

Statement of
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Concerning the Joint 9/11 Inquiry

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I would like to thank the families of the 3000 victims for allowing me to represent them, here today, before the Joint Intelligence Committee. It is a tremendous honor. Testifying before this committee is a privilege and an enormous responsibility that I do not take lightly. I will do my best not to disappoint the families or the memories of their loved ones.

Toward that end, I ask the members present here today to find in my voice the voices of all of the family members of the 3000 victims of September 11th. I would also ask for you to see in my eyes, the eyes of the more than 10,000 children who are now forced to grow up without the love, affection, and guidance of a mother or a father who was tragically killed on September 11.

I would now like to thank the members of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Eleanor Hill, and her staff for giving the families this opportunity to be heard. It has been an excruciating and overwhelming 12 months, and it is now time for our words and our concerns to be heard by you.

My three-year old daughter's most enduring memory of her father will be placing flowers on his empty grave. My most enduring memory of my husband, Ronald Breitweiser, will be his final words to me, "Sweets, I'm fine, I don't want you to worry, I love you." Ron uttered those words while he was watching men and women jump to their deaths from the top of Tower One. Four minutes later, his Tower was hit by United Flight 175. I never spoke to my husband, Ron, again.

I don't really know what happened to him. I don't know whether he jumped or he choked to death on smoke. I don't know whether he sat curled up in a corner watching the carpet melt in front of him, knowing that his own death was soon to come or if he was alive long enough to be crushed by the buildings when they

collapsed. These are the images that haunt me at night when I put my head to rest on his pillow.

I do know that the dream I had envisioned, that I so desperately needed to believe—that he was immediately turned to ash and floated up to the heavens, was simply not his fate. I know this because his wedding band was recovered from ground zero with a part of his left arm. The wedding band is charred and scratched, but still perfectly round and fully intact. I wear it on my right hand, and it will remain there until the day I die.

September 11th was the devastating result of a catalogue of failures on behalf of our government and its agencies. My husband and the approximately 3000 others like him went to work and never came home. But, were any of our governmental agencies doing their job on that fateful morning? Perhaps, the carnage and devastation of September 11th speaks for itself in answering this question.

Our intelligence agencies suffered an utter collapse in their duties and responsibilities leading up to and on September 11th. But, their negligence does not stand alone. Agencies like the Port Authority, the City of NY, the FAA, the INS, the Secret Service, NORAD, the Air Force, and the airlines also failed our nation that morning. Perhaps, said more cogently, one singular agency's failures do not eclipse another's. And it goes without saying that the examination of the intelligence agencies by this Committee does not detract, discount or dismantle the need for a more thorough examination of all of these other culpable parties.

An independent blue-ribbon panel would be the most appropriate means to achieve such a thorough and expansive examination, in large part, because it would not be limited in scope or hindered by time limits. An independent blue-ribbon panel

would provide a comprehensive, unbiased and definitive report that the devastation of September 11th demands.

Soon after the attacks, President Bush stated that there would come a time to look back and examine our nation's failures, but that such an undertaking was inappropriate while the nation was still in shock. I would respectfully suggest to President Bush and to our Congress that now, a full year later, it is time to look back and investigate our failures as a nation. A hallmark of democratic government is a willingness to admit to, analyze and learn from mistakes. And, it is now time for our nation to triumph as the great democracy that it is.

The families of the victims of September 11th have waited long enough. We need to have answers. We need to have accountability. We need to feel safe living and working in this great nation.

Specific Threats as to Using Planes as Weapons

On May 17th 2002, National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice stated emphatically, "I don't think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into The World Trade Center...that they would try to use an airplane as a missile, a hijacked airplane as a missile."

The historical facts illustrate differently:

*In 1993, a \$150,000 study was commissioned by the Pentagon to investigate the possibility of an airplane being used to bomb national landmarks. A draft document of this was circulated throughout the Pentagon, the Justice Department and to FEMA.

*In 1994 a disgruntled FEDEX employee invaded the cockpit of a DC-10 with plans to crash it into a company building in Memphis.

*In 1994, a lone pilot crashed a small plane into a tree on the White House grounds.

*In 1994, an Air France flight was hijacked by members of the Armed Islamic Group with the intent to crash the plane into the Eiffel Tower.

