

THREE LESSER-KNOWN EVENTS OF SEPT 11, 2001

THE ATTACK ON THE TWIN TOWERS

PART ONE: THE KAMIKAZE MISSION OF TWO USAF F-16'S

PART TWO: BEHIND THE ORDER TO SHOOT DOWN AMERICAN PLANES

PART THREE: THE 9-11 COMMISSION REPORT

PARTS 2 AND 3 SHOW THE FAILINGS OF OUR GOVERNMENT EVEN IN CRITICAL TIMES

400

PART ONE

LT HEATHER PENNEY AND ONE OTHER TRIED TO BRING DOWN FLIGHT 93 ON A KAMIKAZE MISSION



**UPDATED
SEPT 8, 2020**

September 11, 2001 was supposed to be a typical day for Lieutenant Heather Penney of the District of Columbia Air National Guard. As Penney recalled in a 2016 interview with HISTORY, that morning she was attending a briefing at Andrews Air Force Base, planning the month's training operations. At about 8:45 a.m., someone leaned into the room and said, "Hey, somebody just flew into the World Trade Center."

First Lieutenant Heather "Lucky" Penney had graduated from Purdue University, majoring in literature. She'd planned on being a teacher. When Congress opened up combat aviation to women, Penney immediately signed up. She wanted to be a fighter pilot like her dad, John Penney, a retired Air Force colonel who had flown combat missions in Vietnam and was now a commercial pilot for United Airlines. After her training, she was assigned to the 121st fighter squadron of the Air National Guard.

THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 11

The weather in New York City that day was very clear with blue skies. "We thought it was a small general aviation airplane or, you know, some small aircraft that maybe had...messed up their instrument approach," Penney recalled. *It was assumed that a general aviation plane had made a terrible mistake, and they went back to their meeting.*

Within a few minutes, there was another knock on the door, and someone said, "Hey, a second plane just hit the World Trade Center." It was clear: America was under attack. They rushed to a nearby television and saw the burning towers. As Penney said, that was when "we realized that our world had suddenly changed."

THERE WAS NO TIME TO ARM THEIR F-16 FIGHTER JETS

As confusion enveloped the briefing room, *Penney's commanding officer, Colonel Marc "Sass" Sasseville, locked his eyes to hers and said, "Lucky, you're coming with me."* They scrambled to the pre-flight area and donned their flight suits.

There was no time to arm their F-16 fighter jets, so they would be flying this mission virtually unarmed, packing only their undaunted courage.



Her Wingman and Commanding Officer was Colonel (now Lt/General) Marc "Sass" Sasseville.

But what was the mission? Where were they to go? What were they looking for? There were no clear orders as to what to do. Somewhere in the confusion as the pilots got into their flight suits and ran to their planes, the Pentagon was hit by hijacked American Airlines Flight 77. Reports circulated that a fourth plane, United Flight 93 out of Newark, New Jersey, was out there. Air command speculated it was also headed to D.C. for another strike on the Pentagon, or a strike on the White House or the Capitol building.

Normally, preflight preparation for F-16 fighter jets takes a half-hour, allowing pilots to methodically work through a checklist. Being a rookie, Penney's only combat experience was in training. As they ran out to their planes, she started going through the checklist. Sasseville stopped her and barked, "Lucky, what are you doing? Get your butt up there and let's go!" She quickly climbed into her cockpit. As she powered up the engines, she shouted to the ground crew to pull the chock blocks holding the wheels.

Receiving the go-ahead from flight control, both jets' afterburners belched out thousands of pounds of thrust as they took off and headed northwest, the last known location of the fourth plane. Word came to them that they had shoot-to-kill orders. Knowing that they had taken off in unarmed aircraft, which could mean only one thing. They would be flying a kamikaze mission, ramming into Flight 93, a Boeing 757 aircraft, nearly 7 times the weight of their F-16 fighter jets. They had agreed upon the plan of attack. Sasseville would head for the 757's cockpit and Penney would aim for the plane's tail. As they sped out beyond Andrews Air Force Base, flying low at about 3,000 feet, they could see black, billowing smoke streaming from the Pentagon.



