

ASSESSING THE U.S.-SAUDI SECURITY  
AND INTELLIGENCE RELATIONSHIP

Friday, September 11, 2020

U.S. House of Representatives,  
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,  
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 12:01 p.m., via Webex, the Honorable Adam Schiff (chairman of the committee) presiding.

The Chairman. All right. The committee will come to order. Good afternoon and welcome. Good morning to those that are on the West Coast. The committee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time.

Before we proceed to the testimony from our panel, I want to address some housekeeping matters. First, today's session will be conducted entirely on an unclassified basis. All participants are reminded to please refrain from discussing any classified or other information protected from public disclosure.

Second, the committee is conducting this virtual hearing in compliance with House Resolution 965 and the regulations for remote committee proceedings. It is being broadcast live and streamed on the committee's website. I would have preferred, of course, to hold this hearing in person. However, because the threat posed by COVID-19 remains serious and widespread, we are proceeding remotely in order to ensure the safety of our witnesses, members, staff, and public.

Today marks the 19th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, in which nearly 3,000 people perished, thousands more were wounded, and our Nation awakened to the threat of international terrorism. The national unity and sense of shared purpose that we all felt in the aftermath of that tragic day has sadly faded, but the memory of that terrible day remains vivid in all of our minds.

Nothing is more important to this committee and its members than ensuring that we avoid another deadly terrorist attack on American soil. Today is also an opportunity to recognize the heroism and the sacrifice of our intelligence community professionals who toil in the shadows and often receive little or no recognition. It is through their selfless efforts we have prevented further attacks on our homeland, and through their efforts we have hunted down and brought to justice the mastermind of that heinous

attack.

The nearly two decades since the September 11 attacks have seen our military and intelligence professionals deploy across the globe and partner with dozens of other nations to defeat an ever-changing terrorist threat.

Congress, including this committee, has approved new initiatives to help combat violent extremist ideology and address other root causes of terrorism. And near the center of that work for decades has been the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In that time and to this day, our intelligence services have worked closely with Saudi Arabia to disrupt al-Qa'ida and cut off its financial resources and to combat violent extremism. Yet, confoundingly and despite this cooperation, entities and individuals in Saudi Arabia have been accused of propagating and funding violent extremists from Jakarta to Kosovo.

When ISIS emerged in Syria and Iraq in 2014, its leaders took inspiration from the same twisted ideology that was promoted by some Saudi clerics. In late last year, it was a Saudi military officer here in the United States for training who, inspired by al-Qa'ida, killed three U.S. servicemembers and injured eight other individuals. The FBI has determined that it was the first successful foreign-directed terrorist attack on U.S. soil since 9/11.

Notwithstanding the Saudi leadership's strong public commitments to counter extremism, some Saudi officials remain reluctant to acknowledge the Kingdom's role since 1979 in funding and supporting violent extremist movements across the globe. As a result, Saudi Arabia continues to play both sides, working with us in some instances to counter violent extremism yet turning a blind eye to other elements which support it and allow it to metastasize outside its borders.

Other recent Saudi actions in the Middle East, most notably the disastrous Saudi-led war in Yemen, have likewise unfortunately strengthened extremists who

threatened shared U.S. and Saudi interests. Alongside the Kingdom's ill-timed oil price war with Russia and public reports suggesting that Saudi Arabia could be pursuing a nuclear weapon that would threaten the security of Israel and other U.S. partners, Saudi actions have left many of us asking a simple question: Does the United States have a reliable partner in Riyadh?

This concern has been heightened by the recent attention in Saudi Arabia of former senior Saudi officials with whom the United States had forged a close counterintelligence -- and counterterrorism, rather, partnership, individuals who understood the importance of professionalizing and reforming the Saudi intelligence services.

This question came to a horrific head last year with a brutal murder of U.S. resident and Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the hands of the Saudi intelligence officers deployed to silence a critic of the Kingdom's new Crown Prince.

Acknowledging MBS apparent responsibility for the murder of Mr. Khashoggi, President Trump reportedly told Washington Post journalist Bob Woodward, quote, "I saved his ass," and, quote, "I was able to get Congress to leave him alone."

And when asked by Mr. Woodward if he believed the reports that MBS may have ordered the killing of Mr. Khashoggi, President Trump replied, quote: No, he says that he didn't do it. He says very strongly he didn't.

Unlike the President, this committee is not in the practice of taking self-interested and implausible denials at face value. And I am confident neither Democrats nor Republicans in Congress are going to stop insisting on accounting an accountability for his murder or stop demanding that the Director of National Intelligence make public its assessment of Saudi officials' culpability for the killing. Justice as well as the law require no less.

Congress also will not stop scrutinizing whether the U.S.-Saudi relationship continues to be a mutually beneficial partnership. This is especially crucial as the Trump administration has granted Saudi Arabia the equivalent of a blank check and done so often outside of normal official, diplomat, and security channels.

Since 2017, the President has looked the other way as the Kingdom dropped American-made bombs on Yemeni civilians, has ignored credible reports of a global campaign to intimidate critics of the regime, and stood by silently as the Saudi Government jailed journalists and women's rights activists, among them Loujain al-Hathloul, a young women's rights activist who had been detained and tortured for more than 2 years without charges.

Contradicting his claims to be ending wars and bringing troops home, the President also deployed thousands of U.S. troops to Saudi soil without Congress' explicit authorization and without a clear rationale for how their presence in the Kingdom advances our national interests.

This committee has long supported and will continue to advocate for pursuing a constructive relationship with Saudi Arabia, grounded and shared interests, rational thinking and mutual trust.

In the recent past, Saudi Arabia provided important counterterrorism cooperation that saved American lives. Former King Abdullah's leadership in putting forward the Arab peace initiative signaled the possibility of normalized ties between Israel, Saudi Arabia, and its other Arab partners in the context of a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Saudi generosity has helped to address the humanitarian needs of the region's many refugees.

But we cannot today turn a blind eye to the Kingdom's current policies, which in several areas are not aligned with U.S. interests and priorities, nor should we ignore Saudi

abuses against journalists, against women, and against our own U.S. residents.

For the stability of Saudi Arabia with its rapidly growing population of young people to enjoy the same freedoms and economic opportunity as other young people, it is critical to the broader stability of the Middle East, the security of our partners, most especially Israel and, yes, our own national security.

I remain hopeful that the Kingdom's current leadership will sometime embrace the potential for a mutually beneficial partnership with the United States in the same spirit as our past cooperation. This would be more likely if the Trump administration were to withdraw its blank check and condition U.S. support for Riyadh on progress towards ending the war in Yemen, refocusing its security services on ending the funding and propagation of violent ideology rather than harassment and intimidation of civil society activists, and ensuring full transparency and genuine accountability for the Saudi Government's role in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. On all of these issues, we cannot and we must not sacrifice our Nation's core values or our vital interests in the pursuit of profit or expediency.

Before inviting our witnesses to make their opening remarks, I want to remind members of the following hearing procedures. First, consistent with the regulations, the committee will keep microphones muted to limit background noise. Members are responsible for unmuting themselves when they seek recognition or when recognized for their 5 minutes. Because there is sometimes delays when muting or unmuting, I would ask members and witnesses to allow sufficient time before speaking to ensure the last speaker has finished.

Second, members and witnesses must have their cameras on at all times. Even if you need to step away from the proceeding, please leave your camera on.

Third, if you encounter technical difficulties, please contact technical support

through the channels established prior to the hearing. Our technical staff will work to get you back up and running as soon as possible.

And, finally, consistent with past practice, I will at the appropriate time recognize members for their 5 minutes in order of seniority, starting with those who were present at the commencement at the hearing.

