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NATIONAL U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RECOGNIZES GCC'S JASEM ALBUDAIWI AS 2026 "*AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR*"

The National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) announced today that His Excellency Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), has been selected as the 2026 *Ambassador of the Year*.

This prestigious 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 relations. The invitation-only award ceremony will take place at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in downtown Washington DC in December. (Click here to see the Ambassador's biography.)

"Ambassador AlBudaiwi has done an exceptional job of building bridges and connecting cultures throughout his career," noted David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO. "This has been an extraordinary time in U.S. – GCC relations, and His Excellency's *savoir faire* has helped to overcome hurdles, keep the relationship on an even keel, and move from strength to strength. He is very deserving of this award."

His Excellency Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).

"I am deeply honored to be selected by the National U.S.–Arab Chamber of Commerce as NUSACC's 2026 *Ambassador of the Year*," AlBudaiwi said. "I accept this recognition with humility and great appreciation, reflecting the longstanding partnership between the GCC states and the United States. This award is part and parcel of our collective efforts to strengthen the commercial, economic, and strategic ties that connect our peoples and institutions."

Connections Across the USA

In Nebraska: Then-Governor Pete Ricketts (center right) and Nebraska Secretary of State Robert Evnen (center left) welcomed His Excellency (far right) to the Cornhusker State.

AlBudaiwi has spent more time in the United States than almost any other Arab diplomat in memory, logging a total of nearly two decades across his academic and professional careers. From 2001 to 2012, he served in a variety of leadership capacities at the Embassy of Kuwait in Washington DC, and he returned to that embassy in 2022, when he was named Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States.

AlBudaiwi graduated from the University of Utah in 1991 with a degree in communications. He recently returned to Salt Lake City to receive that university's inaugural Global U Alumni Impact Award.

Over the years, AlBudaiwi has visited 30 U.S. states. This includes memorable trips to America's Heartland in partnership with the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce.

The Honorable Robert Evnen, Nebraska's Secretary of State, characterized AlBudaiwi as a "gifted diplomat and an accomplished bridge-builder." Evnen went on to say, "We have been privileged to receive Ambassador AlBudaiwi as our guest in Nebraska, where he is always welcome."

NUSACC was proud to support an award ceremony at the University of Utah honoring H.E. Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Here, Ambassador AlBudaiwi receives congratulations from David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO.

U.S. – GCC Relations: Building on Partnerships

The GCC has developed into one of America's most reliable – and most important – commercial partners. In 2025, the six GCC states purchased approximately $56 billion in U.S. goods, representing more than 70 percent of all U.S. goods exports to the Arab world. Two-way goods trade between the USA and the GCC approached $80 billion last year, generating a U.S. trade surplus of nearly $32 billion.

Kingdom of Bahrain

State of Kuwait

Sultanate of Oman

The GCC is one of the few regions of the world where U.S. relationships may be found at virtually every level: Energy and security, of course, but also high tech, trade, investment, higher education, innovation, R&D, training, and diplomacy.

More than ever, this has become a two-way street, with a growing recognition that America needs access to Gulf markets, capital, energy relationships, diplomatic channels, and regional partnerships.

Gulf investment is increasingly flowing back into the U.S. economy, where it has begun to play a meaningful role in job-creation here in the United States, generating or sustaining hundreds of thousands of U.S.-based jobs every year.

GCC countries host major U.S. military facilities, work closely with Washington on regional security, and serve as diplomatic intermediaries when the U.S. needs back-channel partners. With very little fanfare or limelight, GCC nations have quietly helped to advance America's interests in the MENA region.

At a NUSACC event in Washington DC, H.E. Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi (center), offered insights into GCC – USA relations.

The GCC sits at the intersection of energy markets, global shipping routes, capital flows, and supply chains. When something happens in the Arabian Gulf region, the economic impact can be felt very quickly in American businesses and households.

GCC Milestones

The GCC is transitioning from a policy coordination body toward one that is proactively creating a shared physical and economic infrastructure – including but not limited to electricity, rail, water, customs, logistics and energy pipelines:

State of Qatar

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

United Arab Emirates

- ***Electricity grid*** – The interconnected GCC grid allows member states to support each other during shortages and emergencies, and it facilitates cross-border electricity trading. The GCC says that it generated more than $952 million in savings in 2025 and over $5.2 billion cumulatively.

- ***GCC railway*** – An integrated rail network connecting all six states is advancing, with individual cross-border sections already moving forward. The project, extending more than 2,000 kilometers, is scheduled to be fully operational by the end of 2030.

- ***Common Market / Customs Union*** – The growing GCC common market integrates goods, capital, and services, including the exchange of customs data and mutual recognition across GCC markets.

- ***Water security*** – Work is underway on an interconnected Gulf water system that would allow member states to support one another during emergencies.

- ***Oil and gas connectivity*** – GCC leaders are studying cross-border oil and gas pipelines and strategic reserve zones. The most recent example of this trend: Saudi Arabia is contemplating a crude oil pipeline that would extend nearly 650 miles to Duqm – Oman's top port on the Arabian Sea coastline – intended to bypass the Strait of Hormuz.

- ***Logistics*** – During recent disruptions in the region, GCC states have activated alternative logistics corridors and coordinated customs and transport procedures to keep goods moving.

- ***Regional outreach*** – The GCC is expanding engagement with Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and others with a view to enhancing regional stability. This includes economic cooperation, reconstruction, and infrastructure development.

This proactive approach to regional challenges is contributing significantly to security, redundancy, and a better quality of life for GCC residents. In the words of AlBudaiwi, "The GCC is not a bloc that watches crises, but a Council that tackles them."