

Senators Demand Probe Of Saudi-9/11 Ties

by Edward Spannaus

March 5—Two former U.S. Senators who had access to top-secret information on the 9/11 attacks, are asking a Federal judge to allow a full investigation of evidence that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia played a direct role in those attacks. They are arguing that, in fact, this evidence has never been fully examined. If such an investigation were allowed to proceed, over the objections of the Obama Administration, it would reveal not only the Saudi role in 9/11, but more importantly, it would identify the British hand behind the Saudis and the 9/11 hijackers—which *EIR* has documented many times, including as recently as our March 2 issue.¹

Filing the affidavits were former Sen. Bob Graham of Florida (D), who was chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee before and after the 2001 attacks, and was also the co-chairman of the House-Senate Intelligence Committees' Joint Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks; and former Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska (D), who served on the 9/11 Commission in 2003-04. Both were also governors of their respective states before serving in the U.S. Senate.

In their sworn statements, submitted to the U.S. District Court in Manhattan on Feb. 24, Graham and Kerrey forcefully rebut the spurious Saudi contention, made in recently filed legal briefs, that the official 9/11 investigations "exonerated" the Kingdom of any involvement in the 9/11 attacks.

Obama Protects al-Qaeda Sponsors

At issue here is an effort by the families of 9/11 victims, to reinstate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Saudi High Commission, and various Saudi-funded charities as defendants in their long-standing lawsuit. In 2008, the Saudis were dismissed as defendants by a Federal court on the grounds of sovereign immunity, but more recently, a Federal appeals court allowed the families to reinstate their claims. The Saudis are again seeking dismissal of the families' claims, and the

1. "Obama-al-Qaeda Mujahideen Connection Unveiled," *EIR*, March 2, 2012.

Obama Justice Department is taking the side of the Saudis, against the 9/11 victims' families!

In 2009, to the outrage of the 9/11 families, the Justice Department backed the Saudi royal family, including four Saudi princes, in a brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court. Then-Solicitor General Elena Kagan—whom Obama later elevated to the Supreme Court—argued that "the princes are immune from petitioners' claims."

"I find this reprehensible," Kristen Breitweiser, a leader of the Sept. 11 families, told the *New York Times*. "One would have hoped that the Obama administration would have taken a different stance than the Bush administration, and you wonder what message this sends to victims of terrorism around the world."

Even though the long-standing legal doctrine of "sovereign immunity" holds that a foreign sovereign state cannot be sued in U.S. courts without its consent, there are exceptions in U.S. law for countries that are regarded as "state sponsors of terrorism," or if a foreign state has provided "material support or resources" for an act of terrorism. In light of the flimsy evidence which the Justice Department routinely relies on to prosecute often-hapless, low-level individuals in terrorism cases, it is preposterous for the Obama Administration to pretend that the Saudi Kingdom and royal family are exempt from claims by victims of the terrorist actions in which they are deeply implicated.

Investigation or Cover-Up?

Another of the grounds on which the Saudis are demanding that the families' case again be thrown out, is that the Saudi role was already thoroughly investigated and resulted in their exoneration from any culpability for the terrorist attacks. However, as both Graham and Kerrey state, their investigations were limited in scope and resources, and neither fully investigated the Saudi role, nor in any manner "exonerated" the Saudi government and its agents.

"Stated simply, the 9/11 Commission did not have the time, opportunity or resources to pursue all potentially relevant evidence on that important question, and the American public deserves a more comprehensive inquiry into the issue," wrote Kerrey.

"I am convinced that there was a direct line between at least some of the terrorists who carried out the September 11th attacks and the government of Saudi Arabia," Graham said in his affidavit, citing, among other things, the San Diego case of Omar al-Bayoumi (which *EIR* has covered extensively in the past).

