

# Abu Zubaydeh Case Shows Fraud Of NSA's Dragnet Surveillance

by Edward Spannaus

June 17—The argument is often heard—from President Obama, to certain Congressional Republicans and Democrats—that the National Security Agency (NSA)'s dragnet surveillance, spying on all Americans, “keeps us safe from terrorism.” Obama has been insistent in defending the program of vacuuming up all telecommunications, allegedly to detect and disrupt terrorist plots.

A particularly outrageous version of this argument was made by former Vice President Dick Cheney, in an interview with Fox News Sunday on June 16. Cheney repeatedly claimed that if we had had the NSA spy program before Sept. 11, 2001, we could have found out about the two Saudi hijackers who were in San Diego, and stopped the 9/11 attacks. As *EIR* has repeatedly documented, these were the two hijackers who were financed by Saudi Princess Haifa, the wife of Prince Bandar, with the funds going through a suspected agent of Saudi intelligence; the hijackers were living in the home of an FBI informant, on whose phone calls the NSA was already eavesdropping!<sup>1</sup>

The problem was not a lack of intelligence: It was a willful blindness to (or complicity with) the British-Saudi terrorist axis—which continues to this day.

Both the Bush-Cheney Administration and Obama Administration have lied about the actual source of almost all of today's terrorism, and have ignored and suppressed the evidence of Saudi sponsorship. Were



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*Had the evidence in the case of Abu Zubaydeh (shown here) been followed through, the financing and sponsorship of al-Qaeda would have been revealed, and the dragnet surveillance of Americans would be exposed for what it is: the imposition of a police state over the United States.*

this evidence pursued, there would be no need for such broad, indiscriminate surveillance in search of terrorists.

The case of Abu Zubaydeh is exemplary. Had the evidence in that case been followed through, the financing and sponsorship of al-Qaeda would have been revealed, and the dragnet surveillance of all the phone calls, e-mails, and other electronic communications of all Americans which is being conducted today, would be exposed for what it is: the imposition of a police state over the United States itself.

## The Interrogation of Zubaydeh

When Saudi citizen Abu Zubaydeh (actual name, Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Husayn) was captured in Pakistan on March 28, 2002, he was regarded as the number-three official of al-Qaeda, its chief of operations. During the raid in which he was captured, Zubaydeh was severely wounded, shot in the stomach, groin, and thigh. Once positive identification was accomplished, he was rushed to a safehouse where his medical condition was stabilized.

What happened during the next days and months has been the subject of numerous accounts. It is generally agreed that, within days, the top officials of the Bush Administration, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, determined that they would deploy a special CIA interrogation team, along with contractors, to apply what became known as “enhanced interrogation” methods to Zubaydeh. Six months after capture, he was reportedly the first captive to be subjected to waterboarding—no fewer than 83 times!

1. See, for example, “9/11 Secrets Partially Revealed,” *EIR*, Sept. 16, 2011; “Explosive Evidence of Saudi-9/11 Link,” *EIR*, March 2, 2012; “LaRouche: Stop the Coverup of Brit-Saudi Role in 9/11,” *EIR*, March 15, 2013; “Re-open the Saudi File!” *EIR*, April 12, 2013.

However, the most dramatic account of Zubaydeh's interrogation is one that has received little attention—and is not even cited in the various official investigations of the 9/11 attacks. It was reported by author Gerald Posner in his 2003 book *Why America Slept*.<sup>2</sup>

According to Posner's account, three days after his capture, Zubaydeh, who was refusing to cooperate with interrogators, was secretly flown to a medical facility in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and placed in a room which was carefully made up to look like a medical room in a Saudi jail. Two Arab-Americans played the part of Saudi interrogators.

The CIA ran this "false flag" operation, Posner says, in the belief that Zubaydeh would be so terrified of being in Saudi captivity, and of being executed by his captors, that he would become more cooperative with his American captors once returned to their custody. In addition to intravenous devices being used as various types of on-again, off-again painkillers, Zubaydeh was given a new IV with sodium pentothal, often referred to as "truth serum."

"What transpired in the next hour took the American investigators completely by surprise," Posner writes. "When Zubaydeh was confronted with men passing themselves off as Saudi security officers, his reaction was not fear, but instead relief." He suddenly started talking animatedly, and told the interrogators he was happy to see them, and he asked them to call a senior member of the Saudi royal family, giving them the home and cell phone numbers—from memory—for Prince Ahmed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz. "He will tell you what to do," Zubaydeh eagerly told his captors.

