

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Ron Johnson
“The PGA-LIV Deal: Examining the Saudi Arabian
Public Investment Fund’s Investments in the United States”
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
September 13, 2023

On Monday, at 7:46 am Central Time, I was in the Milwaukee airport, when the entire terminal stopped and stood in silence for sixty seconds to somberly commemorate the 22nd anniversary of the horrors of 9/11. Over the weekend, I saw a report about students born after 9/11 acknowledging the tragedy that changed our world forever. I was grateful those students had at least been taught that piece of history and that it had made a powerful impression on them.

For those of us who were alive on that day, we will never forget where we were, who we were with, and what we were doing when we first heard of the brutal attack. For those of us who were alive almost 60 years ago on November 22, 1963, the moment in time when we heard of President Kennedy’s assassination has left an equally indelible imprint in our memory.

In addition to creating indelible memories, those two national tragedies have something else in common. Significant information our government uncovered during investigations of these crimes has been kept hidden from the American public.

Even though a law was passed in 1992 to require the release of all documents related to JFK’s assassination by the year 2017, over 5 years have passed since that deadline and key portions of the historical record remain hidden from public view. Why? What is so sensitive that both Republican and Democrat presidents, together with a host of unelected bureaucrats serving in intelligence agencies and law enforcement, feel that the American people can’t handle the truth?

A similar cover-up is occurring with what the U.S. government knew, and when it was known regarding the 9/11 attacks. I realize that 22 years is a lot less than 60 years, but almost 3,000 Americans lost their lives that day, and their families, together with the rest of the public, deserve to know what the government knows.

It’s been over two years since President Biden issued an executive order to declassify documents connected to the 9/11 attacks. More than one year past the March 2022 deadline for those agencies to complete their declassification reviews, the government has declassified and released only a little more than 4,000 pages of documents, many of which are heavily redacted.

During the Subcommittee’s July 11th hearing I entered into the record an 11-page document handed to me by representatives of families that lost loved ones on 9/11. This document, titled Operation Encore, is only a small subset of the records the U.S. government has released pursuant to President Biden’s executive order. As you can see, it is heavily redacted.

A week following that hearing, on July 18, Chairman Blumenthal and I wrote to the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) demanding unredacted copies of all the records that have been released pursuant to the executive order including the 11-page

document. Because both agencies failed to respond, Chairman Blumenthal and I reiterated our request for this information this past Sunday.

On Monday, the FBI finally responded in what they claimed was a “good faith effort to assist the Subcommittee in its inquiry.” Here’s what we received.

If DOJ and FBI continue to withhold these relevant records, I hope this Subcommittee will use the authority we have to compel compliance to our legitimate Congressional oversight. Why should unelected bureaucrats be able to access and view these records without redactions while duly-elected members of Congress - who have full authority to view classified documents - are kept in the dark?

Freedom can only thrive in an open society with a government that is honest and transparent with its citizens. My time in Congress has taught me that our federal government is far from living up to that requirement.