

Is U.S. Congress Waking Up to the Saudi Threat?

by Edward Spannaus

Sept. 30—A rising chorus of protest against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the role of its royal family and associated “charities” in financial global terrorism, is evident throughout the United States, and even in Congress. Feeding this, is both the mobilization to release the suppressed 28 pages from the final report of the 2002 Joint Congressional Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks, and growing recognition of the crucial Saudi role in financing and supplying the al-Qaeda-linked terrorists who dominate the so-called rebel opposition forces in Syria.

After the call by Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.) for the release of the classified 28 pages, issued on this past Sept. 11, some members of Congress have reportedly gone to the House Intelligence Committee offices to read the 28 pages for themselves, and a number are said to have been shocked by the findings concerning the extensive Saudi ties to the 9/11 hijackers.

Sarasota-Saudi Investigation

Also fueling the clamor for disclosure of the Saudi role, is the expansion of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit in Florida, which seeks tens of thousands of pages of FBI files relevant to its investigation of the Saudi support network for the 9/11 hijackers that was operating in the Sarasota area. The suit was originally filed by the *Broward Bulldog* in 2011, and on Sept. 27, the influential *Miami Herald* announced that it is joining the lawsuit, following the early September

entrance into the suit by the Herald-Tribune Media Group, which publishes the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* and a number of other Florida papers.

On Sept 16, the *Miami Herald* published an editorial “9/11’s lingering questions,” which demanded a full airing of the Saudi connections in Florida to the 9/11 attacks, and particularly, the full results of the FBI’s investigation into the mystery of the upscale house in Sarasota which was hastily abandoned shortly before Sept. 11, 2001 by a wealthy Saudi family later found to have ties to the 9/11 hijackers. The *Herald* concluded: “Ten years later, much about the Saudi connection remains unknown. An investigation prompted by the Sarasota connection would help to clarify matters.”

After initially claiming that it had found no links between the 9/11 attacks and the Saudi family in Sarasota, the FBI recently disclosed that it has more than 15,000 documents (each of which likely contains multiple pages) concerning the Tampa FBI field office’s investigation of 9/11.

Senate Bill Targets Saudis

On Sept. 23, Sen. Charles Schumer (D), Rep. Peter King (R), and other members of Congress from New York State, introduced a bill to block foreign sponsors of terrorism from claiming “sovereign immunity” from lawsuits for restitution filed by American citizens who were victims of terrorism on American soil. In a press statement accompanying the filing of the Justice

Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), Senator Schumer is explicit that the bill aims to overturn the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's claim of "sovereign immunity" from suits brought by families of the victims of the 9/11 atrocity.

JASTA "will finally correct an egregious error within our court system that has prevented victims of 9/11 from obtaining recourse against those who helped sponsor the attacks," Schumer stated, citing the ruling by the Second Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals that held that the doctrine of sovereign immunity protected Saudi government "charities" from 9/11 victims' claims regarding Saudi "aiding and abetting" of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Similar bills were filed in the previous two sessions of Congress, in 2009 and 2011, but now, with the growing recognition of the Saudi role in supporting global terrorism, the climate is more favorable for passage, if members of the House and Senate actually fight for this needed reform of the law.

Senators Demanded Release of 28 Pages

An example of what should be happening again today, is that in 2003, 46 U.S. Senators demanded that then-President George W. Bush declassify the 28 pages on Saudi involvement in the 9/11 attacks. On Aug. 1, 2003, a letter was sent to Bush by Schumer, which had been signed by 45 additional Senators. The letter read, in part:

"It has been widely reported in the press that the foreign sources referred to in this portion of the Joint Inquiry analysis reside primarily in Saudi Arabia. As a result, the decision to classify this information sends the wrong message to the American people about our nation's anti-terror effort and makes it seem as if there will be no penalty for foreign abettors of the hijackers. As you are aware, Saudi Arabia's banks and charities have been used to funnel money to Al-Qaeda; its madrassah schools spew hateful anti-American rhetoric to would-be suicide bombers across the Middle East; and fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudis. Given these facts, protecting the Saudi regime by eliminating any public penalty for the support given to terrorists from within its borders would be a mistake. . . ."

At that time, two other Senators, who didn't sign the Schumer letter, were also calling for declassification of the 28 pages; these were Olympia Snowe (R-Me.) and Richard Shelby (R-Ala.). This was very close to the 51 votes which, as was reported at the time, could have

forced declassification over the opposition of the White House.

In October 2003, Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) and others introduced an amendment to the foreign operations appropriations bill, again calling for the Bush Administration to release the 28 pages. Speaking on the Senate floor on Oct. 28, and after Dorgan had identified Saudi Arabia as the likely subject of the 28 pages, Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.), the co-chairman of the Joint Inquiry, laid out why he wanted the pages released. Graham stated that the Joint Inquiry had determined that "there was a foreign government which was complicitous in the actions leading up to September 11, at least as it relates to some of the terrorists who were present in one part of the United States."

He went on:

"There are two big questions yet to be answered. Why would this government have provided the level of assistance—financial, logistical, housing, support service—to some of the terrorists and not to all of the terrorists? We asked that question. There has been no response.

"My own hypothesis—and I will describe it as that—is that in fact similar assistance was being provided to all or at least most of the terrorists. The difference is that we happened, because of a set of circumstances which are contained in these 28 censored pages, to have an unusual window on a few of the terrorists. We did not have a similar window on others. Therefore, it will take more effort to determine if they were, in fact, receiving that assistance. That effort has, in my judgment, been grossly insufficiently pursued."

We now know that Senator Graham was referring to the Saudi intelligence network in San Diego, which the Joint Inquiry found to have been providing support to at least two of the hijackers who were present there. Graham then zeroed in on the heart of the matter, which was that there was no reason to believe that this Saudi support apparatus was taken down after the 9/11 attacks:

"I don't believe it was taken down. I believe that infrastructure is likely to still be in place assisting the next generation of terrorists who are in the United States."

That was ten years ago, and shamefully, that investigation has not taken place, and that information has still not been released—first at the insistence of President Bush, and now at the insistence of President Obama.

Will Wertz provided research for this article.