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### The CAIR-U.A.E. Connection

By [Paul Sperry](#)
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An Arab nation with ties to 9-11 has pledged a major endowment to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, even as the Washington-based nonprofit group insists it receives no foreign support.

The United Arab Emirates recently announced on its [official government website](#) that it has set up an endowment serving as a source of income for CAIR. The amount of the funding is undisclosed, but sources say it will be enough to help CAIR finance the construction of a new \$24 million office building and a planned \$50 million public-relations campaign aimed at repairing Islam's -- and the UAE's -- image in America.

A recent Washington Post-ABC poll found that a majority of Americans think Muslims are more prone to resort to violence, and more Americans now have a negative view of Islam than right after the 9-11 terror attacks.

Americans also have a lower opinion of the UAE now, thanks to its recent bid to take over U.S. port operations. The political storm over the deal drew increased attention to the Arab country's ties to terrorism.

CAIR -- Washington's biggest Muslim lobbying group -- is quoted in the UAE statement, but has not released its own statement. It is not commenting publicly about the size of the endowment or other details.



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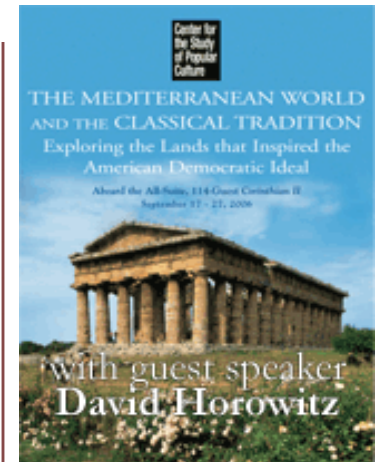
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But the UAE, which formally recognized the Taliban and acted as a launching point for the 9-11 hijackers, has already taken a nearly \$1 million stake in CAIR's existing headquarters near the U.S. Capitol. As first reported in the book, Infiltration, Dubai holds the deed to the building. The transaction took place in 2002, according to local property records.

The strengthened financial partnership comes at a critical time for both parties.

The UAE is still reeling from a spate of bad press following its controversial bid to take over control of shipping terminals at major U.S. ports. Partnering with CAIR gives it a voice in U.S. politics and media, which it hopes will help repair its image and protect its business interests.

UAE's minister of finance, Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, personally approved the deal with CAIR. After meeting with Sheikh Hamdan in Dubai, CAIR Chairman Parvez Ahmad was quoted in the Arab press saying: "If the image of Islam and Muslims is not repaired in America, Muslim and Arab business interests will continue to be on a downward slide in the U.S."

CAIR, meanwhile, has suffered its own image problems and has lost some of its political clout in Washington. The group recently was dealt a series of legal setbacks in civil court. Its image has also been damaged by counterterrorism investigations of several of its officials, some of whom have been convicted of felonies. The major cash infusion from the Middle East will allow the group to polish its image, replenish its legal war chest and go back on the offensive.

"The endowment will serve as a source of income and will further allow us to reinvigorate our media campaign projecting Islam and its principles of tolerance," CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad is quoted in the UAE press release as saying during his trip to Dubai late last month. Before helping establish CAIR, Awad worked for a suspected Hamas front called the Islamic Association for Palestine. Several other CAIR officials have links to Hamas.

CAIR, which keeps a stable of lawyers, recently lost three major lawsuits in a row against critics who called CAIR a front for terrorism.

\* In March, CAIR dropped a \$1.4 million libel suit against the U.S. operator of an "anti-CAIR" website, which still contains statements calling CAIR "a terrorist-supporting front organization."

\* In April, a federal appeals court ruled that CAIR cannot pursue a \$2 million defamation suit against a former congressman who accused the group of being a fund-

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raising arm for terrorists. Ex-U.S. Rep. Cass Ballenger, R-N.C., also said his wife grew disturbed after 9-11 by the proximity of CAIR's operations to their Capitol Hill home.

\* Also in April, CAIR's Canadian branch dropped its suit against a former Canadian Security Intelligence Service official for raising questions about connections between CAIR-CAN and the jihadist movement.

The lawyer for the Anti-CAIR website says CAIR dropped the case to protect its "foreign backers," which it has claimed do not exist. The litigation process would have opened its books up to discovery, which would have exposed "its finances [and] connections to foreign interests," explained Washington lawyer Reed Rubinstein in a recent interview with FP.

The failed legal actions have dealt a major blow to CAIR, which uses the courts to stifle criticism about its operations and Islam in general. Unable to marshal the same degree of legal intimidation, the group is already finding it harder to back down critics. Some major news publications have ignored recent threats from CAIR's legal department to retract statements and print apologies.

At the same time, CAIR is having to fend off lawsuits naming it as a defendant. For one, the widow of an FBI hero killed in the World Trade Center on 9-11 is turning the tables on CAIR and suing it for damages for conspiring to "support terrorism." The suit, filed by the family of the late John P. O'Neill, charges that CAIR has both received donations from terrorist groups and provided "material support" to terrorist groups.

The UAE gift could help CAIR build back its legal fund and reputation. But given Dubai's own reputation for supporting terrorism, the endowment could act as a double-edged sword.

