

Prince Bandar and 9/11

by Jeffrey Steinberg

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Between April 1998 and May 2002, some \$51-73,000 in checks and cashier's checks were provided by the Saudi Ambassador to the United States and his wife to two families in southern California, who in turn bank-rolled at least two of the 9/11 hijackers. The story was investigated by the 9/11 Commission, but never fully resolved, and remains, to this day, one of the key unanswered questions concerning the backing for the worst terrorist attack ever to occur on U.S. soil.

According to numerous news accounts and the records of the 9/11 Commission, in April 1998, a Saudi national named Osama Basnan wrote to the Saudi Embassy in Washington, D.C., seeking help for his wife, Majeda Dweikat, who needed surgery for a thyroid condition. Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, the Saudi Ambassador, wrote a check for \$15,000 to Basnan. Beginning in December 1999, Princess Haifa, the wife of Prince Bandar, began sending regular monthly cashier checks to Majeda Dweikat, in amounts ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,500. Many of these checks were signed over to Manal Bajadr, the wife of Omar al-Bayoumi, another Saudi living in the San Diego area.

Around New Year's Day 2000, two other Saudi nationals, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, arrived at Los Angeles International Airport, where they were greeted by al-Bayoumi, provided with cash, and outfitted with an apartment, Social Security ID cards, and other financial assistance. Al-Bayoumi helped the two Saudi men to enroll in flight schools in Florida. Two months before the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, al-Bayoumi moved to England, and shortly after that, he disappeared altogether. But before his disappearance, and within days of the 9/11 attacks, agents of New Scotland Yard, working in conjunction with the FBI, raided his apartment in England and found papers hidden

beneath the floorboards, according to *Newsweek* magazine, that had the phone numbers of several officials at the Saudi Embassy in Washington. Al-Bayoumi was suspected by the Arab community in the San Diego area of being an agent of Saudi intelligence, which kept tabs on Saudi residents in the area, particularly Saudi students attending college in southern California.

Sources have told *EIR* researchers that Basnan was also long suspected of being an agent for Saudi Arabia's foreign intelligence service. According to the sources, Basnan was arrested for drug possession in southern California and the Saudi government intervened to get the charges dropped; Basnan also befriended Alhazmi and Almihdhar prior to their deaths on American Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon. At one point, the Basnans, the al-Bayoumis, and the two 9/11 hijackers all lived at the Parkwood Apartments in San Diego.

Prince Bandar and Princess Haifa denied they played any role in financing the 9/11 hijackers, and claimed that they were merely providing charitable assistance to the Saudi community in the United States. The two co-chairs of the Senate Intelligence Committee at the time, Robert Graham (D-Fla.) and Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), accused the FBI of failing to fully pursue this "9/11 money trail." Sources told *EIR* that the FBI refused to allow the committee to interview the FBI investigators who had probed the Basnan and al-Bayoumi links.

While Congressional and law enforcement sources insist to *EIR* investigators that all available leads were pursued and no compelling evidence of Saudi involvement in 9/11 was established, other U.S. intelligence sources maintain that many fruitful areas of investigation simply reached dead-ends before any final conclusions could be drawn. And these sources report that some of the al-Yamamah funds, including some funds that passed through the Riggs Bank accounts in Washington, financed a migration of Muslim Brotherhood members to the United States, throughout the 1980s and 1990s. That hardly constitutes a smoking gun, these sources emphasize, but raises serious unanswered questions, particularly in light of the fact that the official staff reports of the 9/11 Commission featured a detailed debriefing of Khaled Sheikh Mohammed, the purported mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, who admitted that he had been a member of the Muslim Brotherhood since he was 16 years old.