
Book Review

Bob Graham, a Man With a Mission: Expose Saudi Role in 9/11

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Intelligence Matters: The CIA, the FBI, Saudi Arabia, and the Failure of America's War on Terror

by Senator Bob Graham

New York: Random House, 2004

297 pages, hardcover, \$24.95

Before his retirement in from the U.S. Senate in January 2005, Bob Graham (D-Fla.) served for a decade on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, ultimately chairing the committee during the period surrounding the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. He headed the Joint Congressional Commission on U.S. Intelligence Failures Surrounding the 9/11 Attacks.

By any standard of public service, Senator Graham could have retired to Florida, and enjoyed the status of an elder statesman. He had served for 38 years in elective office, starting in the Florida House of Representatives and Senate, going on to serve two terms as one of the most popular and successful governors of the state, and then was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served for 18 years.

But Graham is a man with a mission. Having chaired the Joint Congressional 9/11 inquiry, he is convinced, to this day, that two successive Presidents—George W. Bush and Barack Obama—have willfully covered up the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including prominent members of the Saudi Royal Family and the

Saudi General Intelligence Directorate (GID), in the 9/11 attacks.

In 2010, frustrated by the continued coverup of the Saudi Royals' hand behind the biggest terrorist attack ever on U.S. soil, Graham penned a novel, in which he revealed the Saudi role, without betraying national security secrets.

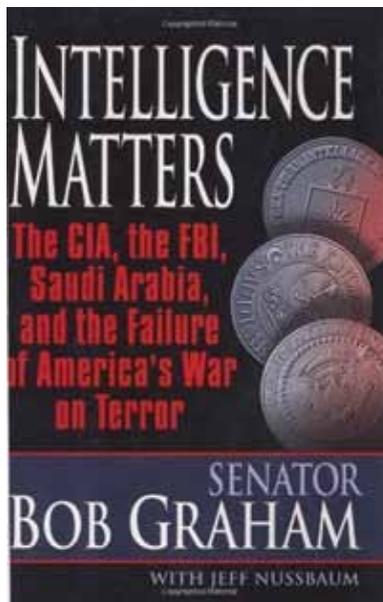
In 2004, prior to his retirement, Graham published a non-fiction account of the Joint Committee's findings, again, carefully avoiding any public revelations of classified intelligence. That book, *Intelligence Matters*, is a stinging exposé of the systematic coverup by U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Within the limits of what he could publish, Graham also made a compelling case that elements within the Saudi government played a direct role in the events of 9/11.

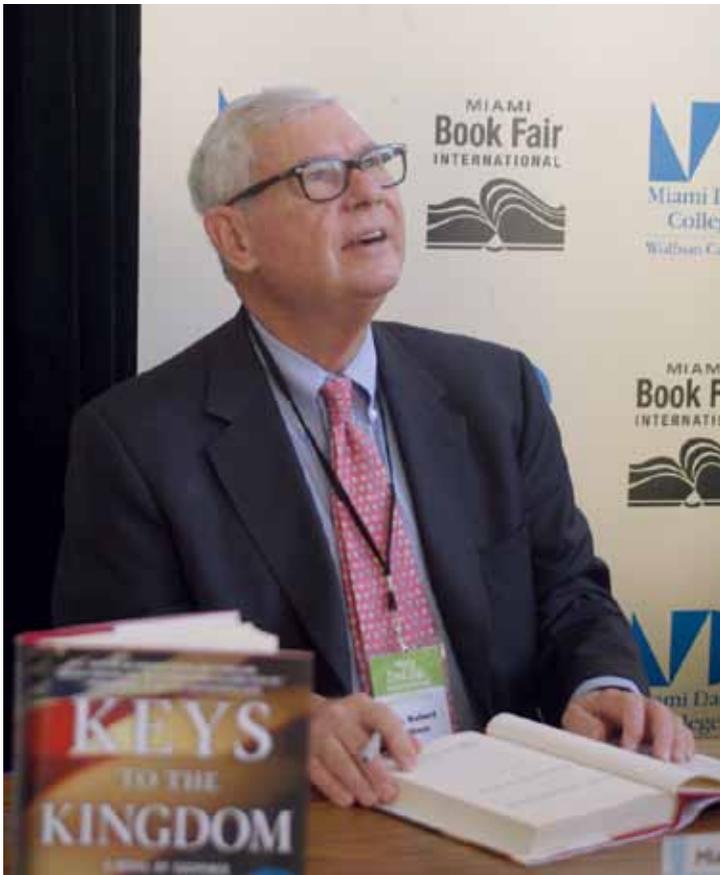
Beyond the 28 Pages

For a long time, Graham's greatest fury was directed at the Bush-Cheney White House, for blocking the publication of a 28-page chapter in the Joint Commission's draft report, that

exposed the role of Saudi Arabia's then-Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, in the financing of the 9/11 attacks.

Some of that anger is now directed at the current occupant of the Oval Office, Barack Obama. In a September 2011 interview with MSNBC's Dylan Ratigan, Graham confirmed that he had tried, repeatedly, to get President Obama to reopen the 9/11 probe, starting with the declassification of the 28-page chapter. He told





Creative Commons

Former Sen. Bob Graham, who chaired the Joint Congressional Inquiry on 9/11, is determined to end the coverup of the Saudi role in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. He is shown here signing copies of his 2010 novel about those events.

