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JEAN-CHARLES BRISARD

Interview by: Bob McKeown

SO TAKE ME BACK TO THE BEGINNING. WHEN DID YOU FIRST START INVESTIGATING THE TIES BETWEEN THE BIN LADEN FAMILY, THE SAUDIS ...

Yes. Back in 1996, the French intelligence asked me to carry out a broad study on basically the financial ties between the Osama bin Laden and the bin Laden family and how it can be related to terrorism at some point.

SO HOW DID YOU BEGIN AND WHAT DID YOU BEGIN TO FIND?

I began with what we learned, what we knew about the bin Laden family businesses, legal and legitimate businesses, and from that point I identified several individuals involved in money-laundering and for a point to another, I went to identify some obvious links with terrorists.

LET'S START WITH THE FAMILY COMPANY... HOW IMPORTANT, HOW EXTENSIVE THE SAUDI BIN LADEN GROUP BEEN?

The Saudi bin Laden group is probably the third conglomerate of the kingdom in terms of assets and revenues –

THE BIGGEST COMPANY IN SAUDI ARABIA?

The third conglomerate of the kingdom. It's still an establishment and not a company, so it doesn't have to provide information on its revenues and assets. But we have clear indications that it is one of the major companies in the kingdom, yes.

“We can value their assets at about \$15 billion.”

HOW MUCH REVENUE WOULD YOU ESTIMATE?

Revenues, I mean assets we can value their assets at about \$15 billion.

15 BILLION?

Yeah, dollars. Involved in construction, communication, real estate, distribution, all kind of goods, it's a real conglomerate Saudi style. It's involved also in religious affairs, I may say, it is the only company that was contracted to rebuild part of Medina and other holy sites.

SO ONE WOULD PRESUME FROM THAT THE BIN LADEN FAMILY AND THE BIN LADEN COMPANIES HAVE TIES, STRONG TIES, TO THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY.

Oh yes, they have strong ties and those ties were even suggested by Osama bin Laden himself in one of his first interviews in '95 to a French daily newspapers. It's very old but still, he's saying when the Afghan war begun, the Saudi Royal

Family, the king, turned to my family and asked them to name me as their representative to go there in Afghanistan. So it's the bin Laden family that the king turns to have a representative, high-level representative to manage and basically rival those mujahadeen.

SO IN FACT, AS FAR AS YOU UNDERSTAND, IT WAS THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY THAT TAPPED OSAMA BIN LADEN TO START THIS WAR OF HIS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Yes, especially Prince Turki, the then-chief of the intelligence, now ambassador to U.K. He was the one who met Osama bin Laden at that time and that they together put in place a structure to recruit and manage again the mujahadeen that were coming, from Saudi Arabia to fight which is in fact the embryo of what will be al-Qaeda.

SO NOT ONLY WAS IT THE ROYAL FAMILY THAT CHOSE OSAMA BIN LADEN IN THE FIRST PLACE, DID THEY ALSO FINANCE HIM AND SUPPORT HIM FINANCIALLY ?

Oh yes, at the time when he settled in Pakistan and then moved to Afghanistan at the beginning of the '80s, he received a crucial help from not only the kingdom, also from his family business. We know now that he brought with him in Afghanistan trucks and all sort of vehicles to be able to build roads and bridges and things like that for the resistance. We also know that he had the full support of a lot of the Saudi charities like the Saudi Red Crescent and others that were clearly fighting aside of Osama bin Laden at that time.

We, for instance, recovered historic files back in 1998-1999, when al-Qaeda was formed, and you have several papers on letterhead of those charities saying: well, we'll keep arms in our offices. If the fighters want some protection, let them come to our offices. They're acting not as charities as we usually refer to, they're basically fake charities, they're acting as safe houses, as providers of arms and covers basically to al-Qaeda members.

AND THESE DOCUMENTS WERE AS RECENT AS 1988-1999?

Yes, those are probably the earlier, the oldest documents we've been able to recover.

IS IT FAIR ALSO TO SAY THAT AT THAT POINT, OSAMA BINLADEN WAS BEING SUPPORTED BY THE U.S.?

I don't think so.

THAT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT?

Yes, it's quite too late. I think the United States, like other nations, supported the resistance against Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan and to some extent we may say: yes, of course, some of these may have come to in the hands of people like Osama bin Laden at that time. But I don't think it was a voluntary move from the United States to support specifically those mujahadeen. And we don't have any

evidence of that. There have been, I mean there's a lot of files that are today public and there's no indication that at the beginning of the '80s, mid-80s even, the United States ever met Osama bin Laden or supported him.

IS IT FAIR TO SAY, THOUGH, THAT IN FIGHTING THE SOVIETS IN AFGHANISTAN, HE WAS DOING THEIR WORK, HE WAS SIDING WITH THEM?

Oh, sure. All the information we have back to that period should be taken very carefully because it was a time where of course, a lot of nations were supporting the fight against Soviet Union. For instance, in the same set of documents we've been recovering in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was a list of the 20 most important supporters, financial supporters of al-Qaeda at that time. It's a list that is back in 1988 again and you find all the backbone of the Saudi economy – mostly important bankers, members of the Royal Family, ministers, things like that. But again, at that time they were supposed to support the fight against Russia.

AND AT THAT TIME, WERE THE AMERICANS AWARE THAT THE SAUDIS WERE SUPPORTING BIN LADEN AND THE MUJAHADEEN?

Yes. Yeah.

NO QUESTION ABOUT THAT IN YOUR MIND -

No, there's no question. At least in 1994, the United States has sent various emissaries or various intelligence documents, reports to Saudi Arabia clearly showing the extent of the support given to Osama bin Laden by not only charities but businesses and banks. So yes, the United States were clearly aware of the massive support given to Osama bin Laden.

