

# Capitol Hill Press Conference Slams Obama as a 9/11 Liar

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Edward Spannaus

Sept. 9—Congressmen Walter Jones (R-N.C.), Stephen Lynch (D-Mass.) and Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) joined seven family members of those killed in the 9/11 attacks, in a powerful Capitol Hill press conference today, reiterating the demand that President Obama fulfill his promise and declassify the 28 pages of the original Joint Congressional Inquiry on the 9/11 attacks, which reportedly expose the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in supporting the terrorists who carried out the attacks. The three Members of Congress are co-sponsors of H. Res. 428, which calls on President Obama to release the 28 pages, and they have called on all Members of the House and Senate to read the hidden chapter. (There will be full coverage in our next issue.)

Jones opened the press conference referring to the previous day's CNN coverage (see below), revealing the fight to get President Obama to release the 28 pages, and detailing evidence of Saudi involvement in the attacks. Jones castigated members of the Senate, especially those from New England, New York, and Northern Virginia, saying that they owe this to their constituents, noting ironically that even members of the Saudi government have, in the past, supported the release of the pages.

Lynch commended the strength of the 9/11 families, and rejected the claim that the pages are classified as a matter of national security, while Massie called for a full discussion of foreign policy, noting that the U.S. has fought two wars in Iraq, and now is about

to fight a third. We must look at who is behind terrorism in the long term, Massie added, in Iraq, in Syria, and the Sunni militant groups.

## 9/11 Families Speak

The strength and pivotal role of the 9/11 families couldn't have been better demonstrated, when each member spoke, including Terry Strada, co-chair of 9/11 Families United for Justice Against Terrorism (JASTA), and her two children, Kaitlyn and Justin, along with Matthew Sellitto, Abraham Scott, Emanuel Lipscomb, and Ellen Saracini. The courage of the Strada children was especially compelling. The Kaitlin Strada said, "At 17 years old, why should I live in a world without answers?"



EIRNS/Alicia Cerritani

*Rep. Walter Jones tells a reporter at the press conference: There is NO EXCUSE for Senators to ignore the issue of the suppressed 28 pages of the 9/11 report. Joining him, left to right, members of the 9/11 families: Ellen Saracini; Terry, Justin, and Kaitlin Strada; and Abraham Scott.*

Terry Strada said, “We live in fear every day, not knowing when it will come again,” referring specifically to the current threat of ISIS and other terrorist groups. She added, “*Not* releasing the 28 pages is a threat to national security.”

There was also severe harsh of Obama. Matthew Sellitto reiterated several times that Obama is a liar, that he broke his promise. They all urged everyone to call Congress, and demand that the game-playing be stopped, saying we must do the right thing, for the sake of our nation.

### Breakout Coverage of 28 Pages

In the period leading up to the Sept. 9 press conference, an unprecedented level of public coverage of the 28-pages fight emerged, including a story on CNN focusing on Obama’s role, and a story on the *New Yorker* website, reporting, for the first time, the hysterical arguments against declassification coming from the Bush-Cheney gang.

On Aug. 15, former Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) was interviewed on public television in Miami by Helen Ferre, who then wrote about the interview in a column in the Aug. 30 *Miami Herald*.

In the interview, Graham said that it is easier to understand the coverup by the Bush Administration, because of its close personal relations with the Saudi ruling family, but why the Obama Administration has continued this, Graham declared, “is an enigma.” Graham went on to say that “there doesn’t seem to be any compelling reason—national security or otherwise—to keep this information from the American people.”

“It isn’t credible that 19 people—most that could not speak English well and did not have experience in the United States—could carry out such a complicated task without external assistance,” Graham told Ferre.

Ferre wrote that Graham “is befuddled” as to why the Obama Administration won’t release the 28 pages that may expose how members of the Saudi royal family aided and abetted the terrorists who were living in Florida prior to the September 2001 attacks. She added, “Graham believes that there was a deliberate effort to cover up Saudi involvement in the tragedy of 9/11 by the Bush Administration, one, he says, that the Obama administration appears to support.”

Ferre wrote about the foreigners, including a couple of Americans, who have joined terrorist groups fighting in Syria and Iraq; one of those had lived in Florida, as had Mohammed Atta and other 9/11 terrorists. She

noted that Americans have tremendous capacity to turn the page on events and forget what they have seen, but Graham has been fighting both the Bush and Obama administrations to declassify the 28 pages “that may detail and expose the efforts of members of the Saudi Arabian royal family in aiding and abetting these terrorists in Florida, many who were themselves Saudi.” She noted that the U.S.-Saudi relationship, which Graham calls “perfidious,” is now shifting, and she asked: “Given the suspicious Saudi link with 9/11 terrorists, why the United States did not rethink this alliance before? The American public needs to know. The families of those who were lost to the 9/11 attacks or those who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq deserve an answer as well.”<sup>1</sup>

On Sept. 5, the *Boston Globe*, in an article entitled, “U.S. Wants More from Saudis in Fight against Extremists,” cited Congressman Lynch’s role in the fight to declassify the 28 pages, quoting him as saying: “I think the Saudis—and there are different elements within the Saudi leadership—have been promoting some of the Sunni factions that have been challenging Assad up in Syria. . . . I think the Saudis in some capacity have been supporting the Al Nusra Front financially. . . . There are probably a fair amount of Saudi citizens fighting for that group. Some of them went over to the Islamic State when they had success.”