F-16'S

Beyond the mission at hand, there wasn't much else on First Lieutenant Heather Penney's mind. She had accepted the fate of Flight 93's passengers, believing whether she succeeded or not, they were going to die. She briefly toyed with the idea of ejecting from her plane just before impact, but quickly dismissed the idea, knowing she had only one shot and didn't want to miss. It didn't even cross her mind that there was a possibility the pilot of United Flight 93 was her father, who often flew out of East Coast cities. As it turned out, he wasn't.

For the next 90 minutes, Penney and Sasseville made ever-increasing sweeps of D.C. airspace, looking for the fourth airliner. "We never found anything," Penney told HISTORY. After about an hour into their mission, Penney and Sasseville heard that Flight 93 had crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Passengers on the flight had heroically prevented the hijackers from reaching their target.

Now the mission has changed from intercepting to sanitizing the airspace. Not every aircraft aloft that morning was aware that the FAA had ordered a national ban on takeoffs of all civilian aircraft regardless of destination. With the assistance of civilian air traffic controllers, Penney and Sasseville began to divert any aircraft away from the D.C. area and ordered them to land as soon as they could. They also identified the first-responding aircraft assisting the rescue at the Pentagon.

Penney and other pilots were instructed to guard the President of the United States as he flew home.



At the time of the attacks, President George W. Bush was attending an elementary school event in Sarasota, Florida. When he was told a second plane had hit the World Trade Center and the country was under attack, he was escorted back to Air Force One and taken to the safest place at that moment, the open skies.

Now, in the evening hours, it was time to bring the president home. ***Penney's plane and the others patrolling the skies around Washington, D.C. had been equipped with live ammunition.*** They were also given "free-fire" authority, ***meaning pilots could make the decision to fire on any civilian aircraft deemed to be a threat, instead of waiting for authorization.*** Several hours after the initial attack, it was still unclear whether more attacks were pending.

HEATHER PENNEY PROMOTED TO MAJOR AND SERVED TWO TOURS IN IRAQ

Since that day, ***Heather Penney served two tours in Iraq, was promoted to Major, retired and currently works for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company.*** She has had time to reflect on her experience on September 11, 2001—and the bravery of the passengers on Flight 93.

"I made a decision with my life, and I swore an oath to protect and defend, but these were just average, everyday people, mothers, fathers, schoolteachers, businessmen," Penney told HISTORY. "They're true heroes."

"The passengers on Flight 93 are the true heroes. In the years since that bright, blue morning, I've come to realize that heroism isn't something unique or possessed by only a chosen few," Penney said.

"I genuinely believed that was going to be the last time I took off," she told the Washington Post. "If we did it right, this would be it."

NOTE

In honor of this, the 20th Anniversary of 9/11, CBS News produced a News Exclusive on September 9, 2021, entitled: **FIGHTER PILOTS RECALL MISSION TO TAKE DOWN FLIGHT 93 ON 9/11**. This 3 minute 19 second video can be seen by copying and pasting the below link into your browser.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISRRuqxa8TA>

PART TWO

BEHIND THE ORDER TO SHOOT DOWN AMERICAN PLANES: “IT HAD TO BE DONE” THE HARROWING DECISION WAS MADE DURING THE FIRST HOUR AFTER THE ATTACK



Vice President Dick Cheney watching the news of the attacks on the World Trade Center in his office on September 11, 2001, before being led to the underground White House bunker.



UPDATED SEP 12, 2019

It's hard to imagine an American leader authorizing the shoot-down of civilian aircraft. But in the first hour following the attacks of September 11, 2001, when it was unclear how many passenger jets had been weaponized by terrorists—and then aimed at America's seats of power—that's exactly what happened.

According to what historic record exists from that chaotic morning, however, it's unclear that the decision came directly from someone in the operational chain of command, which runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense down to military commanders. President George W. Bush, who began the day at an education event in Florida, was sequestered in the skies on Air Force One, frustrated by scant information, spotty communication and handlers determined to keep him safely away from the capital. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, meanwhile, became unreachable after the Pentagon itself had been struck.

That left Vice President Cheney, positioned in a bunker beneath the White House, in the decision-making hot seat.

Moments after the second plane crashed into the World Trade Center's South Tower at 9:03 a.m., it became clear America was under attack. With word that radar had spotted a plane heading straight for the White House, the executive mansion was evacuated and Secret Service agents quickly hustled Cheney and a handful of other high-ranking administration officials down the basement corridors to a Cold War-era underground bunker. During the first hour there, confusion reigned as the team watched the news unfold on TV and struggled to gather reliable information about the unprecedented attack from the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon. The most immediate questions revolved around how many planes remained in the sky, how many had been commandeered by hostile forces—and what to do about it.