“As recently as a week ago the Department of Treasury, for the first time issued a public number about the budget of al-Qaeda. It's \$45 million a year at least, he says. I valued the budget at around \$50 million.”

As recently as a week ago the Department of Treasury, for the first time issued a public number about the budget of al-Qaeda. It's \$45 million a year at least, he says. I valued the budget at around \$50 million. That means such amounts cannot come only from credit card fraud or cheque fraud or things like that that we usually refer to as means to finance terrorism. It clearly indicates that they have benefited for years from massive support.

NOW DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THAT BUDGET TODAY, TWO YEARS AFTER THE WAR ON TERROR BEGAN, IS SO LARGE INDICATES THAT THEY'VE GOT MONEY LEFT FROM BEFORE? OR ARE THEY GETTING INCOME ONGOING INCOME ?

Probably much of it is, of course, left from before, surely. Still, we know that because of the posture of Saudi Arabia on this specific issue, most of the financial backbone of al-Qaeda is still untouched.

SO YOU BELIEVE THERE'S STILL MONEY GOING TO AL-QAEDA FROM SAUDIA ARABIA?

No, I don't say that. I say money can still go to extremists such as al-Qaeda because the backbone, the network is still in place.

BUT YOU HAVE NO PROOF THAT MONEY IS GOING TODAY FROM SAUDI ARABIA AS IT HAS OVER THE YEARS?

No.

AT WHAT POINT WAS THERE A BREAK BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND BIN LADEN?

The real break happened in May 12th, 2002, finally when Osama bin Laden bombed three times in Riyadh and then the Saudis clearly reacted and showed willingness to finally fight those networks.

"You'll find thousands of declarations from Saudi officials stating, for instance, before September 11th: no, we weren't aware of the danger of Osama bin Laden; no, we didn't fear Osama bin Laden at that time – suggesting that they were clearly his backers."

SO EVEN AFTER SEPTEMBER 11th, EVEN AFTER ALL THE PROMISES AND THE ASSURANCES BY THE SAUDI LEADERSHIP THEY WERE STILL CONTINUING FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF OSAMA BIN LADEN?

You'll find thousands of declarations from Saudi officials stating, for instance, before September 11th: no, we weren't aware of the danger of Osama bin Laden; no, we didn't fear Osama bin Laden at that time – suggesting that they were clearly his backers. You'll also find statements pretty every week saying: we're fighting terrorism, we're taking this initiative, that initiative. But if you look at the facts, at the regulations in place in Saudi Arabia, you'll see that all that is only words. Nothing is done before May 2002. And finally, only months ago, a U.S. delegation has been able to go there and to work apparently with the Saudi authorities on the financial ground.

LET'S GO BACK NOW. OSAMA BIN LADEN HIMSELF, HOW WEALTHY A MAN WAS HE?

Well, he probably inherited from his family when he left the kingdom because in the beginning of the '90s he became an opponent of the Royal Family. His statements were clearly in opposition with the policy of kingdom at that time, especially regarding the presence, for instance, of U.S. troops during the first Gulf War. So at some point he was purely, he had to leave Saudi Arabia and to resettle in Sudan.

SO EVEN WHEN HE LEFT AND HAD HIS CITIZENSHIP TAKEN AWAY, WAS HE STILL RECEIVING THAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. We have clear evidence from Sudan, for instance, that he was still running bank accounts in Saudi Arabia himself. He had bank accounts in Saudi Arabia.

AND WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN COMMON KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE SAUDI AUTHORITIES, THE ROYAL FAMILY, THE BUSINESS ELITE?

Of course, the bin Laden family again is a well-known family and a wealthy family. He owned several accounts in a bank controlled by one of his financial backers. So yes, it should have been known, of course. His family they were able to see him. I mean he was simply living elsewhere but still benefiting from the kingdom generosity and the kingdom support.

NOW HIS FAMILY SAYS THAT THEY AT A POINT DISOWNED HIM, THAT THEY CUT ALL TIES WITH HIM. IS THAT TRUE OR NOT?

Well, I understand their position and I would probably do the same in their position actually. The fact is, they didn't really cut the ties. For instance, we recovered evidence that in Sudan, when he settled there until '96 before coming back to Afghanistan, he managed various businesses. Those businesses were covers for his terrorist activities and he was designated in '96 by the United States as the main financial backer of terrorism, Islamic terrorism around the world.

Until that time, his family was supporting him financially, was dealing with him in various businesses in Sudan. The Saudi bin Laden group was involved in, for instance, the construction of a road in Sudan with him.

So there were clear ties and if you speak with some members of the family, not the brothers but the brothers-in-law or sisters-in-law, they would tell you that, given the nature of the Saudi family and especially the bin Laden family, it is impossible that they wouldn't be in touch or in contact with him for so long.

RIGHT. SO THEY WERE IN CONTACT. WERE THERE VISITS FROM SIBLINGS, PARENTS?

Yes, oh yes, yes –

VISITING HIM –

Oh yeah, yeah, in Sudan, in Afghanistan, of course.

WAS THERE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE BIN LADEN FAMILY IN SAUDI ARABIA TO –

Well, if a company like the Saudi bin Laden group is providing all the tools to Osama bin Laden to build a road or an airport in Sudan, yes, they're clearly financial backers of Osama bin Laden.

AND THE ROYAL FAMILY IN SAUDI ARABIA WOULD HAVE BEEN WELL AWARE OF THIS?

Yes, yes. Yes. Given again the nature of the Saudi intelligence, it's virtually impossible that they couldn't know that, impossible.

YOU MENTIONED PRINCE TURKI AL FAISAL. HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH OSAMA BIN LADEN HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THAT OF A MENTOR AND PROTÉGÉ. IS THAT –

That's correct.

“He was of course the representative of the kingdom, he was sent there by the kingdom, he was helped by the kingdom and this support lasted for years.”

HOW IS THAT ACCURATE?

