NOW WILL SAUDI SUPPORT FOR 9/11 BECOME TOXIC?

Back in a Twitter discussion with Jack Goldsmith about whether President Obama could force a peace settlement with Iran through Congress, I suggested the way to change the politics in DC would be to exercise Executive discretion over all the intelligence we've got that shows the Saudis backed 9/11, continued ignore support for al Qaeda until at least 2010, and haven't really tried all that hard to crack down on other Islamic extremists either.

As luck would have it, just as Obama faces a renewed 2 month deadline for his peace plan with Iran (which reportedly is showing progress), and just as Democrats are being forced to snub Bibi's address to Congress, lawyers for victims of 9/11 submitted a large filing on their case against Saudi Arabia accompanied by Zacarias Moussaoui's description of high-level Saudi involvement in 9/11. Moussaoui, you see, claims to have been in charge of a database of all funders to what he called Bin Laden Group (you call it al Qaeda, he said) back in 1998 and 1999 — significantly, in the wake of the African Embassy bombings. (Exhibit 5, Exhibit 6, Exhibit 7, Exhibit 8) And it reads like a who's who of Saudi elite.

> some of them extremely famous, like Waleed -- Waleed bin Talal, Prince -- Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, Prince -- Prince Bandar bin Sultan Al Saud, Prince Mohammed Al Faisal Al Saud, and Haifa Al Faisal Al Saud, I know there was another -- a woman. It will come back to me.

The timing on this is quite curious. The plaintiffs actually took Moussaoui's deposition on October 20 and 21 of last year — not long after a public report that Florence prison authorities had been using the Special Administrative Measures against Moussaoui to prevent the deposition. That deposition, of

course, would have come a month before the initial peace deadline with Iran. Since then, the suit has been in a bit of a stall (particularly as it relates to Saudi involvement) up to the submission of this filing. While the timing seems incidental, this means that just before this came out, all the powers that be were in Riyadh celebrating King Abdullah (and surely trying to ensure the longevity of the US-Saudi embrace), and Bandar was getting fired — again — though surely for palace politics.

Even more curious timing, however, is Alwaleed bin Talal's decision to sell most of his News Corp stocks, even while reiterating his love for all things Murdoch.

> Alwaleed's Kingdom Holding cut its ownership of Class B shares to 2 million from 13.2 million, or 6.6 percent, it said in a statement to the Saudi bourse today. The sale generated 705 million riyals ($188 million), which will be used for other investments, it said. Through Kingdom, Prince Alwaleed holds stakes in companies including Citigroup Inc. and Twitter Inc.
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> Alwaleed, who had the second-largest holding of voting stock in News Corp. after the Murdoch family, has been a staunch ally of the Australian media baron. He publicly supported the family's running of News Corp. amid phone-hacking revelations in 2011 that saw the company abandon its bid to take over the rest of European pay-TV operator Sky Plc.
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> "The reduction of Kingdom's holding in News Corp. has been decided in the context of a general portfolio review," Alwaleed said in a separate e-mailed statement. "We remain firm believers in News Corp.'s competent management and are fully supportive of Rupert Murdoch and his family."

This move also comes just after DOJ announced it would not be pursuing News Corp under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, so at a time when News Corp should be politically safer here in the US.

Who knows whether we'll let Moussoui change the narrative on Saudi support for 9/11. Especially given the underlying risk: Moussaoui's testimony dates all this financial (and logistical) support to the period just after the Embassy bombings, but it suggests these figures supported bin Laden both before and after. That would back the claims of a number of former CIA types who argue Riyadh Station Chief John Brennan prevented the CIA from investigating these ties in the lead-up to the attack on our Embassies.

That is, Moussaoui's testimony carries risks not just for key Saudi elites. But also for the CIA Director.