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Report Links Saudis To 9/11

Source: No evidence top leaders conspired

LOS ANGELES TIMES

August 2, 2003

Washington - The 27 pages deleted from a congressional report on the Sept. 11 attacks depict a Saudi government that not only provided significant money and aid to the suicide hijackers, but also allowed potentially hundreds of millions of dollars to flow to al-Qaida and other terrorist groups through suspect charities and other fronts, according to sources familiar with the document.

One U.S. official who has read the classified section said it describes "direct involvement of senior [Saudi] government officials in a coordinated and methodical way directly to the hijackers," as well as "very direct, very specific links that cannot be passed off as rogue, isolated or coincidental." Said another official: "It's really damning. What it says is that not only Saudi entities or nationals are implicated in 9/11, but the [Saudi] government" as well.

Despite such a harsh assessment of the alleged role of the Riyadh government, those U.S. officials say congressional investigators found no specific evidence proving that top Saudi officials - notably members of the royal family - conspired in any purposeful way to fund the Sept. 11 plot or other acts of terrorism.

And they concede that senior leaders of the CIA, FBI, Treasury Department and other agencies involved in the U.S. counterterrorism effort have begun to raise strenuous behind-the-scenes objections to some of the conclusions reached in the classified section of the report.

The nearly 900-page report, released last week, concluded that a series of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence failures preceded the Sept. 11 attacks and that there was evidence of financial support for the hijackers by an unnamed foreign government. U.S. officials have confirmed that government is Saudi Arabia but that nearly all the details supporting that claim are contained in the lengthy redacted section of the document.

On Friday, several dozen U.S. lawmakers joined in calling on the Bush administration to declassify the section several days after the Saudi Arabian government also called for its release.

Saudi officials have vehemently denied any wrongdoing, saying any allegations of Saudi links to the Sept. 11 attacks contained in the report are unsupported by the facts and are politically motivated.

They also denied allegations in the report that they allowed al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations to train, recruit and raise money within their borders.

Adel al-Jubeir, a chief Saudi spokesman, said in an interview that there are thousands of members of the royal family, and that while an internal government investigation has uncovered "wrongdoing by some," such lapses are certainly not part of any government conspiracy.

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