Osama bin Laden, when he was sent to Afghanistan, was very young and it's this relationship with Turki at that time in beginning of the '80s that finally create the bin Laden phenomenon. He wanted someone that could represent and be the for those mujahadeen. So he said, and we have evidence, that he was at that time paid, trained, that the Saudi intelligence recruited supporters at that time. And most of the Saudi charities were supporting Osama bin Laden financially. So that means he was not alone, like legend would say that bin Laden took his AK47 and went to fight in Afghanistan. This is only a legend. He was of course the representative of the kingdom, he was sent there by the kingdom, he was helped by the kingdom and this support lasted for years. So Turki, for instance, was the one who met regularly with bin Laden in Afghanistan.

OVER WHAT PERIOD OF TIME?

Oh, until '98, I think the last time, for at least three or four times, who sent him cheques, full suitcases of money, trucks – all that suggests that he was really supported by the Saudi government itself.

... THERE'S A BOOK RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY AN AUTHOR NAMED GERALD POSNER. IN THAT BOOK, HE SAYS AT A MEETING IN 1991 BETWEEN PRINCE TURKEY AND OSAMA BIN LADEN, IT WAS AGREED THAT THE SAUDIS WOULD PAY BIN LADEN SUPPORT FOR AL-QAEDA AS LONG AS HE AGREED NOT TO ATTACK SAUDI INTERESTS. DO YOU BELIEVE A MEETING LIKE THAT TOOK PLACE?

Yes, clearly the deal from the Saudi perspective is to say: well, we'll give him money, he'll go and fight abroad wherever he wants, in Chechnya, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Kashmir, or of course in Afghanistan, while preserving our own interests and protecting ourselves. His deal is clearly now established, I think, for years.

For instance, we have indications that in 1996, there was a meeting in Paris between representatives of Osama bin Laden, the bin Laden family and several members of the Saudi Royal Family. And the purpose of the meeting was clearly

to say: well, OK, we give you money to promote jihad and Wahabiism around the world, but please preserve us, that's all, we want.

AND KNOWING THE WAY HE FELT ABOUT THE U.S., KNOWING HE HAD DECLARED WAR ESSENTIALLY ON ALL AMERICANS, WOULD THEY NOT ALSO HAVE KNOWN THAT BY GIVING HIM MONEY, THEY WERE FUNDING ULTIMATELY ATTACKS AGAINST THE U.S.?

Don't you think that the interests of Saudi Arabia from its perspective is more important than U.S. interests of the U.S.? That's what we experienced, that's what we've seen in the past.

YET ALL THIS TIME, OF COURSE, THERE HAS BEEN THIS VERY CLOSE – SOME PEOPLE SAY MUCH TOO CLOSE – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SAUDIS, ESPECIALLY THE ROYAL FAMILY, AND THE UNITED STATES. That's what we used to say because the relationship is mostly a relationship of oil interests essentially. But for the rest, I think the United States didn't really appreciate the lack of willingness from kingdom to fight these networks for years because of these interests.

“Saudi Arabia was saying during all those years to the United States: Osama bin Laden is not a danger, he's under control, we have him because under our auspices, we may say, because we can basically control what he do and he is not a real threat for you. “

SO IF YOU HAD TO INTERPRET IT FROM THE U.S. SIDE, WERE THE AMERICANS FOOLING THEMSELVES? OR WERE THEY INTENTIONALLY NOT LOOKING AT SAUDI ARABIA?

Saudi Arabia was saying during all those years to the United States: Osama bin Laden is not a danger, he's under control, we have him because under our auspices, we may say, because we can basically control what he do and he is not a real threat for you.

NOW WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A MAN WHO HAS EFFECTIVELY DECLARED WAR ON AMERICANS – RESPONSIBLE, IT IS STRONGLY BELIEVED, FOR THE BOMBINGS OF THE U.S. EMBASSIES IN AFRICA, FOR THE BOMBING OF THE U.S.S. COLE. YET YOU'RE SAYING THE U.S. DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO PURSUE HIM. WHY NOT?

Why not? Because again, al-Qaeda at that time was known as a network of organizations. We have CIA intelligence memos in '96 – they won't mention al-Qaeda, although it's created eight years ago, so they should at least know that there was a structure controlled by al-Qaeda created eight years ago. In '96, they're still not referring to al-Qaeda, but to a group composed of former mujahadeen, probably led by Osama bin Laden. It's not very clear even at that time.

I think it's the major problem for the United States was cultural. This type of Islamic terrorism was well known in European countries essentially because of their experience of terrorism on their soil before. It was never the case for the United States. And if you look then at the means put in place against these networks, they're weak until September 11th.

And if you look at the Clinton policy, you'll see the same. He has offered intelligence about bin Laden, he's even offered to arrest him while in national air space when he's going back from Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996. And he does nothing, nothing. He refuses.

NOW THROUGHOUT ALL THIS TIME, HAD SAUDI ARABIA BEEN ACTING AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT A TRUE ALLY AND FRIEND TO ACT, COULD THEY HAVE TOLD THE U.S. ALL THEY NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT THE REAL THREAT POSED BY BIN LADEN?

They knew everything. They were the source of funds that went to buy arms, to buy bombs through their charities and those charities in Saudi Arabia are all controlled by the government to some extent.

SO THERE'S NO QUESTION THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT KNEW THIS WAS HAPPENING. HAD THEY PASSED THAT INFORMATION ON TO THE U.S., WOULD THE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN IN A FAR BETTER POSITION TO PREDICT AND PREVENT SEPTEMBER 11th?

Sure, the Saudi Arabia has misled United States for years. As far as bin Laden, he's not a threat for the kingdom. And the second thing, much more important for the kingdom, because it's a small kingdom in the Muslim world, Wahabiism is very weak and is a minority in the Muslim world, it has to promote and to propagate religion, Wahabiism, around the world. And again, bin Laden is one of the tools invented by the kingdom to propagate Wahabiism.