Thank you again for all of your patience as we proceed under these extraordinary circumstances.

With that, I want to thank and welcome our distinguished panel of experts for joining us today. We will proceed with brief opening statements going forward in the following order: first, Dr. Agnes Callamard, who serves as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions; then Mr. Bruce Riedel, who is a senior fellow and director of the Intelligence Project at The Brookings Institute; and, finally, Mr. Ali Soufan, founder of The Soufan Group.

Dr. Callamard, it is now my pleasure to recognize you for your opening remarks.

[The statement of The Chairman follows:]

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**STATEMENTS OF AGNES CALLAMARD, SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON EXTRAJUDICIAL,  
SUMMARY OR ARBITRARY EXECUTIONS, THE UNITED NATIONS; BRUCE RIEDEL, SENIOR  
FELLOW AND DIRECTOR, INTELLIGENCE PROJECT, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION; AND  
ALI SOUFAN, FOUNDER, THE SOUFAN CENTER**

**STATEMENT OF AGNES CALLAMARD**

Ms. Callamard. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And may I start by thanking you for convening the hearing and for this honor of speaking before you as U.N. Special Rapporteur.

In compliance with regulations within the United Nations, I need to affirm that nothing in my remarks should be understood to be a waiver of the privilege and immunities of the United Nations. I will also ask that the report of my investigation be placed as in the official record of this hearing.

The Chairman. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

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Ms. Callamard. I will proceed by going through a number of points and issues which I believe are of particular interest to the committee. My investigation into the disappearance and killing of Jamal Khashoggi found that his execution constituted a number of crimes: an extrajudicial killing; an enforced disappearance; an act of torture; a violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations; a violation of the U.N. Charter; an act inconsistent with the core tenet of the United Nations; a wrongful act against Turkey; a wrongful act against the United States since Mr. Khashoggi was a U.S. resident; and a wrongful act against the entire international community because it violated peremptory and customary norms, multiple crimes which demonstrate that the killing was never a domestic affair.

These are crimes for which the state of Saudi Arabia is responsible. Very quickly, some of the evidence pointing to the responsibility of the state include the following:

Fifteen Saudi state agents acting under the cover of their official status used state means, such as diplomatic passport and private jet, to execute Mr. Khashoggi.

Fourteen of the state agents worked for the Saudi Intelligence Army or Royal Guards. The remaining one was a forensic doctor employed by the Saudi Ministry of Interior.

The killing was made possible due to the pretense of provision of an official government service: Mr. Khashoggi entered the Consulate on a prearranged date to obtain an official document.

Mr. Khashoggi's killing was premeditated and one of a range of evidence pointing to the premeditation is the presence of a forensic doctor, whose role was eventually fulfilled, the dismembering and disposal of the body, a role the doctor discussed some 30 minutes before the dismemberment, and a function that could not be spontaneously executed. The dismemberment of Mr. Jamal Khashoggi required planning, and it

required having the necessary equipment.

The mission was endorsed, planned, and overseen by high-level Saudi officials, including Mr. Saud Alqahtani, a close adviser to the Crown Prince. This we know because the Saudi prosecutor made it clear in an official statement.

And, finally, another demonstration of the responsibility of the state is that in the aftermath of the killing a total of 17 additional Saudi officials came to Istanbul, all of them allegedly from the secret police division. They were alone in the Consulate until 15th of October, and there is plenty of evidence proving that they undertook a thorough cleanup of the crime scene, thus perverting the course of justice.

The responsibility of the state for me leaves absolutely no doubt. The responsibility of the individuals within the state is something that I researched but not with the depth that is required for this kind of criminal investigation. And I wish to remind you that my inquiry was, first and foremost, a human rights inquiry.

However, based on the evidence I collected, I found credible evidence warranting further investigation of high-level Saudi officials' responsibility, including that of the Kingdom's Crown Prince. I could not conclude whether the Crown Prince ordered, incited, or failed to prevent the killing. But there is no doubt he was involved and his responsibility is involved, and there is no doubt that the chain of command deserves far greater scrutiny than it has received so far, particularly, by Saudi Arabia itself.

In January 2019, a trial began in Saudi Arabia with 11 persons. The final step of this trial took place this week when the Saudi prosecutor announced that the death penalty against 5 of the 11 defendants will be commuted to 20 years imprisonment.

As I have elaborated in a number of texts, the trial in my view failed to meet basic standards. Some of the most salient violations include the fact that, A, did not focus on the responsibility of the state; B, it focused on the hit men and failed to investigate the

responsibility of the chain of command; and, three, it ended up finding guilty the hit men and letting go the one senior official that was initially included in the indictment and who was present in Turkey, as a matter of fact.

Besides Saudi effort, I am aware of one ongoing effort for accountability, one that of Turkey, wherein July 2020 a trial in absentia has begun. Only one hearing has been held thus far, which I attended. Additional indictments are in the making, according to information I have received, focusing on the responsibilities of high-level state officials, and further hearings should be held in November.

I was asked to identify the issues that, in my opinion, warrant further investigation. I have already mentioned one, which is the nature and extent of high-level Saudi officials' liability, including or beginning with that of the Crown Prince, who ordered the crime, who may have abused or failed to fulfill the responsibilities of their positions of authorities. These are central questions that have not been answered transparently at least.

But there are other issues that deserve investigation. The location of Jamal Khashoggi's remains has not yet been made public. There are issues of international law which would benefit from further inquiry because of their implications for international relations, such as the violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and of the U.N. Charter. There are -- the killing of Jamal Khashoggi raised difficult questions regarding jurisdiction or questions which would deserve as well further inquiry.

And, finally, and particularly important, I think, for the committee, one area that deserves much more focus is the extent to which the U.S. Government knew or should have known that the life of Mr. Khashoggi was at risk and thus should have done more to protect him.

The disclosure of U.S. intelligence, including any information related to warning

they may have received and to their duty to warn Mr. Khashoggi, I think, is very important and part of the search for justice.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I would like to highlight a few other recommendations, if I may. The killing of Mr. Khashoggi by the state of Saudi Arabia, in my view, points to a dangerous recklessness, coupled with the permissiveness that comes only when power is mixed in with impunity.

Further evidence has come to light that suggest a pattern of targeting, harassment, and threat against those individuals perceived to disagree or threaten the Crown Prince or his rule. Anyone can be at risk, Saudis and non-Saudis, political dissidents, social media influencers, and even wealthy economic actors.

And in response to that, there should be a multidimensional principled response by the United States and the international community. The first, in my view, and the important one is to continue speaking up and denouncing what has happened.

It is crucial that public accolade of the Saudi regime and the Crown Prince be suspended. Those potentially responsible for those crimes should be denied the pomp and circumstance that they might otherwise receive until nonrepetition of such crime has been demonstrated.

And if there are some kind of public praise coming from within or outside the United States, others, including members of the American Congress and Senate, should speak up about the many allegations of violations. I think this is something that has been done already, and I would like to insist that, in my view, it is also part of delivering justice for Jamal.

Second, with regard to the forthcoming G20 summit, in my view, a government responsible for the mastermind in premeditation and execution of a citizen abroad should not be rewarded with the hosting of a G20 or similar event. And if it were to proceed, in

my view, again, it should be used as an opportunity to demand justice for Mr. Khashoggi and indeed for all the journalists, activists currently wrongly imprisoned and tortured. Participation by member states should be at the lowest rank possible.

