

# Saudi Arabian Support for Terrorist Groups



*A special report from the  
Zionist Organization of America*

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# About the Zionist Organization of America

The Zionist Organization of America is the oldest, and one of the largest, pro-Israel organizations in the United States. Founded in 1897 to support the re-establishment of a Jewish State in the ancient Land of Israel, its presidents have included such illustrious Jewish leaders as Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. The ZOA was instrumental in mobilizing the support of the U.S. Government, Congress, and the American public for the creation of Israel in 1948.

With a national membership of more than 50,000 and active chapters throughout the United States, the ZOA today works to strengthen American-Israeli relations, through educational activities, public affairs programs, support for pro-Israel legislation on Capitol Hill, and by combating anti-Israel bias in the media.

The *Jerusalem Post* recently called the ZOA "one of the most important and influential Jewish groups in the U.S. today." Then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote: "The Zionist Organization of America, under the leadership of Morton Klein, has done important work in explaining Israel's case to the American public, media, and Congress. The ZOA has performed a vital service by exposing and challenging the Palestinian Arab violations of the Oslo accords; by documenting and combating anti-Israel media bias; and by helping Americans understand the shared values and mutual strategic interests that are the basis of U.S.-Israel friendship."

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A poem by a prominent Saudi Arabian diplomat praising terrorists aroused international criticism in April 2002. The poem, titled "The Martyrs," was authored by the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Great Britain, Ghazi Algosaibi and appeared in the London-based Arab newspaper Al Hayat on April 13. It read, in part:

*Allah is witness that you are martyrs / The prophets are witness ... and the holy men / You died to honor My God's word / In lands where the dearest are prisoners ... Ayat, the bride of loftiness [18 year-old Palestinian Arab suicide bomber Ayat Akhras] / She embraced death with a smile while the leaders are running away from death / Doors of heaven are opened for her ... We complained to the idols of a White House whose heart is filled with darkness.1*

Although such blatant glorification of terrorists is repulsive and merited the criticism it received, the critics should not have been surprised. Ambassador Algosaibi's sentiments are completely consistent with the Saudi Arabian government's long-standing support --political as well as financial-- for anti-Israeli and anti-American terrorist groups.

The Saudi Arabian government's refusal to fire the ambassador, or to reprimand him, or even to dissociate itself from the pro-terrorist poem speaks volumes about the Saudi leadership's own attitude towards terrorism.

## **I. Saudi Sabotage of America's Anti-Terror Investigations**

**Aided Possible Suspects :** Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the Saudi Arabian government flew a group of Saudi citizens out of the United States, even though U.S. law enforcement officials "were concerned that some of the people could be potential witnesses" in the prosecution of the terrorists.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Saudi government provided legal assistance to Saudi citizens who were detained as possible suspects in the attacks.<sup>3</sup> Bush administration officials complained in October 2001 that Saudi Arabia "has proved unwilling to cooperate fully on the investigation of the hijacking suspects."<sup>4</sup>

**Refused to Identify Passengers:** In mid-October, U.S. officials said that Saudi Arabia

"refused to cooperate with American efforts to identify terrorists and other criminals on aircraft flying to the United States. Ninety-four airlines cooperate, but Saudi Arabian Airlines and Egypt Air are among a handful that do not electronically provide passengers lists when planes begin flights to the United States."<sup>5</sup>

**Refused to Help Arrest Bin Laden:** In March 1996, "the government of Sudan, where Bin Laden was residing at the time, had reportedly contacted the Clinton administration with an offer to arrest Bin Laden and place him Saudi custody. But despite American entreaties the Saudis declined, and when Bin Laden was expelled from Sudan in May, he had it to safety in Afghanistan."<sup>6</sup>

**Wouldn't Let FBI Interview Suspects:** After a 1995 bombing that killed four Americans in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, the killers made televised confessions in which they "made it clear that [bin Laden] was their inspiration ... investigators from the FBI who had hoped to interview the suspects never got the chance. The men were beheaded."<sup>7</sup>

**No Cooperation in Investigation of Khobar Towers Attack:** Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director Louis Freeh publicly revealed that the Saudis had refused to cooperate in the investigation of the June 1996 terrorist attack at the Al Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in which 19 American soldiers were killed. Reno said the Saudis had failed to hand over "very important information" about the investigation," and Freeh said, "We have not gotten everything which we have asked for [from the Saudis] and, sure, that has affected our ability to make findings or conclusions or to channel the investigation in different directions ... There is a great deal of information that we have not seen."

