

Document 17 and the Battle for the Truth About 9/11

by Jeffrey Steinberg

April 24—Every commissioner and key investigator into the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, in which 2,977 innocent Americans were killed, has not only demanded that President Obama declassify and publicly release the 28-page chapter from the original Joint Congressional Inquiry, providing leads on the role of the Saudi government and the Saudi Royal Family in 9/11. They have also demanded the full declassification of all of the still-classified files from the Joint Inquiry and the follow-on 9/11 Commission.

The issue is not just the 28 pages, as vital as they are. The issue is the thousands of documents that remain sealed from public view, which provide a much more in-depth picture of the magnitude of evidence against the Saudi Royals. It is the full release that is vital, and the immediate release of the 28 pages is the indispensable first step towards opening a new, top-down uninhibited probe into Saudi sponsorship of global Sunni jihad terrorism.

Such a probe will necessarily also focus on the cover-up and sabotaging of the original investigations by a combination of Bush family-allied political appointees, and the larger than life role of the FBI's top management, starting with then-Director Robert Mueller, in sabotaging the probe at every turn.

This is not a matter of speculation. In July 2015, the Interagency Security Clearance Appeals Panel (ISCAP) declassified a 47-page staff working document from the 9/11 Commission, referred to as "Document 17," or "Saudi notes."

The June 6, 2003 document was written by Dana Lesemann and Michael Jacobson, two of the most important of the Federal government prosecutors and investigators assigned to the 9/11 probe. Lesemann was a Justice Department attorney and Jacobson was an FBI

agent. Both were assigned to the Joint Congressional Inquiry staff and were then also hired by the 9/11 Commission to continue their earlier work. Lesemann and Jacobson conducted the investigation and contributed to the writing of the 28-page chapter of the final Joint Inquiry report. They saw their mission at the 9/11 Commission as an extension of their investigation into the Saudi role. Document 17 spelled out their ambitious plans to thoroughly probe the Saudi Royals' and Saudi government's complicity in 9/11.

FBI Coverup

Along the way, as Document 17 made clear, they ran up against serious roadblocks from the FBI, which blocked their access to key witnesses and documents, including an FBI informant in San Diego, California, code-named "Moppet," who housed two of the 9/11 hijackers and had ties to two Saudi intelligence officers who were the "handlers" of those two hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar.

The 47-page June 2003 working plan made clear that the Commission and the previous Joint Inquiry had developed strong links between 21 officials of the Saudi government and the San Diego hijackers. Some of those officials were based in southern California, others were at the Saudi embassy in Washington (including a half-brother of Osama bin Laden), and others were officials of the Saudi government posted in Hamburg, Germany, where an Al-Qaeda cell was based that was intimately linked to the 9/11 team.

The tasking document also traced the southern California Saudi officials and hijackers to other cells, with key named individuals in other locations that are now known to have been central to the 9/11 attacks. These included Falls Church, Va., Paterson, N.J., Phoenix, Ariz., and Pompano Beach, Fla.

Anwar Awlaki, a radical cleric who was subsequently killed in a President Obama-approved drone assassination attack in Yemen, was the “spiritual adviser” to the two San Diego hijackers. He moved from the San Diego mosque to a mosque in Falls Church, Va. at precisely the time that the 9/11 attackers moved to the same area in the final preparations for the attack. There are compelling reports hinting that Awlaki himself may have had ties to the FBI while he was in the United States (Awlaki was a natural born American citizen).

The 9/11 investigators Lesemann and Jacobson clearly came to believe that there was a systemic and top-down FBI effort to stymie the work of the Commission. A segment of Document 17, starting on page 29, details evidence of the FBI coverup and proposed remedies, including new and more intense Congressional oversight of the FBI; detailed questions and subpoenas for documents from the Bureau; and even efforts to grant Commission immunity to key witnesses who could detail the FBI duplicity. The memo makes clear that Lesemann and Jacobson saw the FBI interference as coming from the top. At one point, they candidly asked: Why did the FBI, the Justice Department, and the White House all refuse the Commission investigators access to FBI informant “Moppet,” and was this indicative of a much larger FBI effort to sabotage the investigation?

Who Is the FBI Working For?

Then-FBI Director Robert Mueller had “earned his stripes” in part through his role as head of the “Get LaRouche Task Force” in the mid-1980s, which conducted the biggest political witch-hunt since the McCarthy era, targeted against the political movement led by Lyndon LaRouche. Former Attorney General of the United States Ramsey Clark called the LaRouche case the worst case of politically motivated prosecutorial abuse he had ever encountered.

Mueller’s predecessor as FBI Director (Mueller took the job on Sept. 4, 2001 after serving for two months as Acting Director), Louis Freeh, subsequently became the attorney for Saudi Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, one of the highest ranking Saudi officials linked directly to the 9/11 plot. Freeh represented Bandar in matters relating to the Al-Yamamah project, which was an arms-for-oil barter deal between Britain and Saudi Arabia, negotiated by Bandar and Margaret Thatcher in 1985. The Joint Inquiry, in the 28-page

chapter, linked funds from Bandar and his wife’s personal account at Riggs National Bank in Washington to the two San Diego hijackers, through one of their Saudi intelligence handlers, Osama Basnan. At the time, Bandar was receiving funds from the Bank of England into his Riggs personal account, which were part of his \$2 billion “commission” for his role in Al Yamamah. In his official biography, Bandar boasted that the offshore Al Yamamah funds were used for conducting covert “anti-communist” joint Anglo-Saudi intelligence operations. He openly admitted that some of those funds went to the “Afghan mujahideen.” Translation: To Al Qaeda.

Document 17 makes clear that Bandar was a prime suspect in the financing of the 9/11 hijackers, and the Commission intended to probe whether Bandar and his wife, Princess Haifa, knew whether the \$50-72,000 they sent to Basnan went to medical care for his wife, or for the financing of al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar.

Document 17 was a follow-up on the solid leads and evidence that Lesemann and Jacobson included in the 28-page chapter of the original Joint Inquiry final report. It indicates the vast scope of evidence against the Saudi Royals, the in-depth infrastructure that the investigators unearthed, and the level of coverup by senior Federal officials, including the Director of the FBI himself.

Ultimately, the 9/11 Commission, like the earlier Joint Inquiry, was blocked from completing the thorough investigation the key researchers sought to pursue. At one point, staff director Philip Zelikow, who was covertly reporting the work of the Commission to then-Secretary of State Condi Rice in a scandalous conflict of interest, fired Lesemann over a conflict. That conflict began when Lesemann and Jacobson sought to obtain a copy of the 28-page chapter from the Joint Inquiry—a chapter they themselves had researched and written.

[Document 17](#), among the 29 Commission documents declassified by ISCAP in the past 18 months, is a must-read for anyone committed to getting to the bottom of 9/11 and the coverup.

If your blood is not boiling after you read Document 17, there is something wrong with you. It offers a small window into the volumes of evidence against the Saudi Royals and the Saudi government. It should make it clear that the release of the 28 pages is an existential necessity.