

Kean and failure on 9/11

by John Judge

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9/11 Chair: Attack Was Preventable

CBS News, 17 December 2003

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/12/17/eveningnews/printable589137.shtml>

It's important that they are finally admitting it was preventable and pointing to accountability. However, if the thesis is that the system "failed" then it is a slippery slope. The theme of the Joint Inquiry in Congress was that 9/11 represented an "intelligence failure", and of course the solution is to give the agencies more funds and more power, reward the error in other words and unleash the spying.

A recent *Washington Post* article noted that the FBI now works directly with intelligence agents in their counter-terrorism and that the old rules preventing the excesses of the past have been abandoned again, with increased surveillance of those not suspected of actual criminal activity. NORAD/FAA activity on 9/11 cannot be explained as a "failure" in the sense of lack of readiness or incompetence. Why?

1. The whole system knew that planes had been and could be used by Al Qaeda as weapons, and had worked to prevent that happening in Genoa at the summit that summer when warning signals were high, protecting Bush specifically against planes.
2. Warnings from foreign intelligence agencies of such a plot were received all through the summer and early fall, as well as specific forewarnings not to fly on 9/11 to Pentagon Brass, foreign officials and the mayor of San Francisco.
3. Exercises and preparations were taken in 1998-2000 to secure the Pentagon against a plane attack with radar and cameras, and to test emergency response procedures.
4. NORAD was on full readiness alert, with planes waiting on the runways as part of an exercise that day called Vigilant Guardian. There had been earlier exercises involving planes used as weapons as well. NORAD is capable of tasking any available plane.
5. Standard operating procedures in any single, even private plane air emergencies for an immediate FAA/NORAD response were not followed at all on 9/11 despite multiple large commuter planes off course, without transponders and not communicating with towers, which later were clearly known to be hijackings.
6. Not only were no NORAD intercept planes scrambled for well over half an hour after the first plane gave indications of trouble at 8:17 am, *NONE* were ever scrambled to defend DC and P-56, the most protected air space in the country.
 - Available planes in Canada were not scrambled, which regularly protect New York air space.

- Available planes at Andrews AFB and Anacostia NAS proximate to DC were not scrambled.
- Planes scrambled from Langley AFB, 130 miles south of DC, were sent to NYC and asked to confirm the hit on the Pentagon on the way there.
- In addition, planes scrambled from Otis AFB in CT, sent too late to intercept the two NY attack planes, turned to intercept Flight AA77 headed to DC and were called back.
- Fighter pilots from Pomona AFB in Atlantic City, NJ, on military maneuvers, within sight of the first tower burning in NYC were called back to base.
- Planes in the air over North Carolina, based out of Andrews AFB were not tasked.

Normal response time in over 65 other air emergencies in the year before 9/11, in far less serious circumstances, was an average of 6-10 minutes. On 9/11 the time stretched to over an hour.

7. Army Brigadier General Montague Winfield, in charge of the the National Military Command Center (the Pentagon War Room) on the morning of 9/11, and in an open phone bridge communication with FAA, NORAD, White House and other agencies, getting real time information on the planes as they went off course, said on a *CNN* special anniversary program that the US Air Force did not respond right away because the FAA was tracking four seemingly unrelated hijackings. This makes no sense.

We realized that the seemingly unrelated hijackings that the FAA was tracking were actually a part of a coordinated terrorist attack against the United States. [Specific quotes of Winfield include: "We realized that the seemingly unrelated hijackings that the FAA was tracking were actually a part of a coordinated terrorist attack against the United States", Inside the Pentagon on 9-11, NEXT@CNN, *CNN.com Transcripts*, 9/7/02; "When the second aircraft flew into the second tower, it was at that point that we realized that the seemingly unrelated hijackings that the FAA was dealing with were in fact a part of a coordinated terrorist attack on the United States", "Moments of Crisis, Part 1: Terror Hits the Towers - How Government Officials Reacted to Sept. 11 Attacks, *ABC News*, 9/14/02 --ratitor]

8. Even though the Pentagon was attacked directly, the headquarters of the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, none of its own internal defense mechanisms were used that day. In addition, not a single investigation, court of inquiry or courts-martial has ensued following the attack to determine responsibility.

Richard Meyers, the officer in charge of the Joint Chiefs that day spent well over an hour in private conversation with Congressman Max Cleland, apparently uninterrupted despite the fact that he had been informed about the first plane hitting the WTC and the fact that the country was clearly under attack by 9:05 am. Testifying to Congress the following week he answered questions about military response to the attacks wrongly, claiming that no planes were scrambled until after the Pentagon was hit.

The problem was that the planes scrambled that day were directed away from the areas that needed defense the most, and called into or back to the areas already hit instead.

Similarly, the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, reportedly sat in his office doing paperwork, oblivious to the attack until he felt the plane hit the Pentagon.

Even the Commander-in-Chief showed a lack of any urgent concern, despite having known about the first plane hitting the WTC before he joined an elementary school class in Florida for story reading, and despite being informed by aide Andrew Card of the second building being hit. Instead, Bush sat with the students and read until the entire scenario had unfolded.

9. According to the *Washington Post*, the Pentagon went to an Alpha security and defense alert once news of the WTC attack was reported, and after their building was hit, they went to a Charlie level of security. This is a scale from A-Alpha to B-Beta, C-Charlie, D-Delta. However, in 1999, facing phoned bomb threats, the Pentagon was on Delta alert, it's highest level. Why would it not have risen that high once they were under attack, or previous to the attack that day?

I have been trying hard to get public advocacy and policy groups here in DC involved in the Commission process. Chairman Kean told me at the last hearing that if anyone wants to be heard, they should contact him. I think our best strategy will be to compile a list of credible experts with alternate messages to the majority of witnesses who have testified so far, most of whom are directly involved with FBI, CIA and Pentagon intelligence, currently or in the past. We could then push publicly for the National Commission to hear from credible witnesses on sane alternative policies relating to 9/11, as well as the historical and physical evidence of what really happened that day and who is its ultimate sponsor.

If they refuse all these witnesses, they will only discredit themselves. We don't need "theorists" about 9/11, we need real experts with good credentials. Mel Goodman would be an example, from Ambassador White's policy group. A former DoD official, Goodman has openly challenged Zelikow's conflicts of interest and called for him to step down as Commission director, as did the families. The Commission's official response was that they knew of Zelikow's conflicts, and that he was prepared to recuse himself in discussions relating to the NSC and Condalleze Rice. Kean went on to say that "all of us will have to [recuse ourselves] in relation to some issues". In other words, every single one of them is conflicted and compromised.

Accountability is key, but "failure" is a tricky concept. Did Haliburton "fail" to charge the right price for gasoline, an "error" that can be corrected merely by repayment, as Bush suggests. Any other contractor would face cancellation of contract, bar from future contracts for a period, possible jail time, and repayment of all defrauded funds. But Kellogg/Brown & Root gets a slap on the wrist, a subsidiary of Cheney's former employer. The other subsidiary is DI or Dresser Industries, an oil and defense contractor that gave Bush Sr. his first job in Texas. Did the Bush neocons "fail" to heed ample warnings about 9/11, or did they intentionally ignore them?