
Senate Passes Bill That Would Expose Saudi Arabia to Legal Jeopardy Over 9/11

17/05/2016



The Senate's passage of the bill, which will now be taken up in the House, is another sign of escalating tensions in a relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia that once received little scrutiny from lawmakers.

Obama administration officials have lobbied against the bill, and the Saudi government has warned that if the legislation passes, it might begin selling off up to \$750 billion in [Treasury securities](#) and other assets in the United States before they face a danger of being frozen by American courts. Adel al-Jubeir, the Saudi foreign minister, delivered the warning to lawmakers and administration officials while in Washington in March.

Many economists are skeptical that the Saudis would deliver on such a warning, saying that a sell-off would be hard to execute and would do more harm to the kingdom's economy than to America's.

Questions about the role Saudi officials might have played in the terror plot have lingered for more than a decade, and families of the Sept. 11 victims have used various lawsuits to try to hold members of the Saudi royal family and charities liable for what they allege is financial support for terrorism. But these moves have been mostly blocked, in part because of a 1976 law that gives foreign nations some immunity from suits in American courts.

The Senate bill carves out an exception to the law if foreign countries are found culpable for terrorist attacks that kill American citizens within the United States. If the bill were to pass both houses of Congress and be signed by the president, it could clear a path for the role of the Saudi government to be examined in the Sept. 11 lawsuits.

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, a Democrat and bill sponsor, said the legislation would help the families of the victims seek justice. "For the sake of the families, I want to make clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that every entity, including foreign states, will be held accountable if they are found to be sponsors of the heinous act of 9/11," he said shortly before the bill passed.

"If the Saudis did not participate in this terrorism, they have nothing to fear about going to court," the senator said.

"If they did, they should be held accountable."

Document

Memos on Alleged Saudi-Affiliated Support of the 9/11 Attacks

The National Archives released a series of memos written by Sept. 11 Commission staff members, a compilation of numerous possible connections between the hijackers and Saudis inside the United States. The document appears to be a glimpse into what is still inside the classified 28 pages of the congressional inquiry into the 2001 attacks.

~~SECRET MATERIALS ATTACHED~~

To: Philip
Chris
Dan

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2012-048, document no. 17
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: July 8, 2015

From: Dana
Mike

Date: June 6, 2003

Subject: Updated work plans and detailed list of associates

Attached are our revised work plans and a detailed list of associates mentioned in the workplans for the Commissioners and the FBI.

~~SECRET MATERIALS ATTACHED~~

OPEN Document

Mr. Schumer also said he believed Democrats would override a veto from Mr. Obama.

He said he believed Saudi Arabia's threat to pull its assets, a concern of the administration, was "hollow," adding, "It will hurt them a lot more than it hurts us."

Senator John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, said he believed the legislation was written in such a way that Americans would not be subject to legal action by other nations. "I do believe that there's going to be some saber rattling, some threats, but I think that they are hollow," Mr. Cornyn said.

The legislation is moving through Congress as the Obama administration weighs whether to declassify a portion of a 2002 Congressional inquiry into the Sept. 11 attacks that cited some evidence that Saudi government officials and other Saudi citizens living in the United States had a hand in the terror plot.

Those conclusions have yet to be released publicly, but recently the National Archives posted on its website a

separate document that appears to be a glimpse into what is contained in the still-classified 28 pages.

The document, dated June 6, 2003, is a series of memos written by Sept. 11 Commission staff members compiling a numerous possible connections between the hijackers and Saudis in the United States.

The document was first disclosed publicly by 28pages.org, an advocacy website devoted to pushing for the declassification of the redacted section of the congressional inquiry.

The Sept. 11 commission, which began its work after the congressional inquiry, found "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded" Al Qaeda or the 9/11 plotters.

Last month, the commission co-chairmen Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton issued a statement saying that the 28 pages "were based almost entirely on raw, unvetted material that came to the FBI" — much of it ultimately deemed inconclusive by the Sept. 11 commission

"Accusations of complicity in that mass murder from responsible authorities are a grave matter," they wrote. "Such charges should be levied with care."
