

9/11-Linked Saudi National Now Oil Exec in London

Feb. 19—In an update on the explosive story that former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) last year called “the most important thing about 9/11 to surface in the last seven or eight years,” it was reported by the London *Telegraph* Feb. 18 that Saudi national Abdulaziz al-Hijji, who fled abruptly from his home in Sarasota, Fla., just weeks before the 9/11 attacks, has been residing comfortably in London since 2003, working for the British branch of the Saudi Aramco oil company.

Last September, it was reported that hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi had visited al-Hijji’s residence in a gated community several times before the 9/11 attacks, as had another al-Qaeda operative, Adnan Shukrijumah, who is on the FBI’s most wanted list with a \$5 million bounty offered for his capture.

Simultaneously, a story in the *Broward [Fla.] Bulldog* reports that al-Hijji considered Osama bin Laden a “hero,” according to an informant interviewed by the

FBI and Florida law enforcement officials in 2004. The informant, Wissam Taysir Hammoud, is now serving 21 years in Federal prison after pleading guilty in 2005 to weapons violations and attempting to kill a Federal agent and a witness in an earlier case against him. Hammoud reaffirmed his previous statements about al-Hijji to the FBI in recent interviews.

The *Bulldog* has obtained Florida Department of Law Enforcement reports, which provide new details on the story. Hammoud told officials that he and al-Hijji worked out together at Shapes Fitness in Sarasota and played soccer at the local Islamic Society. He said that al-Hijji was “very well schooled in Islam” and that “Osama bin Laden was a hero of al-Hijji.” He added that al-Hijji showed him a “website containing information about bin Laden,” and spoke of “going to Afghanistan and becoming a freedom fighter.”

According to Hammoud, al-Hijji also talked of “taking flight training in nearby Venice [Fla.],” where a number of hijackers trained. He said he believed “al-Hijji had known some of the terrorists from the September 11, 2001 attacks,” who were students at an airport there. Hammoud’s wife and sister-in-law confirmed during recent interviews that they too knew the al-Hijjis, and are familiar with elements of Hammoud’s account.