SO IT'S NOT JUST PAYING PROTECTION MONEY, SO TO SPEAK, TO BIN LADEN, NOT TO TARGET THEM, THEY SEE IT AS AN INVESTMENT IN THEIR FUTURE?

Exactly, exactly and you'll see that wherever bin Laden goes, in Chechnya, in Bosnia all the mosques there, all the cultural, Islamic cultural centres and other tools of propaganda that can exist are all funded by Saudi Arabia.

SO BASICALLY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA FROM THE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE IS ONE OF WHAT THEY THINK IS FRIENDSHIP, BUT THEY KNOW IT'S FINANCIAL GAIN? THERE'S OIL THERE FOR THE AMERICANS TO BUY FROM THE SAUDIS AND THE SAUDIS ARE BUYING ARMAMENTS FROM THE U.S. AND THAT'S WHY THE U.S. DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK TOO CLOSELY AT THIS? THEY DIDN'T WANT TO UPSET THE APPLE CART, SO TO SPEAK?

Exactly. I mean clearly the interests are so important for the United States that their view is clearly not oriented in responding to such a threat. It could have been prevented and at least identified and assessed a long time ago.

NOW HOW MUCH OF THAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE LIKE THE BUSHES, GEORGE HERBERT WALKER BUSH AND GEORGE W. BUSH, AND THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY AND THE BIN LADENS? HOW IMPORTANT IS THAT IN THIS EQUATION?

And in fact, if you look at the reality, you'll see a lot of personal relationships through various entities in the United States, private investments of George W. Bush at the end of the '70s that involved Saudi Arabian citizens or businessmen. And then when you look at the global perspective and essentially what was the impact finally of these interests to the policy of the United States, you'll see that it's not only regarding George W. Bush himself or the Bush family, as we may say. Clinton has done the same, has failed to identify the dual language of Saudi Arabia.

AND THERE'S NO INFORMATION TO SUGGEST THAT BILL CLINTON HAD BUSINESS, PERSONAL BUSINESS DEALINGS WITH THOSE –
No, not as I know, no.

SO GEORGE W. BUSH IN 1978 WAS IN HIS EARLY 30s, JUST STARTING OUT IN THE OIL BUSINESS?

Yes, exactly. And following in the path of his father in the oil business and he tried to found two companies, Arbusto 78 and Arbusto 79. Those two companies, managed several oilfields in Texas and Florida. At a certain point in the '80s, those companies had to find financial backers to continue the activity. And those backers he found at that time were Saudis.

AND IN FACT, THE MONEY CAME FROM A COMPANY CALLED BIN LADEN HOUSTON?

Well –

IS THAT TRUE?

Well, the money was coming from various companies, some of the money was coming from companies controlled by the bin Laden group, yes, yes.

WHICH IS THE COMPANY AT WHICH GEORGE HERBERT WALKER BUSH, THE PRESIDENT'S FATHER, NOW WORKS?

Exactly and founded by, the majority, by the staff of George Bush, the father.

RIGHT. LET'S GO BACK AGAIN TO ARBUSTO. ... DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH MONEY WAS GIVEN FROM THE SAUDI INTERESTS –

Yes, we have the figures. Several tens of millions of dollars.

TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS?

Yes, yeah.

WHEN BIN MAHFOUZ WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN GETTING MONEY TO BUSH FOR HIS COMPANY IN THE '70S AND AGAIN IN THE '90S, AT THE SAME TIME WAS HE CONNECTED TO BIN LADEN?

Yes, but again, at that time don't forget that before '96, August '96, for the first time, the State Department declares that Osama bin Laden is the financial backer of Islamic terrorism. Not before.

BUT THE SAUDIS KNOW IT BEFORE?

Yes, yes.

WOULD BIN MAHFOUZ REALISTICALLY HAVE KNOWN THE KINDS OF THINGS THAT BIN LADEN WAS DOING?

Yes, Bin Mahfouz was clearly supporting willingly and voluntarily Osama bin Laden during all those years until the year 2000, probably more.

AND IN THE '90s, WHEN HE HELPED INJECT MILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTO HARKEN ENERGY WHEN GEORGE W. BUSH WAS ON THE BOARD, WOULD BIN MAHFOUZ HAVE KNOWN BIN LADEN'S AGENDA, KNOWN THAT HE WAS PLANNING TO GO AFTER THE U.S.?

That we don't know, to be clear.

NOW YOU SAID BIN MAHFOUZ HAS HAD BANK ACCOUNTS FROZEN RECENTLY. WHAT'S HAPPENED RECENTLY?

Recently, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency decided to close one of his accounts at the Saudi American bank he held in Saudi Arabia.

AND WHY DID THEY CLOSE THEM?

Well, they didn't say why, but obviously the United States are investigating are investigating Bin Mahfouz for his ties with terrorism. We cross him pretty everywhere in every files and every procedure against the bin Laden networks around the world. In Spain, for instance, he provided money through his bank, the National Commercial Bank to al-Qaeda operators. We cross him in Germany, we cross him in Asia, in Chechnya, everywhere.

CAN YOU TRACE ANY MONEY FROM OR THROUGH BIN MAHFOUZ TO THE 19 HIJACKERS ON SEPTEMBER 11th?

No. What we only can say is that his bank was used to transfer money to the Spanish al-Qaeda cell. The Spanish al-Qaeda cell is the one who made the preliminary filmings of the World Trade Center for al-Qaeda in '97. It also provided money to several individuals that were providing help to the Hamburg cell.

NOW IS THERE AN ARGUMENT THAT THE BANK WAS SIMPLY A CLEARINGHOUSE AND THAT BIN MAHFOUZ WOULD HAVE HAD NO

KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE THE MONEY WAS COMING FROM OR WHERE IT WAS GOING?