Ratigan that he had personally spoken with John Brennan, Obama's top White House counter-terrorism aide, and a former career CIA officer, and had implored him to get the President to open the secrets of 9/11, including the Saudi connection. Now, almost four years into the Obama Presidency, not a finger has been lifted to break the coverup.

If anything, Obama tightened the lid on the 9/11 Saudi file by ordering his Solicitor General in early 2009 to intervene in a Federal court case to secure sovereign immunity from prosecution for the Saudi Royal Family.

Both Senator Graham and senior U.S. intelligence officials have confirmed that new evidence reveals that the coverup runs much deeper. The FBI, for example, has been deeply implicated in an ongoing coverup. In his 2004 account of the 9/11 Congressional probe, Graham nailed the FBI for refusing to allow his staff

investigators—including two FBI Special Agents on loan from the Bureau—to interview an FBI informant who had housed two of the lead 9/11 hijackers in San Diego, Calif. The FBI, under Bush White House orders, refused to grant the Committee permission to interview the FBI field agent who handled the informant—even after details of the informant's relations with the two hijackers—Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar—had come out in *Newsweek* magazine and other publications. Ultimately the FBI sequestered its informant in the Federal Witness Protection Program to ensure that the investigators could not reach him.

In 2011, even more evidence of the FBI coverup came out as the result of solid investigative work by author Anthony Summers and Dan Christensen, the publisher of the *Broward Bulldog*, an online publication based in Broward County, Fla. What Summers and Christensen discovered was that another wealthy Saudi, with close ties to the Royal Family, had been in touch with three additional hijackers in the Sarasota, Fla. area, including the alleged hijack team leader Mohammed Atta. Atta, Marwan al-Shehi, and Ziad Jarrah had all visited the Sarasota home of Abdulazzi al-Hijjii, his wife Arnoud, and her father Esam Ghazzawi, on a number of occasions.

Mysteriously, the entire al-Hijjii family fled their home on Aug. 30, 2001—12 days before the 9/11 attacks. There was evidence that they departed in a hurry: Food was left on the table, cars were left in the driveway, water was running in the swimming pool, and dirty diapers were found in one of the bedrooms. Passing through Dulles and Heathrow Airports, the al-Hijjiis arrived back in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on the eve of the 9/11 attacks.

The FBI was alerted to the al-Hijjii links to the 9/11 hijackers by local sheriffs, and by the head of security at the gated community where the Saudi family had lived. Within a day of the 9/11 attacks, FBI agents were swarming all over the complex, interviewing neighbors and thoroughly searching the home. Ultimately, tracking of phone records revealed telephone communications with 11 of the hijackers!

Graham, the Joint Congressional Inquiry staff, and the staff of the subsequent 9/11 Commission, were never told by the FBI about the Sarasota links to the 9/11 hijackers. It was later confirmed that al-Hijjii and

his father-in-law Esam Ghazzawi, were closely tied to members of the Saudi Royal Family. They were also both on a U.S. Government watch list of suspected terrorist funders *prior* to the 9/11 attacks.

All of this was covered up by the FBI, which claimed that the leads had been followed, but had reached a dead end.

San Diego and Bandar

On Aug. 15, 2002, Graham was in Tallahassee, Fla, when he received an urgent call from Eleanor Hill, the staff director of the Joint 9/11 Committee, asking him to go to a secure phone

to receive a briefing on some startling new discoveries. Ironically, Graham had to go to the FBI office to take the call. Hill told Graham that two of the staff investigators—Mike Jacobson and Tom Kelly—had been combing through files in the San Diego FBI office, and had discovered information about the FBI informant’s links to the two West Coast hijackers, al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi. Jacobson had been an attorney and counterintelligence analyst for the FBI, and Kelly had served as the Bureau’s deputy general counsel, before being assigned to work for the Congressional Joint inquiry.

The following day, Hill called the Senator again, and again asked him to go to a secure phone line. “We’ve found more in the FBI files in San Diego,” she told Graham. “There are two money trails to Omar al-Bayoumi.”

Al-Bayoumi was a known agent of the Saudi GID, who had been deployed to the San Diego area to spy on Saudi students who might be tied to al-Qaeda. In January 2000, al-Bayoumi and Osama Basnan, also a GID agent, had been given another assignment: To host two newly arrived Saudi nationals—al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar. Al-Bayoumi and Basnan complied with the orders, providing the two new arrivals with housing in San Diego, a car, and assistance registering as students in flight school.

During the time that al-Bayoumi and Basnan were



FEMA News/Andrea Booher

The World Trade Center in New York City, five days after the 9/11 attacks. The well-established role of the Saudi Royal Family has been hidden from the public since then.

“handling” the two future hijackers, al-Bayoumi was being paid through several Saudi fronts—including bank accounts of Saudi Ambassador Bandar and his wife, who was the sister of Prince Turki bin-Faisal, the head, at the time, of the GID.