Thirdly, truth telling. The U.S. Congress has taken crucial steps with its resolution and the passage of a law last year calling for the disclosure of the intelligence assessment. And I cannot insist enough on how important it is that as much information as possible be released publicly by the U.S. Government, including the Director of National Intelligence, that to counter disinformation and contribute as well to preventing other killings of journalists in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

Another possible line of action concerning individual sanctions, some of which have already been taken by the government of the United States, but in my view targeting low-level officials with possibly two exceptions. I would recommend that the sanction focus on the chain of command and extend -- and be extended to the Crown Prince and that these could include the freezing of some or all of the asset until and unless meaningful steps have been taken proving nonrepetition, meaning the release of activists and journalists imprisoned on the basis of freedom of conscience.

I am also recommending that maybe the U.S. Government could develop a new program of sanctions called the Khashoggi sanctions, which would take into account the principle of command responsibility and focus on sanctioning senior officials responsible for ordering, inciting, or condoning violence against journalists. That could be part of the Magnitsky program of sanctions or they could constitute a parallel one just focusing on the media world.

I have also suggested in my report, along with David Kaye, the Former Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and an American citizen, that the export of surveillance equipment to Saudi Arabia should be -- that should be a moratorium, and

that it could only be lifted if there has been demonstrated progress in respect of human rights. And investigation into any kind of misuse of American training or American equipment, I think, is warranted.

And, finally, in conclusion, final word, final recommendation, the killing of Jamal Khashoggi has revealed the many accountability deficits and gaps within the international system. It has shown how poorly prepared we are to respond to targeted harassment and killings, specifically of dissidents. And this is deeply troubling, not the least because of the upward trend globally in intolerance for critical thinking, critical reporting, and violent targeting of dissidents around the world.

And to that end, I think Congress could assist by advocating for a U.N. standing instrument to independently investigate targeted killings and/or to support national actors engaged in such investigations.

Thank you very much, Chairman, for giving me this opportunity.

[The statement of Ms. Callamard follows:]

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The Chairman. Well, Doctor, thank you very much for all of your work but particularly for your investigation into the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. And thank you for the testimony recommendations.

About 15 years ago, I cofounded a Caucus on Freedom of the Press with Mike Pence, one of my classmates in coming to Congress, and I am particularly intrigued by your suggestion that we develop a law like the Magnitsky Act named after Jamal Khashoggi that focuses on the arrest, detention, persecution, or murder of journalists and those that are implicated. So we will definitely follow up with you on that.

Mr. Riedel, you are now recognized for your opening statement, and you may need to unmute yourself.

**STATEMENT OF BRUCE RIEDEL**

Mr. Riedel. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hear me now?

The Chairman. Yes.

Mr. Riedel. Very well. Thank you for inviting me. Thank you all for being here. I am honored to be on such a distinguished panel [inaudible].

Saudi Arabia is America's oldest partner in the Middle East. This relationship goes back to 1943 when then-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt invited the King of Saudi Arabia to send some of his sons to Washington to begin a dialogue between the United States and Saudi Arabia. He sent Prince Faisal, later King Faisal.

FDR sealed the deal in a famous meeting on Valentine's Day 1945 in Egypt on board the USS Quincy with King Ibn Saud directly. The deal has always been very simple between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The United States gains access to Saudi energy resources in return for which the United States provides support for Saudi security at home and abroad.

I have been following this relationship since 1977 when I joined the CIA. It has had marked ups and downs. Some of the ups have been very high, like 1991, the Gulf War, and some of the lows have been extraordinarily low, the 1973 oil embargo and, of course, 19 years ago today, the attack on September 11.

But we are in a fundamentally different and new relationship with Saudi Arabia today than anything I have seen in the last 75 years. Saudi Arabia today, under King Salman and his son, Mohammed bin Salman, MBS, the Crown Prince, has embarked on a series of foreign policies which are reckless and dangerous and, most important, are inimical to America's vital interests in the Middle East and in the world.



Mohammed bin Salman is very much the driving force on these policies. He is one of the ultimate micromanagers of any policy. He needs it boiled down to the smallest details. I think that tells us a lot about the Khashoggi death. But the King is also very, very important in this whole process. King Salman provides legitimacy, and it is like air cover for the activities. Without the King, the Crown Prince would find it very, very difficult from this [inaudible].

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has traditionally, for decades, been a very, very cautious, risk-averse economy. It prefers to throw money at problems not military resources. It prefers to deal behind the scenes, not out in public. This has all changed dramatically in the last 5-plus years under Mohammed bin Salman. The Kingdom has now become unpredictable, erratic, and as I said earlier, reckless and dangerous.

I am going to briefly focus on three policy areas very quickly that just illustrate. By far the most important is the one you alluded to, Mr. Chairman, the war in Yemen. The war in Yemen is today the world's biggest humanitarian catastrophe without a doubt. Thousands, tens of thousands of Yemeni children are suffering, and many of them will not survive.

Instead of becoming a quick, decisive storm, MBS called it in the beginning, it has turned into a quagmire which is costing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Instead of ousting a pro-Iranian militia, the Zaidi Shia Houthis, from the capital Sana'a and other cities, the war has given Iran a base on the Red Sea and on the Bab-el-Mandeb. And Iran has paid a pittance for these advances. The contrast between Saudi spending and Iranian spending couldn't be more dramatic.

Instead of Iran being under siege in this war, it is Saudi cities, Saudi oil infrastructure that is regularly attacked by the Houthis and, on one occasion, by the Iranians directly with cruise missiles and drones. It is really a remarkable situation to

see Saudi Arabia in this place.

Today the Kingdom has finally, I think belatedly, realized its mistake and very much wants to end the war. They have asked for two unilateral cease-fires, but they are not withdrawing their troops from Yemeni territory, and they have not given up their backing for the forces of Yemeni President Hadi.

The Zaidi Shia rebels, on the other hand, seem in no hurry in the war. I think it is increasingly clear that the Zaidi Shias think they are winning the war and that they are on the verge of complete victory. This war is entirely a creation of MBS. He rushed into it about 5 years ago in close to a panic with no end game in sight, with no strategy for achieving an end game, and without critical allies, most importantly, the Pakistanis and the Omanis, the countries with the most influence how to bring this conflict to an end.

He is now desperate to find scapegoats for his mistake. He knows that there are significant elements in the Royal Family who blame him for this quagmire. And he just fired the commander of Saudi forces in Yemen under the auspices of an anticorruption bribe. Anybody in Saudi Arabia that gets fired is accused of corruption. There is no doubt there is a lot of corruption in Saudi Arabia, but this has become the standard excuse now for moving against [inaudible].

The other Arab partners that the Saudis had at the beginning of the war, most notably the Emiratis, but also the Jordanians, the Bahrainis and others, have all now left the battlefield. They have essentially abandoned the war and the Emiratis have continued some influence, but they are much more ill found (??) than they were earlier.

Only the United States of America, and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom, continue to provide the kind of support that allows this war to go on. And it is vital that we do something about that.

The war has left us associated with a humanitarian catastrophe and with the

results of that catastrophe. It has found us in a position where we are seen as an ally of Saudi Arabia in a murderous campaign against the poorest country in the Arab world. The United States should take immediate steps to cease all support for the war.

I would recommend withdrawing the bulk of all of the American troops inside Saudi Arabia today, cutting back on training programs, no new arms sales, but even more importantly, disrupting the logistics chains from the ongoing arms sales. The United States provides about two-thirds of the aircraft in the Royal Saudi Air Force; the United Kingdom provides the other third. Literally, if we and the United Kingdom cut off logistic support, the Royal Saudi Air Force would be grounded. That is how much influence we have over. That is how much responsibility we have.

The second issue that I would just mention a little more briefly is the siege of [inaudible] in 2017, Saudi Arabia and the Emiratis and the Bahrainis announced that they were cutting off all communications, all diplomatic relations with the state of Qatar and shutting it down for their mutual borders and shutting their airspace.

