

Saudi-U.S. Relations

Information Service

Item of Interest

July 31, 2003

Congressional 9/11 Report Missing Pages: Saudis Ask for Full Disclosure

"It is an outrage to any sense of fairness that 28 blank pages are now considered substantial evidence to proclaim the guilt of a country that has been a true friend and partner to the United States for over 60 years."

- Prince Saud al-Faisal
Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister

Excerpt From An Interview With Secretary of State Colin Powell July 30, 2003

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, there was the meeting yesterday with the Saudi Foreign Minister. The Saudis clearly have a problem here because they are very much under attack in the United States, essentially on the basis of secret evidence. Is there anything you can do to help them? What do you propose to –

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I had conversations with the Saudi Foreign Minister when he was here yesterday, and I was in the meeting with the President, and **we expressed our appreciation for all that Saudi Arabia has been doing in the global war against terrorism**, especially over the last month or two, where they really have been rounding up cells, they have been finding individuals within the Kingdom who meant to injure the Kingdom and meant to see what they could do to attack us as well. So we complimented the Saudis on what they had been doing recently.

With respect to the report that is in the paper, the Saudis pressed hard to release the redacted or the blacked-out portions of the report because they believe they have done nothing to warrant the insinuations and suggestions that are in the media about the whole blacked-out section relating to bad behavior on the part of the Saudis. **The Saudis would like to see it in the open because they think it will show that the Saudis have been cooperating with us.**

We had to make the point back to them, however, that because of sources and methods and investigations that are underway, that part of the report has to remain redacted or blacked out.

Source: U.S. State Department

Statement by HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister

The following statement was released by HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal following his meeting with President George W. Bush at the White House in Washington DC on July 29, 2003:

On Thursday July 24, a 900-page report was published by the Congressional Joint Inquiry into the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001. In that report Saudi Arabia is indicted by insinuation. It is an outrage to any sense of fairness that 28 blank pages are now considered substantial evidence to proclaim the guilt of a country that has been a true friend and partner to the United States for over 60 years.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been wrongfully and morbidly accused of complicity in the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This accusation is based on misguided speculation and is born of poorly disguised malicious intent; it has been refuted by the consistent public statements of the President and responsible Administration officials, especially those who have access to the facts and who have praised Saudi Arabia as an active and strong ally in the war on terrorism.

The report seems to have overlooked or intentionally ignored Saudi Arabia's continuing efforts to fight terrorism. It does not speak to the reality of the actions and achievements made by the Kingdom. There is no mention of the fact that Saudi Arabia has questioned thousands of individuals and arrested more than 500 suspects since September 11. Saudi actions have not only led to the arrest of major terrorists and the dismantling of their cells in Saudi Arabia, but also led to similar results in the United States. In the area of finance, the report never mentioned the many steps that have been taken such as strict auditing procedures and financial control mechanisms to ensure that our tradition of charitable giving cannot be abused.

We have nothing to hide. And we do not seek nor do we need to be shielded. We believe that releasing the missing 28 pages will allow us to respond to any allegations in a clear and credible manner; and remove any doubts about the Kingdom's true role in the war against terrorism and its commitment to fight it.

I have conveyed these views in a letter from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah to President Bush. The President expressed understanding of the Crown Prince's position, and renewed his own appreciation for our role in the war against terrorism. The President indicated that release of missing pages, at this time, would compromise operations and undermine ongoing investigations. And anyone who believes that this President will cover up for anyone culpable in the events of 9/11 must be out of touch with reality, or driven by ulterior motives.

The President congratulated Saudi Arabia on the actions it has taken in the War against Terrorism, and assured me that these are the actions of a strong ally in this war who deserves our appreciation. The President also noted that our two nations are not only allies but also victims in this war. The fact, as the President said, that we are both victims of terror and partners in the war against it, makes it incumbent upon us to work together effectively in an environment of

trust and mutual confidence if we are to prevail in this war.

Source: Saudi Press Release

Saudi Arabia's Progress in the War on Terrorism

"I vow to my fellow citizens and to the friends who reside among us, that the State will be vigilant about their security and well-being. Our nation is capable, by the Grace of God Almighty and the unity of its citizens, to confront and destroy the threat posed by a deviant few and those who endorse or support them. With the help of God Almighty, we shall prevail."

- Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz
Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard
May 13, 2003

Actions to Counter Terrorism

From September 2001 to May 2003:

- More than 300 terrorist suspects were arrested.
- About 100 suspects were referred to the courts to stand trial.
- Over 1,000 suspects were questioned.

Since May 2003:

- Over 130 individuals with suspected ties to terrorism have been arrested.
- Over the course of the arrests security officers also seized large quantities of high explosives, automatic rifles, bomb-making materials and devices, false identity cards and documents, and large amounts of cash.

