

US Attorney General Barr invokes “state secrets” to cover up Saudi involvement in 9/11

Barry Grey
17 September 2019

Last week, it was revealed that the Trump administration has taken extraordinary steps to continue the 18-year cover-up of Saudi government involvement in the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

On Thursday, September 12, one day after the 18th anniversary of the attacks on New York and Washington that killed nearly 3,000 people, a federal court filing revealed that Attorney General William Barr has asserted the “state secrets” privilege to block the release of an FBI report detailing extensive relations between some of the 19 hijackers and Saudi government officials. Victims of the attacks and their families are pushing for access to the 2007 report as part of a lawsuit against the Saudi government launched in 2003 charging the despotic monarchy with coordinating the mass killings.

Barr declared there was a “reasonable danger” that releasing the report would “risk significant harm to national security.”

The court filing also revealed that the FBI has agreed to turn over to the families’ lawyers the name of a Saudi individual that is redacted in a four-page summary of the FBI report released in 2012. The summary lays out evidence concerning three Saudis who provided money and otherwise assisted two of the hijackers in California in finding housing, obtaining driver’s licenses and other matters.

Government investigations have established that the two people who are named in the FBI summary, Fahad al-Thumairy, a former Saudi consulate official, and Omar al-Bayoumi, suspected by the FBI of being a Saudi intelligence officer, were working in coordination with the Saudi regime. The third person, whose name is redacted, is described in the FBI summary as having assigned the other two to assist the hijackers.

Lawyers for the families last year subpoenaed the FBI for an unredacted copy of the summary based on the contention that the third person was a senior Saudi

official. But as part of the court filing, citing the “exceptional nature of the case,” the FBI issued a protective seal to prevent the name of the third Saudi from becoming public. The agency also refused to provide any of the other information requested by the families.

An FBI official said the agency was shielding the name to protect classified information related to “ongoing investigations” and to protect its “sources and methods.”

In fact, the extraordinary measures taken to conceal the role of the Saudi regime in the 9/11 attacks are driven by the need of US imperialism to maintain its reactionary alliance with the Saudi sheiks and continue the false cover story on 9/11 that has served as an ideological pillar for aggression in the Middle East and the buildup of a police-state infrastructure within the US, carried out in the name of fighting a “war on terror.”

The Saudi monarchy has been a key ally of the United States in the Middle East for 70 years, and since 9/11 it has become, alongside Israel, Washington’s most important partner in the region. It has played a central role in the bloody wars for regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, which have killed more than a million people and destroyed entire societies. It is also the world’s biggest purchaser of US arms.

Its intelligence agencies have long worked in the closest collaboration with the CIA and the FBI. The exposure of Saudi complicity in 9/11 immediately implicates sections of the US intelligence establishment in facilitating, it not actively aiding, the terror attacks, and sheds light on the multiple unanswered questions about how 19 men, 15 of whom were Saudi nationals, could carry out such a complex operation.

The 9/11 attacks were eagerly seized upon by the George W. Bush administration, with the support of the Democratic Party and media allies such as the *New York Times*, to implement longstanding plans to wage aggressive war in the Middle East.

The cover-up of Saudi involvement has been carried out over three administrations, Democratic and Republican alike. It began within hours of the attacks themselves. Eight days after the attacks, at least 13 relatives of Osama bin Laden, accompanied by bodyguards and associates, were allowed to secretly leave the US on a chartered flight. One of the passengers, a nephew of the supposed number one on Washington's "most wanted" list, had been linked by the FBI to a suspected terrorist organization.

The US association with bin Laden went back decades. Under the CIA's Operation Cyclone, conducted between 1979 and 1989, the US and Saudi Arabia provided \$40 billion worth of financial aid and weapons to the mujahedeen "freedom fighters" waging war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, an operation in which then-US ally bin Laden played a key role. The proxy war in Afghanistan was pivotal in the later creation of Al Qaeda.

In July of 2016, the US government released to the public a 28-page section, suppressed for 14 years, of a joint congressional inquiry into 9/11. The 28-page chapter dealt with the role of the Saudi government and contained abundant and damning evidence of extensive Saudi support for the 9/11 hijackers in the period leading up to the attacks.

Among its revelations were:

? Two of the Saudi hijackers, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, lived for a time in Los Angeles and San Diego in 2000, where they obtained pilot training. They were given money and lodgings by Omar al-Bayoumi, who worked closely with an emir at the Saudi Defense Ministry. Both were under CIA surveillance while attending an Al Qaeda planning meeting in 2000 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and placed on a "watch list" for FBI monitoring if they came to the United States. Nonetheless they were allowed to enter the US on January 15, 2000.

? Al-Bayoumi "received support from a Saudi company affiliated with the Saudi Ministry of Defense," drawing a paycheck for a no-show job. The company also had ties to Osama bin Laden. His allowances jumped almost tenfold after the arrival of al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar. Al-Bayoumi had found an apartment for the two, which they shared with an informant for the San Diego FBI, advancing them a deposit on the first month's rent.

? Al-Bayoumi's wife received a \$1,200 a month stipend from the wife of Prince Bandar, then the Saudi ambassador to the US and later head of Saudi intelligence. The wife of his associate, Osama Bassnan, identified by

the FBI as a supporter of bin Laden, received \$2,000 a month from Bandar's wife.

? Three of the hijackers stayed at the same Virginia hotel as Saleh al-Hussayen, a Saudi Interior Ministry official, the night before the attacks.

Despite such evidence, and much more, the bipartisan 9/11 Commission appointed by George W. Bush concluded that there was no conclusive evidence that "senior" Saudi officials played a role in the 9/11 attacks. When the 28-page section of the congressional report was released in 2016, Obama's CIA director, John Brennan, denounced all suggestions of Saudi involvement as baseless.

However, former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, a member of the 9/11 Commission, said, "There was an awful lot of participation by Saudi individuals in supporting the hijackers, and some of those people worked in the Saudi government."

Former Democratic Senator Robert Graham, cochair of the Joint Congressional Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks, said that there was "a pervasive pattern of covering up the role of Saudi Arabia in 9/11 by all of the agencies of the federal government, which have access to information that might illuminate Saudi Arabia's role in 9/11."

In the lawsuit filed by the families of the victims, he filed an affidavit that stated, "I am convinced that there was a direct line between at least some of the terrorists who carried out the Sept. 11 attacks and the government of Saudi Arabia."

It is significant, but not surprising, that the corporate media has given only the most perfunctory and muted coverage to the moves by the Trump administration to once again suppress the role of the Saudi regime in 9/11, and the Democrats have been completely silent.

One should compare this response to damning evidence of Saudi culpability and US cover-up in relation to an event that took nearly 3,000 lives to the hysteria of the anti-Russia witch hunt led by the Democratic Party, the *New York Times* and the bulk of the media, based on completely unsubstantiated charges.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact