

FBI declassified document confirms links between Saudi Arabia and the 9/11 terrorists

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Under an executive order from President Joe Biden, the FBI declassified an FBI report on Saturday—the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks—showing that there were links between former representatives of the Saudi Arabian government and the hijackers.

Although the 16-page report, dated April 4, 2016, is redacted, it contains important details about an investigation by the FBI into the support given by a Saudi consular official and a suspected Saudi intelligence agent in Los Angeles to at least two of the men who hijacked commercial airliners on September 11, 2001.

Entitled, “ENCORE Investigation Update, Review and Analysis: Interview [Redacted] (NOV 2015),” the FBI report reviews connections and witness testimony regarding the activity of the suspected intelligence agent Omar al-Bayoumi and says that he was deeply involved in providing “travel assistance, lodging and financing” to help the two hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar.

The report says that what had been previously portrayed in the official 9/11 Commission Report of 2004 as a “chance meeting” between al-Bayoumi and the two future hijackers was in fact a preplanned and well-orchestrated rendezvous at a restaurant. Purportedly attending San Diego State University as part of a work-study program paid for by a contractor with the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation, al-Bayoumi was characterized by the 9/11 Commission report “to be an unlikely candidate for clandestine involvement with Islamic extremists.”

The document from Operation Encore, the codename of the FBI investigation, also says that Saudi diplomat and Islamic Affairs official Fahad al-Thumairy had “tasked” an associate to help al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar

when they arrived in Los Angeles and told the associate that the men were “two very significant people.”

Al-Hazmi and Al-Mihdhar were two of the five terrorists who hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 from Washington Dulles International Airport to Los Angeles International Airport and flew the Boeing 757 into the Pentagon, killing all 64 aboard and another 125 people in the building.

The FBI release is the first of what is expected to be several documents in response to the September 3 executive order signed by President Biden on “Declassification of Certain Documents Concerning the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001.” Biden’s order stated, “Information collected and generated in the United States Government’s investigation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks should now be disclosed, except when the strongest possible reasons counsel otherwise.”

This is the first official US acknowledgement that a relationship existed between individuals connected to the government of Saudi Arabia and the attacks that occurred twenty years ago, attacks that became the basis for international war crimes against Afghanistan and Iraq, rendition to black sites, torture and indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay as well as an assault on numerous fundamental rights contained in the US Constitution. It is significant that an FBI document based on an interview conducted nearly six years ago is now confirming what has been widely known since 2001.

Family members of those killed on 9/11 responded to the FBI document with blunt statements. Brett Eagleson, whose father died at the World Trade Center, said, “Today marks the moment when the Saudis cannot rely on the U.S. government from hiding the truth about 9/11.” Terry Strada of the group 9/11

Families United said, “Now the Saudis’ secrets are exposed, and it is well past time for the Kingdom to own up to its officials’ roles in murdering thousands on American soil.”

Jim Kreindler, who represents families suing Saudi Arabia, said the report validates their case. “This document, together with the public evidence gathered to date, provides a blueprint for how al-Qaida operated inside the US with the active, knowing support of the Saudi government.”

A statement from the Saudi embassy said: “No evidence has ever emerged to indicate that the Saudi government or its officials had previous knowledge of the terrorist attack or were in any way involved in its planning or execution. Any allegation that Saudi Arabia is complicit in the September 11 attacks is categorically false.”

The administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump all blocked public access to any FBI documents regarding Saudi Arabian involvement with al-Qaeda on the grounds that it risked “significant harm to the national security” of the US. However, the existence of Operation Encore, which dates back to 2007, was revealed in an investigative report based largely on anonymous sources published by ProPublica in January 2020. ProPublica said at the time that the Encore investigation “exposed a bitter rift within the bureau over the Saudi connection.”

The revelations contained in the declassified document raise many more questions regarding Saudi Arabia’s role and that of US intelligence agencies in the events of 9/11. As explained by the *World Socialist Web Site* on Saturday, not only did the Saudis al-Thumairy and al-Bayoumi facilitate the two 9/11 hijackers in California, but both al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar lived in “the home of the main FBI informant in the Muslim community of San Diego.

“The Saudi connection is so sensitive not only because it involves US imperialism’s principal ally in the Arab world, but because the intimate ties between Saudi and US intelligence agencies raise troubling questions about how it was possible that no one in the CIA, FBI or other agencies was aware of the hijackers’ plans, even though several of them had been under CIA surveillance and were on FBI watch lists as they freely entered and moved about the United States.”



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