



RESEARCH IN POLITICAL ECONOMY
VOLUME 23

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF
9-11-2001

PAUL ZAREMBKA
Editor

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RESEARCH IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Series Editor: Paul Zarembka

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EDITED BY

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JAI Press is an imprint of Elsevier

JAI Press is an imprint of Elsevier
The Boulevard, Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1GB, UK
Radarweg 29, PO Box 211, 1000 AE Amsterdam, The Netherlands
525 B Street, Suite 1900, San Diego, CA 92101-4495, USA

First edition 2006

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-0-7623-1305-1

ISBN-10: 0-7623-1305-6

ISSN: 0161-7230 (Series)

For information on all JAI Press publications
visit our website at books.elsevier.com

Printed and bound in The Netherlands

06 07 08 09 10 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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FOREWORD

Chile, Tuesday, 9-11-1973

A political democracy is destroyed! Everyone now knows that the USA was behind it. Henry Kissinger said to his CIA operatives in 1970: “It is firm and continuing policy that Allende be overthrown by a coup It is imperative that these actions be implemented clandestinely and securely so that the USG [United States Government] and American hands be well hidden.” Elsewhere, he explained: “The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves.”

The agency for 9-11-1973 was, however, Chilean. If you lived through that you don’t glorify its State, even as it had a long tradition of political democracy.

This history for Chile is no longer hidden. In contempt of that knowledge, George W. Bush expressed himself by initially appointing the same Henry Kissinger to head a Commission for a different 9-11 in the United States itself.

USA, Tuesday, 9-11-2001

Another attack! Does everyone know that the USA was behind it? No. Why should such a question even cross our minds? This happened in the States. The U.S. State is not the Chilean State. Even finance capitalists were killed, along with cooking-staff in the top of the Towers on down to other innocents below.

Fair reaction and we accept: no prejudice. Let’s examine objective evidence. Perhaps knowing the truth will not make you free, but being blind to lies and deceptions certainly won’t. Nineteen hijackers would make the definition of a conspiracy. Were there nineteen and, if so, who were they and who was behind them? Is/was bin Laden a Pinochet of sorts? Should we be concerned with bin Laden? If not, then who?

We are academics concerned with the truth about 9-11 and its larger context. We claim independence and have expertise for questions we address. Without modesty, this book is better than the 9-11 Commission Report. Much better.

We invite you to rely upon this volume as a base for understanding.

Paul Zarembka
(Editor)

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PART I:
HIJACKERS – WHO WERE THEY?

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WHAT WE NOW KNOW ABOUT THE ALLEGED 9-11 HIJACKERS

Jay Kolar

ABSTRACT

Inconsistencies and contradictions in the US government's story of hijackers and their masterminds are examined to account for what happened on 9-11. A little-known initial FBI list of 19, scrutinized for four names not on its final list, calls into question the FBI naming process. We discovered 11 of the FBI-named finalists could not have been on those planes, with 10 still alive and another's identity improvised by a double. The Dulles videotape, essentially the government's case that hijackers boarded the 9-11 flights, is found to have serious problems including authentication, as does the so-called bin Laden "confession" video.

Were "hijackers" known to be in the US before intelligence alleges it knew? Evidence is examined which shows that they were closely monitored by agencies which denied this knowledge; in particular, an undercover FBI agent lived with them the prior year.

Noting government refusal to disclose evidence called for by investigators, we find some pieces altered or fabricated and others confiscated or destroyed. Other revelations point to hijackers with national security overrides, protection in their alternate roles as drug traffickers, and deep political connections with government elites. We investigate patterns, reminiscent of historical intelligence involvement, revealing the presence of a covert intelligence operation disguised as an outside enemy attack.

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 3–45
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23001-3

1. INTRODUCTION

FBI Director Mueller has admitted his case against 19 FBI-named hijackers would never stand up in a court of law. Despite his admission, however, the FBI has refused to alter its list. And only one month after the FBI began to investigate the alleged hijackers, President Bush himself called off their investigation on the pretext that manpower was needed to fight the anthrax threat. After that threat dissipated, the hijacking investigation itself had been hijacked: the FBI never returned to complete it. And the FBI never released the original 9-11 airline flight manifests after it had quickly confiscated them. Then the FBI said it located “suspects” in those manifests, investigated them, and promptly named 19 Arab hijackers. Passenger lists made available by the airlines, however, contained none of these 19. Within 24 h of the attacks, CNN had this *first* FBI list of 19. A little-known fact is that, besides the name of Mohamed Atta, it contained four names from the Flight 11 manifest, which the FBI dropped and replaced with four other Arab names. Are we then to believe there were at least nine Arab names on Flight 11 to choose from, and four of the FBI’s five choices were wrong? Because the original manifests have never been released to the public, despite the many requests of the researchers who have all been refused, there is no way to know. Yet lists of the deceased passengers on each flight were released minus the alleged hijackers, it was said, because the airlines did not want to upset families who had lost loved ones. In Flight 11’s case, there should have been – but were not – four Arab names among the deceased who were not hijackers. Total passenger counts for each flight similarly fail to correspond to the total names on each airline list plus FBI-named hijackers for that flight. No discrepancy exists in this respect: none of the airline lists contain any hijacker names. Finally, 10 of those named by the FBI have since turned out to be alive, documented as such by authorities and interviews with those named. Meanwhile, the FBI has stubbornly refused to adjust its list to reflect these facts.

