

Saudi government funded extremism in U.S. mosques and charities: report



FILE - In this Sept. 11, 2001 file photo, a shell of what was once part of the facade of one of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center rises above the rubble that remains after both towers ... more >

By Rowan Scarborough - *The Washington Times* - Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Saudi Arabia was funding Muslim radicalism in mosques and charities at the time the Sept. 11, 2001, hijackers were gathering in the United States and making contacts with Saudi nationals, according to a declassified intelligence document.

To jihad watchers, the paper confirms their charges that the Saudi government and its wealthy citizens fund extremist teachings in America. To this day, the kingdom is pressing its harsh Wahhabi Sunni Islam on American Muslims as it seeks to spread Islam around the world, they say.

In the document, one Saudi who was receiving money from Prince Bandar bin Sultan,

Riyadh's ambassador to the U.S. at the time, made a startling statement to an FBI informant. The man, who had ties to some of the hijackers, told agents that it would do the U.S. no good to limit entry visas because a sufficient number of Muslims were already in the country to destroy it and create an Islamic state.

The disclosure was tucked in the "28 pages" — a long-secret chapter in a 2002 report by the House and Senate intelligence committees after an investigation in the immediate aftermath of the al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon. Of the 19 who hijacked four airliners, 15 were Saudis.

The report section, referred to as "Part 4," deals mainly with one topic: suspected Saudi government support for the Sept. 11 plot. The George W. Bush administration insisted that the section remain classified. Under pressure, the Obama administration released the pages last week.

The high-powered 9/11 Commission conducted a more extensive investigation into the attacks. Its leaders assert that the commission ran down every lead in the 28 pages but was unable to confirm that the Saudi kingdom or its agents helped plan or knowingly financed the attack, which killed nearly 3,000 people.

But the 28 pages also touch on an issue beyond the question of the attack itself. The Saudi government and Saudi citizens were funding groups that spread jihadi messages against the U.S., funded terrorist groups and were seen as recruiters for Osama bin Laden, the al Qaeda terrorist leader.

Fifteen years later, the Riyadh government asserts that it undertook a monumental campaign to stop its citizens from funding terrorism.

Ties to terrorism

Here are some of the Saudi-linked entities mentioned in the 28 pages, which derived from the FBI's and CIA's earliest investigation into Sept. 11:

- The King Fahad mosque in Culver City, California. Sheik Fahad al-Thumairy was a Saudi diplomat in its mission in Los Angeles and an imam at the mosque.

Said Part 4: "The mosque was built in 1998 from funding provided by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdelaziz. The mosque is reportedly attended by members of the Saudi consultant in Los Angeles and is widely recognized for its anti-Western views."

- The Ibn Tamiyah mosque in Culver City. The report called it "a site of extremist-related

activity.” This mosque appears to be associated with the King Fahad Mosque.

The report: “Several subjects of FBI investigations prior to September 11 had close connections to the mosque and are believed to have laundered money through this mosque to non-profit organizations overseas affiliated with [O]sama bin Ladin. In an interview, an FBI agent said he believed that Saudi government money was being laundered through the mosque.

“In approximately 1998, the FBI became aware of millions of dollars in wire transfers from the Somali community in San Diego to A Bazakaat Trading Company and other businesses affiliated with Osama Bin Laden. At the time, the funding appeared to be originating from the local Somali community in the form of donations to various Somali non-profits. However, the FBI now believes that some of the funding actually originated in Saudi Arabia and that both the Ibn Tamiyah mosque in Los Angeles and the Islamic Center of San Diego were involved in laundering the money.”

- Omar al-Bayoumi. He met two of the hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar, in San Diego in 2000. He helped the two find an apartment and obtain driver’s licenses. He managed a mosque in Cajon, California.

He received \$400,000 from Saudi Arabia to fund a new mosque in San Diego. The FBI searched his papers and concluded, “after an exhaustive translation of Bayoumi documents, it is clear that in Bayoumi correspondence, he is providing guidance to young Muslims and some of his writings can be interpreted as jihadist.”

He also received money from Princess Haifa bit Faisal, wife of Prince Bandar. The FBI suspected him of being a Saudi intelligence agent.

- The Islamic Center of San Diego. The FBI suspected it of laundering Saudi money to al Qaeda. A center employee helped Hazmi and Mihdhar attend flight school and served as their translator.

- Osama Bassnan. An associate of Bayoumi’s, Bassnan praised Osama bin Laden and talked by phone with his family members. Bassnan worked at the Saudi Arabia Education Ministry in Washington. He later moved to San Diego.

He hosted a party in 1992 for the “Blind Sheikh,” a convicted plotter in the World Trade Center attack in 1993. Egyptian Omar Abdel-Rahman, the blind sheikh, received a life sentence.

The report: “According to an FBI asset, Bassnan spoke of bin Laden ‘as if he were a god.’

Bassnan also stated to an FBI asset that he heard that the U.S. government had stopped approving visas for foreign students. He considered such measures to be insufficient as there are already enough Muslims in the United States to destroy the United States and make it an Islamic state within ten to fifteen years."