(Prince Ahmed, a nephew of King Fahd, and one of the most westernized of the Saudi Princes, was well known in London, where he ran the Saudi Research and Marketing Group and other businesses,<sup>3</sup> as well as in the U.S., where he was known as a collector of thoroughbred racing horses. He was one of the Saudis who were allowed by President Bush to fly out of the U.S. just days after the 9/11 attacks, when all other flights were grounded.)

U.S. intelligence officials were initially skeptical, thinking Zubaydeh was just throwing out Ahmed's name to buy time. After leaving him alone, but under

conditions intended to increase his pain and disorientation, the interrogators returned, and told Zubaydeh that Prince Ahmed had denied any knowledge of him, that the phone numbers were wrong, and that he would be executed for disparaging a member of the royal family.

## The 9/11 Rosetta Stone

"It was at that point that some of the secrets behind 9/11 came rushing out of Zubaydeh's mouth," Posner writes. In what one investigator called the "Rosetta Stone of 9/11," Zubaydeh laid out the details of what he called his "work" for senior Saudi and Pakistani officials. According to one of the U.S. agents involved with the case, Zubaydeh spoke to his interrogators "as if they were the ones in trouble if they didn't take him seriously."

Zubaydah said the Saudi connection ran through Prince Turki al-Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, the longtime head of Saudi intelligence, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID). He said that Osama bin Laden had personally told him of a 1991 meeting at which Turki agreed to let bin Laden leave Saudi Arabia and to provide him with secret funds as long as al-Qaeda refrained from promoting jihad in the kingdom. Zubaydeh said that he personally attended a 1996 meeting in Pakistan, where bin Laden struck a deal with a high-ranking Pakistani Air Force officer, Mushaf Ali Mir, closely tied to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to procure protection, arms, and supplies for al-Qaeda. Zubaydah told his interrogators that the Pakistani arrangement was blessed by the Saudis.

Zubaydeh also described another meeting in Kandahar in 1998, in which Prince Turki and the Taliban struck a deal whereby Turki promised that "more Saudi aid would flow to the Taliban, and the Saudis would never ask for bin Laden's extradition, so long as al-Qaeda kept its long-standing promise of directing fundamentalism away from the Kingdom."

Posner says that Zubaydeh not only regularly sent funds to al-Qaeda, but that he personally also dealt with members of the royal family other than Prince Ahmed. Here he named, and gave the private telephone numbers for, Prince Sultan bin Faisal and Prince Fahd bin Turki.

When the "Saudi" interrogators told Zubaydeh he was lying, he reeled off more names and details of meetings, which, he said, would confirm his friendship with members of the royal family.

His interrogators then told him that whatever he

2. Gerald Posner, *Why America Slept: The Failure to Prevent 9/11* (New York: Random House, 2003).

3. *EIR* investigators had come across the Saudi Research and Marketing Group and its connections to Osama bin Laden during their 1990s investigations of London-based terrorist networks.

claimed, it was all changed by the 9/11 attacks on the United States. “You have no friends after that,” they told him.

Posner continues: “To the surprise of the CIA team watching the event unfold live on video, Zubaydeh said that nothing had changed because both Prince Ahmed and Mir knew beforehand that an attack was scheduled for American soil for that day. They just didn’t know what it would be, nor did they want to know more than that.”

According to Posner’s account, the CIA conducted an extensive probe of Zubaydeh’s claims. “Within a month the Agency had a preliminary report. They had found nothing that could definitely prove Zubaydeh a liar. And they had uncovered some minor corroborating evidence about the times and places of the meetings he had mentioned.” The CIA “delicately” passed along some of its suspicions to their counterparts in Saudi and Pakistani intelligence. “In less than a week, both countries returned with remarkably similar answers. They assured the U.S. that they had thoroughly investigated the claims, and they were false and malicious.”<sup>4</sup>

Not everyone in the CIA was convinced by these denials, Posner says, but creating an international incident and straining relations with these countries, “when they were critical to the war in Afghanistan and the buildup for possible war in Iraq, was out of the question.”

As Col. Lawrence Wilkerson (ret.), former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, stated, referring to the Bush Administration in 2002, “Its principal priority for intelligence was not aimed at pre-empting another terrorist attack on the U.S., but discovering a smoking gun linking Iraq and al-Qaeda.”