As part of the research for my new book, The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11, I interviewed dozens of top U.S. officials who were with the president and vice president that day—as well as culled official oral histories conducted by the Pentagon and other institutions in the wake of

9/11—to create one of the most detailed pictures yet of the national decision-making that unfolded that morning.

One particular moment of that first hour in the bunker would prove among the day's most controversial moments: *that order from Cheney authorizing fighter jets to shoot down hijacked airliners. Did he actually have the authority to give the order? And did he and President Bush connect before or after Cheney ordered the fighters into battle?*

THE SCRAMBLE TO SAFETY



Vice President Cheney with senior staff in the President's Emergency Operations Center (PEOC), the Cold War-era bunker under the White House.

The White House bunker, known officially as the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC), dates back to World War II, when officials set up a modest bunker for Franklin D. Roosevelt in the event of a surprise German attack on the capital. Harry Truman expanded the facility dramatically for the Cold War as part of a large White House renovation during his presidency. In the years since, the bunker has been updated technologically; and while officials and presidents had used it as part of drills and exercises, *it had never been used for its intended purpose—until 9/11.*

Still, the facility is staffed 24 hours a day, and that morning the team on duty had been gathering for its normal Tuesday morning staff meeting when the towers were struck. Within minutes, Vice President Cheney and other officials arrived. Navy Commander Anthony Barnes was on duty that morning, and in his first-ever interview, he recalls that he looked around and saw National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, White House Communications Director Karen Hughes, Cheney aide Mary Matalin and Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta: “Mr. Mineta put up on one of the TV monitors a feed of where every airplane across the entire nation was. We looked at that thing—there must have been thousands of little airplane symbols on it.”

Barnes, who served on 9/11 in a role known as the deputy director of Presidential Contingency Programs—that is, the deputy director of the nation's doomsday plans at the White House—explains, “The PEOC is not a single chamber; there are three or four rooms. The operations chamber is where my watch team was fielding phone calls. Then there's the conference room area where Mr. Cheney and Condi Rice were—that's the space that had the TV monitors, **telephones, and whatever else.**”



In those opening minutes of the crisis response, officials still struggled to understand what was happening—particularly as word came around 9:37 a.m. that the western face of the Pentagon had been hit too, targeted by American Airlines Flight 77, hijacked out of Dulles International Airport.

"That first hour was mass confusion because there was so much erroneous information," recalls Barnes. "It was hard to tell what was fact and what wasn't. We couldn't confirm much of this stuff, so we had to take it on face value until proven otherwise."

RUMSFELD, BREAKING PROTOCOL, RAN TO THE CRASH SITE



U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (center) leads Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich. (left), and Sen. John Warner, R-Va. (right), to the crash scene at the Pentagon heliport September 11, 2001, in Arlington, Virginia

Remarkably, one of the reasons that Cheney was left seemingly on his own during that first hour of the crisis was because Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, officially the second person in the military chain of command, rushed out of his Pentagon suite in the moments after the attack and went to the crash site personally. Under the protocols for the secret system known as "continuity of government," meant to preserve the U.S. leadership and evacuate key officials to bunkers and mobile command posts around Washington in the event of an attack, Rumsfeld should have been immediately evacuated. Yet that day he found himself torn between his official duties and the unfolding human tragedy. His actions that morning, where he actually helped carry stretchers of wounded personnel out of the impact zone, would long endear him to the military. But placing himself in danger—and out of communication in a moment of true crisis—was precisely the wrong action from an official standpoint.

As Victoria "Torie" Clarke, the head of public affairs at the Pentagon, recalled in her oral history, not even Rumsfeld's staff fully understood where he was in the moments after the attack: "Several times in the next half-hour or so people would ask where the secretary was. The answer was 'out of the building.' We took that to mean that he had been taken to a secure location. But he had gone out to the [crash] site."

Aubrey Davis, one of Rumsfeld's security agents who trailed the defense secretary out to the crash, recalls hearing frantic questions on the radio about the secretary's whereabouts that he was unable to answer: "The Communications Center kept asking where the secretary was, and I kept saying we had him. They couldn't hear."