Well, the bank at that time was used also to provide money to some prisoners in Jordan, for instance, that were indicted by the Jordan government for terrorism. So on the knowledge side, I'm quite confident that yes, he was aware. I mean the bank was aware that they were giving money to terrorism.

AND IF THE BANK KNEW, OR SHOULD HAVE KNOWN, WOULD BIN MAHFOUZ HAVE KNOWN?

Yes.

NO QUESTION?

No question about it. There was in 1999, in 1999 an investigation carried out by the Saudi government at the request of the United States on Ali BIN MAHFOUZ. He was, for instance, pouring money through a charity he owned that were directed to bin Laden and to some point he was arrested placed under house arrest. He today denies that, but we have a press release from a Saudi group in London calling for the release of Bin Mahfouz.

ONE COULD UNDERSTAND PERHAPS WHY GEORGE W. BUSH WOULD HAVE WELCOMED THE INJECTION OF MONEY TO HIS COMPANIES. HE RAN ARBUSTO, HE WAS A DIRECTOR OF HARKEN ENERGY. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT BIN MAHFOUZ CALCULATED THAT INVESTMENT, THAT HE KNEW THIS WAS THE SON OF A PROMINENT MAN, A MAN WHO WOULD GO ON TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THAT HE GAVE MONEY TO THOSE COMPANIES INTENTIONALLY FOR THAT REASON?

Well, that we don't know.

“But then again, if you look at the world picture, you'll see that not only George W. Bush but also Bill Clinton before him were on the same situation clearly experiencing blindness.”

AND WAS IT INVESTMENTS BY THE SAUDIS SUCH AS THOSE THAT CREATED THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE U.S. DIDN'T LOOK TOO CLOSELY AT WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING IN SAUDI ARABIA?

I've thought that for a long time, that if you look at that specific situation, when finally you look on the period of 20 years, you'll see that the basically in simple words, the banker of George W. Bush is also the banker of Osama bin Laden, you may think: yes, of course it creates such an incredible situation. But then again, if you look at the world picture, you'll see that not only George W. Bush but also Bill Clinton before him were on the same situation clearly experiencing blindness.

IF YOU TOLD THAT TO MOST PEOPLE, THAT AS YOU PUT IT, THE BANKER OF OSAMA BIN LADEN HAS ALSO BEEN THE BANKER OF THE MAN WHO IS NOW THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MOST PEOPLE WOULD SAY: THAT'S CRAZY. IT CAN'T BE. THAT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE CONSPIRACY THEORIES –

Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course

BUT IN FACT –

But in fact it's the case and everything is there to prove that was the case. Yeah. But I'm not suggesting that situation may have undermined the willingness of the United States as a country, to fight terrorism. It was not the case. It was a blindness, a cultural blindness against in front of this phenomenon ... terrorism.

SO YOU'RE NOT SUGGESTING THAT THERE WAS A CONSCIOUS CHOICE MADE BY GEORGE W. BUSH BECAUSE OF THIS RELATIONSHIP NOT TO PURSUE OSAMA BIN LADEN –

Exactly. He won't say to the CIA: forget about bin Laden because I'll be in trouble if in any way if we reveal that he has ties to me or anything.

AT THE SAME TIME, IS IT REASONABLE TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS THE KIND OF THING THAT LULLED THE U.S. INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY, THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE OUR FRIENDS, THAT THEY'VE COME TO US IN TIMES OF NEED?

You're right. Yes, the belief is probably that those people are our friends. We have very close interests with them, we can trust them, they're friends and what they say is the truth.

I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE MEETING IN 1996 IN PARIS. HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT MEETING IN PARIS?

Through witnesses and through intelligence sources.

FRENCH INTELLIGENCE?

I won't be able to say that. So: intelligence sources.

AND FROM YOUR INFORMATION, WHERE DID THE MEETING TAKE PLACE, WHO WAS AT IT AND WHAT WAS DECIDED?

What we know, the meeting took place in June 1996, took place that with the same person that invested in Harken Energy, the George W. Bush company; Ali BIN MAHFOUZ; a representative then minister of defence; a brother of Osama bin Laden was there; and three or four arm dealers. We know that about 20 persons were at that meeting.

WAS OSAMA BIN LADEN HIMSELF THERE?

No, no.

“The Royal Family is in a very weak position and each time you speak to a Saudi, and you probably did for this show, but they will tell you privately: the United States and other nations think we can act against those people. They’re fools because the exact day we act against those people, next day we’re out of the country.”

AND WHAT WAS DISCUSSED AND WHAT WAS DECIDED?

From what our associates told us, the purpose of the meeting was to assess the situation and to a certain point it was clear to participants that bin Laden fighting in a broad theatre of operation, we may say, in Chechnya, in Kashmir and in Bosnia, was helping the kingdom in the sense that it was promoting and propagating Wahabiism and it was worth paying him to do so abroad to prevent him to come, of course, back in Saudi Arabia and try to oppose the king and the Royal Family.

The Royal Family is in a very weak position and each time you speak to a Saudi, and you probably did for this show, but they will tell you privately: the United States and other nations think we can act against those people. They’re fools because the exact day we act against those people, next day we’re out of the country. What only counts in Saudi Arabia is the religious voice and there are in fact those who are ruling the country.

SO IF IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT THERE WAS NO OPPOSING BIN LADEN AND AL-QAEDA AT THAT MEETING IN PARIS IN 1996, WAS IT THEN ALSO DECIDED THAT MORE MONEY WOULD CHANGE HANDS TO CONTINUE THAT?

Yes, I mean the clear deal was at that time they agreed to and apparently find ways to pour money to Osama bin Laden abroad.

DO WE KNOW HOW MUCH MONEY?

Again, if you look at the figures, available figures today, we can estimate that within a ten-year period, between \$300 and \$500 million were poured to Osama bin Laden.

