E. Hanene Tajouri Bessassi (center), Tunisia's Ambassador to the USA, congratulates Shaikh Abdulla while NUSACC's David Hamod (right) looks on.

I have often stated publicly that a relationship with Bahrain and Palm Beach is precious; it is a beginning point for greater economic and social expansion.

I have come to appreciate your diplomatic and commercial style and your efforts to expand opportunity throughout the United States with the World Trade Center network as an essential partner.

You are a true leader, Shaikh Abdulla, an important representative of the spirit and vision of Bahrain 2030.

Sh. Daij Bin Salman AlKhalifa, Chairman, Aluminium Bahrain (Alba)

"I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the tremendous efforts exerted by the National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce in strengthening the business relations between the United States and the Arab countries, and its endeavors to create new opportunities for collaboration between major Arab and American enterprises."



Removing Walls, Building Bridges

Mr. Qays H. Zu'bi, President of AmCham Bahrain and Chairman at [Zu'bi & Partners](#), introduced Ambassador AlKhalifa.

“Throughout his distinguished career, both as a national and international diplomat, Shaikh Abdulla has always been situated at the helm of progress,” Zu'bi noted. “But this is the year of historical figures. U.S. - Bahrain bilateral trade exceeded \$2 billion in the first three quarters of 2022, and the USA is now Bahrain’s #1 export destination outside of the GCC countries; everyone is winning.”



Mr. Qays H. Zu'bi, President of AmCham Bahrain and Chairman of Zu'bi & Partners.



VIP guests congratulate Shaikh Abdulla on being named Ambassador of the Year. These include H.E. Moosa Al Tai, Oman’s Ambassador to the USA, H.E. Mohammed Al-Hadhrami, Yemen’s Ambassador to the USA, H.E. Jasem Albudaiwi, Kuwait’s Ambassador to the USA, Admiral (ret.) Kevin Donegan, and others.

Zu'bi continued, “Affecting change requires an active approach. Active is an understatement when describing the work of this Ambassador. Removing walls to make way for bridges, His Excellency’s successes in forging a business-friendly ecosystem are cemented by the significant rise in bilateral trade between the United States and Bahrain.”

“Awarding ‘Ambassador of the Year’ to Shaikh Abdulla gives fitting and well-deserved recognition to his important contributions in championing trade relations with the United States,” Zu'bi stated. “Bahrain is incredibly lucky to have him in that role, as is the business community – both American and Bahraini – because he has always been available to support, listen and assist.”

Zu'bi concluded, “This award recognizes the importance of his work so far. We look forward to seeing more of his energetic leadership in the years ahead!”

Ambassador AlKhalifa: Accolades for Team Bahrain

In accepting this year’s Ambassador of the Year award, H.E. Shaikh Abdulla noted, “Ladies and gentlemen, thank you to all of you who have come to speak so kindly. But, as much as I am personally touched, let me be very clear that this award is not really for me. Although I am the one receiving it, the real recipients are His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa (the Crown Prince and Prime Minister), and all of those who make up Team Bahrain.”



HRH Princess Reema Al-Saud (center), Saudi Arabia’s Ambassador to the United States, visits with Hon. James Smith (right), former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and Reem Al Tharwa, the Embassy’s commercial attaché.



Hon. Ron Neumann (left), former U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain, congratulates Shaikh Abdulla. Looking on is Qays Zu'bi, Chairman of Zu'bi & Partners and President of AmCham Bahrain.



The "Ambassador of the Year" Award, dedicated to H.E. Abdulla AlKhalifa.



Kirsten Fontenrose, President of Red Six International, makes a point to Hon. Daniel Benaim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

He continued, "To everyone here, in the audience, who so evidently care about Bahrain as a market, as a country, as a friend; thank you. You are acknowledged, appreciated, and valued."

"Serving as an ambassador is a great honor unto itself," Shaikh Abdulla said. "To be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as eyes and ears for those who lead one's homeland is humbling beyond description. I strive to make the right judgments and presentations on their behalf, to affirm their confidence, and to improve relations that may allow others a better quality of life."

He continued, "There are many reasons why I have the privilege to stand before you today. ♦ The United States is now our largest trading partner outside the GCC region. ♦ Multiple MOUs have been signed between Bahrain and entities throughout the United States. ♦ Bahrain has established itself as one of the world's leaders for humane and effective pandemic-readiness. ♦ My country is quickly becoming known as one of the best places in the world for Western companies to invest and establish residence. These are only a few of the things that are helping to drive our two countries closer together."

AlKhalifa went on to say, "Regardless of whether it is any, some, or all of these, I am merely the messenger representing the leadership back home in Bahrain."

He noted, "I am driven by the support, and open collaborative spirit, of those who are here today. So many of you have played such a pivotal role in our respective countries' bilateral accomplishments. When a nation aligns its policies, practices, and operational ideology with another nation, the mutual dedication toward one another is undeniable."

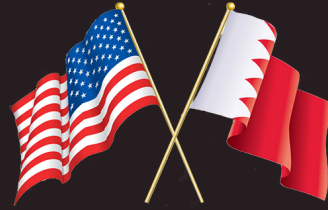
Shaikh Abdulla concluded, "Although today is a great honor for me personally, it is only one moment in the deep and valued relationship between our two lands. As this relationship continues its forward momentum, I am proud to stand beside you in anticipation of what Team Bahrain has in store for our shared future."

H.E. Shaikh Abdulla Bin Rashid AlKhalifa
The Kingdom of Bahrain's Ambassador to the United States

"It is a great honor to be recognized by NUSACC, which has proven to be an invaluable partner to both of our peoples. The Chamber has become a driving force in U.S. - Arab relations, and an irreplaceable asset. Congratulations on your 50th anniversary!"



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