### Disappearing Witnesses

Within four months, according to Posner, and corroborated by many other sources, three of the Saudi Princes named by Zubaydeh were dead:

- Prince Ahmed bin Salman died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 43, following abdominal surgery, the Saudi news agency reported on July 22, 2002.
- Prince Sultan bin Faisal died the next day in an

4. In their book *The Eleventh Day*, authors Anthony Summers and Robin Swan report that former CIA officer John Kiriakou, who was involved with the Zubaydeh case, told them that his colleagues in the CIA believed that what Zubaydeh said was true. “We had known for years,” he told Summers and Swan, “that Saudi royals—I should say elements of the royal family—were funding al-Qaeda” (p. 419).



Sauditv2.tx

*Prince Ahmed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz (shown here) was named by Zubaydeh as one of the members of the Saudi royal family who would vouch for him. Within four months of the interrogation, three of the princes named by Zubaydeh, including bin Salman, were dead.*

automobile accident, while traveling to the funeral of his cousin, Prince Ahmed.

- Prince Fahd bin Turki was found dead a week later, having “died of thirst” while traveling in the Saudi Summer heat.
- Mushaf Ali Mir, by then Pakistan’s Air Marshal, perished in a plane crash in clear weather over the North-West Frontier Province, along with his wife and 15 others, in February, 2003.

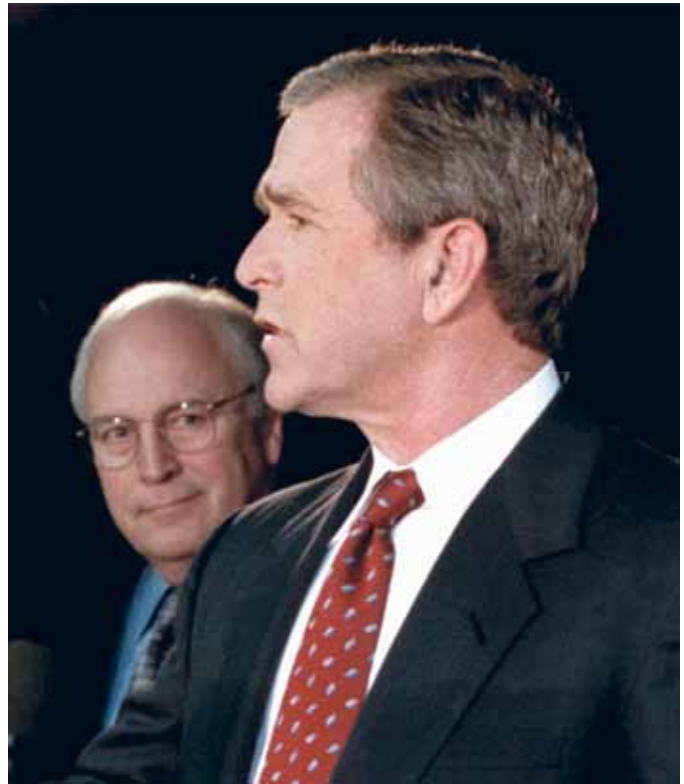
As to Prince Turki al-Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, he was dismissed as head of Saudi intelligence ten days before the 9/11 attacks, and went on to become the Saudi Ambassador to Britain.

### ‘Pocket Litter’

*New York Times* reporter James Risen, in his 2006 book *State of War*, provides another piece of the Abu Zubaydeh story. He reports that when Zubaydeh was captured in 2002, among the items he was carrying on his person were two bank cards, one from Saudi Arabia, and one from Kuwait. “This was an extremely rare find,” Risen writes, because it showed that Zubaydeh, a



White House/Chuck Kennedy



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*The Obama Administration, continuing the police-state practices of the Bush-Cheney regime, maintains the coverup of the Saudi role in 9/11. Were the evidence pursued, there would be no excuse for the indiscriminate surveillance of millions of Americans.*

top lieutenant of bin Laden, “had access to Western-style accounts in major financial institutions in the Persian Gulf.” This was the only case in which such evidence was found.

“But something very odd happened when the FBI and CIA team on the ground in Pakistan swept up Abu Zubaydeh’s personal belongings and bundled them back to the United States for examination,” Risen says. “There is little evidence that an aggressive investigation of the cards was ever conducted. . . . It is not clear whether an investigation of the cards simply fell through the cracks, or whether they were ignored because no one wanted to know the answers about connections between al-Qaeda and important figures in the Middle East—particularly in Saudi Arabia.”

Risen points out that there is no evidence that Zubaydeh was ever questioned about the bank cards. One source told Risen that the cards “were never fully exploited,” which the source attributed to “incompetence”—a strange assertion, given the massive resources which have been devoted to investigations of terrorist financing since 9/11.

