

Will 9/11 and BAE Derail Cheney's Plan To Bomb Iran?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Two recent events, both occurring in the context of Saudi Arabian King Abdullah's visit to London at the end of October, have once again cast the dark shadows of 9/11 and the BAE scandal over Vice President Dick Cheney. Coupled with mounting opposition to Cheney's war schemes from within the U.S. military and factions of the Bush Administration, as well as from Persian Gulf states, Russia, and even Israel, the spotlight, once again focussed on two of the biggest Cheney-linked scandals, could help derail the Vice President's accelerating drive for a U.S. bombing of Iran, and avert what would certainly devolve into a new Eurasian Hundred Years War.

On Nov. 1, Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, the longtime former Saudi ambassador in Washington, and the current national security advisor to King Abdullah, gave an interview to the Arabic-language satellite TV network Al-Arabiya, in which he made the startling claim that the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks could have been avoided, if the United States had taken Saudi intelligence efforts more seriously.

Bandar claimed that Saudi intelligence was "actively following" most of the 9/11 hijackers "with precision," prior to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. "If U.S. security authorities had engaged their Saudi counterparts in a serious and credible manner, in my opinion, we would have avoided what happened."

Finger-Pointing on 9/11

Bandar's accusations that the U.S. government could have stopped 9/11, had they pursued leads provided by Saudi intelligence, were met with skepticism by some U.S. intelligence officials consulted by *EIR*. They pointed to *EIR*'s own June 29, 2007 revelations, drawn from the 9/11 Commission Report and other sources, that then-Saudi Ambassador Bandar had funnelled more than \$50,000 through two Saudi intel-

ligence operatives, to some of the 9/11 hijackers. One source emphasized that the Bandar payments were so controversial that a 28-page segment of the 9/11 Commission report, dealing with this incident, was classified and blocked, to this day, from publication. But the Prince's charges of U.S. failures, leading to the 9/11 attacks, could signal a rift between the Saudi prince and his "war party" ally Dick Cheney, that could set back the Vice President's schemes to build up a Sunni versus Shi'ite confrontation in the Persian Gulf—a scheme he launched with his November 2006 trip to Riyadh, arranged by Bandar personally.

Whether legitimate or not, Prince Bandar's extraordinary claims mirrored comments made by King Abdullah on Oct. 29, in an interview with the BBC on the eve of his state visit to London. King Abdullah claimed that British authorities also failed to listen to Saudi intelligence warnings about terror plots in England; and the July 7, 2005 London subway bombings, which killed 52 people, could have been prevented, if British authorities had acted on specific warnings passed from Riyadh in advance of the attacks.

U.S. intelligence sources, canvassed by *EIR* following the Bandar and Abdullah statements, reported that the Saudis had been devastated by the public revelation that 15 of the 19 Sept. 11 hijackers had been Saudi nationals, and that they were now launching a public relations offensive to get beyond the stigma. But, the sources observed, the effort to shift the blame for the 9/11 attacks carried considerable risks—for all parties concerned, including the Vice President, who has counted on the Saudis to back up his war plans against Iran.

Bandar's blunt allegations raised some dramatic questions, which echo charges made by Lyndon LaRouche, most recently, during his Oct. 10, 2007 international webcast from Washington, D.C. In his opening remarks, LaRouche de-

clared: "I shall say, that I do know, beyond doubt, that 9/11 was an inside job. It was an inside job on behalf of what the Bush-Cheney Administration represents." Later, LaRouche added, "I know more than I'm saying: With complicity of certain people in Saudi Arabia, with the British Empire, which shares power with Saudi Arabia, through the BAE, a job was done on the United States on 9/11. And we've been living under the heat of that, ever since. That I stand by. Other facts will come out at a suitable time."

With Bandar's charges that U.S. officials failed to cooperate with the Saudis, who were tracking the 9/11 hijackers "with precision," a question must be posed to Vice President Cheney and others inside the Bush White House:

Did the Saudis, in fact, provide the Bush-Cheney Administration with "actionable intelligence" on a pending al-Qaeda attack on America? By July 2001, both the FBI and the CIA were circulating warnings about an al-Qaeda terrorist action. On July 10, 2001, then-CIA director George Tenet and Cofer Black, the Agency's counterterrorism director, met with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Attorney General John Ashcroft, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, to sound the alarms about an imminent al-Qaeda attack, but they were given the "brush-off"—by Rice, in particular.