This has damaged significantly the Gulf Cooperation Council. We were the leading players in creating the Gulf Cooperation Council, the GCC, back in the 1980s under President Ronald Reagan as a means to contain Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf.

The GCC today is a much, much weaker organization. The GCC is essentially split. Qatar is off by itself and was very important support for peace [inaudible]. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are one alliance backed by the Egyptians, to a lesser extent backed by the Jordanians, although the Jordanians have not [inaudible].

Kuwait stands off on its own trying to pretend it has nothing to do with the rest of the people in the GCC, and Oman has proclaimed its neutrality as it has for many, many years.

The U.S. spent many, many years trying to build up this organization and trying to

integrate the militaries and the security services of the countries. It is very difficult on the outside to know how badly damaged those relationships are, but there is no question developments [inaudible] are significant. Who is the beneficiary of this? Once more, it is the Iranians. Just as the Yemen war has benefited the Iranians, the breakup of the GCC benefits the Iranians.

There is no end in sight to this. I spoke to State Department officials this week who are engaged very attentively in trying to end the siege, and they don't see any sign of any progress. It is time for the United States to take a more forceful action and press Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, to open up relations and end the siege of Qatar.

Finally, and I won't say very much about this because Dr. Callamard has said far more about it than I can, the question of killing and arresting critics from the Crown Prince. Jamal Khashoggi primary example, but there have been other attempts on critics, other efforts to stifle dissent.

All of this in the context too of some of the worst repression we have ever seen in the history of the Kingdom at home. And I would highlight in particular the arrests this March of the former Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Nayef. Muhammad bin Nayef led the battle against al-Qa'ida in Saudi Arabia. He deserves enormous credit from us for defeating al-Qa'ida inside the Kingdom and also dealing with those outside the Kingdom as well. That this man today is under arrest and under charge for corruption is very, very dangerous. I fear for his health. I fear for his life.

I won't go over the points that the doctor made. Saudi Arabia has never had a good human rights record, never been a paragon of human rights, very, very slowly on all kinds of human rights issue, most notably gender [inaudible]. But it was not in the past in the business of targeted assassinations abroad. This is a whole new threshold crossed, and, again, it has been Mohammed bin Salman who has been leading the charge.

The United States is now fully implicated in being his defendant, as he told Bob Woodward, and very proudly, I gather, in his conversation.

Now, I will just conclude by saying Saudi Arabia today is more a danger to the United States than it is an ally. It is time to find a way to go back and get Saudi Arabia to even help the United States [inaudible] with respect to our interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Riedel follows:]

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The Chairman. Thank you so much, Mr. Riedel. I really appreciate your long years of service and your testimony today.

Mr. Soufan, you are recognized for your opening statement.

#### **STATEMENT OF ALI SOUFAN**

Mr. Soufan. Thank you, sir. Chairman Schiff and distinguished members, thank you for hearing my statement, and it is a great honor to be with such a distinguished panel.

Today marks 19 years since al-Qa'ida murdered nearly 3,000 people on American soil. As we honor the dead, we remember the importance of remaining vigilant and understanding the nature of our security and intelligence relationships.

In assessing the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia specifically regarding CT cooperation, I draw three conclusions. First, the threat stemming from the global Salafi-jihadist movement is more acute today than in the aftermath of 9/11.

Second, despite Saudi Arabia's pledges to combat extremism, Riyadh is not behaving as a reliable CT partner. Saudi Arabia's actions continue to contribute to the key drivers of radicalizations, and such actions have grown more critical under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Third, beyond CT cooperation, the U.S.-Saudi relationships have become a one-way street. The Kingdom acts with impunity, and the United States looks the other way while dismissing Saudi's atrocities.

In the war on terrorism, the United States has had numerous tactical successes. However, while we have managed to counter the terrorism threat from al-Qa'ida and ISIS, we have strategically failed to counter the three ultimate drivers of extremism that

transform the appeal of this organization's message globally.

Importantly, Saudi Arabia has directly contributed to these drivers. First, the proliferation of radical Wahhabi teachings throughout Muslim countries funded by Saudi Arabia. Second, sectarianism has become the geopolitical currency to advance political goals in the Middle East, and the struggle for regional hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran pits Sunni against Shia. And terrorist organizations on both sides of the sectarian divide exploit sectarianism to leverage recruitment and as a theological justification of violence and murder. Third, geopolitical conflicts, like the wars in Yemen and Syria, provide oxygen to terrorist organizations to operate and recruit all the way from the Sahel to Southeast Asia.

Counterterrorism successes -- the story of counterterrorism successes between the United States and Saudi Arabia has largely been personality driven. Unfortunately, as you heard, reliable Saudi CT partners, like Muhammad bin Nayef, have been purged for the purpose of MBS' power consolidation, leaving the future of the relationship uncertain and vulnerable to the whims of an impulsive leader.

While MBS has promised to crack down on religious extremism in the Kingdom, Saudi clerics, who have issued fatwas cursing Christians, Jews, and Shiites, are calling for the destruction of churches in the Arabian Peninsula, are still allowed to operate openly.

Meanwhile, MBS targets human rights activists and political dissidents and even seek asylum (ph) overseas by sending teams of assassins into countries even in the West to eliminate his perceived rivals. These actions speak to MBS' priorities, which are clearly not related to eliminating extremist narratives.

As discussed in depth in my written statement, there was a sort of Saudi connection to nearly every major terrorist attack against the U.S. interest in the past two decades, the East Africa Embassy bombings, the USS Cole, 9/11. Believe me, I

investigated all these cases. But these linkages are not just a thing of the past. They continue to the present day. Thousands of Saudis traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight first with al-Qa'ida in Iraq and then with ISIS.

In 2017, Saudi Arabia undermined U.S. CT interests by blocking efforts to impose multilateral sanctions under the U.N. Security Council and ISIS affiliates in the Kingdom, in the Sinai Peninsula, and in the Caucasus.

In December 2019, we suffered the first al-Qa'ida-directed attack on American soil since 9/11 conducted by a Saudi Air Force officer. Three U.S. Navy sailors lost their lives that day.

The key takeaway is that Saudi Arabia will pursue a relationship with the U.S. insofar as it benefits regime stability in Riyadh. Yet their partnership seems to be no longer assured when CT initiatives contradict with Saudi Arabia's pursuit of its geopolitical ambitions. Then their actions are more symbolic than substantive.

Finally, let me conclude that sustained stability in Saudi Arabia is essential to wider stability in the Middle East and the Muslim world. However, given the Kingdom's checkered past and its alarming present, the majority of Americans hold a highly unfavorable view of the country. Only 4 percent of the American public considers Saudi Arabia an ally. This poses an existential threat to the future of the so-called special relationship.

I hope that the current leadership in Riyadh realizes that no special relationship is a one-way street. It is time the U.S. begins to hold Saudi Arabia to the same standards as we hold our other true allies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward for your questions.

[The statement of Mr. Soufan follows:]



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The Chairman. Well, thank you very much, all of you, for your testimony which gives us a great jumping off point for our discussion today.

Mr. Soufan, if I could start off where you left off, with the very troubling notion that Saudi support for extremism has gone up, not down, since 9/11, what is behind that? I mean, certainly the Saudi regime must recognize that this extremist ideology is a threat to their own regime.

Is it that they think they can ride the tiger, they can direct that tiger outwards in some kind of a Hobbesian bargain where they would support it, allow it to flourish and propagate as long as it is not directed inward? What is behind the calculation there?