Eventually, Risen says, American investigators in

the field recruited a Muslim financier with ties to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and Saudi intelligence, to look into the case. He reported that his Saudi sources told him a “stunning” story: that around the time of Zubaydeh’s capture, “Saudi intelligence officials had seized all of the records related to the card from the Saudi financial institution in question; the records then disappeared. There was no longer any way to trace the money that had gone into the account.”

### **Destroying the Evidence**

According to many undisputed accounts, Zubaydeh was subsequently shipped off to Thailand or another CIA “black site,” where he was the first U.S. prisoner to be subjected to the torture technique known as waterboarding, along with other techniques such as forced nudity, stress positions, physical assaults, prolonged confinement in small dark boxes, and deprivation of sleep and solid food. Some sources say that Zubaydeh provided no information of value under waterboarding, whereas he had provided useful information under conventional interrogation methods. Iraq was one of areas Zubaydeh was later questioned about, but there is no

evidence that he was further interrogated about the Saudi role.

Of course, the best evidence of what occurred during Zubaydeh's interrogation, were the CIA videotapes of the interrogation—which were destroyed in 2005. When the destruction of the tapes was disclosed in 2007, the assumption was that they were destroyed to conceal the interrogation methods used. But Posner called this a “coincidence of coincidence,” that the tapes were destroyed that could have proved whether his account involving the Saudi royal family was correct or not. “How convenient,” Posner commented.<sup>5</sup>

In 2010, when former CIA Director Porter Goss said that he had personally approved the decision to destroy the tapes, Posner commented on his personal blog: “Read Chapter 19 in my book *Why America Slept*, and you'll get an idea of why the tapes were destroyed.”<sup>6</sup>

5. “A Question About Those Destroyed CIA Tapes,” David Frum's Diary, National Review Online, Dec. 7, 2007.

6. Gerald Posner, “More on CIA coverup of Abu Zubaydah interrogations,” April 18, 2010, on [geraldposner.blogspot.com](http://geraldposner.blogspot.com).

## 10 Years Later

An LPAC-TV Feature Film

Eight months before the September 11, 2001 attacks, Lyndon LaRouche forecast that the United States was at high risk for a Reichstag Fire event, an event that would allow those in power to manage, through dictatorial means, an economic and social crisis that they were otherwise incompetent to handle. We are presently living in the wake of that history.

<http://larouchepac.com/10yearslater>



Except for occasional references, the story of Abu Zubaydeh's revelations about Saudi funding and support for 9/11 has disappeared from public view. It is not recounted in any of the official accounts of the 9/11 attacks. *Time* magazine raised the question in 2003, of whether this was part of the material in the suppressed 28 pages in the final report of the Joint Congressional Inquiry on the 9/11 attacks.

The later 9/11 Commission Report, which exonerates the Saudis, never mentions the portion of the Zubaydeh interrogations referring to the Saudi royal family, and Posner wrote in a later book, *Secrets of the Kingdom: The Inside Story of the Secret Saudi-U.S. Connection* (2005), that the materials were never provided to the Commission.

Confirmation of this later came from Philip Zelikow, the Commission's lead investigator, in a 2007 memorandum to the Commission's co-chairmen, in which he noted that the Commission had specifically asked the CIA for information concerning “press allegations that Abu Zubaydeh had referred to a Saudi prince in his interrogations,” and that “We cannot find a record of the CIA's response.”

Zubaydeh was reportedly transferred to the Guantanamo prison camp in September 2003, and held in a secret “prison within the prison.” He was moved out of Guantanamo in 2004, for fear that a recent Supreme Court decision might require that he be given access to a lawyer. By 2006, he was back in Guantanamo, where he has been held ever since. He is one of those prisoners against whom no charges have ever been brought, and who is never expected to go to trial.

Zubaydeh is not in good shape. His lawyer, Joseph Margulies, was quoted in 2009 as saying that Zubaydeh's “mental grasp is slipping away,” and that he suffers from “permanent brain damage” as a result of war injuries and his treatment by the CIA, including extended isolation.

But, it doesn't matter to some. The consensus of most today, is that Abu Zubaydeh was never very important: According to the Obama Administration, in a U.S. Justice Department memorandum in 2009, he was never a member of al-Qaeda, and he was at best “a personnel clerk” and a “travel agent” (!).<sup>7</sup>

Move along, folks. Nothing to see here.

7. See the “Abu Zubaydah” entry in Wikipedia, for a summary and documentation of the changing depictions of Zubaydeh.