Before 9-11, the UAE sponsored hunting camps in Afghanistan attended by Osama bin Laden. In fact, according to U.S. intelligence, UAE Defense Minister Gen. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum requisitioned a C-130 cargo plane to deliver Toyota Land Cruisers, weapons and other supplies to bin Laden at one of the camps a year after the terrorist kingpin attacked U.S. embassies in Africa.

Sheikh Mohammed, now the ruler of Dubai, knew bin Laden was wanted by the U.S., but provided him material support nonetheless. His Al-Maktoum Foundation, which holds telethons to support families of Palestinian suicide bombers, holds the deed to CAIR's headquarters in Washington.

On one trip in 1999, roughly half the UAE royal family hunted with bin Laden at their camp near Kandahar, Afghanistan. They flew in on an official UAE aircraft, according to a recently declassified CIA memo dated Feb. 19, 1999, and titled, "Recent High

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Level UAE Visits to Afghanistan." The memo also determined that Dubai officials had lied to U.S. officials about visiting the camps. And they were believed to have even tipped off bin Laden about U.S. plans for additional strikes on his terror-training camps.

Hunting with prized falcons is popular sport in the Middle East. The late president of the UAE, Sheik Zayed, reportedly introduced his top falcon trapper to bin Laden during a hunting trip in Afghanistan before 9-11. The trapper, Mohamed al-Qahtani, then signed on as the would-be 20th hijacker, according to recently disclosed detainee interrogation logs from Gitmo.

U.S. intelligence officials say the secret hunting expeditions were a way for al-Qaida to safely meet with top officials of purported U.S. allies in the region, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia. While there is no evidence to suggest they discussed the 9-11 operation as they sipped tea with bin Laden at the Afghan camps, bin Laden nonetheless chose to use Dubai as the final staging ground for the operation and the launching point from which to deploy most of his 9-11 hijackers to hit America.

Two of the hijackers, in fact, were UAE citizens, and one of them -- Marwan al-Shehhi -- served under Gen. Sheikh Mohammed as a sergeant in the UAE army. Al-Shehhi was the pilot who crashed the plane into the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

Dubai also served as the transit point for 9-11 cash. More than \$100,000 in al-Qaida funds were funneled through Dubai banks to the hijackers.

Now CAIR is on the receiving end of millions of its own Dubai cash. In effect, CAIR is officially partnering with Osama bin Laden's old hunting partners -- the rulers of Dubai -- potentially creating more image problems for the nonprofit group.

Its main benefactor, Sheikh Mohammed, owns 100% of Dubai Ports World, the company that bought the rights to run major shipping terminals in America. Not surprisingly, CAIR endorsed its bid for the port operations. And when the deal fell apart, the group blamed American "bigotry" toward Arabs and Muslims and chided those who called it a victory for U.S. security.

"If it's a victory, it's a victory for bigotry and Islamophobia," fumed CAIR spokesman Dougie "Ibrahim" Hooper.

During the ports debate, Hooper, who directs CAIR's aggressive communications program, made no mention of the nonprofit group's financial ties to the UAE. And he has publicly denied receiving support from any Arab or foreign benefactors.

In a press statement he issued after 9-11, Hooper flatly asserted: "We do not support directly or indirectly or receive support from any overseas group or government." He

has claimed CAIR receives its funding from member dues.

In fact, CAIR not only receives support from the UAE, but also from interests based in Saudi Arabia -- which, like the UAE, supported the Taliban and al-Qaida. Those Saudi-based entities include the Islamic Development Bank; the International Islamic Relief Organization, one of bin Laden's favorite charities; and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, whose U.S. branch was formerly run by bin Laden's nephew, now on the terrorist watchlist. Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal has also pledged donations to CAIR.

Saudi Arabia is run by sharia, or strict Islamic, law. Hooper and CAIR co-founder Omar Ahmad are both on record stating they want the U.S. to be Islamic under sharia law. As a result, critics say CAIR's real agenda is to Islamize America.

To help assuage skeptics, CAIR has enlisted the help of former Republican congressman Paul Findley, a well-known apologist for Islam who happens to do business in the Middle East. In fact, Findley led the CAIR delegation to Dubai and helped broker the endowment deal.

In his years on the Hill, Findley earned a reputation as an Israel basher and "Arafat's best friend in Congress."

After 9-11, he rooted for Sami al-Arian to beat a terrorism rap. The Palestinian activist is even lionized in Findley's 2001 book, "Silent No More: Confronting America's False Images of Islam," along with another American Muslim activist, Abdurahman Alamoudi, who has since proved to be one of al-Qaida's top fund-raisers in America. Like Alamoudi, al-Arian recently confessed to terrorism charges. Both now sit in jail.

Ironically, the UAE press release says Findley briefed Sheikh Hamdan on CAIR's "strategic plan on correcting the image of Islam and Muslims among the American public."

The UAE endowment from the state-run Al Maktoum Foundation reportedly will help support a new seven-story building for CAIR and help cover a baseline annual operating budget of about \$3 million. CAIR currently offices out of a three-story brick building located a few blocks from the Capitol, at 453 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.

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