ALMOST HALF A BILLION DOLLARS?

Yes. Yes.

LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT THE CHARITIES... WHAT IS THE IIRO, THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC RELIEF ORGANIZATION, AND HOW ARE THEY CONNECTED?

IIRO is a, is part of the Muslim War League. The Muslim War League was funded by former members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and is one of the major charities in the kingdom.

WHO IN THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY AND-OR THE BUSINESS ELITE WOULD HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE IIRO?

Saudi charities are supervised by ministers. In the case of IIRO the supervisor is Prince Bulaziz, minister of charity.

"These charities receive funds from a lot of wealthy Saudis including members of the Saudi royal family."

SO A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY...

Exactly. Brother of King Fahd. These charities receive funds from a lot of wealthy Saudis including members of the Saudi royal family – Prince Sultan, Prince Salman, others. The interesting thing is that one of the founder of several branches of the IIRO in the world is the brother-in-law of Osama bin Laden. What is also most interesting and we just found our recently is that not only are the charities helped in funding, in supporting logistically the terrorist network in Africa, in Bosnia, in Chechnya and elsewhere. From the very beginning they were associated with Al Qaeda. They were part of Al Qaeda. When for instance, Al Qaeda decides to create a committee to raise funds they include IIRO and others. And most surprisingly, at that time when bin Laden came back in Afghanistan in '96 to build training camps to train people not only to fight Soviet Union but clearly to engage in terrorist actions. Those same charities are funding – are giving him money to build these training camps.

And something we just discovered a couple of weeks ago is that IIRO was the founder of the Darwita training camp. The Darwita training camp is a famous camp. It's the camp that where there were filmed images of that dog dying because of suffocating after inhaling chemical devices. This camp was specialized in chemicals and biological weapons testing.

YOU MENTIONED FINDING DOCUMENTS WHICH SHOWED THAT CHARITIES WERE AVAILABLE FOR SUPPORT IN VARIOUS WAYS. DID YOU FIND ANY DOCUMENTS WITH THE IIRO NAME ON THEM?

Yes. For instance there's a document clearly stating that they, the weapons, just arrived – AK47s and things like that. And most surprisingly this letter was sent to a emissary for bin Laden and it went through. We have the own signature of bin Laden in this letter.

NO QUESTION IN YOUR MIND THAT THIS IS LEGITIMATE. THIS IS THE REAL DOCUMENT.

This document is now an FBI document used in a criminal procedure in United States so yes, I presume it's a real document.

"Every day we're finding more evidence that the kingdom is clearly lying to the world and has played a double role in all that to protect itself and to promote its religion."

NOW THE SAUDIS HAVE CATEGORICALLY DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF FUNDING THAT WENT TO AL QAEDA FOR TERRORIST PURPOSES. PRINCE TURKI HAS CATEGORICALLY DENIED HE EVER MET WITH BIN LADEN OR PROMISED TO GIVE HIM MONEY.

There's an investigation going on and every day we're finding more evidence that the kingdom is clearly lying to the world and has played a double role in all that to protect itself and to promote its religion.

AFTER THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN ENDED, THE AMERICAN INTEREST BECAME NONE. NOT ONLY POLITICAL BUT ALSO ECONOMIC BECAUSE OF THE PROSPECT OF A PIPELINE. HOW IMPORTANT WAS THAT PIPELINE?

The pipeline arrived later, I mean in '94, '95. The pipeline was important. It's another thing that disturb the, probably the political level in United States, from viewing those networks and those forces as they were.

SO WAS THE U.S. MORE INCLINED TO NEGOTIATE AND TO LOOK FRIENDLY UPON THE TALIBAN BECAUSE OF THAT PIPELINE?

They were negotiating with the Taliban and they were in fact viewing their power as important for the stability of the country and for the prospect of pipeline there.

DO YOU THINK THEY LOOKED AT THEM A LITTLE TOO POSITIVELY BECAUSE OF THE PROSPECT OF THE PIPELINE WHICH THEY ALL WANTED SO MUCH? DID THEY GIVE THEM THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT WHEN PERHAPS THEY SHOULD NOT?

Well we're speaking about interests and probably the idea is not to put in place someone who is moral or not. The idea is to put in place someone who controls the territory, who can speak for the entire territory and impose a solution. And at that time the one, at least for the United States, appearing as that force, is the Taliban because they're occupying 90% of the country. They are creating stability which is a good prospect for building the pipeline.

SO THE INTEREST IN STABILITY WASN'T SO MUCH FOR THE WELFARE OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE.

Exactly, never. You even have statements from State Department officials saying, well at that time in '96 or '97 that the way the Taliban are using their religion and treating, for instance, women was comparable to the way Saudi Arabia was acting on that so it was not such a big question.

THE SAUDIS ARE OUR FRIENDS. HOW BAD CAN THE TALIBAN BE?

Exactly, exactly. Plus the Saudis were the first principal backers of the Taliban at the same time.

SO WHAT KINDS OF NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING ON THROUGH THE CLINTON ERA AND AGAIN WHEN BUSH CAME INTO THE ADMINISTRATION TO – TO TRY TO GET THE PIPELINE?

We know now that State Department officials and other officials were speaking about that pipeline openly since '96 when basically the Taliban came in power.

NOW OF COURSE THIS WAS ALSO THE TIME WHEN THE TALIBAN WAS HOSTING OSAMA BIN LADEN.

Yes, yes.

HOW DID THAT COMPLICATE THESE NEGOTIATIONS?

Well of course those were kept secret and nobody said, you know, a U.S. company was openly pursuing the prospect of a pipeline.

"What we've seen in September 11 that the bad interests prevailed for all those years against what should have been pursued."

WAS THE U.S. INCLINED TO UNDERESTIMATE THE THREAT POSED BY OSAMA BIN LADEN?

