

# The 9/11 Coverup Is Unraveling

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Ramtanu Maitra

Aug. 16—As the tenth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon approaches, the decade-long coverup of the actual authorship of the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history is continuing to unravel.

Just in the past week, two dramatic revelations have surfaced, challenging some of the most fundamental features of the “official” coverup.

First, on Aug. 10, the *Daily Telegraph* published a report from a CIA contractor, Raelynn Hillhouse, revealing that Saudi Arabia had been financing Osama bin Laden’s safehouse in Abbottabad, a Pakistan garrison town, and that the identification of the al-Qaeda leader’s whereabouts had come from a Pakistani intelligence officer who came forward to claim the reward.

The very next day, on Aug. 11, The Daily Beast website published charges from former Clinton and Bush White House counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke, that the CIA had withheld details about two of the 9/11 hijackers, information which, if passed on, could have preempted the attacks.

Combined, these two revelations point to a much bigger scandal: the role of British and Saudi intelligence in the 9/11 attacks.

## Saudi Cash Protected bin Laden

Notwithstanding what President Obama, or his National Security Advisor Tom Donilon and the gamut of the Obama Administration people tell you, it is evident that Washington ally Saudi Arabia was disbursing money to Pakistan’s powerful intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), for the upkeep of bin Laden for years in Abbottabad.

Hillhouse’s *Telegraph* article, “Was Osama bin Laden Protected by Pakistan in Return for Saudi Cash?,” pointed out that bin Laden’s whereabouts were finally revealed when a Pakistani intelligence officer came forward to claim the \$25 million bounty on the al-Qaeda leader’s head.

“Dr. Hillhouse,” *The Telegraph* writes, “allegedly known for her connections to private military contractors working with the CIA, wrote on her blog ‘The Spy Who Billed Me,’ that ‘The [Inter-Services Intelligence] officer came forward to claim the substantial reward and to broker US citizenship for his family.’” She continues: “My sources tell me that the informant claimed that the Saudis were paying off the Pakistani military and intelligence (ISI) to essentially shelter and keep bin Laden under house arrest in Abbottabad, a city with such a high concentration of military that I’m told there’s no equivalent in the US.”

After confirming bin Laden’s presence in Abbottabad, the U.S. approached Pakistan’s military leaders securing their cooperation in return for cash and a chance to avoid public humiliation.

That the operation to eliminate Osama bin Laden was done in cooperation with the Pakistani military had earlier been revealed in the Lahore-based *Daily Times*, on June 14, where Sheikh Asad Rahman, director of the Programmes Sungi Development Foundation, Pakistan, in his article, “Myths versus Realities,” wrote “The US was confident that Osama was there [in the Abbottabad safehouse—ed.] and put pressure on GHQ to cooperate or else face the consequences. GHQ (Pakistan’s military headquarters in Rawalpindi), fearing a backlash from the TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban—a terrorist group that operates within Pakistan) and al Qaeda, decided to collude but made it clear that they would deny knowledge.

“Neighboring residents report that the Kakul Academy office [located a stone’s throw from Osama’s hideout—ed.] lights were on till very late that night. When the choppers arrived and shooting started, many of them climbed their roofs and observed everything. The Pakistan Army arrived within three to five minutes and started pushing people into their homes. The choppers dropped the hit squads and flew to the Baloch Regiment grounds, waiting there to be called. It was in the attempt to pick up the squads that one of them mal-



U.S. Navy/Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Jim Watson

*New revelations are ripping apart the carefully constructed coverup of the actual authorship of the 9/11 attacks, as the tenth anniversary approaches. Here, rescue workers ascend deep into the rubble of the World Trade Center on Sept. 14, 2001.*

functioned and crashed. As soon as a relief chopper arrived to pick up the squad, which had remained behind to demolish the crashed chopper, and left, the Pakistan Army contingent moved in and secured the compound.”

Confirmation of Hillhouse’s report came from Col. Patrick Lang, former U.S. defense intelligence chief for the Middle East, who is reportedly still in close contact with the relevant agencies. He answered a blogger, hope4usa, who wrote: “RJ Hillhouse is reporting that

OBL was caught/killed due to ISI informant who wanted the 25m reward. She goes on to say that the Saudi government was paying Pakistan to keep him under house arrest in Abbottabad. I was curious of your take on that.” Lang replied on his website: “Yes to both but the ISI walk in merely confirmed the existing analytic opinion that UBL [Osama bin Laden, “Osama” spelled “Usama”—ed.] was in a major Pak city under ISI protection.”

Despite the load of misinformation on the raid of bin Laden’s compound, put out by the Obama Administration to protect the “good name” of its ally Saudi Arabia, some analysts realized that the White House story was full of holes. But then, it should be no surprise that the White House was lying to the American people, given the track record of the Washington establishment in the coverup of the Saudi role, ever since the 9/11 attacks.

