

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

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Subject: Saudi king builds a lift to the beach on French Riviera with walkways | Daily Mail Online

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Saudi king builds a lift to the beach on French Riviera

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The mayor of Vallauris wrote to French President Francois Hollande to say the lift, which will rest on a giant concrete slab, is against planning laws, the Times reports.

But the president fast-tracked permission for the structure 'within hours' of the formal request, according to the newspaper.

The French Interior Ministry announced the King Salman promised to remove all the newly-built facilities by the time he leaves the Riviera on August 20.

He is thought to arrive on Saturday but his exact schedule has not been made public for security reasons.

CHURCHILL AND THE KENNEDYS: PARTY VILLA OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

British biographer Mary S. Lovell, who is writing a book about the villa in the French Riviera, has revealed the property's colourful history.

Originally called Chateau de l'Horizon, it was built in 1932 for American actress Maxine Elliott - a friend of Winston Churchill and his mother.

Among the people who stayed (and partied) with Maxine between 1932 and 1939, were Winston Churchill, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, American gossip columnist and author Elsa Maxwell and Doris Delevingne, model Cara's great-aunt.

The villa, pictured here in 1978, was originally called Chateau de l'Horizon and was visited by celebrities

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Maxine died in 1940 and during the Second World War the property was used as Gestapo officer accommodation.

After the war, the grand villa was bought by Prince Aly Khan, who was considered the head of the Ismaili Muslims, which are a branch of Shia Islam.

The prince married Hollywood star Rita Hayworth in a lavish ceremony in France in 1949, and the reception was held at the seafront villa.

The likes of actress Elizabeth Taylor, entertainer Eddie Fisher and the Kennedys visited the property in the Cote d'Azur.

Prince Aly Khan died in a car crash in 1960 and his body was buried temporarily at the villa, until it could be safely moved to Syria.

The property was bought in 1979 by the heir to the Saudi throne, the future King Fahd.

The King is already at the centre of a row after holiday makers in the exclusive area in the French Riviera were banned from visiting the beach next to his 'for security reasons'.

Residents of Vallauris, a playground for the rich and famous, have accused the French government of crumbling under the pressure from the Saudi royal family and launched a petition to overturn the ban.

They say that if there is indeed a risk of terror attacks, King Salman should stay inside the villa where his family has holidayed for many decades

Legal action against the ban is being considered because lawyers say it is 'unconstitutional' to 'privatise' public land in the country - and the local council is seeking compensation for loss of income due to its closure.

 Colourful past: The villa in the Cote [REDACTED], France was used as a holiday home by Sir Winston Churchill

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Colourful past: The villa in the Cote [REDACTED], France was used as a holiday home by Sir Winston Churchill

 Royalty: The family, headed by King Salman, owns the villa in Vallauris in the Cote ████████, near Cannes



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Royalty: The family, headed by King Salman, owns the villa in Vallauris in the Cote ████████, near Cannes

'We cannot accept that our laws are not being obeyed, whether it is the King of Saudi Arabia or the Pope,' said Blandine Ackermann, chairman of the association for the defence of the environment in Vallarius and Golfe-Juan.

The king's holiday home, which once belonged to Prince Aly Khan and the actress Rita Hayworth, his second wife, was bought by King Fahd, the late Saudi monarch, in 1979.

There followed a series of clashes with local residents, who won a court order in the 1980s blocking his efforts to close a footpath next to the villa.

Jean-Noël Falcou, a councillor and the organiser of the petition, said that the demands of the Saudi royals were out of control. 'The Saudi royal family has been coming here for 40 years, but this is on a different scale,' he said.

No money is believed to have changed hands between the Saudi and French governments, with France believed to be agreeing to the move as part of its diplomatic obligation to protect the security of visitors.

The royals, headed by King Salman, own the villa, which Rita Hayworth used as the venue for her wedding reception. Sir Winston Churchill and Elizabeth Taylor were among those who used it as a holiday home.