At the White House, aides feared the worst for Rumsfeld. As Mary Matalin recalls, "There was a real concern in getting information about the casualties at the Defense Department. At first, we thought Secretary Rumsfeld had been hit, then we heard he was pulling bodies out of the rubble. We couldn't quite get a location on the Secretary of Defense."

OFFICIALS FEARED THERE WOULD BE A DOZEN HIJACKED PLANES



President George W. Bush and his staff look out the windows of Air Force One at their F-16 escort on September 11, 2001, while en route to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. Initially, they weren't sure whether the approaching planes were hostile, aiming to shoot them down. Pictured from left are: Andy Card, White House chief of staff; Ari Fleischer, press secretary; Blake Gottesman, personal aide to the president; Karl Rove, senior adviser; Deborah Loewer, director of White House Situation Room, and Dan Bartlett, deputy assistant to the president.

That vacuum—with the "SecDef" beyond reach and the president himself being hustled aboard Air Force One in Florida—meant that Cheney faced the critical hour from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. almost entirely alone. They struggled to piece together what was happening. As Barnes says, "Every one of my guys in the watch room have at least two phones to their ears. I was talking to the Pentagon operations center on one line. I had a line to FEMA, and people are asking us for directions on what to do and how to do it."

Matthew Waxman, an aide on the National Security Council, recalls how difficult it was to get information at the time. "The TV feeds would occasionally go down. The vice president was pretty ticked off about that. There were technical glitches that day," he told me. "One of my jobs was to stand with a phone in my hand to make sure that there was an open line between the PEOC and some of the other national security officials. So that if the vice president or the National Security Adviser needed to speak to one of them, we had a direct line out with me at one end and a counterpart on the other."

One of the most critical questions to arise was how to handle the remaining hijacked planes—no one from air traffic control or the military was really sure how many planes in the air were still under the control of terrorists, but they feared the number might be a dozen or more.

THE PENTAGON ASKED PERMISSION FOR THE UNTHINKABLE

Then, at 9:59 a.m., the morning went from very bad to worse as the South Tower collapsed in a rolling cloud of dust. As Barnes says, "There are four or five very large, 55-inch television screens in the PEOC...I remember Cheney being as flabbergasted as the rest of us were sitting there watching on these

monitors. Back in those days, a 55-inch TV monitor was a really big TV. It was almost bigger than life as the towers collapsed.”

A moment of truth arrived sometime shortly thereafter, around 10 a.m., likely between 10:12 a.m. and 10:18 a.m., according to the best reconstruction later. As Barnes, who has never before spoken publicly about the morning, explains, *“The Pentagon thought there was another hijacked airplane, and they were asking for permission to shoot down an identified hijacked commercial aircraft.”* I asked the Vice President that question and he answered it in the affirmative. I asked again to be sure. ‘Sir, I am confirming that you have given permission?’ For me, being a military member and an aviator—understanding the absolute depth of what that question was and what that answer was—I wanted to make sure that there was no mistake whatsoever about what was being asked. Without hesitation, in the affirmative, he said any confirmed hijacked airplane may be engaged and shot down.”

Cheney didn’t blink at the order. Scooter Libby, his chief of staff, recalled that the vice president decided “in about the time it takes a batter to decide to swing.

.” As Cheney himself explained later, “It had to be done. Once the plane became hijacked—even if it had a load of passengers on board who, obviously, weren’t part of any hijacking attempt—*—having seen what had happened in New York and the Pentagon, you really didn’t have any choice. It wasn’t a close call.”*

BUT WAS CHENEY AUTHORIZED TO MAKE SUCH A CALL?



President George W. Bush speaks to Vice President Dick Cheney by phone aboard Air Force One on September 11, 2001, after departing Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska.

A question, though, has lingered ever since: The vice president isn’t actually part of the military chain of command and, in theory, doesn’t have authority to order fighters into battle—let alone to take an unprecedented step of shooting down a commercial domestic airliner filled with civilians. *According to standard protocols, such an order should only come from the president.*

It’s not clear—and years of extensive investigation has never definitively determined—whether Cheney had actually spoken to President Bush to get such an authority. Both men have hinted that they’d spoken prior to Cheney’s order, *but there’s little concrete evidence they did. In fact, the preponderance of evidence appears to show that Vice President Cheney unilaterally gave the order.*

According to the 9/11 Commission, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten—the senior-most of the president’s staff at the White House that day—was present when Cheney gave the authorization to Barnes. The 9/11 Commission reported that “Bolten watched the exchanges and, after what he called ‘a quiet moment,’ suggested that the vice president get in touch with the president and confirm the engage order.