### Obama Stonewalls

The pressure on President Obama dramatically increased in the days before the press conference. On Sept. 7, a statement entitled “Letters from 9/11 Family Group to Obama Go Unanswered” was posted on the recently established 28pages.com website. It began: “On three separate occasions, 9/11 Families United for Justice Against Terrorism has sent letters to President Obama, asking him to declassify the 28-page finding on foreign government support of the 9/11 hijackers. Each letter takes a slightly different approach to pleading for the release of the redacted section of a joint House/Senate intelligence study, but one thing they share in common is the response from the President and the White House: complete silence.

“One would think an organized group of 9/11 family members would at least merit the courtesy of a presidential reply—if only to say he had received their letter

1. A video of the interview is available at: <http://video.wpbt2.org/video/2365310648/>

and would give due consideration to their request. Instead, Obama has opted to ignore them, despite the fact that he has reportedly twice promised 9/11 families he would declassify the 28 pages.”

After outlining the details of how each letter was delivered to the White House—they weren’t just dropped in a mailbox—the statement concluded:

“The Obama White House seems to hope that, by ignoring 9/11 families, demands for 9/11 transparency will fall silent. However, as the group says in the closing of its latest unanswered letter, ‘There is a gathering storm in pursuit of the truth.’ The strength of that gathering storm lies in the growing number of everyday Americans who are contacting Congress and the White House to demand the release of the 28 pages.”

### **White House Responds to CNN**

On Sept. 8, the issue of the 28 pages and President Obama’s failure to keep his promise to release them, was featured on CNN’s “The Lead” program, hosted by Jake Tapper—the first time in many years, if ever, that CNN has covered this story.

Tapper interviewed Bill Doyle, whose son was killed in the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. Doyle described his meeting with Obama in 2011, and then how, after Obama promised to release the 28 pages, Doyle told Obama: “You know something? I’m going to hold you to your word. And I’m not going away.” Later, Doyle declared flat-out, that Obama “broke his promise.”

The CNN story referenced Omar al-Bayoumi, who provided financial assistance to two of the 9/11 hijackers in San Diego, and noted that the 9/11 Commission believed him to be a Saudi intelligence agent.

Also quoted in the CNN report were Bob Graham, who co-chaired the Congressional Joint Inquiry, Tom Kean, who co-chaired the 9/11 Commission, and Rep. Walter Jones.

Tapper noted that the Saudis, 11 years ago, had said they did not object to release of the 28 pages, and the segment concluded with Tapper declaring: “Why the 28 pages remain hidden from the public, remains a mystery.”

Indicating that the Obama White House is feeling the pressure, shortly after the program aired, CNN reported that it had received a statement from National Security Council spokesperson Caitlin Hayden, which said: “Earlier this summer the White House requested that ODNI [Office of the Director of National Intelligence] review the 28 pages from the joint inquiry for

declassification. ODNI is currently coordinating the required interagency review and it is ongoing.”

### **The Cheneyacs React**

On the morning of the press conference, the *New Yorker* website carried a feature on the Saudis and the 28 pages, in its “Daily Comment” section. The story was written by Lawrence Wright, author of a definitive book on al-Qaeda, *The Looming Tower*. Not only did Wright have quotes from Reps. Jones and Lynch identifying the Saudis as the subject of the 28 pages, and calling for their declassification, and from 9/11 Commissioners Tom Kean and Tim Roemer urging that the report be made public, but he also quoted 9/11 Commission staff director Philip Zelikow, the mole for the Bush-Cheney White House who sabotaged the Saudi investigation.<sup>2</sup>

According to the *New Yorker* story, both Zelikow and an unnamed staff assistant vociferously argued against release of the 28 pages. Zelikow said that the Commission’s findings did not substantiate the arguments made by the Congressional Joint Inquiry about Saudi involvement, or the arguments of the 9/11 families in their lawsuit against the Saudis. Zelikow—who went to extraordinary efforts to prevent the Commission members or staff from reviewing the 28 pages, even those who had written them for the Congressional Inquiry (!)—labelled the 28 pages “an agglomeration of preliminary, unvetted reports,” concerning Saudi involvement, and added: “They were wild accusations that needed to be checked out.” Zelikow says he and his staff were unable to prove any official Saudi complicity in the 9/11 attacks, and an unnamed staffer was quoted recommending against declassifying the 28 pages, on the grounds, wrote Wright, that “the release of inflammatory and speculative information could ‘ramp up passions’ and damage U.S. Saudi relations.”

Wright then reviewed the San Diego story, including the payments from then-Saudi Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar’s wife to the wife of Osama Basnan, who had befriended two future hijackers in San Diego. Wright concluded with statements from Massie and Roemer, arguing that public release of the 28 pages is very relevant, in light of the need for an open debate on the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and on what the nation’s response ought to be.

The pressure is building.

2. For an account of Zelikow’s sordid role in the 9/11 Commission, see *EIR*, Aug. 16, 2013.