*In January 1995, Philippine authorities investigating Abdul Murad, an Islamic terrorist, unearthed "Project Bojinka." Project Bojinka's primary objective was to blow up 11 airliners over the Pacific, and in the alternative, several planes were to be hijacked and flown into civilian targets in the US. Among the targets mentioned were CIA headquarters, The World Trade Center, the Sears Tower, and the White House. Murad told US intelligence officials that he would board any American commercial aircraft pretending to be an ordinary passenger. And he would then hijack the aircraft, control its cockpit and dive it at the CIA headquarters.

*In 1997, this plot re-surfaced during the trial of Ramsi Yousef—the mastermind behind the 1993 bombings of The World Trade Center. During the trial, FBI agents testified that "the plan targeted not only the CIA but other US government buildings in Washington, including the Pentagon."

*In September 1999, a report, The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism, was prepared for U.S. intelligence by the Federal Research Division, an arm of the Library of Congress. It stated, "Suicide bombers belonging to Al Qaeda's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives(c-4 and semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the CIA, or the White House."

This laundry list of historical indicators—in no way exhaustive--illustrates that long before September 11th the American intelligence community had a significant amount of information about specific terrorist threats to commercial airline travel in America, including the possibility that a plane would be used as a weapon.

Failure to Make Warnings Public

On March 11th 2002, Director of the CIA, George Tenet stated, “in broad terms last summer that terrorists might be planning major operations in the United States. But, we never had the texture—meaning enough information—to stop what happened.”

On May 8th 2002, Director of the FBI, Robert Mueller stated, “there was nothing the agency could have done to anticipate and prevent the attacks.”

Once again, the historical facts indicate differently:

* Throughout the spring and early summer of 2001, intelligence agencies flooded the government with warnings of possible terrorist attacks against American targets, including commercial aircraft, by Al Qaeda and other groups. The warnings were vague but sufficiently alarming to prompt the FAA to issue four information circulars, or IC's, to the commercial airline industry between June 22nd and July 31st, warning of possible terrorism.

* On June 22, the military's Central and European Commands imposed “Force Protection Condition Delta,” the highest anti-terrorist alert.

* On June 28th: National security advisor Condoleeza Rice said: "It is highly likely that a significant Al Qaeda attack is in the near future, within several weeks."

* As of July 31st, the FAA urged U.S. airlines to maintain a "high degree of alertness".

* One FAA circular from late July, noted according to Condoleeza Rice that there was 'no specific target, no credible info of attack to US civil-aviation interests, but terror groups are known to be planning and training for hijackings and we ask you therefore to use caution."

* Two counter-terrorism officials described the alerts of the early and mid-summer 2001 as "the most urgent in decades."

One thing remains clear from this history. Our intelligence agencies were acutely aware of an impending domestic risk posed by Al Qaeda. A question that remains unclear is how many lives could have been saved had this information been made more public.

Airport security officials could have gone over all the basics, again, of the steps needed to prevent hijackings. The policy of allowing passengers to carry razors and knives with blades of up to four inches in length certainly could have come under scrutiny. Indeed, officials could have issued an emergency directive prohibiting such potential weapons in carry-on bags. Finally, all selectees under the Computer Assisted Passenger Pre-Screening System (CAPPS), and their carry-on luggage and checked bags, could have been subjected to additional screening. Apparently, none were on September 11th, although internal FAA documents indicate that CAPPS selected some of the hijackers.

And how many victims may have thought twice before boarding an aircraft? How many victims would have chosen to fly on private planes? How many victims may have taken notice of these Middle- Eastern men while they were boarding their plane? Could these men have been stopped? Going further, how many vigilant employees would have chosen to immediately flee Tower 2 after they witnessed the blazing inferno in Tower 1, if only they had known that an Al Qaeda terrorist attack was imminent?

Could the devastation of September 11 been diminished in any degree had the government's information been made public in the summer of 2001?

Failure to Investigate and Share Information

On July 5th, the government's top counter-terrorism official, Richard Clarke stated to a group gathered at the White House, "Something really spectacular is going to happen here, and it's going to happen soon."

The group included the FAA, the Coast Guard, the FBI, the Secret Service, and the INS. Clarke directed every counter-terrorist office to *cancel vacations, defer non-vital travel, put off scheduled exercises and place domestic rapid response teams on much shorter alert.*

For six weeks last summer at home and abroad, *the U.S. government was at its highest possible state of readiness—and anxiety—against imminent terrorist attack.*

A senior FBI official attending the White House meeting on July 5th *committed the bureau to redouble contacts with its foreign counterparts and to speed up transcription and analysis of wiretaps obtained under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), among other steps.*

But when the field agent in Phoenix, Arizona, reported the suspicions of a hijacking plot *just five days later*, the FBI did not share the report with any other agency. One must ask, why?

