

Florida Suit Could Rip Cover Off Anglo-Saudi Role in 9/11

by Edward Spannaus

Aug. 25—A Freedom of Information Act lawsuit pending in Florida, seeking information on a wealthy Saudi family, who were living in Sarasota, and who fled from the U.S. just prior to the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks, could further expose the Saudi support network which made the 9/11 attacks possible. The Sarasota family had close ties to the Saudi royal family.

This is the second node of the Saudi 9/11 support network to surface; the first was discovered in San Diego during 2002 by investigators for the Congressional Joint Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks (see *EIR*, Aug. 16, 2013).

The Florida lawsuit, in conjunction with efforts underway in Congress to force disclosure of the suppressed 28 pages of the Congressional Joint Inquiry, could blow the lid off the 12-year Bush-Obama coverup of the British-Saudi sponsorship of the 9/11 attacks.

In mid-July, the Obama Justice Department filed papers in Federal court in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., acknowledging that the FBI's Tampa office has more than 15,352 documents, which probably contain "hundreds of thousands of pages of records related to the 9/11 investigation." The Tampa field office covers 18 counties in central Florida, including Sarasota.

According to court documents, the FBI had previously provided no indication that the Tampa area had any significant connection with the 9/11 investigation. The Congressional Joint Inquiry mentions Tampa only once, in noting that hijacker Mohamed Atta had traveled through there in January 2001; it also cites the fact that Atta had trained, along with another hijacker, at a

flight school in nearby Venice. But, according to an analysis done by the plaintiffs in the FOIA suit, it appears that the FBI had over 2,500 documents pertaining to its 9/11 investigation, filed in just one week's time—between Sept. 19 and Sept. 25, 2001—indicating that it had conducted an extensive investigation in the Tampa area, and that it knows a lot more than it has let on.

Saudi 'Aid and Assistance' for 9/11

Brought by the online Broward Bulldog news site and its founder Dan Christenson, the FOIA suit seeks the disclosure of FBI documents "concerning persons who may have provided aid and assistance to the terrorists in the days and years leading to the [9/11] attack."

Explaining its objective very clearly, the complaint in the lawsuit declares: "The records are sought to determine whether the FBI uncovered evidence that in Sept. 2001, Saudi nationals living in Sarasota, Florida had close ties with high-ranking Saudi government officials, supported al-Qaeda, provided material aid and comfort to the terrorists who carried out the 9/11 attacks, and then left the United States abruptly just days before the 9/11 attacks took place.

"Furthermore, the records are sought to determine whether the FBI, in order to protect the Saudi government or for other reasons, concealed or withheld such evidence from Congress, other U.S. government officials responsible for investigating the 9/11 attacks, the American public and news media."

The Sarasota connection to the 9/11 attacks only

emerged ten years later, in 2011, when British author and investigator Anthony Summers approached Christenson and the Broward Bulldog for help in researching leads that tied a number of the hijackers to Florida, and to aviation schools there. Summers' investigations had identified certain Saudis living in Sarasota with links to both the Saudi royal family and to the 9/11 hijackers, namely Saudi financier Esam Ghazzawi and his wife, who owned a high-end home in a gated community at 4224 Escondito Circle, and their daughter and her husband Abdulaziz al-Hijji.

As a result of their collaboration with Summers, the Bulldog and other news outlets began publishing a series of articles beginning in September 2011, which showed not only extensive ties between the residents of the Escondito Circle house and a number of the 9/11 hijackers, but which also showed that the FBI had investigated the Sarasota connection, but never reported it to the Congressional Joint Inquiry or to the 9/11 Commission.

Ghazzawi had first come to public attention in the West during the 1990s investigations of the terror-linked Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), when it was disclosed that he was holding (or hiding) assets of Saudi Prince Fahd bin Salman, who died less than two months before the 9/11 attacks. Prince Fahd's younger brother, Prince Ahmed bin Salman, was one of the Saudi princes identified by al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaydeh as directly financing al-Qaeda; three of the princes turned up dead within months of Zubaydeh's admissions.¹

The head of security for the gated community where the Ghazzawi house was located, reported that his records of vehicles and visitors entering the community and visiting the Ghazzawi house included hijacker-pilots Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Ziad Jarrah, hijacker Walid al-Shehhi; and Adnan G. El-Shukrijumah, who was identified in a 2010 indictment as a leader of al-Qaeda's external operations program, and a planner of the foiled 2009 plot to bomb New York City subways. Subsequent investigations showed that additional 9/11 hijackers had been in contact by telephone with the Ghazzawi house.

'No Connection,' or 'Many Connections'

With all this, one might expect the Sarasota-Saudi connection to have been a major focus of investigation by the FBI and other agencies. Nonetheless, the FBI

1. "See, Edward Spannaus, "Abu Zubaydeh Case Shows Fraud of NSA'S Dragnet Surveillance," *EIR*, June 21, 2013; these facts are also cited in the Bulldog's FOIA complaint.

issued a statement shortly after publication of the initial Broward Bulldog article, stating that "There was no connection found to the 9/11 plot." Former Florida Sen. Bob Graham, who terms the Sarasota disclosures "the most important thing to surface about 9/11 in the last seven or eight years," said that nothing about the Sarasota investigation had been reported to the Congressional Joint Inquiry by the FBI. Former Congressman Lee Hamilton, chairman of the 9/11 Commission, likewise said that the Commission was never told anything about the Sarasota connection.

But last year, after the Bulldog sued the FBI and Justice Department, the FBI released a handful of records, including an April 2002 report that said that its investigation of the Escondito Circle residence and "of the [deleted] family revealed many connections between the [deleted] family and individuals associated with the terrorist attacks of 09/11/2001." The FBI documents also said that "a [deleted] family member . . . was a flight student at Huffman Aviation"—a flight school attended by at least two of the 9/11 hijacker-pilots, Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi.

Now, in its latest court filing, the FBI has admitted having over 15,000 documents on 9/11 in its Tampa office. The DoJ filing states: "The FBI's Tampa office alone has more than 15,352 documents (serials), which together contain, potentially, hundreds of thousands of pages of records related to the 9/11 investigation." While admitting this, the DoJ and FBI are stonewalling the Bulldog's request for a more thorough search of these documents for relevant information.

The Bulldog is very clear as to what it is looking for. "For example," their lawyers write, in arguing for a more specific document search, "if any one of the documents reflected that Abdulaziz al-Hijji, a resident of the [Sarasota] home, was paid as an agent of the Saudi royal family to provide comfort and aid to Mohamed Atta while he learned to operate the Boeing 757 that he would fly into the Twin Towers," such a document would not be found under the search methods used by the FBI.

The Broward Bulldog and the 9/11 Families group are also seeking declassification of the 28 pages from the Joint Congressional Inquiry report—as *EIR* has been doing for the past two years. Taken together, these two initiatives would expose not only the Saudi-British hand behind 9/11 and all major acts of terrorism in the past two decades, but also the systematic coverup of the truth about the 9/11 attacks, perpetrated first by the Bush-Cheney Administration, and aggressively carried forward, up to the present, by the Obama Administration.