



April 13, 2004

A summary of findings by the panel investigating the Sept. 11 attacks involving six flights to Saudi Arabia just after the 2001 hijackings:

National air space was closed on Sept. 11. Fearing reprisals against Saudi nationals, the Saudi government asked for help in getting some of its citizens out of the country. We have not yet identified who they contacted for help. But we have found that the request came to the attention of (presidential counterterrorism adviser) Richard Clarke and that each of the flights we have studied was investigated by the FBI and dealt with in a professional manner prior to its departure.

No commercial planes, including chartered flights, were permitted to fly into, out of, or within the United States until Sept. 13, 2001. After the air space reopened, six chartered flights with 142 people, mostly Saudi Arabian nationals, departed from the United States between Sept. 14 and 24. One flight, the so-called bin Ladin flight, departed the United States on Sept. 20 with 26 passengers, most of them relatives of Osama Bin Ladin. We have found no credible evidence that any chartered flights of Saudi Arabian nationals departed the United States before the reopening of national airspace.

The Saudi flights were screened by law enforcement officials, primarily the FBI, to ensure that people on these flights did not pose a threat to national security, and that nobody of interest to the FBI with regard to the 9-11 investigation was allowed to leave the country. Thirty of the 142 people on these flights were interviewed by the FBI, including 22 of the 26 people (23 passengers and 3 private security guards) on the bin Ladin flight. Many were asked detailed questions. None of the passengers stated that they had any recent contact with Osama Bin Ladin or knew anything about terrorist activity.

The FBI checked a variety of databases for information on the bin Ladin flight passengers and searched the aircraft. It is unclear whether the TIPOFF terrorist watchlist was checked. At our request, the Terrorist Screening Center has rechecked the names of individuals on the flight manifests of these six Saudi flights against the current TIPOFF watchlist. There are no matches.

The FBI has concluded that nobody was allowed to depart on these six flights who the FBI wanted to interview in connection with the 9-11 attacks, or who the FBI later concluded had any involvement in those attacks. To date, we have uncovered no evidence to contradict this conclusion.