Mr. Soufan. Exactly as you said, Mr. Chairman. And that is something that they have been doing for a long time. Remember, Saudi Arabia was one of the very few countries that supported the Taliban regime that was allowing al-Qa'ida to operate in Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia continued to fund Wahhabi schools all across the Muslim world, and the numbers of these radical Wahhabi schools are on the increase, in Southeast Asia and Africa. And those schools, as you remember, graduated the people who were involved in the East Africa Embassy bombings, who were involved in the USS Cole, who were involved in the Bali bombing. These things did not stop.

The Saudis, as I think Kim Ghattas in her recent book mentioned, they are bad managers. They always lose control of their product. They have this Sunni extremism, radical Wahhabism, and they use it against their enemies, especially against Iran, to curb Iranian influence in the region. But every now and then, and we see that historically, they lose control of it.

So as long as it is happening outside their borders, they have no problem. We have so many incidences where Saudi Government [inaudible] extremists to go and fight

wars in a different country.

So this is -- as long as it is not happening in home, you know, inside Saudi Arabia and this is something that started, as you mentioned correctly in your opening statement, back in 1979, after, you know, Wahhabi extremists took over the holy mosque in Mecca, took hostages over there. Since then, they have been preferring to send these extremists overseas hoping that they can use them to expand their own geopolitical agenda.

The Chairman. Can you talk a little bit about these efforts under Mohammed bin Salman to monitor critics and dissidents overseas, mobilize social media against them -- I understand you are a target of this; Jamal Khashoggi, worryingly, was also a target of this -- and what you see in terms of a pattern of trying to lure people back into the Kingdom?

What are the tactics the Saudis are using? Do you play much -- do you put much stock in Mr. al-Jabri's allegations that there was a hit squad deployed to Canada to try to assassinate him?

Mr. Soufan. Yeah. I think we should take these things very seriously. And, as you mentioned, Chairman, I have been -- you know, as we speak now there is a campaign against me on social media. And one of the things that we have to keep in mind that what you see in English Twitter is very different than what we see in Arabic Twitter.

In Arabic Twitter, the Saudis uses a language of al-Qa'ida and ISIS. As of just, I think, yesterday, I was called the Jewish criminal Ali Soufan. I was part of conspiracies that include the Israelis and that includes the U.S. and the CIA to destroy the outer world. I am involved with the Qataris and some other conspiracies.

I mean, when they target someone, they target someone. I mean, they make QAnon look like kids. And I think this is a thing that, you know, we need to pay

attention to on Twitter. We need to be responsible for what is happening on their Arabic platforms.

I think I take these things seriously. In the campaign against me, for example, when we did forensic investigation we found striking similarities between what happened with me and what happened with Jamal Khashoggi, same people, same bots, same account, and even the language: "The bidding on your life has started. You are going to end up in a garbage can. Watch your back. The end is near." These terms were used against me, and they were used against Jamal Khashoggi. So it will be very irresponsible and naive to think this is only something on social media because we know how it ended with Jamal.

The Chairman. Well, thank you very much. I have a bunch more questions, but I am going to turn to my colleagues.

Mr. Himes, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Himes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you very much to all of our panelists. That was a very interesting and sobering presentation.

It is a sobering day for me. I am in southwestern Connecticut right now. I am sitting in a small town in Connecticut that lost 33 people 19 years ago. I knew four or five of them. And there is not a town near me where that is not true. And so I don't have a lot of choice about what I am going to ask you about today.

And, Mr. Soufan, I want to direct my questions to you. Just yesterday, after a memorial in Westport, Connecticut, I had a young man come up to me. His father had been killed in Manhattan on 9/11. And he said, "Congressman, why won't the government release whatever information it has to the suit that I am involved in, you know, to try to get some justice for what happened to my father?"

I said, "I don't have an answer to that question."

He asked me about Operation Encore. What is Operation Encore? I said, "I don't know. I don't have an answer to that question." Question after question. And my answer as his representative was, "I don't know. I don't have an answer to that question."

It is just -- without prejudicing what reality is, that is just not acceptable to the thousands of victims of what happened 19 years ago. We need answers, and we need transparency, and we need visibility. If the Saudis, in fact, are not in any way complicit with what happened on 9/11, even though 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals, they should encourage the release of any and all information which would establish that fact.

So, Mr. Soufan, the Department of Justice and the DNI continue to withhold details about the alleged role that Saudi Arabia may or may not have had in 9/11, and that to me is inexplicable. It is inexplicable because the FBI and DOJ statements justifying withholding that information was submitted to a court under seal.

The withholding of the information is even more upsetting because President Trump promised to declassify and release that information. And Attorney General Barr and DNI Ratcliffe have shown no reservations about declassifying other sensitive information.

So, Mr. Soufan, I understand. I have really got just two questions for you. One is small; one is big. I know you weren't responsible for the investigation in the Saudi role on the 9/11 attacks. But as someone who is intimately involved, do you know any legitimate law enforcement or national security justification for why this committee and the September 11 victims should not be provided access to any and all details that the Justice Department and CIA may have about the alleged Saudi role?

Mr. Soufan. No, sir, I don't. And that is why we need the transparency because, without the transparency, we are going to have conspiracies and we are going to have a lot of unanswered questions. And this moment is an extremely important moment, especially for us who lived through it and who remember clearly what happened on that day.

Look, we know what happened in the U.S. Government. We dragged every FBI agent and CIA person who was involved. I spent hours and hours with the 9/11 Commission. But even if you read the 9/11 Commission reports, they say they could not find anything about the official connection with Saudi Arabia, but then they said they didn't see everything. So even the 9/11 Commission, we are not allowed to see.

I agree with you. Let's put everything out. And if Saudi Arabia has nothing to do with that, the American people will understand. But I think we need the transparency, and we need to support the families, and I think there is a bipartisan support on this. That is why Congress passed the JUST law in order to allow the families to seek answers in a court of law.

And, yesterday, the Federal judge who is overseeing this issued a landmark ruling. For the first time, 24 high-ranking Saudi officials, to include the former Ambassador Bandar here in Washington, can be interviewed and deposed by the defense -- by the families. So this is a huge, huge win, and hopefully --

Mr. Himes. Mr. Soufan, look, I believe in being fastidious about accusations, and there are allegations as there is uncertainty. But between 9/11 and the 15 of the 19 hijackers, the Pensacola incident, what is happening in Yemen, the isolation of Qatar, which would cause terrible humanitarian catastrophe if Qatar weren't such a wealthy country, Khashoggi, it doesn't feel to me like we just accept denials.

And so I have only got 20, 30 seconds left, but, Mr. Soufan, based on your

knowledge, and you know more than most, has all the information, relevant information, been released, or do you believe that there is information that is really critical to making a final determination here?

Mr. Soufan. I don't believe everything has been released, no. And that is why they are debating it in court about releasing some of these things. So I don't believe everything has been released. We don't know if these things can incriminate or not incriminate, but I think, 19 years later, I am embarrassed to be in front of you, sir, and saying now we don't know everything that happened on 9/11.

Mr. Himes. Thank you, Mr. Soufan, and thank you to our panelists. I yield back the balance of my time.

The Chairman. Thank you.

I now recognize Terri Sewell.

Ms. Sewell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank our witnesses. Today is indeed a very sobering day. All Americans are taking a moment of pause. I know, in Alabama, lost four folks who were visiting the Towers on that day, and like Congressman Himes, we are all -- our constituents want answers.

My question is actually to Bruce Riedel. MBS appears to have effectively consolidated power. Are there potential signs of instability on the horizon within Saudi Arabia, and does the Trump administration's close relationship with Saudi help or hinder the IC's ability to anticipate potential surprises? That is the first question.

And I have a second question, a follow-on, which is that you, sir, specifically talked about changing our sanctions against Saudi Arabia and likewise suggest that we limit our arms sales. And so my question is, can a decision by the Trump administration to sell the F-35s to the UAE open the doors for MBS to demand F-35s, and how would that affect

the security of the U.S. partners such as Israel? And thank you all for your time.

