

FBI releases newly declassified record on September 11 attacks

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Washington, September 12 (RHC)-- The FBI has released a newly declassified 16-page document related to logistical support provided to two of the Saudi hijackers in the run-up to the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The document, released late on Saturday, describes contacts the hijackers had with Saudi associates in the United States but offers no evidence the Saudi government was complicit in the plot. It is the first investigative record to be disclosed since U.S. President Joe Biden ordered a declassification review of materials that for years have remained out of public view.

Biden had encountered pressure in recent weeks from victims' families, who have long sought the records as they pursue a lawsuit in New York alleging that senior Saudi officials were complicit in the attacks.

The Saudi government has long denied any involvement. The Saudi Embassy in Washington said on Wednesday that it supported the full declassification of all records as a way to "end the baseless allegations against the Kingdom once and for all." The embassy said that any allegation that Saudi Arabia was complicit was "categorically false."

Regarding September 11, there has been speculation of official involvement since shortly after the attacks, when it was revealed that 15 of the 19 attackers were Saudis. Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda at the time, was from a prominent family in the kingdom.

The U.S. investigated some Saudi diplomats and others with Saudi government ties who knew hijackers after they arrived in the U.S., according to documents that have already been declassified.

Still, the 9/11 Commission report found "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded" the attacks that al-Qaeda masterminded. But the commission also noted "the likelihood" that Saudi government-sponsored charities did.

Particular scrutiny has centered on the first two hijackers to arrive in the US, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar. In February 2000, shortly after their arrival in southern California, they encountered at a halal restaurant a Saudi national named Omar al-Bayoumi who helped them find and lease an apartment in San Diego, had ties to the Saudi government and had earlier attracted FBI scrutiny.

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