The powerful Bush family, which has produced two Presidents, and other major power-brokers over the decades, was doing business with the bin Laden empire. Salem bin Laden, Osama’s older brother, was an investor in Arbusto Energy, the Texas oil company started by George W. Bush.

### **Saudi Arabia: Friend or Foe?**

Saudi Arabia, the Gulf monarchy, is a rentier state in which no taxes are imposed on the residents. Instead, Saudis have a religious tax, the zakat, requiring all Muslims to give at least 2.5% of their income to Islamic charities. Many of the charities are truly dedicated to good causes, but others merely serve as money-laundering and terrorist-financing apparatuses. The money gets transferred through a complex system, known as

the Hawala system—the unofficial method of transferring money, and one of the key elements in the financing of global terrorism. The system has existed for generations, and is deeply embedded in the Arab culture. Hawala transactions are based on trust; they are carried out verbally and leave no paper trail, one analyst pointed out.

Moreover, it was widely known, and no one disputes the fact that some of the Saudi government money is funneled into madrassas, or Islamic schools,

in which radical anti-Americanism is propagated. The madrassas have been instrumental in creating an ideological climate which produces and shelters large numbers of terrorists. Most wealthy Saudis who sponsor charities and educational foundations that preach religious intolerance and hate toward Western values, have made their fortunes from the petroleum industry or its subsidiaries.

In July 2005, Undersecretary of the Treasury Stuart Levey testified to a Senate hearing that, “Wealthy Saudi financiers and charities have funded terrorist organizations and causes that support terrorism and the ideology that fuels the terrorists’ agenda. Even today, we believe that Saudi donors may still be a significant source of terrorist financing, including for the insurgency in Iraq.”

These facts have been known for years, if not decades. What is clear is that pursuing this policy, which is centered on protecting the “good image” of the Saudis, by one U.S. Administration after another, including the present one, is responsible for the deaths of thousands of young Americans in the streets and fields of Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, and continues to endanger the lives of Americans and others.

### **The Clarke Revelations**

As part of a documentary to be released on the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, former National Security Council counterterrorism head Richard Clarke—who served with distinction under both Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush—has charged that the CIA covered up crucial information in 2000 and 2001 that could have prevented the attacks. Clarke, in interviews released to the Daily Beast online, charged that the CIA was attempting to recruit two of the 9/11 hijackers, and therefore withheld information from the White House, the National Security Council, and the FBI. Clarke asserted that the cover-up at the Agency was ordered from the very top—starting with then-CIA Director George Tenet.

Clarke also charges that the hijackers he is referring to, are Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar, the two West Coast-based Saudis who were the recipients of funds from the Saudi Embassy account of Ambassador Prince Bandar bin-Sultan and his wife. It was the Bandar-Hazmi-al-Mihdhar financial links that were covered up by the George W. Bush White House in the now infamous 28-page chapter from the Joint Congressional 9/11 probe, which remains classified to this day.

Despite promises to family members and survivors of the 9/11 attacks to declassify that damning chapter, detailing Saudi funding channels into the hijackers, President Barack Obama has maintained the top-down coverup, and has taken other measures to further bury the truth.

The Bandar funding links to at least two of the hijackers—conducted through two Saudi intelligence officers—Basnan and al-Bayoumi—are also the key to an even bigger scandal: the role of the al-Yamamah Anglo-Saudi offshore black operations slush fund in bankrolling al-Qaeda and other international terrorist organizations.

Clarke charged in the documentary interview that he gave in 2009, that the CIA had shared massive amounts of information with him in the run-up and aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, but had not made any mention of the fact that they knew that al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar had been in the United States since late 2000. He said that if he had known about the presence of the two men in the United States, “We would have conducted a massive sweep. We would have conducted it publicly. We would have found those assholes. There’s no doubt in my mind, even with only a week left. They were using credit cards in their own names. They were staying in the Charles Hotel in Harvard Square, for heaven’s sake. Those guys would have been arrested within 24 hours.”

The Joint Congressional Inquiry into the intelligence failures leading up to the 9/11 attacks, co-chaired by Senators Bob Graham (D-Fla.) and Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), revealed further elements of the coverup. The two San Diego-based hijackers Hazmi and al-Mihdhar were living for a period of time in the home of another Saudi—who was a paid FBI informant. When Graham and Shelby attempted to interview the informant and the FBI case officers, Committee investigators were repeatedly rebuffed.

When the investigation was picked up by the 9/11 Commission, efforts to interview Basnan and al-Bayoumi—the two Saudi intelligence officers who were case-officers for at least two of the hijackers—Saudi “minders” sat in on the interviews and nothing was accomplished. This prompted now-former Senator Graham to issue pointed charges of a U.S. and Saudi intelligence coverup.

Both Tenet and Cofer Black, the head of the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center at the time of the 9/11 attacks, have denied the charges, and denounced Clarke for what they termed, his reckless allegations.