I don't know if it was their intention but the result is that it misled them in the war against terrorism.

BECAUSE ONE OF THE ITEMS ON THE AGENDA WAS THE PIPELINE.

They were pursuing various interests and goals in the region. For instance in '98 they were bombing Afghanistan training camps. But then later in '99 and 2000 and even 2001 they're still negotiating with the Taliban. So it's very complicated. I think it's a conflict of interest there. But finally what we've seen in September 11 that the bad interests prevailed for all those years against what should have been pursued.

IN YOUR BOOK YOU POINT TO A MEETING THAT TOOK PLACE IN BERLIN IN JULY 2001. WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT MEETING AND WHAT WAS ITS SIGNIFICANCE?

This meeting that probably the last meeting between the United States and the Taliban designed to stabilize the power of the Taliban, make it appropriate for the international community. That means to trying to say that ... well be soft with human rights, etc and you will have what you deserve – money, the pipeline. This was a fundamental error because again the Taliban came in power and stayed in power because they were incarnating a pure and radical doctrine of the religion, Wahabism.

ACCORDING TO YOUR BOOK THAT MEETING IN JULY 2001 LED TO A THREAT OR IMPLIED...

The U.S. representative during that meeting said, well the Taliban will have a carpet of gold or if they don't want that and change fundamentally their policy or their government they'll have a carpet of bomb.

SO IF THEY WON'T TAKE A CARPET OF GOLD AND THE ECONOMIC REWARD THEN YOU'RE GOING TO GET A WAR.

Yeah.

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE'S ANY REASON TO SUPPORT THAT THAT LED IN SOME WAY TO A REACTION BY THE TALIBAN AND OSAMA BIN LADEN IN 9-11?

Frankly no one knows and I never said myself that there was a link between the two items.

DO YOU BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE?

Yes it's possible. But again I won't be the one that says that September 11 was foreseen even given all the information we've been discussing about the Bush involvement, about the U.S. involvement with Saudi Arabia, with the Taliban, ... the pipeline. I think if any sensitive person was aware of the evidence of September 11 before it happened it should have been prevented.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE SAID, OF COURSE THE U.S. IS THINKING ABOUT MILITARY ACTION. OSAMA BIN LADEN HAS BOMBED THE EMBASSY, HE'S BOMBED THE USS COLE. HE'S DECLARED A WAR ON THE AMERICANS AROUND HIM, WOULDN'T IT BE EVIDENT TO ANYONE INCLUDING AL QAEDA THAT MILITARY ACTION WAS A POSSIBILITY? WHY WOULD THEY NEED THAT LINE TO TRIGGER IT?

I'm questioning myself on that till today. I have no answer to that and a recent report from the joint inquiry staff of the U.S. Congress doesn't go much on any answer to that specific point.

THE OTHER POINT THAT'S BEEN MADE IS THAT FROM ALL WE KNOW AND ALL WE'VE LEARNED THE ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11TH WERE BEING PLANNED YEARS BEFORE.

Yes, yes, yes.

SO IS IT PLAUSIBLE TO THINK THAT ONE REMARK BY AN AMERICAN THREATENING SOME SORT OF MILITARY ACTION WOULD HAVE CONVINCED OSAMA BIN LADEN TO DO SOMETHING HE REALLY WASN'T GOING TO ... GIVEN ALL THE PLANNING THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE.

We don't really know if that statement was actually carried out to the Taliban regime and to Mullah Omar or to Osama bin Laden before September 11. So was that a signal to launch the attack or could it have been a signal, I still don't know.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT ONE VERY SMALL PART OF YOUR BOOK BECAME SO CONTROVERSIAL?

I must tell you that in Europe, that book was considered as a new perspective on the United States government. In the United States the problem is that you are in the line of major media chains or you're a conspiracy theorist.

SO BECAUSE YOU ARE ASKING THESE QUESTIONS THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAW YOU AS A CONSPIRACY THEORIST?

Exactly, exactly.

ARE YOU?

Not at all. Never been.

" I believe elements of the Saudi government were involved to some extent in the plot, not the U.S."

YOU SAY YOU DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE A CONSPIRACY THEORIST. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD FOREKNOWLEDGE, ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN ON SEPTEMBER 11TH?

No, they had probably knowledge that something big will happen soon but didn't have any knowledge of the exact timing and precise location of September 11.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT NOT ONLY DID THEY HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF SOMETHING HAPPENING BUT THAT THEY WERE – THAT ELEMENTS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WERE INVOLVED IN WHAT HAPPENED?

No. I don't buy that. I believe elements of the Saudi government were involved to some extent in the plot, not the U.S.

NOW OF COURSE WE'VE BEEN TOLD THAT THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, THE WAR IN IRAQ, THOSE WERE THE U.S. ATTACKING TERROR. WHAT WAS IT, THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN? WHAT WAS THE WAR IN IRAQ IF NOT THE WAR ON TERRORISM?

The war in Afghanistan was clearly a war on terror. After September 11 the U.S. government was coherent, was saying, well we're pursuing terrorists so we have to go after those who host terrorists. Afghanistan and Taliban regime was hosting bin Laden and his network. So it's a good thing that the Taliban regime was finally reversed and we hope for a long time reversed. And most of the Al Qaeda, at least the central organization was dismantled by the same time. But then we've seen a shift in U.S. policy in fact and contrary to its primary objective to run after terrorists and the terrorists weren't and have never been in Iraq.

SO FROM YOUR INVESTIGATION WAS THERE A CONNECTION BETWEEN SADDAM HUSSEIN AND OSAMA BIN LADEN?

No. There were points of contacts but there's much more points of contact between Al Qaeda, for instance, and U.K. than there are with Iraq.

WAS THERE SUPPORT, FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

No, no, no.

MATERIAL SUPPORT?

