

Secret chapter of 9/11 inquiry released

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Newly declassified pages from a congressional report into 9/11 released Friday have reignited speculation that some of the hijackers had links to Saudis, including government officials — allegations that were never substantiated by later U.S. investigations into the terrorist attacks.

Congress released the last chapter of the congressional inquiry that has been kept under wraps for more than 13 years, stored in a secure room in the basement of the Capitol. Lawmakers and relatives of victims of the attacks, who believe that Saudi links to the attackers were not thoroughly investigated, campaigned for years to get the pages released.

The lightly redacted document names individuals who helped the hijackers get apartments, open bank accounts and connect with local mosques. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals and several were not fluent in English and had little experience living in the West.

Former Florida Sen. Bob Graham, the co-chairman of the congressional inquiry, who pushed hard for the last chapter of the inquiry's report to be released, believes the hijackers had an extensive Saudi support system while they were in the United States.

Saudi Arabia itself has urged the release of the chapter since 2002 so the kingdom could respond to any allegations.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubier told reporters Friday that his government welcomed the release of the 28 pages and said the documents should finally put to rest questions about Saudi Arabia's suspected role in the Sept. 11 terrorist attack.

"That matter is now finished," al-Jubier said. "The surprise in the 28 pages is that there is no surprise," al-Jubier said.

The 9/11 Families and Victims welcomed the release, and said it confirmed what they've long known.

"Each of the claims the 9/11 families and victims has made against the kingdom of Saudi Arabia enjoys extensive support in the findings of a broad range of investigative documents authored by multiple U.S. intelligence agencies," the families said.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said in a statement that the documents "provide more than enough evidence to raise serious concerns. These concerns should be addressed and proved or disproved."

The document mentions scores of names that the congressional inquiry believed deserved more investigation. They included:

— Omar al-Bayoumi, a Saudi national who helped two of the hijackers



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik
Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir speaks at a news conference at the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Washington on Friday after the U.S. released once-top secret pages from a congressional report into 9/11 that questioned whether Saudis who were in contact with the hijackers after they arrived in the U.S. knew what they were planning.

in California, was suspected of being a Saudi intelligence officer. The 9/11 Commission report found him to be an "unlikely candidate for clandestine involvement" with Islamic extremists. The new document says that according to FBI files, al-Bayoumi had "extensive contact with Saudi government establishments in the United States and received financial support from a Saudi company affiliated with the Saudi Ministry of Defense. ... That company reportedly had ties to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida," which orchestrated the attacks.

— Osama Bassnan, who lived across the street from two of the hijackers in California. According to an FBI document, Bassnan told another individual that he met the hijackers through al-Bayoumi. Bassnan told an FBI asset that "he did more than al-Bayoumi did for the hijackers."

The office of the Director of National Intelligence on Friday also released part of a 2005 FBI-CIA memo that said "there is no information to indicate that either (Bayoumi) or (Bassnan) materially supported the hijackers wittingly, were intelligence officers of the Saudi government or provided material support for the 11 September attacks, contrary to media speculation."

The document also notes that U.S. and coalition forces retrieved the telephone book of Abu Zubaydah, the first high-profile al-Qaida terror suspect captured after the Sept. 11 attacks. The telephone book, obtained during his capture in Pakistan in March 2002, contained an unlisted number traced to ASPCOL Corp. in Aspen, Colorado, which the FBI field office in Denver determined "manages the affairs of the

Colorado residence of Prince Bandar (bin Sultan)," who was the Saudi ambassador to the United States at the time.

The document, however, also stated that "CIA traces have revealed no 'direct' links between numbers found in Zubaydah's phone book and numbers in the United States."

Other individuals named in the document include Saleh al-Hussayen, a Saudi interior ministry official who stayed at the same hotel in Herndon, Virginia, as one of the hijackers. "While al-Hussayen claimed after Sept. 11 not to know the hijackers, FBI agents believed he was being deceptive. He was able to depart the United States despite FBI efforts to locate and re-interview him," the document said.

The document also described lax sharing of information between government agencies. It notes an instance where a CIA memo about alleged financial connections between the hijackers, the Saudi government and members of the Saudi royal family was put in a FBI case file, but never made it to FBI headquarters in Washington.

Former President George W. Bush classified the chapter to protect intelligence sources and methods, although he also probably did not want to upset U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia, a close U.S. ally.

Two years ago, under pressure from the families of those killed or injured on Sept. 11, and others, President Barack Obama ordered a declassification review of the chapter. National Intelligence Director James Clapper conducted that declassification review and transmitted the document to Congress, which released the pages online on Friday.

Trump picks Pence for VP

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After frenzied, final decision-making, Donald Trump announced Indiana Gov. Mike Pence as his running mate Friday, adding an experienced politician with deep Washington connections to the Republican presidential ticket.

Trump's pick was aimed in part at easing some Republicans' concerns about his temperament and lack of political experience. Pence spent 12 years in Congress before being elected governor and his demeanor is as calm as Trump's is fiery. While some conservatives are skeptical of Trump's political leanings, Pence has been a stalwart ally on social issues.

Yet Pence is largely unknown to many Americans. And his solidly conventional political background runs counter to Trump's anti-establishment mantra.

The two men scheduled a news conference for Saturday in New York to present themselves to America as the Republican team that will take on Hillary Clinton and her Democratic running mate in November. The duo will head to Cleveland next week for the Republican National Convention.