Bolten told us he wanted to make sure the president was told that the vice president had executed the order. He said he had not heard any prior discussion on the subject with the president.”

Cheney has long insisted that he had spoken to the president before giving the order to Barnes, but there's no proof of such a call. Some of the best possible evidence comes from the recollection of Condoleezza Rice, who told the 9/11 Commission that when she entered the PEOC, she heard the vice president on the phone with the president. She said she “remembered hearing him inform the president, ‘Sir, the [Combat Air Patrols] are up. Sir, they're going to want to know what to do?’ Then she recalled hearing him say, ‘Yes sir.’”

That conversation, though, seems unlikely to have been placed accurately in the morning’s timeline—the Combat Air Patrols launched by the Air Force and various Air National Guard units that morning were largely not in place until the early part of the 10 a.m. hour, although there were fighter jets from Otis Air Force Base on Cape Cod over New York City by a little after 9 am.

THE FLIGHT 93 CRASH: DID WE DO THAT?

What is clear is that President Bush concurred with the order, whenever he and Cheney did speak. The two men spoke at 10:18 a.m., with the president safely aboard Air Force One, and contemporaneous notes from the plane by White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer note at 10:20 a.m., President Bush told aides that he had authorized hijacked planes to be shot down. As White House Chief of Staff Andy Card told me, “The president is sitting at his desk, and I’m sitting directly in front of him. I witness the president authorize the Air National Guard to shoot down the hijacked airliners. The conversation was sobering to hear. What struck me was as soon as he hung up the phone, he said, ‘I was an Air National Guard pilot—I’d be one of the people getting this order. I can’t imagine getting this order.’”

While Barnes says that in the PEOC he never wondered whether Flight 93 had been shot down by U.S. fighters—he says he heard none of the “chatter” from the military side that would have indicated a fighter had unleashed a weapon in American airspace—those on Air Force One were less sure. For much of the morning, those with the president thought it possible their decisions had resulted in the plane’s downing. As Andy Card told me, “We hear that Flight 93’s gone down. We’re all wondering, did we do that?...It lingered deepest in the president’s conscience.”

Around 10:30 a.m., Rumsfeld himself was back in command at the Pentagon’s nerve center, the National Military Command Center, and spoke to the vice president by phone at 10:39 a.m. “There’s been at least three instances here where we’ve had reports of aircraft approaching Washington,” Cheney told the defense secretary. “Pursuant to the president’s instructions I gave authorization for them to be taken out.”

Rumsfeld gave no immediate response. Cheney heard only silence and asked, “Hello?”

Finally Rumsfeld replied, “Yes, I understand. So we’ve got a couple aircraft up there that have those instructions at this present time?”

“That is correct,” Cheney said, “and it’s my understanding they’ve already taken a couple aircraft out.”

As John Farmer, Jr., senior counsel of the 9/11 Commission, later recounted, the conversation between Cheney and Rumsfeld was “remarkable, ultimately not as an artifact of history but as an indication of how little-understood the events of the morning remained years later, even—and perhaps especially—to national leaders.” As he said, “They honestly believed that their actions in those critical moments made a difference; the records of the day say otherwise.”

Indeed, the question of whether Cheney technically had the authority to give that shoot-down order ends up being somewhat academic. Had it even been conveyed to fighters in the air fast enough, it would have meant little: United Airlines Flight 93, the final hijacked plane, crashed in a Pennsylvania field at 10:03 a.m., minutes before Cheney’s exchange in the PEOC. In fact, according to the 9/11

Commission and its reconstruction of the morning's events, it wasn't until 10:31 a.m. that Cheney's order even reached the military.

Had Flight 93 continued on its path, the hijacked plane would have reached the nation's capital sometime between 10:13 and 10:23 a.m.