Law enforcement officials said "the Saudis refused to turn over forensic evidence about the explosion at Al Khobar Towers [and] the Saudis failed to provide American officials with intelligence reports and failed as promised to allow FBI agents direct access to witnesses and suspects."<sup>8</sup> Assistant FBI Director Robert Brant told a Congressional hearing the following month that "the Saudi Arabian government has prevented FBI investigators from interviewing any civilians who witnessed or may have been involved in the bombing."<sup>9</sup>

**Terror Charges Dropped:** In September 1997, "U.S. officials dropped charges against a Saudi man believed to have knowledge of the [Khobar Towers] bombing because, according to Freeh, Saudi authorities failed to provide evidence against him that could be used in a U.S. court."<sup>10</sup>

**Investigation Dropped:** In March 1998, the Saudi government suddenly announced "that it had completed its investigation" into the Khobar Towers attack. "The announcement caught the Clinton administration by surprise and led to new fears that the culprits might never be brought to justice," the New York Times reported. "Officials at the State Department and the Justice Department said the American investigation of the bombing of the Khobar Towers apartment complex in eastern Saudi Arabia was far from over and that the terrorists had not been identified with certainty."<sup>11</sup>

Even after a personal visit to Saudi Arabia from Vice President Al Gore in May 1998, the Saudi government still showed "no indication that they are prepared to allow U.S. investigators into the case."<sup>12</sup>

## **II. Saudis Blocked U.S. Arrest of Hezbollah Terror Leader**

Hezbollah is on the official U.S. list of terrorist groups, and three of its leaders --Imad Mughniyah, Hasan Izz-Al-Din, and Ali Atwa-- are on the America's list of the 22 "Most Wanted" terrorists.

Hezbollah's attacks have included the April 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, in which 63 people were killed; the October 1983 bomb attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon, killing 241 Americans; the March 1984 kidnap-murder of the CIA station chief in Lebanon, William Buckley; the June 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, in which U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem was murdered; the March 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in which 29 people were killed; the July 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in which 85 people were killed; the June 1996 bombing of the U.S. Army barracks in the Khobar Towers, in

Saudi Arabia, in which 19 Americans were killed.<sup>13</sup>

In April 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher revealed that two weeks earlier, the FBI sent agents overseas to arrest Hezbollah's Imad Mughniyah for the 1983 bombing that killed 241 marines and masterminding the hijacking in which Stethem was murdered. "The plan to arrest him was thwarted when Saudi Arabia did not allow the plane on which he was flying to land for a scheduled stopover," the New York Times reported. "The Saudis blocked the landing despite a call from the White House national security adviser, Anthony Lake, to Prince Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador, who has a close relationship with King Fahd, to inform him of the plan."<sup>14</sup>

## **III. Saudi Support for Hamas**

Hamas is on the official U.S. list of terrorist groups. It is responsible for thousands of terrorist attacks against Israel since the early 1990s and was the pioneer, in early 1994, of the tactic of suicide bombings. The majority of the 300 Israelis murdered between 1993 and 2000 were victims of Hamas attacks. Hamas has also claimed many American victims; of the 29 American citizens murdered in Israel by Palestinian Arab terrorists since 1993, 19 were victims of Hamas.

According to a study by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, at Tel Aviv University, "Hamas's organizational infrastructure is dependent on external sources of financing, mainly contributions to local Islamic associations from the Gulf states, primarily Saudi Arabia." (No such associations could operate in Saudi Arabia without the approval of the Saudi government.)<sup>15</sup>

In the spring of 2002, U.S. troops in Sarajevo found, in the office of the Saudi High Commission for Relief of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "documents that proved Saudi funding of the Hamas terrorist group to enable it to produce a short-range missile called the 'Qassam.'"<sup>16</sup>

## IV. Saudi Support for PLO Terrorism

During the peak of PLO terrorism, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Saudi Arabian government provided the PLO with over \$100-million in annual aid.<sup>17</sup>

The Saudis also provided weapons to PLO terrorists. For example, the terrorists who massacred 38 Israeli civilians on the Tel Aviv highway in March 1978 were found to have been armed with U.S.-made M-16 automatic rifles and standard U.S. Army explosives, bearing Saudi Army markings and serial numbers. These armaments had been provided by the U.S. to Saudi Arabia, and were then given by the Saudis to the PLO.<sup>18</sup>

Saudi Arabia has strongly endorsed the Palestinian Arab violence against Israel that began in September 2000. In a typical statement, the Saudi Interior Minister, Naef bin Abdul Aziz, told the Syrian News Agency SANA on October 30, 2001, "We refuse to consider the Palestinian resistance as terrorism."

The Saudi Arabian government provides cash payments of \$5,333 to each family of "martyrs" killed while trying to murder Israelis, and a telethon on Saudi Arabian government-controlled television in April 2002 has been "raising money for the Palestinian uprising"--and it has raised \$100-million so far.<sup>19</sup>

Jaffee Center Memorandum No. 48, July 1997, p. 20)

16 New York Post, April 15, 2002.

17 Jerusalem Post, Sept. 18, 1981.

18 Jerusalem Post, April 4, 1978.

19 New York Post, April 12, 2002.

1 Washington Post, April 19, 2002.

2 New York Times, Sept. 19, 2001.

3 Washington Times, Sept. 18, 2001.

4 New York Times, Oct. 11, 2001.

5 New York Times, Oct. 18, 2001.

6 New Republic, Oct. 22, 2001.

7 New York Times, Sept. 15, 2001.

8 New York Times, Jan. 24, 1997.

9 Washington Post, Feb. 13, 1997.

10 Washington Post, May 3, 1998.

11 New York Times, March 31, 1998.

12 Washington Post, May 3, 1998.

13 Washington Post, Oct. 31, 2001.

14 New York Times, April 22, 1995.

15 Anat Kurz and Nahman Tal, " Hamas: Radical Islam in a National Struggle,"

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