As Pence arrived for a private meeting with Trump Friday, he told reporters he "couldn't be more happy for the opportunity to run with and serve with the next president of the United States."

In choosing Pence, Trump appears to be looking past their numerous policy differences. The governor has been a longtime advocate of trade deals such as NAFTA and the Trans

Pacific Partnership, both of which Trump aggressively opposes. Pence also has been critical of Trump's proposed temporary ban on foreign Muslims entering the United States, calling the idea "offensive and unconstitutional."

The reaction to the Pence choice from Republican officials was overwhelmingly positive — no small feat for Trump, given how polarizing he's been within his own party.

"It was a pick that clearly shows he is pivoting to the general election," said GOP chairman Reince Priebus, who was in the midst of an interview with The Associated Press when Trump announced his decision. "He is choosing a person who has the experience inside and outside Washington, Christian conservative, very different style that I think shows a lot of maturity."

Pence, a staunchly conservative 57-year-old, served six terms in Congress before being elected governor and could help Trump navigate Capitol Hill. He is well-regarded by evangelical Christians, particularly after signing a law that critics said would allow businesses to deny service to gay people for religious reasons.

Clinton's campaign moved quickly to paint him as the "most extreme pick in a generation."

Clinton spent Friday holding meetings in Washington about her own vice presidential choice. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a favorite of liberals and one of the Democrats' most effective Trump critics, and Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, were seen in separate cars that left Clinton's home.



Pence

BRIEFLY

Hawaii pot dispensaries can legally open, but none are ready

HONOLULU (AP) — Medical marijuana dispensaries can now legally open in Hawaii, but not one is ready to do so.

The state Department of Health said none of the state's eight dispensaries was approved to open by July 15, the first day they were allowed by law.

One big hurdle is the state hasn't certified a lab to test the dispensaries' products.

"On the dispensary front, they're all doing their best to open their doors with as diverse a product line to serve all of the many needs of the patients and all the qualifying conditions that are out there," said Chris Garth, executive director of the Hawaii Dispensary Alliance. "Until those products can be tested in a clinical capacity, no dispensary will be able to open their doors, no matter how perfect their product is."

The state hasn't yet received any applications from interested laboratories, said Janice Okubo, spokeswoman for the Department of Health.

Spectra Analytical Lab is working on an application, but the lab needs to be certified as meeting international standards, said Michael Covington, lead chemist.

If approved, the lab aims to open by December, and would test products for potency and traces of substances like heavy metals and fungus, he said.

Hawaii was among the first states to legalize medical marijuana more than 15 years ago, but dispensaries were only legalized last year. The state's estimated 13,000 patients approved for the drug were generally left to buy it on the black market or grow it on their own.

Woman who pointed out alleged rapist is sentenced in killing

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — Norma Patricia Esparza was a Southern California college student in 1995 when she says she was raped by a man she met at a bar.

Weeks later, she went back to the same spot and pointed him out to her ex-boyfriend. He and two others followed Gonzalo Ramirez out of the bar, kidnapped him and hacked him to death with a meat cleaver, authorities say.

For the next 17 years, the killing went unsolved and Esparza built her life, earning a doctorate, working as a psychology professor in Switzerland and serving as a consultant to the World Health Organization. She started a family.

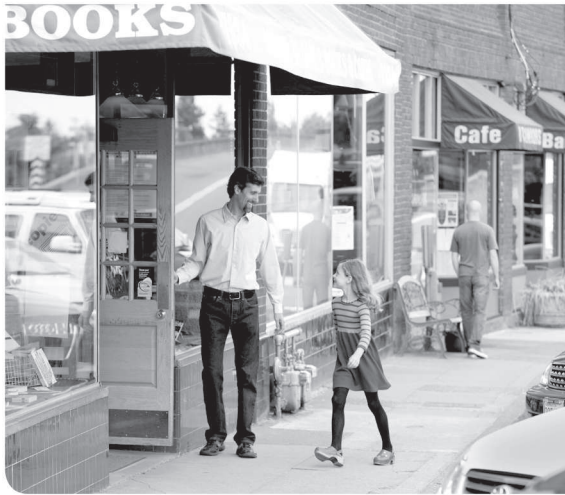
But police didn't stop investigating, and they arrested Esparza and the others in 2012. She insisted she was innocent but later accepted a plea deal. On Friday, 21 years after the killing, Esparza was sentenced to six years in prison for her role.

She was not there when Ramirez was killed, but Esparza, now 41, pointed him out to his assailants, said her attorney, Jack Earley.

It comes after the case drew international attention after Esparza's arrest and prompted an outcry from sexual assault victims' advocates, who said the case sent a chilling message to rape survivors.

After she told Gianni Van that Ramirez had raped her, Van and two others followed and rear-ended Ramirez in his vehicle, then attacked, kidnapped and killed him, dumping his body on the side of a road in Irvine, authorities said.

Co-defendant Diane Tran also was sentenced Friday to four years in prison.



OREGON MANUFACTURERS. LOCAL BUSINESSES. YOUR NEIGHBORS.

ALL GETTING MORE FROM THEIR ENERGY.

Here in Oregon, thousands of businesses and individuals are saving money with help from Energy Trust of Oregon. With cash incentives for energy improvements, we can help you get more from your energy.



Are you ready to get more from your energy?

Visit www.energytrust.org/more or call us at 1.866.368.7878.

Serving customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and Cascade Natural Gas.

EnergyTrust
of Oregon