This led up to the now infamous Aug. 6, 2001 Presidential Daily Briefing, with a section titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike Inside US," which again warned of imminent al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, based on a pattern of U.S.- and foreign-generated intelligence.

Despite all of the FBI and CIA warnings, and the new claims by Prince Bandar that Saudi Arabia had also been warning about pending al-Qaeda attacks on the U.S.A., the Bush-Cheney White House did absolutely nothing to act on the warnings.

Who bears the greatest burden of responsibility within the U.S. government for 9/11, whether or not the Bandar allegations pan out? At the time of the 9/11 attacks, Cheney was the counter-terrorism czar at the White House, a title bestowed on him by President Bush on May 17, 2001—at the very moment that the White House was shelving the findings of the Hart-Rudman U.S. Commission on National Security, which conducted a two-and-a-half year study of America's vulnerability to terrorist attack, and demanded a major overhaul of U.S. domestic security planning and structures.

The Bandar accusations, on the heels of the LaRouche Oct. 10 webcast, are now certain to push the 9/11 matter back onto the front burner, which is particularly bad news for Cheney, whom LaRouche has branded the "Hermann Göring" of the Bush Administration.

The BAE Scandal: Back With a Vengeance

With much pomp and circumstance, King Abdullah paid a state visit to Great Britain during the last week of October, in what was billed as the "Two Kingdoms" celebration. Over 500 people accompanied the King—including Prince Bandar,

Defense Minister Prince Sultan (Bandar's father), Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, and Interior Minister Prince Naif.

The visit once again placed a spotlight on the scandal surrounding the longstanding "Al-Yamamah" arms-for-oil deal between Britain's premier arms manufacturer, BAE Systems, and the Saudis. Vince Cable, the acting leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, boycotted the entire British-Saudi ceremony in protest over the British government's coverup of the BAE scandal, and over Saudi human rights violations.

As one of his last official acts as Prime Minister, Tony Blair had ordered the Serious Fraud Office to shut down its investigation into the Al-Yamamah deal—including the reported \$2 billion in kickbacks paid to Prince Bandar, the architect of the entire arms-for-oil scheme, since the mid-1980s. Just before packing his bags and leaving 10 Downing Street, Blair had signed a new BAE arms deal with the Saudis, worth an estimated \$20 billion.

As *EIR* exclusively revealed earlier this year, the real BAE Al-Yamamah scandal centered around a \$100 billion offshore covert action fund, which was administered by the British, with Saudi complicity and American participation, utilizing the spot market sales of the Saudi oil, paid to BAE for the weapons and support systems. These clandestine funds, according to Bandar's semi-authorized biography, went to a wide range of secret war schemes, including bankrolling the Afghani mujahideen, who battled the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan throughout the 1980s; arming Chad with Soviet-made weapons, to repel a Libyan invasion in the late 1980s; and U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia, bypassing Congressional oversight. Some of the BAE slush funds went to Bandar—and may have even been part of the money that went to some of the 9/11 hijackers, through Saudi intelligence operative Osama Basnan.

According to one U.S. intelligence source, the resurfacing of the BAE Al-Yamamah scandal during the Saudi royal visit to Britain could lead to new frictions between Riyadh and London. In an interview with BBC during the visit, Prince Faisal answered a question about the BAE scandal, saying that the focus of any investigation should be on the party that did the bribing, not on the recipients—i.e., blame BAE for any funny money passed to Prince Bandar.

The BAE scandal remains a subject of serious investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice. So far, according to official sources, the probe is centered around possible BAE violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act—for making the \$2 billion in payoffs to Bandar, via Saudi bank accounts at Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C. If the DOJ investigation were to be expanded to include money laundering, the finances of the Saudi Embassy, during Bandar's more than two decades as ambassador, could be opened to scrutiny. And that is something that Dick Cheney, the Republican National Committee, and a whole lot of others do not wish to see happen.