Mr. Riedel. Thank you for your question. Let me deal with the first one. Superficially, it appears that Mohammed bin Salman has completely consolidated his control. But I think, in fact, his control is much more fragile than is often portrayed in the media. His actions are the actions of someone who very much feels he is under threat, that there are powerful enemies out there looking for him, and his actions have created very many powerful enemies.

Much of the Saudi Royal Family, including supporters, obviously, of Muhammad bin Nayef but also supporters of former King Abdullah, have been shaken down literally by MBS, and they resent it deeply.

It is very difficult to know how extensive this unrest is. Saudi Arabia is the most nontransparent country in the world with the possible exception of North Korea. But I think you can say that arresting his predecessor as Crown Prince is not a sign of strength on the part of MBS; it is a sign of weakness.

I would not be shocked at all one morning to find that MBS has been assassinated. I would also not be shocked one morning to find that the Royal Family has gotten in some enclave and decided to replace him. King Salman, after all, has many, many other sons, several of whom are far more qualified for the job than MBS. I think that it is superficial.

The Trump administration provides very significant support on [inaudible]. The President's trip to Riyadh in defense of MBS, and the Khashoggi thing, has all served to help the King and the Crown Prince [inaudible].

I would also point out that it means, if and when there comes a day when MBS is held accountable for Saudi Arabia, the United States is going to be thrown into the docket along with him, and that is not a place where we want to be in terms of our long-term relationship.



Whether the Trump administration's approval for MBS hinders our ability to collect -- because, frankly, I don't know. I don't have access into what the Republicans are in agreement on these days -- I can't imagine that it makes it easy. I can't imagine how it would make it more difficult.

Turning to your question about the F-35, I think this is a very important question. Yes, in it, one Gulf State gets the F-35, every Gulf State is going to demand that they have access to it as well. Now, the good news is that Bahrain doesn't have the money to buy F-35s. The bad news is Saudi Arabia does have the money. And if the UAE gets it, Saudis are going to press very hard for [inaudible] treatment.

And they are not going to be willing to normalize relations with Israel in the process, but they will say they faced a threat from Iran even more than the UAE does. And if you recall back a few Septembers ago, yes, they were attacked by the Iranians, and they could make, in that case, the argument that they need all the defensive weapons that they want, and they will press for the F-35. I worry about it very much.

RPTR MOLNAR

EDTR ZAMORA

[1:01 p.m.]

Ms. Sewell. Thank you, sir.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the rest of my time.

The Chairman. Thank you.

And we have a few different hearings going on simultaneously, so Representative Carson and Speier had to go to other meetings.

I will now recognize Representative Eric Swalwell.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you, Chairman, and also wanted to express my sentiment for the panelists being here and the first responders who we honor today on September 11.

Mr. Soufan, also want to thank you for the post-September 11 work and pre-September 11 work that you participated in and wanted to focus a lot of my questions, first, on MBS. And do you have any concerns that the Saudi Government would work in any way to try and influence the outcome of this upcoming November election? And do you have any concerns that they would use any of their surveillance or intelligence capabilities to benefit the President?

Mr. Soufan. Well, I know that just from monitoring their social media operation, they created, you know, sock puppet accounts. Twitter basically shut down -- Twitter and Facebook shut down thousands of Saudi accounts that were involved in Saudi influence operation here in the United States.

If you recall, sir, during the Mueller investigation, there was a big hashtag, the Mueller hoax. And then, you know, we found out that it basically originated from Saudi

Arabia. So they are trying to play that game. They are not in the same level as the Russians or the Chinese with their influence operation, but definitely that is something that we need to pay attention to and focus on.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you, Agent Soufan.

Mr. Soufan. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Swalwell. And, Dr. Callamard, you raised the issue of a duty to warn Mr. Khashoggi of a threat to his life if we, in fact, had evidence of that. Are you aware of any evidence that anyone in the U.S. Government had foreknowledge of the plot to murder Mr. Khashoggi?

Ms. Callamard. Thank you very much for the question. No. I am only aware of what was reported in the media. I tried to get to the source of that information but without much success. What I can say is that having analyzed what was in the public domain, on the basis of the standard related to the duty to warn, I reached the conclusion that if indeed there had been information originating from MBS and the use of trigger words, such as bullet, suggesting violence, in my opinion, because of the origin of such words and the words themselves, they should have triggered further analysis, so at the very least, an assessment of the risk and of the validity of the threats.

So if there were indeed that kind of interception made, then in my view, it should have triggered an analysis of the validity of the threat and possibly then a duty to warn. So the key issue is, you know, is for the U.S. Intelligence to release the information that was made reported in the media. That is one of the issue that I recommended.

There is an ongoing process at the legal level of an appeal under the Freedom of Information Act for those information to be released, and I do hope that, as well as the release of the information regarding the CIA assessment of the responsibility of the Crown Prince.

And in keeping with one of the theme of today's discussion, which is transparency, I will really invite, insist, recommend, that the information regarding the interception of communication originating from the Crown Prince be made public.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you.

And, Mr. Soufan, just briefly, you alluded to the Taliban and its relationship with Saudi Arabia. Do you assess that the Taliban and Saudi currently, as negotiations are ongoing with Afghanistan, does Saudi and Afghanistan -- or the Taliban have a relationship?

Mr. Soufan. Not with the current leadership, because the Taliban is negotiating with the U.S. in Doha, and Doha is basically the arch enemy of Saudi Arabia at this point. But remember, sir, the Taliban is not a monolithic organization. So even within the Taliban there is, for example, the Haqqani Network, that dances to the tunes of Islamabad, and there are other factions that, you know, work -- still have relationship with Saudi Arabia and with the UAE and other countries. So it is not a monolithic organization, but as the leadership, the core Taliban, I don't think today the relationship that they have with Saudi Arabia is as good as it used to be when al-Qa'ida was in Afghanistan.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you. Thank you again to the panelists.

And, Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. Thank you.

We will now go to Peter Welch.

Mr. Welch. Thank you, and thank all the panelists.

Mr. Riedel, how would you describe the view of the Trump-Pompeo administration as to what they see the U.S. is getting out of supporting Saudi Arabia in the way that it is, number one? And number two, however they would define it, is it

giving, from their perspective, anything of benefit?

Mr. Riedel. I think that the President has been remarkably open, transparent about why he wants to have a good relationship with Saudi Arabia, with MBS in particular. That is sale of weapons [inaudible] said this is one of the world's great customers for the sale of weapons. And in fact, in the past, that was very much the case.

Mr. Welch. So I just want to interrupt there. So that is transparent in the way the President is, but would he give any strategic definition in the traditional sense of a State Department, or strategic sense, beyond, we are making some money and it is good for business?

Mr. Riedel. I think he also sees it in terms of the struggle with Iran, and his Secretary of State plays a crucial part. Maximum pressure on Iran is the hallmark policy in the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia fully endorses the fact that [inaudible] on that issue they see eye to eye.

Mr. Welch. But as I understood your testimony, in fact, this policy that we are supporting Saudi Arabia and is hurting Saudi Arabia, you know, as opposed to hurting Iran?

Mr. Riedel. Exactly. Look, in Yemen and in Qatar, the reckless policies that MBS has pursued are counterproductive. There is a lot of pressure on Iran in other areas, but these are two notable areas, but particularly Yemen, where MBS' policies conflict with the Ayatollah's.

Mr. Welch. So what would be your judgment as to what would happen if the U.S. did, in fact, cut off the support to Saudi Arabia for arms and the Houthis, quote, won in Yemen?