Bassnan and his wife also received money from Prince Bandar and his wife.

- Al Haramain Islamic Foundation. The FBI was alarmed by its ties to the Saudi kingdom and terrorists.

Said the report: "Intelligence reporting suggests it is providing financial and logistical support to al Qaeda."

Al Haramain opened a U.S. office in Oregon and received about \$700,000 from its parent organization in Saudi Arabia. Its documents show it wanted to appoint the imam for al-Bayoumi's mosque.

The U.S. Treasury Department subsequently cited Al Haramain several times for ties to terrorism, and Riyadh banned its operations at home.

- The Islamic Assembly of North America. The Michigan-based group was "dedicated to the spread of Islam worldwide," the report said.

"According to the FBI, the IANA's mission is actually to spread Islamic fundamentalism and Salafist doctrine throughout the United States and the world at large. The IANA solicited funds from wealthy Saudi benefactors, extremists Islamic Sheikhs and suspect non-governmental organizations," the report said.

The New York Times reported that half its budget came from the Saudi government. Its phone number in Michigan has been disconnected.

- The World Arab Muslim Youth Association and the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America. Both organizations are based in Riyadh.

The report: "There is reason to believe that WAMY is closely associated with the funding and financing of international terrorist activities."

'Men, money and mind-set'

Jihad watchers in the U.S. say the 28 pages are further evidence that Saudi money ends up in

the hands of extremists.

“Next to Iran, which is the leading state sponsor of jihad, what we call ‘terrorism,’ Saudi Arabia has spent more money funding the global Islamic movement than any other nation on the planet,” said former FBI agent John Guandolo, who runs the nonprofit Understanding the Threat website. “The U.S. State Department and our national security apparatus should see Saudi Arabia as an enemy of the United States.”

Frank Gaffney, who runs the Center for Security Policy, said: “The 28 pages make clear that the Saudis were neither reliable allies of the United States prior to 9/11 nor are they today. Rather, they are adherents to a jihadist agenda driven by the Islamic supremacists’ Sharia doctrine. To that end, they have built a vast infrastructure inside the United States, including mosques, front groups and influence operations.”

According to a 2011 survey by Islamic groups, there are now more than 2,000 mosques in the United States, an increase of nearly 100 percent since 2000.

Anti-jihad scholars estimate that 80 percent of U.S. mosques are funded by Saudi money.

The Saudis, however, viewed the release of 28 pages as vindication because the U.S. never proved that the government knew of or supported the plot.

Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, a press aide under Prince Bandar when he was U.S. ambassador, sent out a number of statements on Twitter.

“Now that the declassification is complete, we hope to continue our close cooperation with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism,” he said. “Since 9/11, the Kingdom has embarked on a series of major steps to confront the men, money and mind-set that foments terrorism.”

“We have put in place an unprecedented financial control system to stop the funding of extremist causes and terrorism. The Kingdom is committed and determined to use all of its resources to go after terrorists and to work with other countries to do so.”

The website home page of the King Fahad Mosque in Los Angeles features an imam preaching against the evils of terrorism and specifically condemns recent terrorist attacks in Turkey and France.

“Their actions have no place in Islam,” he says.

No proof of direct support

Along with releasing the 28 pages, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence declassified a 2005 letter from the FBI and CIA. It served as an update to the agencies' input into the 2002 intelligence committee report.

It was signed by FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III and CIA Director Porter J. Goss, and was addressed to the House and Senate intelligence committees.

The letter absolved the Riyadh government of knowingly funding the Sept. 11 attack.

"There is no evidence that either the Saudi government or members of the Saudi royal family knowingly provided support for the attacks of 11 September 2001 or that they had foreknowledge of the terrorists operations in the Kingdom or elsewhere," the FBI and CIA said.

The letter said neither al-Bayoumi nor Bassnan, the men in San Diego, knew of the Sept. 11 plot.

But the letter was less exculpatory when it came to the actions of Saudis in the U.S.

One heavily censored sentence says, "Saudi-funded clerics have been found to be [censored] Saudi-Americans and other communities in the United States."

Another finding states: "There is evidence that official Saudi entities [censored] and associated nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), provide financial and logistical support to individuals in the United States and around the world, some of whom are associated with terrorism-related activity."

And this conclusion: "The Saudi government and many of its agencies have been infiltrated and exploited by individuals associated with or sympathetic to al Qaeda.

"The Saudi government and private Saudi individuals support the propagation of the conservative Wahhabi-Salafi sect of Sunni Islam in the United States. Jihadists adhere to and interpret this sect's beliefs to justify their actions."

Writing in the New York Post in April, Fox News military analyst Ralph Peters said: "Consider how idiotic we've been, allowing Saudis to fund hate mosques and madrassas, to provide Jew-baiting texts and to do their best to bully American Muslims into conformity with their

misogynistic, 500-lashes worldview. Our leaders and legislators have betrayed our fellow citizens who happen to be Muslim, making it more difficult for them to integrate fully into our society.”

Copyright © 2016 The Washington Times, LLC. [Click here for reprint permission.](#)