WASHINGTON -- The long-classified document detailing possible connections between the government of Saudi Arabia and the Sept. 11 terrorist plot released on Friday is a wide-ranging catalog of meetings and suspicious coincidences.

It details contacts between Saudi officials and some of the Sept. 11 hijackers, checks from Saudi royals to operatives in contact with the hijackers and the discovery of a telephone number in a Qaeda militant's phone book that was traced to a corporation managing an Aspen, Colo., home of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, then the Saudi ambassador to Washington.

The document, 28 pages of a congressional inquiry into the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, is also an unflattering portrayal of the kingdom's efforts to thwart American attempts to combat Al Qaeda in the years before the attacks.

But it is also a frustrating time capsule, completed in late 2002 and kept secret for nearly 14 years out of concern that it might fray diplomatic relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Subsequent investigations into the terror attacks pursued the leads described in the document and found that many had no basis in fact. But the mythology surrounding the document grew with each year it remained classified.

The Obama administration sent a declassified version of the document, with some redactions, to the congressional leadership on Friday. Its release on the website of the House Intelligence Committee later in the day marked the end of a years-long fight by lawmakers and families of the Sept. 11 victims to make public any evidence that Saudi Arabia may have played a role in the attacks.

It is by no means a Rosetta Stone that deciphers the lingering mysteries behind the attacks. But it is also a far more substantial document than many American and Saudi officials -- from the White House press secretary to some members of Congress to the Saudi foreign minister -- tried to indicate in a flurry of news conferences and emailed news releases on Friday afternoon.

And it was made public at a particularly troubled moment in America's decades-long relationship with Saudi Arabia. The Senate unanimously passed a bill in May that would make it easier for families of Sept. 11 victims to sue the Saudi government for any role in the attacks. The bill is now being considered in the House.

The White House has threatened to veto the legislation, but the Obama administration has had its own recent period of tension with Saudi leaders over the Iran nuclear deal and the grinding war in Syria.

Much of the push over more than a decade to get the document declassified was led by former Senator Bob Graham, the Florida Democrat who was one of the co-chairmen of the congressional inquiry. In a statement on Friday, Senator Graham compared the release to the "removal of the cork at the end of the bottle" that should lead to even more information to be declassified.

The panel that Senator Graham helped lead did not try to reach definitive conclusions about what the 28 pages called the "Saudi issue" in its final report in 2002. "It was not the task of this Joint Inquiry to conduct the kind of extensive
investigation that would be required to determine the true significance of any such alleged connections to the Saudi Government," the document states.

The most extensive investigation into the attacks was conducted by the September 11 Commission, which pursued many of the leads presented in the 28 pages. The commission's final report, released in 2004, said that the panel had found no evidence that the "Saudi government as an institution, or senior Saudi officials individually funded" Al Qaeda.

Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, quoted that assessment word for word on Friday, adding that the various leads that investigators pursued about top Saudi officials having a role in the plot "didn't really turn up anything."

Adel al Jubeir, the Saudi foreign minister, echoed that sentiment hours later at a news conference at the Saudi Embassy, saying that all the allegations in the document "have been dealt with in the subsequent investigations and they have found that they were without merit."

"The surprise in the 28 pages is that there is no surprise," he said.

But some former September 11 Commission staff members pointed out that the wording in the group's final report did not rule out the possibility that lower ranking Saudi officials had assisted the hijackers and said that the commission operated under extreme time pressure and could not run down every lead.

In particular, some investigators remain puzzled by the exact role played by Fahad al-Thumairy, a Saudi consular official based in the Los Angeles area at the time of the attacks. They believe that if there had been any Saudi government role in the plot, it probably would have involved him.

Mr. Thumairy was the imam of a mosque visited by two of the Sept. 11 hijackers, and some American government officials have long suspected that Mr. Thumairy assisted the two men -- Nawaq Alhamzi and Khalid al-Midhar -- after they arrived in Los Angeles in early 2000.

An F.B.I. document from 2012, cited last year by an independent review panel, concluded that Mr. Thumairy "immediately assigned an individual to take care of" of Mr. Alhamzi and Mr. Midhar "during their time in the Los Angeles area," but the F.B.I. has been unable to piece together other details of the movement of the two men during their early days in the United States.

Two investigators for the Sept. 11 commission interviewed Mr. Thumairy for several hours in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, in February 2004, but he denied having any ties to the hijackers -- even after being presented with phone records that seemed to link him to the two men.

The 28 pages discuss the role that Mr. Thumairy is said to have played, as well as a number of possible connections between Qaeda operatives and Saudi officials. One section of the report details how a phone number in a telephone book found with Abu Zubaydah, who was captured in Pakistan in March 2002 by the C.I.A., was traced to a corporation in Aspen, Colo., that manages the affairs of the Colorado residence of Prince Bandar.

The Saudi government on Friday issued a lengthy rebuttal to the 28 pages, saying it was "one of the more peculiar ironies" that a nation that has done so much to combat terrorism finds itself "the object of ceaseless suspicion." American officials broadly agree that Saudi Arabia, since the Sept. 11 attacks, has been aggressive in its efforts to stamp out terror networks inside the kingdom and to clamp down on the financing private individuals in the country historically have given to militant groups.

But the document released on Friday is unsparing in its criticism of Saudi efforts to undermine American attempts to dismantle Al Qaeda in the years before the Sept. 11 attacks. Moreover, it portrays the F.B.I as generally in the dark about the maneuverings of Saudi officials inside the United States during that period.

It closes with a snippet of testimony from October 2002, when a senator asked Robert Mueller III, the F.B.I director, during a closed-door session, whether the work of the congressional inquiry had unearthed information of which he had been unaware.

"Yes," he said.

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