No, no.

FROM IRAQ FOR AL QAEDA?

What we have as evidence is contacts. I mean Bin Laden meeting with an Iraqi representative in the beginning of the '90s, an Al Qaeda member in Spain receiving an invitation to attend a party at the Iraqi embassy in Madrid. Only, contacts, very insignificant contacts.

SO WHAT WAS THE WAR IN IRAQ ABOUT THEN IN YOUR OPINION?

The main goal of the war was I think was stated by, President Bush only days before the war. It was to basically to put Saddam Hussein out of power. I think it's mostly a private and personal war designed to tackle Saddam Hussein but nothing else.

"For the first time in history we're running after the real source of terrorism. We're going deeper in the roots and trends of this terrorism."

WHY IS THIS LEGAL CASE YOU'RE INVOLVED IN IMPORTANT IN YOUR OPINION?

It's important because for the first time in history we're running after the real source of terrorism. We're going deeper in the roots and trends of this terrorism.

AND YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN TRACE THOSE ROOTS BETTER THAN THE CIA, THE FBI AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT?

What I know is since the beginning of our case at least 50 governments around the world have offered us cooperation. That means full access to records... intelligence reports, pieces of evidence. And I'm speaking about big countries. I'm speaking about Morocco, about France, about Spain, Germany, Russia. Those countries are helping our case. And we have been able to recover very interesting material for our own that have been helpful for the U.S. government later.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE ATTITUDE TOWARD SAUDI ARABIA BY THE U.S. CHANGED SUBSTANTIALLY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH? DID THEY REALIZE THAT THEY HAD BEEN WRONG BEFORE?

There's probably a sense at least at the operational and intelligence level that in fact they have been misled. But I think fundamentally and in the war against

terrorism the real challenge a political challenge. For a U.S. government to clearly assess and address this issue with Saudi Arabia.

DO YOU THINK THEY'VE DONE IT YET?

Not yet. Unfortunately. They have been mostly focused on the military war against terrorism.

AND HAVE THE SAUDIS CHANGED YET?

No. Unfortunately. They won't change. They won't change. Won't change.

IF THE U.S. IS TELLING THE SAUDIS WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON WITH THOSE CHARITIES? WHY WAS THERE NO SAUDI ACTION AGAINST THE CHARITIES FORTHCOMING?

Because those charities are involved in religion. It's a religious duty in Saudi Arabia to donate money to those charities. So trying to counter these charities inside the kingdom would have endangered the political power in Saudi Arabia.

IF THE SAUDIS IGNORED THIS INFORMATION AND KEPT SUPPORTING THE CHARITIES AND TERRORISM AND KEPT PRETENDING THEY WEREN'T, WHY DID THE U.S. NOT ACT UPON THIS?

United States government and the intelligence services were in a situation at that time where they didn't see the threat as imminent for their country itself.

"Words that are convenient for the interest of both nations. But in fact Saudi Arabia has never been a friend of the United States."

SO WHEN WE HEAR NOW AND OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS GEORGE W. BUSH INSISTING THAT THE SAUDIS ARE FRIENDS, THEY'RE HELPING US TO FIGHT TERROR, THEY ALWAYS HAVE, THAT'S SIMPLY NOT TRUE.

Those are words. Words that are convenient for the interest of both nations. But in fact Saudi Arabia has never been a friend of the United States. Saudi Arabia has a dual policy since the beginning. It is supporting those charities because it's fine for them that those charities propagate their doctrine of Islam, their religious beliefs around the world even if they support terrorists.

WHEN YOU SAY DUAL LANGUAGE YOU MEAN SAYING ONE THING BUT DOING ANOTHER.

Yes.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THIS ONE.... THIS IS 14 PAGES LONG AND IT'S WHAT?

CIA summary report on..

SO FROM THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

Exactly. And it was confirmed to us that it was coming from the CIA. It's a summary analyzing the Islamic charities' involvement in terrorism and it basically states that about one-third of the Islamic charities around the world are directly or indirectly involved in terrorism.

NOW THIS IS DATED 1996 WHICH OF COURSE AGAIN WAS AT A TIME WHEN SAUDI ARABIA WAS PROCLAIMING IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ANY OF THIS.

Sure, sure.

SO THIS IS JANUARY 1996 WHICH SHOWS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC CHARITIES AND TERRORISM. IT ALSO SHOWS THAT THE U.S. IS AWARE OF IT YET WE'VE BEEN TOLD ESSENTIALLY EVER SINCE THAT THE U.S. IS FULLY CONFIDENT THERE'S NO SUPPORT OF TERRORISM COMING FROM SAUDI ARABIA.

Well yes, these statements were made obviously to preserve strategic interests between United States and Saudi Arabia. But in fact intelligence agencies in the United States and elsewhere were well aware at that time and since long time ago, '94 and '96 the nature of the links between those charities and terrorism.

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS?

This is a, a letter signed by Mullah Omar. It was recovered by our teams in Afghanistan. It's basically an order to pay the amount of \$2 million to an Al Qaeda leader who is heading the special terrorist unit.

IT SAYS AFGHANISTAN EMBASSY, ISLAMABAD. GREETINGS. PAY \$2 MILLION FROM SAUDI ARABIA AID TO RESPECTED BROTHER, JAMJAMA NOMANGANI. WHO IS JAMJAMA NOMANGANI?

Jamjama Nomangani is believed to have been killed by the U.S. forces in Afghanistan during the offensive. He was the leader of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan and the head since the year 2000 of special terrorist unit of Al Qaeda, referred as Brigade Zero 55.

SO AN AL QAEDA LEADER.

Yeah Al Qaeda leader, definitely.

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT THAT MEANS \$2 MILLION BEING DIRECTED TO THIS MAN FROM THE MONEY RECEIVED FROM SAUDI ARABIA.

Yes, yes.