Specific Cases:

- Yousif Salih Fahad Al-Ayeeri, a.k.a. Swift Sword, a major Al-Qaeda operational planner and fundraiser, was killed on May 31 while fleeing from a security patrol.
- Ali Abdulrahman Said Alfagsi Al-Ghamdi a.k.a. Abu Bakr Al-Azdi, surrendered to Saudi authorities. Al-Ghamdi, considered one of the top Al-Qaeda operatives in Saudi Arabia, is suspected of being one of the masterminds of the May 12 bombings in Riyadh.
- Turki Nasser Mishaal Aldandany, another top Al-Qaeda operative and mastermind of the May 12 bombings, was killed along with three other suspects in a gun battle with security forces that had them surrounded.
- Three clerics, Ali Fahd Al-Khudair, Ahmed Hamoud Mufreh Al-Khaledi and Nasir Ahmed Al-Fuhaid, were arrested after calling for support of the terrorists who carried out the Riyadh attacks.

International Cooperation

- Saudi Arabia and the United States maintain a Counter-Terrorism Committee comprised

of intelligence and law enforcement personnel who meet regularly to share information and resources and develop action plans to root out terrorist networks.

- In May 2003 a new U.S.-Saudi team was organized from across law enforcement and intelligence agencies to work side by side to share “real time” intelligence and conduct joint operations.
- Also in May 2003, Saudi authorities worked closely with U.S. and British law enforcement agents who came to the Kingdom to assist in the investigation of the Riyadh attacks.
- Saudi Arabia has provided extensive intelligence and military cooperation in the assault on Al-Qaeda. Public disclosures to date have revealed major Saudi contributions to the breakup of a number of Al-Qaeda cells, the arrests of key Al-Qaeda commanders, and the capture of numerous Al-Qaeda members.
- In 2002, Saudi Arabia asked Interpol to arrest 750 people, many of whom are suspected of money laundering, drug trafficking, and terror-related activities. This figure includes 214 Saudis whose names appear in Interpol’s database in addition to expatriates who fled Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi Arabia is engaging other countries to locate and extradite Al-Qaeda operatives who may be hiding in those countries.

Actions Taken in the Financial Area

- Saudi government departments and banks are required to participate in international seminars, conferences and symposia on combating terrorist-financing activities. Saudi Arabia has hosted many such events; and is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) established by the G-7 in 1988.
- Saudi Arabia completed and submitted two FATF self-assessment questionnaires: one regarding the 40 FATF recommendations on the prevention of money laundering and the other regarding its eight special recommendations on terrorist financing.
- Saudi Arabia has established a High Commission for oversight of all charities, contributions and donations.
- A special Financial Intelligence Unit was established to ensure that funds are not misdirected into the hands of those who would use them to harm others.
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States took steps to freeze the assets of a close bin Laden aide, Wa’el Hamza Julaidan, who is believed to have funneled money to Al-Qaeda.
- In March 2002, the U.S. Treasury Department and Saudi Arabia blocked the accounts of the Somalia and Bosnia branches of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation. While the Saudi headquarters for this private charity is dedicated to helping those in need, it was determined that the Somalia and Bosnia branches supported terrorist activities and terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and AIAI (al-Itihaad al-Islamiya). In May 2003, Saudi Arabia asked the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and all Saudi charities to suspend activities outside Saudi Arabia until a security clearance mechanism to screen all personnel is implemented. The Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation has closed its offices in Croatia, Albania and Ethiopia while moves are under way to close others in Kenya, Tanzania, Indonesia and Pakistan.
- In February 2003, SAMA began to implement a major technical program to train judges

and investigators on legal matters involving terror financing and money-laundering methods, international requirements for financial secrecy, and methods followed by criminals to exchange information.

- Also in May 2003, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) distributed a circular entitled Rules Governing Combating Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Terrorist Financing to all banks and financial institutions in the Kingdom requiring the full and immediate implementation of nine new policies and procedures that relate to accounts of charitable and welfare institutions.
- In June 2003, the Consultative Council approved new legislation that puts in place harsh penalties for the crime of money laundering and terror financing. The law consists of 29 articles and stipulates jail sentences of up to 15 years and a fine of more than \$1.5 million for anyone laundering money through charities. Other money-laundering offenses are punishable by up to 10 years in jail and a fine of \$1.3 million.
- Saudi Arabia has investigated many bank accounts suspected of having links to terrorism and has frozen 41 accounts belonging to 7 individuals that totaled \$5,697,400.85.

"America and Saudi Arabia face a common terrorist threat, and we appreciate the strong, continuing efforts of the Saudi government in fighting that threat."

- George W. Bush
President of the United States
July 1, 2003

Source: "Saudi Arabia's War on Terrorism"

ABOUT THE SAUDI-US RELATIONS INFORMATION SERVICE

The Saudi-U.S. Relations Information Service (SUSRIS) web site is part of a private sector, information service highlighting the characteristics, strength and importance of the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

The SUSRIS is a public service of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations as an element of its mission: *To educate Americans about Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world through leadership development, people-to-people programs, lectures, publications, and grassroots outreach.*

The Forum consists of a web site and an email information service.
Visit the web site at: <http://www.saudi-us-relations.org>

CONTACT INFORMATION

You can contribute your ideas and feedback to the SUSRIS through direct email to: info@SaudiUSRelations.org

Thank you for your support of the Saudi-U.S. relationship and the Saudi-US Relations Information Service.