Mr. Riedel. The Houthis will, quote, win. They will still have many domestic

enemies at home, but I think it would end Saudi involvement in the war, and I think that is a crucial first step, not only to involve -- in their involvement and their siege of Yemen. Because of their siege, humanitarian assistance, food, and medicine has not been able to get to the Yemeni people. The United Nations is warning now of the risk of mass famine in Yemen in the months ahead, 3 million people being at very high risk.

We could end the Saudi support for the blockade, if we could end Saudi bombing raids, that would make a bad situation immeasurably better. It won't make it perfect, but it will make it much better.

Mr. Welch. Okay.

Mr. Riedel. It will also send a very powerful signal inside the royal family in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis know that they are the biggest beneficiary. We don't need Saudi really. There is more oil out there than anybody could possibly use especially in a pandemic. They need us more than them. And if the royal family sees that the Crown Prince is endangering this relationship with the United States, that will send a powerful message throughout the world.

Mr. Welch. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Soufan, how would you describe the Saudi objective with their dramatic change in policy that includes extrajudicial and extraterritorial killings that we have heard about?

Mr. Soufan. This is something we never seen in Saudi Arabia, as Bruce, you know, mentioned. And, you know, Saudi Arabia wasn't big on human rights, but they never allowed assassinations and targeted assassinations. This is -- this kind of ruling, this kind of style is Mohammed bin Salman and his network, young, inexperienced. They are used to getting everything they want, and if they don't get it, they will kill you. And they are sending a strong message to intimidate dissidents, to scare them.

Remember, they even put spies in Twitter here in San Francisco, to give them detailed information about dissidents and where they are. And as we speak, there is an ongoing Federal case against three, you know, Saudi operatives who were spies for the government in Twitter. They were spying on us here in the United States.

So this is not what I know about Saudi Arabia. This is not the institutions that we worked with in Saudi Arabia. You know, we mentioned Mohammed bin Nayef earlier. Mohammed bin Nayef was the only head of intelligence that al-Qa'ida tried to kill, and they failed. And the reason they tried to kill him, sir, is because the relationship in counterterrorism between us and the Saudis, we are basically a personal relationship, and the fact was [inaudible] and now he is betrayed in order for MBS to take over. He was the Crown Prince, and they got him out of it.

So this is not institutions. This is not the people and the institutions in Saudi Arabia saying that is what we need to do, we have a strategy. This is a whim of an erratic person.

Mr. Welch. Thank you. I yield back, but I do want to thank Ms. Callamard for an extraordinary report.

The Chairman. Thank you, Peter.

We will go now to Raja Krishnamoorthi. Raja?

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Hi, Chairman, can you hear me?

The Chairman. Yes.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Great. Well, thank you so much. And like the others, I also echo the sentiments that this is really an entirely appropriate discussion to have on 9/11 when we remember our first responders and those we lost.

And one question that I have for Mr. Riedel, at the same time that we are extremely concerned about Iran developing a nuclear weapon, I am concerned, as are

many of the people on this committee, about the Saudis pursuing a nuclear weapon. And my understanding is that the Chinese have recently -- the Chinese Government has recently assisted them in certain matters related to enriching uranium and so forth. What can you tell us about the status of the Saudi nuclear weapons effort?

Mr. Riedel. It is something to be very worried about. You are right to be. The Crown Prince has said it publicly. If Iran gets a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia will. The good news is, Saudi Arabia's technical capabilities in the area of physics and the like are pretty primitive. They have a long way to go. But the bad news is that Saudi Arabia has a long policy of buying what it needs, needs to do that.

I think the Chinese deal is disturbing in this case, but the place I would be particularly worried about is Pakistan. We have had rumors -- more than rumors -- for decades now of Saudi-Pakistani nuclear cooperation. The relationship has been a little bit troubled in the MBS era, but it is still a very, very deep relationship, particularly between the Pakistani military who owns the nuclear weapons, controls the nuclear weapons, and their Saudi counterparts.

And I would recommend as much transparency that is possible, and I would certainly encourage the committee to tell the DNI and the D/CIA that this needs to be at the top of the list of intelligence collection requirements for both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. There is an understanding that the Saudis bankroll [inaudible] program. Do you believe that if he is demanded to have a nuclear weapon from their arsenal that the Pakistanis would agree?

Mr. Riedel. It is a very good question, impossible to know, but I think it would be more than a demand. I think the Saudis would say to the head of the Pakistani military, here is \$100 million, \$500 million, you name the number, in it for you, personally, in



addition to which we will also give assistance to Pakistan. And that is how I think it would operate. It would not just simply be a nation-to-nation deal. It would probably include quite a large bribe to the head of the Pakistani military.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I understand.

Mr. Soufan, we talked a little bit about 9/11 before. What are some of the most important questions that remain unanswered related to the Saudi role in 9/11 as you see it right now?

Mr. Soufan. Well, we have couple of things that is coming up -- or coming out through the lawsuits. For example, we still, until today, don't know what happened at the first 30 days when Mihdhar -- Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar arrived to LAX. Even the 9/11 Commission didn't talk about this, the first 30 days, the first month.

Now from the lawsuits, it appears that they were connected immediately upon their arrival with a guy named Fahad al-Thumairy, who is connected to the Saudi Government. And then they had relationship with another person whose name is Bayoumi, who was also connected to the Saudi Government. And now we know that there are more individuals, one whose named was recently released, also was connected with them.

So there is a lot of connections. These things might be innocent because they are two Saudis and dealing with other Saudis. Just the idea that we are trying to classify the heck out of it, it means that possibly that there was something, that it is good to know.

We have a lot of other things that the committee -- and this is just as specifically for the Saudis. The 9/11 Commission made it very clear that they did not look into all these things that exist on the potential Saudi role. And we are not saying that it is the Saudi Government, maybe people in Saudi Government, or people were connected to

Saudi Arabia.

I mean, as you know, 15 of the hijackers were Saudi. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed used a Saudi passport during the whole operation from the start. So there was a lot of connections there, but these connections we always see them mentioned, sir, before, with the East Africa Embassy bombings, lots of Saudi connections. Actually, two of the suicide bombers were from Saudi Arabia, Jihad Ali and al-Owhali. One survived that bombing and he is currently in jail in the U.S. The USS Cole, the boat that they used to attack the Cole was purchased from Saudi Arabia, and one of the suicide bombers were Saudis.

So at one point in Iraq and Syria, it gets to a significant amount of number, percentage, of the suicide bombers used by ISIS with one country, Saudi Arabia. The number two in the organization of ISIS, the guy, if you remember, he was killed a day after al-Baghdadi, Abu Hassan al-Muhajir, and he is also Saudi. So there is a lot of connections. Now, if the Saudi Government has any awareness of these things or not, that is yet to be seen, especially in the face of 9/11.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Soufan. Thank you.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Val Demings.

Mrs. Demings. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for joining us today. I join my colleagues in remembering the first responders and others who were lost on 9/11, 19 years ago. I was assigned as a police commander to the Orlando International Airport on that day, and it is a day that I will never forget. I hope none of us do. And I join Mr. Himes in his very strong push for answers because it really is about time.

Dr. Callamard, thank you so much for your testimony today. And I just wanted to ask you, has anyone from the U.S. Government requested to review the evidence that you have.

Ms. Callamard. No. Nobody did.

Mrs. Demings. No one from the U.S. Government, with all of the questions still unanswered, asked to review the evidence?

Ms. Callamard. No.

Mrs. Demings. Would you be amenable to the U.S. Intelligence Committee -- or the Community or the U.S. law enforcement community receiving it?