That report written by Agent Kenneth Williams, now well known as the "Phoenix Memo," recommended that the FBI investigate whether Al Qaeda operatives were training at U.S. flight schools. Williams posited that Osama Bin Laden's followers might be trying to infiltrate the civil aviation system as pilots, security guards or other personnel, and he recommended a national program to track suspicious flight school students. Agent Williams was dead-on point.

But, in the summer of 2001, while our nation was at its highest state of alert, his memo was flatly ignored. And, what result if it hadn't been ignored? What if his memo was promptly placed on INTELINK, SIPRNET, or NIPRNET? What if other agents had the same suspicions in Florida, California, Georgia, Ohio, and Nevada? Could the terrorists have been stopped?

On August 15, 2001, an alert civilian instructor at a Minnesota flight school called the FBI and said, "Do you realize that a 747 loaded with fuel can be a bomb?" The next day, Zacarias Moussaoui was arrested. After investigating Zacarias Moussaoui's past, the FBI (with the help of French Intelligence) learned that he had Islamic extremist connections. They also knew that he was interested in flight patterns around New York City, and that he had a strong desire to fly big jets, even though at the time he didn't have so much as a license to fly a Cessna.

And then, what happened?

The FBI office in Minnesota attempted to get a FISA warrant, but they were rebuffed. A crucial mistake, because

Zacarias Moussaoui's possessions contained evidence that would have exposed key elements of the September 11th plot.

But, why was this request denied? Again, the historical facts must be analyzed.

In March 2001, an internal debate ignited at the Justice Department and the FBI over wiretap surveillance of certain terrorist groups. Prompted by questions raised by Royce C. Lamberth, the Chief Judge of the FISA Court, the Justice Department opened an inquiry into Michael Resnick, an FBI official who coordinated the Act's applications. Attorney General John Ashcroft and Robert Mueller (then deputy Attorney General), ordered a full review of all foreign surveillance authorizations.

Justice Department and FBI officials have since acknowledged the existence of this internal investigation, and said that the inquiry forced officials to examine their monitoring of several suspected terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda. And while senior FBI and Justice Department officials contend that the internal investigation did not affect their ability to monitor Al Qaeda, other officials have acknowledged that the inquiry might have hampered electronic surveillance of terror groups. The matter remains highly classified.

What is not classified is that in early September a Minnesota FBI agent wrote an analytic memo on Zacarias Moussaoui's case, theorizing that the suspect could fly a plane into The World Trade Center. And, tragically, this, too, was ignored.

Also ignored by U.S. intelligence agencies was the enormous amount of trading activity on the Chicago Exchange Board and in overseas markets. Our intelligence agencies readily use Promis software to analyze these kinds of market indicators that presented themselves in the weeks prior to September 11th. Why were these

aberrational trades and market swings ignored? We were at the highest state of alert. An attack by Al Qaeda was expected to occur at any given moment. And yet, massive amounts of trades occurred on American Airlines, United Airlines, Re-insurance companies, and leaseholders in The World Trade Center and none of our watchdogs noticed?

Perhaps even more disturbing is the information regarding Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, two of the hijackers. In late August, the CIA asked the INS to put these two men on a watchlist because of their ties to the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole. On August 23, 2001, the INS informed the CIA that both men had already slipped into the country. Immediately thereafter, the CIA asked the FBI to find al-Midhar and Alhazmi. Not a seemingly hard task in light of the fact that one of them was listed in the San Diego phone book, the other took out a bank account in his own name, and finally, an FBI informant happened to be their roommate.

But, again, our intelligence agencies failed.

Were the Terrorists Already Under Surveillance?

It was only after the devastation of September 11th that our intelligence agencies seemed to get back on track.

On September 12, 2001, *The New York Times* reported, "On Tuesday *a few hours* (emphasis added) after the attacks, FBI agents descended on flight schools, neighborhoods, and restaurants in pursuit of leads. The FBI arrived at Huffman Aviation at about 2:30 a.m., Wednesday morning. They walked out with all the school's records, including photocopies of the men's passports."

