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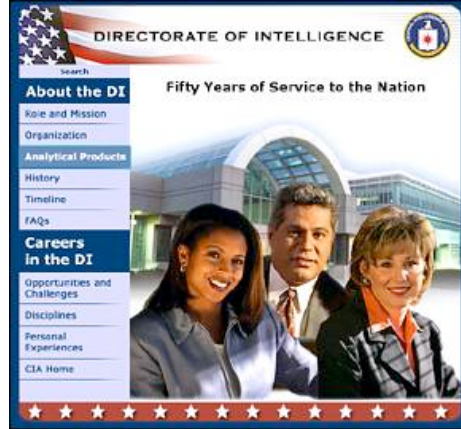
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Secrets: The CIA Web site acknowledges documents that Bush aides won't



Classified: Censoring the Report About 9-11?

Bush officials are refusing to permit the release of matters already in the public domain—including the existence of intelligence documents referred to on the CIA Web site.

By Michael Isikoff
NEWSWEEK

June 2 issue — Why is the Bush administration blocking the release of an 800-page congressional report about 9-11? The bipartisan report deals with law-enforcement and intelligence failures that preceded the attacks. For months, congressional leaders and administration officials have battled over declassifying the document, preventing a public release once slated for this week. NEWSWEEK has learned new details about the dispute.

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AMONG THE PORTIONS of the report the administration refuses to declassify, sources say, are chapters dealing with two politically and diplomatically sensitive issues: the details of daily intelligence briefings given to Bush in the summer of 2001 and evidence pointing to Saudi government ties to Al Qaeda. Bush officials have taken such a hard line, sources say, that they're refusing to permit the release of matters already

in the public domain—including the existence of intelligence documents referred to on the CIA Web site.

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One document is called the PDB, the President's Daily Brief. The congressional report contains details of PDBs provided to Bush (and top national- security aides) prior to 9-11. The PDBs included warnings about possible attacks by Al Qaeda. (One PDB was given at the presidential ranch in Crawford, Texas, on Aug. 6, and dealt with the possibility that Al Qaeda might hijack airplanes.) But an administration review committee overseen by CIA Director George Tenet has refused to declassify anything that even refers to the existence of PDBs—though they are described on the CIA's own Web site (www.CIA.gov). A U.S. intelligence official said the review committee must consult with the White House before releasing anything. But the official denied charges by Florida Sen. Bob Graham, a Democratic presidential candidate, that Tenet's review committee was covering up White House embarrassments. "We're not playing politics," the official says. "Our concern is national security."

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The other hot-button issue is the Saudis, sources say. The report discusses evidence that individuals with Saudi government connections may have provided the hijackers aid. One of them is Omar al-Bayoumi, a Saudi student who helped two hijackers get apartments in San Diego. The administration won't declassify references to al-Bayoumi even though, in response to a NEWSWEEK story, an FBI spokesman confirmed last November that he was being investigated. The report also includes interviews with U.S. officials about Saudi cooperation in the war on terror. Many were critical of the Saudis. The administration is declassifying only the response by former FBI director Louis Freeh praising Saudi assistance on the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing case. The U.S. intelligence official said that, in response to a letter cosigned by Graham and Rep. Porter Goss, House Intelligence Committee GOP chair, the review committee was considering allowing more portions of the report to become public.

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