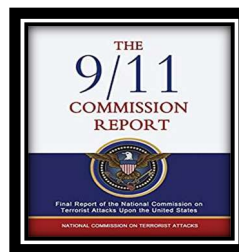
While most speculate that Flight 93 was targeting the Capitol—the White House is a much smaller, harder to hit target—*to this day no one knows for sure.*



P 2336

PART THREE

THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT



UPDATED SEPT 6, 2019

The 9/11 Commission Report was published on July 22, 2004, three years after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. The report was authored by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, or "9/11 Commission." They were an independent, bipartisan group created on November 27, 2002, when President George W. Bush signed congressional legislation mandating that they produce a report exploring what really happened on 9/11. The 9/11 Commission Report studied U.S. preparedness and responsiveness to the attacks and provided recommendations to guard against future threats. The 9/11 Commission began its first hearings in New York City in the spring of 2003 and presented its findings in a public report released on July 22, 2004.

BIRTH OF THE 9/11 COMMISSION

On November 27, 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush signed into law congressional legislation authorizing federal funding for intelligence activities. The legislation also established the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States in order to (in Bush's words) "examine and report on the facts and causes relating to the September 11th terrorist attacks." Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was Bush's choice to head the commission, while Democratic congressional leaders chose former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell as vice-chairman. *Less than a month later, however, both men resigned from the 9/11 Commission, citing potential conflicts of interest.* Mitchell did not want to sever ties to his law firm, while Kissinger—whom many considered too close to many national and international leaders to be objective—did not wish to disclose the identities of clients of his consulting firm.

Did you know? In early 2008, after it was revealed that that the CIA had destroyed videotaped interrogations of Al Qaeda operatives, 9/11 Commission leaders Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton wrote in the New York Times that the commission had asked the CIA repeatedly for information of the kind that would have been obtained in such interrogations; they called the agency's failure to disclose the existence of the tapes "obstruction."

To replace Kissinger, Bush tapped former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, a Republican. Congressional Democrats chose former Representative Lee Hamilton, Democrat of Indiana, to replace Mitchell. The 10-member commission included five Democrats and five Republicans. It was given a budget of some \$3 million and a total of 18 months, or until the end of May 2004, to complete a full report of the circumstances surrounding the events of 9/11 and provide a number of recommendations to guard against future attacks.

PROGRESS OF THE 9/11 COMMISSION

Organizations representing the families of the 9/11 victims had been instrumental in the establishment of the 9/11 Commission, and closely monitored its progress. In March 2003, the 9/11 Commission sought \$11 million in additional federal funding to complete its task in the allotted time period. Kean requested the funds as part of a \$75 billion supplemental spending bill that Bush had submitted in order to pay for war with Iraq. Later that month, the Bush administration agreed to up the commission's budget by \$9 million.

From March 31 to April 1, 2003, the 9/11 Commission held its first public hearing in the United States Customs House, located not far from the World Trade Center site in New York City. Survivors of the 9/11 attacks and relatives of victims delivered their heart-wrenching accounts and questioned the failures of American intelligence that had allowed such horrific attacks to occur. In a total of 12 public hearings over the next 10 months, the 9/11 Commission heard from a range of witnesses including Department of Justice experts, academics in the fields of terrorism and counterterrorism, and New York City Police and Fire Department representatives. Prominent leaders who testified before the commission included New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director George Tenet, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Secretary of Defense William Cohen. President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney gave private testimony (not under oath), as did former President Bill Clinton and former Vice President Al Gore.

THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT

In its final report, published on July 22, 2004, the 9/11 Commission stated that the terrorist attacks of September 2001 "were a shock but they should not have come as a surprise," as Islamic extremists such as Al Qaeda's Osama Bin Laden had long declared their intentions to kill large numbers of Americans. The report outlined the failings of numerous government agencies, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Pentagon and the National Security Council, in acting on existing intelligence in order to protect and defend the nation from such threats. Among a long list of recommendations designed to guard against future attacks, the 9/11 Commission advocated a comprehensive restructuring of U.S. intelligence agencies and an increased emphasis on diplomacy between the United States and the Islamic world.

Some critics have claimed that the 9/11 Commission was not truly independent, as its members were chosen by Congress and the Bush administration, and that it suffered from conflicts of interest due to connections between some of its members and key figures in the administration. Meanwhile, Kean and Hamilton have claimed that the commission was hamstrung by the time and budgetary constraints it

was under *and that its effectiveness was hampered by misinformation given by organizations like the Pentagon and the Federal Aviation Administration.*



PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN TAKEN
FROM WEBSITES & OTHER SOURCES THAT APPEAR TO BE AUTHENTIC, I CAN NOT GUARANTEE THAT ALL THE
DATA IN THIS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE AND CORRECT.