Saudi Ex-Spy Chief Linked to Al-Qaeda Operative Engaged in 9/11 Attacks

Washington, August 8 (RHC)-- Former Saudi intelligence chief and long-time Ambassador to Washington Prince Bandar bin Sultan has been linked to an al-Qaeda operative by the co-chair of a recent U.S. probe into the 9/11 terror incidents.

The recently declassified part of the 9/11 report regarding suspected Saudi ties to some of the hijackers involved in the terror events revealed that a phone log maintained by an alleged senior al-Qaeda operative, identified as Abu Zubaydah, included unlisted phone number of a Colorado company associated with Bandar as well as the phone number of a bodyguard working at the Saudi Embassy in Washington at the time, according to a CNN report.

"Both of those numbers were unpublished, so they had to have gotten into Zubaydah's phone book through a personal contact who knew what those numbers were and what they represented," said former Senator Bob Graham, who co-chaired the congressional commission that compiled the 28 pages of the 9/11 report that remained secret until its recent release.

Although both U.S. intelligence agencies -- the CIA and FBI -- concluded that there was no evidence that anyone from the Saudi royal family knowingly provided support for the 9/11 attacks, Graham insisted that connection between Zubaydah's contact list and the company associated with the senior Saudi official was "one of the most stunning parts of the investigation" and worthy of further investigation.

Bandar served as the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. from 1983 to 2005, during the administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. He later served as secretary general of Saudi Arabia's National Security Council and the head of the kingdom's General Intelligence Presidency, the equivalent of the CIA, until last year.

Bandar "is probably the most effective ambassador in Washington ever. Full stop," said former CIA analyst Bruce Riedel. "He was highly regarded by every president."

The senior Saudi official was known to have the closest relationship with George H. W. Bush, in part due to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the 1990 Persian Gulf War, in which Riyadh viewed the Iraqi aggression as a threat and supported the subsequent U.S. military action.

"Bandar was in the Bush White House, I would say, every other day and in some periods every day. It was a very, very close relationship," Riedel added. "And I think the president and Bandar genuinely liked each other."

Saudi authorities have denied allegations of their involvement in the September 2001 incidents in which nearly 3,000 people were killed in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 attacks were Saudi nationals.

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