Al-Bayoumi was a ghost employee for a Saudi company, Ercan, which contracted with Dallah Avco Aviation, a government contract company owned by Saleh Kamel, a wealthy Saudi, and member of the “Golden Chain,” a network of super-rich Saudi businessmen and princes who funded al-Qaeda. When supervisors at Ercan complained in 1999 about al-Bayoumi’s no-show job, the director general of Saudi Civil Aviation wrote to the company manager, threatening to shut all contracts with the firm if they didn’t retain al-Bayoumi on payroll.

From the start of his employment at Ercan, al-Bayoumi was paid a monthly salary of \$2,800, with an expense allowance of \$465 a month. However, when the two future Saudi hijackers arrived in Southern California, al-Bayoumi’s expense allowance was raised to \$3,700 a month.

When Graham asked staff director Hill for her explanation of al-Bayoumi’s sudden salary increase, she replied, “It sure looks as if al-Bayoumi was the conduit for money from Ercan and probably Dallah Avco to al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar.”

The other, even more controversial source of funding for the San Diego hijackers also came through al-Bayoumi and Basnan (when Basnan was arrested for cocaine trafficking several years earlier, the Saudi Embassy in Washington intervened to get the charges dropped). Bandar personally provided Basnan with an estimated \$15,000, ostensibly for medical care for his wife, and Prince Bandar's wife, Princess Haifa bin-Faisal, provided a monthly check to Basnan's wife of \$3,000. All told, the Bandar channel provided Basnan with between \$50,000 and \$72,000 in the run-up to the 9/11 attacks. Prince Bandar, later confronted on the payouts to the Saudi intelligence handlers of the 9/11 hijackers, wrote it off as a simple "act of charity."

What Graham Did Not Know

At the same time that Bandar and his wife were providing Basnan and al-Bayoumi with funds to establish the West Coast 9/11 team, the Saudi ambassador was receiving an estimated \$2 billion in "fees" from the Al-Yamamah oil-for-arms barter deal that he had arranged between the British government and the Saudi Ministry of Defense. From 1985, through the time of the 9/11 attacks and beyond, the Al-Yamamah deal generated over \$100 billion in profits that were sequestered in offshore bank accounts, jointly administered by the Saudis and the British, to run worldwide covert operations. In addition, Bandar and other Saudi officials and princes received enormous payoffs, sometimes running into the billions of dollars.

It was this pool of cash that bankrolled the 9/11 attacks, and the Saudi and British fingerprints are all over the transactions.

Al-Mihdhar's Travels

With the aid of the two Saudi GID agents Basnan and al-Bayoumi, Khalid al-Mihdhar had enrolled in a flight training school in Southern California; then, in June 2000, six months after his arrival in the United States, he left to take up another assignment critical to the 9/11 attacks.

Over the next 13 months, he traveled throughout Europe and the Middle East, arriving first in Germany, then, going on to Yemen. Al-Mihdhar's assignment was to recruit the "muscle" for the operation—the men who would subdue the pilots, crew, and passengers, while the trained hijacker pilots commandeered the planes into the targeted buildings.

Al-Mihdhar traveled from the Middle East to South-

east Asia, winding up eventually in Afghanistan. Despite the fact that he had attended a meeting in late 1999 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where the plot was apparently devised, al-Mihdhar had no trouble getting a new visa to re-enter the United States in July 2001.

The fact that al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi were bankrolled by a front for the Saudi Ministry of Civil Aviation, and by the Saudi ambassador in Washington—and the fact that al-Mihdhar was a central figure in the recruiting of the majority of the 19 9/11 hijackers—underscores the role of high-ranking Saudi officials and royals in the scheme. The complicity of President Bush and his successor, President Obama, in the coverup of this Saudi sponsorship of 9/11 is perhaps the greatest crime against the American people since the coverup of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

'A Matter of National Security Today'

On Sept. 11, 2012, Graham published a signed editorial comment on Huffington Post, which began, "The passage of time since September 11, 2001, has not diminished the distrust many of us feel surrounding the official story of how 9/11 happened and, more specifically, who financed and supported it. After eleven years, the time has come for the families of the victims, the survivors and all Americans to get the whole story behind 9/11. . . . It is not merely a question of the need to complete the historical record. It is a matter of national security today. If a support network was available to the terrorists before 9/11, why should we think it has now been disbanded or been rolled up? It may still be in place, capable of supporting al-Qaeda or other extremist groups that hate America—of which there are many."

After referencing the suppressed 28 pages of his Joint Congressional report, Graham added, "Sadly, those 28 pages represent only a fraction of the evidence of Saudi complicity that our government continues to shield from the public." Graham cited another damning document, "a 16-page CIA report titled 'Saudi Based Financial Support for Terrorist Organizations,'" When 9/11 families filed a Freedom of Information Act suit demanding the document (it was cited in the notes of the 9/11 Commission report), "our own government redacted every word of substantive text."

Graham concluded: "What the Joint Inquiry learned—and has emerged since—shows where the proverbial finger of suspicion points. It points to Saudi Arabia, and we need to know the full truth."