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# **In 9/11 Document, View of a Saudi Effort to Thwart U.S. Action on Al Qaeda**

By MARK MAZZETTI

WASHINGTON — The long-classified document detailing possible connections between the government of Saudi Arabia and the Sept. 11 terrorist plot released on Friday is a wide-ranging catalog of meetings and suspicious coincidences.

It details contacts between Saudi officials and some of the Sept. 11 hijackers, checks from Saudi royals to operatives in contact with the hijackers and the discovery of a telephone number in a Qaeda militant's phone book that was traced to a corporation managing an Aspen, Colo., home of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, then the Saudi ambassador to Washington.

The document, 28 pages of a congressional inquiry into the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, is also an unflattering portrayal of the kingdom's efforts to thwart American attempts to combat Al Qaeda in the years before the attacks.

But it is also a frustrating time capsule, completed in late 2002 and kept secret for nearly 14 years out of concern that it might fray diplomatic relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Subsequent investigations into the terror attacks pursued the leads described in the document and found that many had no basis in fact. But the mythology surrounding the document grew with each year it remained classified.

The Obama administration sent a declassified version of the document, with some redactions, to the congressional leadership on Friday. Its release on the website of the House Intelligence Committee later in the day marked the end of a years-long fight by lawmakers and families of the Sept. 11 victims to make public any evidence that Saudi Arabia may have played a role in the attacks.

It is by no means a Rosetta Stone that deciphers the lingering mysteries behind the attacks. But it is also a far more substantial document than many American and Saudi officials — from the White House press secretary to some members of Congress to the Saudi foreign minister — tried to indicate in a flurry of news conferences and emailed news releases on Friday afternoon.

And it was made public at a particularly troubled moment in America's decades-long relationship with Saudi Arabia. The Senate unanimously passed a bill in May that would make it easier for families of Sept. 11 victims to sue the Saudi government for any role in the attacks. The bill is now being considered in the House.

The White House has threatened to veto the legislation, but the Obama administration has had its own recent period of tension with Saudi leaders over the Iran nuclear deal and the grinding war in Syria.

Much of the push over more than a decade to get the document declassified was led by

former Senator Bob Graham, the Florida Democrat who was one of the co-chairmen of the congressional inquiry. In a statement on Friday, Senator Graham compared the release to the “removal of the cork at the end of the bottle” that should lead to even more information to be declassified.

The panel that Senator Graham helped lead did not try to reach definitive conclusions about what the 28 pages called the “Saudi issue” in its final report in 2002. “It was not the task of this Joint Inquiry to conduct the kind of extensive investigation that would be required to determine the true significance of any such alleged connections to the Saudi Government,” the document states.

The most extensive investigation into the attacks was conducted by the September 11 Commission, which pursued many of the leads presented in the 28 pages. The commission’s final report, released in 2004, said that the panel had found no evidence that the “Saudi government as an institution, or senior Saudi officials individually funded” Al Qaeda.