The New York Times also reported that students at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University said that *within hours* (emphasis added) of the attacks FBI investigators were seen at their school.

How did the FBI know exactly where to go only a “few hours” after the attacks? How did they know which neighborhoods, which flight schools, and which restaurants to investigate so soon into the case?

The New York Times went on to report that “federal agents questioned employees at a store in Bangor, Maine, where five Arab men believed to be the hijackers tried to rent cell phones late last week. Store employees at first refused to sell the phones because the men lacked proper identification, but they gave in after the five offered \$3000 cash, store employees and an airport official said.”

The article goes on to state, “the men then phoned Bangor airport trying to get a flight to Boston but were told there was no flight that matched their desired departure time, the authorities said. The men then phoned Portland International JetPort, where two of them apparently made reservations for a flight to Boston on Tuesday morning.”

How would this information be gleaned so quickly? How would the FBI know to visit a store in Bangor, Maine only *hours* after the attacks? Moreover, how would they know the details of a phone conversation that occurred a week *prior* to the attacks? Were any of the hijackers already under surveillance? It has been widely reported that the hijackers ran practice runs on the airline routes that were chosen on September 11th. Did our intelligence agents ever shadow these men on any of their prior practice runs?

Furthermore, on September 12th, *The New York Times* reported that, “authorities said they had also identified accomplices in several cities who had helped plan and execute Tuesday’s

attacks. Officials said they knew who these people were and important biographical details about many of them. They prepared biographies of each identified member of the hijack teams and began tracing the recent movements of the men.”

How were complete biographies of the terrorists and their accomplices created in such short time? Did our intelligence agencies already have open files on these men? Were they already investigating them? Could the attacks of September 11th been prevented?

The speed by which the FBI was able to locate, assimilate, and analyze a small amount of information so soon after the attacks—barely one day later, perhaps answers this question for itself? But, if the terrorists were under investigation, then why were they ever permitted to board those planes? Perhaps, even more potently, why if such an investigation was already underway, why was our nation so late in responding to the emergency that quickly unfolded that day?

Too Many Questions Remain

Too many questions remain. Topping the list of unanswered questions are those that involve our nation’s coordination, communication, and response to the attacks that morning. The 24 hours that presented themselves on September 11th beg to be examined. Questions like:

Why did the NY/NJ Port Authority not evacuate The World Trade Center when they had an open phone line with Newark Traffic Control Center and were told that the second plane was bearing down on the South Tower? NY/NJ Port Authority had at least eleven minutes of notice to begin evacuations of the South Tower. An express elevator in The World Trade Center was able to travel from top to bottom in one minute’s time. How many lives

may have been saved, had the Port Authority acted more decisively or, rather, acted at all.

Were F-16's and Stealth bombers seen and tracked on radar screens at approximately 8:05am the morning of September 11th in the vicinity of the New York metropolitan area?

Washington Air Traffic Control Center knew about the first plane before it hit the World Trade Center. Yet, the third plane was able to fly "loop de loops" over Washington D.C. one hour and 45 minutes after Washington Center first knew about the hijackings. After circling in this restricted airspace—controlled and protected by the Secret Service who had an open phone line to the FAA, how is it possible that the plane was then able to crash into the Pentagon? Why was the Pentagon not evacuated?

Why was our Air Force so late in its response?

What, if anything, did our nation do, in a defensive military posture that morning?

3000 innocent Americans were killed on September 11th, leaving behind families and loved ones like myself and my daughter. There are too many heartbreaking stories to recount. There are too many lost opportunities and futures to be told.

But what can be said to you today is that the families continue to suffer each and every day. All we have are tears and a resolve to find the answers because we continue to look into the eyes of our young children who ask us why? We have an obligation as parents and as a nation to provide these innocent children with answers as to why their mother or father never returned home from work that day.

We need people to be held accountable for their failures. We need leaders with the courage to take responsibility for what went wrong. Mistakes were made and too many lives were lost. We must investigate these errors so that they will never happen again. It is our responsibility as a nation to turn the dark events of September 11th into something from which we can all learn and grow, so that we, as a nation, can look forward to a safe future.

In closing, I would like to add one thought. Undoubtedly, each of you here today, because you live and work in Washington D.C. must have felt that you were in the bull's-eye on September 11th. For most of you, there was a relief at the end of that day; a relief that you and your loved ones were in safe hands. You were the lucky ones. In your continuing investigation, please, do not forget those of us who did not share in your good fate.