Graham states that al-Bayoumi “provided financial and other assistance to [hijackers] al-Hazmi and al-Midhar in the months leading up to the September 11th attacks,” and he describes Bayoumi meeting with the hijackers, holding a dinner for them, finding them an apartment, fronting the initial payments for the apartment, and providing continuing financial assistance. During this same time, Graham states, Baymoumi’s income from the Saudi government and from a private Saudi firm “increased eightfold.”

Graham concludes, “I am convinced that al-Bayoumi was an agent of the government of Saudi Arabia,” and that to date, this evidence has not been fully explored and pursued, “to the considerable detriment of the American public.” He adds that whether other hijackers also received support from the Saudi government “has never been adequately explored.”

A statement by the 9/11 families also points to the suppressed 28 pages of the Joint Congressional Inquiry Report concerning Saudi Arabia, disclosure of which has been blocked, first by the Bush Administration, and now by the Obama Administration.

In addition to the Graham and Kerry affidavits, lawyers for the families also submitted military and CIA reports to the court that back up the families’ contention that the U.S. government has identified the Saudi-based charities in question as terrorist support organizations.

The Sarasota Connection

Senator Graham knows a lot more than he was able to put into his recent affidavit. Last Fall, a second element of the Saudi support apparatus, in addition to that exposed in San Diego, was revealed to have been operating in Florida, less than 20 miles from the airfield at which a number of the 9/11 hijackers underwent training.

In September, the *Miami Herald* and other news outlets disclosed that a wealthy and well-connected Saudi family had abruptly fled from their home just days before the 9/11 attacks, leaving behind three cars and most of their personal belongings, including medicines and a full refrigerator. Records showed that 9/11 pilot Mohamed Atta and another hijacker had repeatedly visited the luxury Sarasota residence, and that the house had telephone contact with a dozen other hijackers and terrorist suspects.

Graham believes that both the San Diego and Sarasota operations were part of an extensive Saudi shadow “support network” for the hijackers. “The chances that 19 people, most of whom had never been in the U.S.,

who did not speak English, and most of whom did not know each other, could have completed training, practiced and executed such a complicated plot, defies common sense,” Graham said last Fall. He suggests that this shadow support network also operated in other U.S. cities where clusters of hijackers lived before the 9/11 attacks.

Graham has been vociferous in criticizing the FBI for never disclosing any of this information to the Congressional 9/11 investigation. After the disclosures about the Sarasota network were published in September 2011, the FBI issued a terse statement, which said: “At no time did the FBI develop evidence that connected the family members to any of the 9/11 hijackers . . . and there was no connection to the FBI plot.”

The FBI has also stonewalled FOIA requests made by newspapers on the Sarasota case, although documents recently disclosed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement showed that Abdulazziz al-Hijjii, who lived in the Sarasota house, also had contact with another top al-Qaeda leader. The house was owned by al-Hijjii’s father-in-law, who is a financial advisor to leading members of the Saudi royal family. Al-Hijjii was recently discovered to be living in London and working at the British offices of the Saudi ARAMCO oil company.

On March 2, Salon.com columnist and constitutional lawyer Glenn Greenwald followed up the new disclosures on the Saudi 9/11 story, taking note of what he calls “one of the towering, central contradictions in War on Terror logic: namely, that the only foreign government which likely had any connection to 9/11 is the one which is the least likely to be attacked by the U.S.”

Greenwald quotes Obama from last October affirming “the strong partnership” between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and the Obama Administration’s announcement in December that it will sell \$30 billion of F-15 fighter jets to the Saudis. “Meanwhile,” Greenwald continues, “the U.S. in just the last three years alone—in the name of 9/11 and Terrorism—has dropped bombs on at least six Muslim countries whose governments had no connection whatsoever to 9/11 (often aimed at groups that did not even exist at the time of that attack). And now Washington is abuzz with exciting debates about the mechanics of how yet another country that had nothing whatsoever to do with 9/11—Iran—should be aggressively attacked.”

“I’d bet the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. has closer ties to Al Qaeda than 90% of the people we’ve killed with drones,” Greenwald quotes a commentator saying.