

Graham, 9/11 Families: Government Must ‘Come Clean’ on Saudi Links

by Edward Spannaus

June 10—“I am deeply troubled by what appears to me to be a persistent effort by the FBI to conceal from the American people information concerning possible Saudi support of the 9/11 attacks,” wrote former Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.), who was co-chairman of the Congressional Joint Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks, in a declaration filed in Federal court in Florida the last week of May.

Graham was joined in his call for full disclosure, by the organization representing 6,600 survivors and relatives of those injured and killed in the 9/11 attacks, who are also demanding that the FBI reveal all its information about the investigation of a Saudi family in Sarasota, Fla., which has been linked to the 9/11 hijackers.

FBI’s Contradictory Claims

Graham’s and the 9/11 Families’ new demands were triggered by FBI statements made in a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit pending in Federal court in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. After the FBI at first had denied that there was any connection between a Saudi family whose home had been visited by some of the 9/11 hijackers, and which then fled Sarasota shortly before the 9/11 attacks, the FBI now claims that disclosure of certain classified information about the Saudi family “would reveal current specific targets of the FBI’s national security investigations.”

In other words: “We never found anything, and there’s nothing there, but we can’t tell you about it, because it would endanger national security.”

The FBI’s preposterous claims come in a sworn declaration as part of a Justice Department motion to dismiss the FOIA suit brought by the *Broward Bulldog*, which, along with journalist Anthony Summers, discovered and published, in 2011, an account of the Sarasota links of the 9/11 hijackers (see [EIR](#), Sept. 23, 2011).

The *Bulldog* story showed that two weeks before the 9/11 hijackings, a wealthy Saudi family which

had been in contact with 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta and others, abruptly fled from their luxury home near Sarasota, leaving all their possessions—from fresh food to expensive automobiles. The house was owned by Saudi financier Esam Ghazzawi, and was occupied by his daughter and her husband, Abdulazzi al-Hijjii. (Al-Hijjii then went to London, where he worked for the Saudi Aramco state oil company.)

According to the *Bulldog* story, also published in the *Miami Herald*, law enforcement agents had found records of telephone calls with a number of the hijackers, including Atta. Security records of the gated community showed visits by vehicles owned by Atta and by another hijacker, Zaid Jarrah. Atta, Jarrah, and a third hijacker, Marwan al-Shehhi, were all living within 10 miles of Ghazzawi’s house, and were taking flying lessons in nearby Venice. Analysis of phone records from Ghazzawi’s house showed contact with 11 other terrorism suspects, including Walid al-Shehhi, who was with Atta on the first plane to hit the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

As the *Miami Herald* put it: “The government’s latest court filings, thick with veiled references to foreign counterintelligence operations and targets, deepen the mystery about [the FBI’s] once-secret investigation.”

After at first claiming that it had no documents relevant to the FOIA request, the FBI then “found” 35 pages of records, and has released 31 of them, with many deletions. One of the documents, first disclosed a few months ago, directly contradicted the Bureau’s earlier claims, by stating that the investigation had “revealed many connections” between the al-Hijjii family and individuals associated with 9/11. When the *Bulldog/Herald* story was first published, the FBI had issued a formal statement denying any connection between the Ghazzawi-Hijjii family and 9/11.



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Former Sen. Bob Graham, co-chairman of the Congressional Joint Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks.

Graham Charges FBI Interference

In a declaration filed in Federal court in Florida on May 31, Graham charged that the FBI's failure to provide the Joint Inquiry with documents concerning its investigation into the Saudi family living in Sarasota, and that family's documented connections to some of the 9/11 hijackers, had impeded and interfered with the Joint Inquiry's investigation, and also with the probe conducted by the 9/11 Commission appointed by President George W. Bush and Congress. According to Graham, the fact that the 9/11 Commission stated that it had "found no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded al Qaeda," shows that the Commission was not provided with the information about the FBI's investigation in Sarasota.

Graham also recounts how, in 2011, he had asked President Obama's counterterrorism chief, John Brennan, to look into the FBI's Sarasota investigation. Graham says that he received an e-mail from an assistant to Brennan, "indicating that Mr. Brennan was well aware of the Sarasota house/occupants and chose not to include it in the final 9/11 Commission report because it didn't stick to the wall." (!) Graham says that he was told that the Commission's files did not contain any records regarding the FBI's Sarasota investigation.

In his court declaration, Graham also points out that the section of the Joint Inquiry's report that reportedly

deals with Saudi support for the hijackers is still being withheld from the public. "The 28-page section of the Inquiry's Final Report dealing with 'sources of foreign support for some of the Sept. 11 hijackers,' remains classified to this day even though declassification would not, in my opinion, endanger national security."

'Stop Protecting Saudi Potentates'

Almost immediately, the group representing survivors and relatives of those injured and killed in the 9/11 attacks issued its own statement.

"The Steering Committee of the 9/11 Families United To Bankrupt Terrorism endorses the efforts of investigative reporters Dan Christensen and Anthony Summers and calls on the FBI to come clean regarding an investigation involving a Saudi family, former residents of Sarasota, Fla., who may have provided aid to the 9/11 hijackers," says a statement issued on June 7.

Sharon Premoli of Dorset, Vt., who was pulled from the rubble of the World Trade Center, said: "After almost 12 years, the time has come for the Department of Justice, the FBI and this administration to give the American people access to the truth about who financed the murder of 3,000 people on 9/11. It is simply implausible that release of this information would interfere with any current national security investigation. Rather, the FBI's obstruction creates at least the perception of a cover-up to protect Saudi potentates."

Although there is some question as to who has the power to declassify and release the 28 pages dealing with the Saudis—Congress or the Administration—the families put the onus directly on Obama:

"First President Obama promises me personally to release the 28 pages removed from the Congressional committees' report and doesn't, and now the FBI is pulling this stunt," said Bill Doyle, father of Joseph M. Doyle, who died in the World Trade Center. "The FBI keeps contradicting itself. On one hand, they say they found no evidence connecting the Sarasota Saudis to 9/11. On the other hand, they say releasing the information would threaten national security. But they can't have it both ways. And the Courts should not let them get away with it."