

# 20-year saga of al Yamamah arms deal

**Key players:** (Left to right)

British Defence Secretary

**Michael Heseltine**,

Attorney General

**Lord Goldsmith**,

Saudi Defence

Minister **Crown**

**Prince Sultan bin**

**Abdul Aziz Al Saud**,

**Prince Bandar**

**bin Sultan**

*Eurofighter  
Typhoon*



■ **1986:** Defence

Secretary Michael Heseltine

signs phase one of **al Yamamah** deal with Saudi government to build airbase and supply warplanes worth £43 billion

■ **1988:** Phase two signed to supply warships and aircraft worth £10bn

■ **1991:** Saudi and British aircraft fly side-by-side in Gulf War against Iraq

■ **1994:** Documents submitted to House of Commons allege that **Mark Thatcher**, son of former prime minister **Margaret Thatcher**, received £12m in commission from al Yamamah deal

■ **2001:** Serious Fraud Office (SFO) begins investigation into alleged corruption by BAE Systems

■ **May 2004:** Ministry of Defence police investigate allegations that BAE Systems won al Yamamah deal with aid of secret £60m slush fund

■ **Nov:** BAE Systems confirms it is being investigated by SFO, but strenuously denies any wrongdoing

■ **Dec 2005:** BAE Systems confirms new £20bn contract to supply Saudi Arabia with 72 **Eurofighter** jets

■ **Nov 2006:** Eurofighter deal stalls amid reports that Saudi government is unhappy about SFO probe

■ **Dec:** France bids to sell **Rafale** – key rival to Eurofighter – to Saudi Arabia. British Attorney General Lord Goldsmith announces that SFO probe has been dropped

■ **Jan 6, 2007:** Saudi Defence Minister Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud confirms Eurofighter deal is back on track

■ **Jan 17:** Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development warns there are “serious concerns” about SFO inquiry being dropped

■ **May:** Swiss prosecutors reveal criminal investigation into possible al Yamamah-linked money laundering by BAE Systems

■ **Jun:** BBC investigation reveals that, for over a decade, secret payments of £120 million were paid into accounts controlled by Prince Bandar bin Sultan – ex-Saudi ambassador to America – who negotiated al Yamamah deal

■ **June 11:** BAE Systems announces independent committee to investigate its ethics in an attempt to head off likely bribes probe by U.S. Congress