Ms. Callamard. It depends what you mean by "evidence." I think most -- you know, my report has already -- is a long and lengthy report with a great deal of information. As a Special Rapporteur, I cannot share with you information that was given to me by confidential sources. I will need to go back to each and every one of that source, and, in fact, I will invite them to speak with you directly rather than through me. So that will raise a number of issues which I could not, you know, I could not fulfill.

But I believe that most of the information, frankly, is already within the knowledge of the United States and that they probably have far more information than I do on how the killing was organized, how it was planned, the level of involvement of the highest ranking persons in the state, and so on and so forth. So while I am a bit honored by your question, I suspect they actually do have the information already.

Mrs. Demings. Okay. All right. Thank you.

You also discussed training and equipment that the U.S. should withhold from the Saudis, from Saudi intelligence services. Is there training that you would suggest that the U.S. provide?

Ms. Callamard. Well, with recount, this was about the training provided by

Intel- -- to and by Intelligence and more generally security forces on both sides. We, my colleague, David Kaye, and I, have suggested, first of all, that there should be a moratorium on anything related to surveillance technology, simply because it is very difficult to put in place guarantees regarding the proper use of that technology. And at the moment, there are no system in place in Saudi Arabia, meaning no institution that can be trusted to provide the necessary oversight.

And as we know, and the other speakers have pointed out to that as well, there is a pattern of territorial and extraterritorial surveillance of a range of actors, including American citizen and economic actors. So I will not recommend any form of surveillance technology training at the moment.

If there were any training, it will be related to the protection of human rights and human rights standards, and in relations as well to international humanitarian standards. But we have already dealt with the question of Yemen. And I should just suggest to maybe the committee that actually the Commission on Yemen -- the U.N. Commission on Yemen has had a new report yesterday where it also detailed, yet again, a range of allegations with regard to Saudi Arabia violations in Yemen that you may find of interest.

Mrs. Demings. Okay, Doctor, thank you so much. Thank you so much for that.

Mr. Riedel, MBS has threatened, if you will, to abandon the U.S. for a better, closer, more effective relationship with Russia or China. How credible do you find those threats, and if you find them credible or not, why is that?

Mr. Riedel. I don't think they are very incredible. First of all, you don't change your air force overnight. Russian radar system won't work on an F-16. Try to put a Russian radar system on an F-16, good luck with trying to land that airplane when you want to get back to base. It takes a long, long time to go from having American, British equipment, to Russian or Chinese.

In addition, Russia and China do not share Saudi Arabia's antipathy for Iran. Quite to the contrary. The Chinese in particular, I think, are looking very much forward to selling arms to Iran once the U.N. embargo comes off. So the huff-and-puff, threaten, and the like, but at the end of the day, we are, with our British allies, the only real game in town, unless he wants to think about 20 or 30 years from now, but I don't think that is his timeframe. I think he is a here-and-now kind --

Mrs. Demings. Okay. Again, thank you all very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. Thank you very much.

I had a couple last questions I wanted to ask, and then I thought I would see if there are any further questions from our members. Really so greatly appreciative of your expertise today.

Dr. Callamard, you had recommended the U.S. Government support a U.N. mechanism to independently investigate harassment or targeted killings of dissidents by authoritarian regimes. Can you explain to us why the current system is inadequate or broken and how your proposal would work?

Ms. Callamard. Yes. Thank you very much. The current system, in my view, is extremely weak. I took on the investigation into the killing of Jamal Khashoggi because it fitted within my mandate, but, you know, I am not the best equipped as a Special Rapporteur. We have very limited resources and our mandate is really focused on human rights issues.

So I could focus quite well on state responsibilities, but as I have pointed out, individual liability is a much more difficult process for a Special Rapporteur.

Second, there was heavy politicization of the question of this investigation. In fact, there is still politicization of it, which is not very healthy. The Secretary General fell

back on some procedural reasons to justify not moving forward with any kind of formal call for an investigation.

So all in all, I felt, and I feel, that it will be good to remove those issues a little bit from this politization and from the lack of resources and so on. A standing instrument could, both a human rights and a criminal law angle, it could declare itself or declare its jurisdiction without request from special -- from states or from the Secretary General. So it will have the freedom to pick on cases on the basis of a number of criteria. It could either support national investigation where they are shown to be of good will but with little capacities or it could undertake a parallel investigation where national authorities are clearly not interested in doing so.

So, you know, at the moment, there is nothing like this. The killings of human rights defenders, journalists, dissidents, are largely killings with impunity, as is the vast majority of them. There are a few cases where it doesn't happen, but we as an international community could do far better.

The Chairman. Thank you very much, Doctor.

And, Mr. Soufan, if I could, one last question to you. The terrorist attack in Pensacola, how was it that you think that the Saudis didn't do the due diligence on their end, given this person's continuing ties to al-Qa'ida? And how is it that DOD, FBI, didn't do sufficient diligence on their end, and what is your sense of how likely this is to potentially recur?

Mr. Soufan. Well, it is a very significant event, sir, and I think we know now from reports that this person has been communicating with al-Qa'ida for many, many years. And usually when they do the vetting for people from the military -- coming from one military, allied military, to the United States, we trust the assessment of the host of the country. So, you know, his name is sent to the Saudis, and the Saudis will do the

background and then say, he is a good guy, you know, bring him here.

There is definitely a big failure also in not knowing the relationships that he has with al-Qa'ida and the Arabian Peninsula. But that also shows how MBS' war on the institutions in Saudi Arabia in the name of fighting corruption is weakening the professionals in these institutions to do the job. Many red flags have been missed in Saudi Arabia, and I am sure we have a lot of assessments here in the United States to look inward and see what did we miss. But usually something like this, it goes to the Saudis, and the Saudis give us the name, and they give us that this guy is good or he is not good. Because Saudi Arabia is considered a strong ally to the United States, so we go with their own background checks.

The Chairman. What kind of pressure is brought to bear when you have critics or dissidents outside of Saudi Arabia, what kind of pressure is brought to bear on their family? I am sure you saw that the children of Jamal Khashoggi gave some form of forgiveness to those that were recently convicted in the Saudi trial. That would remove them, I guess, from consideration for the death penalty. How much pressure is brought to bear on the family? There are also allegations that Mr. Al-Jabri's children are being detained by Saudi authorities. How much danger are they in? How would you assess those things?

Mr. Soufan. Well, you know, I feel sorry for the family of Jamal Khashoggi, not that they have any other choice. They have seen what happened to their father. And I think what MBS is trying to do is trying to intimidate, trying to put fear in the hearts of dissidents, trying to send the message that if you are against me, I will get to you wherever you are. And it was mainly Saudis.

Now recently, we start seeing that he is actually going against other people, to include U.S. residents and U.S. citizens. I think the only way he will continue to get away

with this, if he is not held accountable. Accountability is the key. We see people, dissidents in jail in Saudi Arabia, we see the families of dissidents in jail in Saudi Arabia, and we see the level of intimidation that they are using on social media and in the physical sphere, so big for anyone to bear. And I think it affects definitely the families, it affects the people that is being targeted, but this is his way to intimidate.

This is a very -- I hate to say that, but this is a Mafia-style ruling, and I think they are sending a message that if you are against us, you are going to live miserable. And a lot of people will give up, but we cannot give up, because the moment that we give up, people like him will win, and that is why we cannot give up. And that is why we need to send a message that you cannot do this to fellow human beings, and you cannot do this, especially to American residents and American citizens.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Let me just ask my colleagues, anyone have a last question they would like to ask our witnesses before we adjourn?

All right. Hearing none, I want to thank you, Dr. Callamard, Bruce Riedel, Ali Soufan, thank you so much for your testimony today. You have just provided, I think, invaluable information to our committee and others around the country watching today's hearing, so we are greatly in your debt.

And with that, the hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 1:36 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]