

Graham: Hijackers Needed The Saudi Support Network

In a Sept. 15, 2011 interview with Democracy Now!, former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham said the following:

“One of the questions around 9/11 is whether these 19 hijackers were operating alone or whether they had a support network that assisted them and gave them anonymity. It’s been my feeling that it was very unlikely that they could have been successful without such a network. We know a great deal about the network component that existed in San Diego. What we’ve just learned is about another pod of this network in Sarasota.

“What we know to date is that there was a wealthy Saudi family living in a gated community near Sarasota, which had numerous contacts with Atta, the leader of the hijackers, and two others who were doing their [airline] pilot training near Sarasota. We also know that this family left the United States under what appear to be very urgent circumstances on August the 30th, 2001, just before 9/11.”

When asked how his concerns about the Saudi role in 9/11 had developed, Graham responded:

“Well, it started with the disbelief that 19 people, most of whom didn’t speak English, had never been in the United States, could have come here, plotted, practiced, and then executed such a complex plan as 9/11. My assumption had been that they had some support system that was already in place in the United States, which facilitated their activities. We learned a lot about such a facilitation in San Diego.

Now we’re beginning to learn about Sarasota. The question in my mind is, what happened in places like Arlington, Virginia; Paterson, New Jersey; Phoenix, Arizona; Delray Beach, Florida, where we know hijackers lived for a considerable period of time? Were there similar facilitators in those communities?

“Right after the first Persian Gulf War, the monarchy in Saudi Arabia became very concerned that they were going to be the next Iran, a youth-led revolt. In order to avoid that, one of the steps they took was to begin to establish monitors in those areas of the world where there were significant numbers of Saudi youth, particularly college and university students.

“One of those places was San Diego. The man who was listed by the FBI, described prior to 9/11 as a Saudi agent, had the responsibility of that monitoring in Southern California, but he also, in January of 2000, took on a second task, which was to provide assistance to two Saudis who had recently entered the country. We know that they had been very important and experienced operatives of al-Qaeda, because, among other things, they had just attended a summit of terrorists held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the first week in January in 2000. Bayoumi, the agent in San Diego, and Bassnan, who was the successor to Bayoumi, provided substantial assistance to these two men.

“Now, it appears in Sarasota that the facilitators may not have come from the same network of persons who were monitoring students, but rather from people who were close to the [Saudi] royal family and were considered reliable, and who were given this assignment of helping hijackers.”