Most frustrating to researchers and investigators are instances in which the US government, intelligence agencies, and Pentagon have simply confiscated or destroyed the evidence. Then, when hard-pressed to make a disclosure, as for example in the recent Senate Hearings on the top-secret Able Danger intelligence unit, they only disclose they did indeed destroy some documents. The Able Danger case revealed **2.5 terabytes** of documents (equivalent to one-fourth of all printed materials in the Library of Congress) were destroyed (*Associated Press*, 09/16/05).¹ Among them were documents identifying ringleader Mohamed Atta as a terrorist

two years before 9-11. Most of the time we only learn the government has simply refused to disclose evidence or brief the public about what happened on 9-11. It seems pretty clear now that the government, through the FBI and an FBI-complicit 9-11 Commission, has as its goal to cover-up what happened that day.

No one knows exactly how the FBI came upon their original list of 19, nor how it made such grievous errors. The FBI never explained how the errors came about, CNN was forced to print a retraction, and the rest of the media left the FBI off the hook. After Flight 11 crashed into the WTC killing thousands, the FBI appeared to rush in to doctor the original flight manifest, and then seemed to pretend their alteration of evidence never happened in this criminal murder case. Then the US government became preoccupied with war against terrorists and refused to release *authenticated* videos of terrorists boarding the planes that crashed. The Boston, Dulles, and Newark airports were all equipped with security cameras, which would have captured all of the passengers who boarded those flights that day. Since authenticated airport security videos of the boarding of the four 9-11 flights had to have existed at some time, why have we never been shown just one of them? Why could not all four of them just as easily have been released to the public as evidence against the accused hijackers? Could it be that none of the alleged hijackers were on these planes?

This investigative journey takes us first to the government's best evidence, the alleged Dulles security videotape of terrorists boarding Flight 77, then to bin Laden's "confession" video, and finally to a pharmacy security video with a segment of Atta's father in the US that went missing after the FBI perused it. Then other videos of "hijackers" appear proclaiming their final "farewells," nullified when the "hijackers" themselves turn up alive. We follow the impossible trail of other hijackers who would have had to be in at least two places at once. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of Ziad Jarrah's double(s). We note that not only did most of the hijackers have doubles, but also pairs of them were doubled, their car rentals and sometimes itineraries were doubled, as well as the entire 9-11 plot of flying planes into buildings finds its double in the military war-game exercise known as Amalgam Virgo. This pattern of doubling, together with evidence of patsies, cut-outs, national security overrides, protected hijacker activities, and of the hands of controller-moles pulling the strings from inside the government, all suggest the entire 9-11 scenario was a covert US intelligence operation. The double-agent status of Mohamed Atta would require an entire book to address, as Hopsicker has shown, in order to do justice to the complexities of Atta's nefarious connections to off-line CIA, an underworld

of drug-trafficking and gun-running figures like super-billionaire Khashoggi, and others with ties to government elites.

2. THE VIDEOTAPE EVIDENCE

2.1. The Portland (Connecting Flight) Video and the Dulles Airport Video

The 9-11 Portland Jetport video of Abdul Aziz al-Omari and Mohamed Atta contains verifiable airport security data on its entire footage. Such data include the date, a digital clock showing the ongoing time of day, and the camera identification number which gives the camera's airport location, all necessary factors to authenticate an event, as well as the video itself. Through this footage, the FBI was able to identify Atta as the terrorist ringleader, although it was never explained how the FBI could identify him so quickly. However, the Portland video does not count as proof that Atta and al-Omari hijacked the plane that crashed, since this video only depicts them boarding a connecting flight. Under the viewing public's stress of witnessing the 9-11 tragedy on television, it is understandable that events would get confused and conflated in the viewing and memory of which plane was being boarded. This factor was most likely taken into account in the overall plan of the real perpetrators of 9-11, and it may be why Atta and al-Omari took the detour from Boston to Portland, Maine, only to fly the connecting flight back to Boston.

The Dulles Airport video is unlike the Portland video in every way. While the Portland video has sharp, clear resolution, the Dulles video's resolution is poor and grainy. While the Portland video was released soon after 9-11, only heavily edited versions of the Dulles video with segments missing were not made available to the American public until almost three years later, on July 21, 2004, one day before the Commission Report's release. It took a lawsuit by families of some of the victims of the 9-11 attacks seemingly to pry the video loose from the government's grip. Significantly, Elaine Teague, one of the family members suing over the death of her daughter, recalled when she had previously been shown the footage by the FBI, the terrorists' faces had been digitally disguised (*Associated Press*, 7/21/04). The video was finally obtained by the *Associated Press* from the law firm representing the families.²

First, the Dulles Airport video is unlike every other airport surveillance video we have seen in one crucial way: it lacks verifiable authenticity, namely any security data – camera number (revealing its location), date, and

ongoing digital clock. Researcher Vialls (2004) performed a painstakingly meticulous examination of “every available frame blown up over twenty times, and [found] there is not a trace of editing.” Then he made certain “that all of the footage ... was included in this ‘Dulles Airport Security video package.’” Without verifiable security camera data imprinted on the entire tape – standard for all airport videos – and without evidence to indicate erasure, there is no possibility that the video is authentic. Hence, the possibility that the Dulles Airport video is a forgery. Devoid of such *security* data, both as a *security* video and as evidence of an event to be used in a court of law, what possible use could this video have? Finally, the missing security data are all the more suspect given the camera’s location at the airport terminal’s *security* screening checkpoint. These missing data are just one of five major problems identifiable in the Dulles video. Photographs have also turned up in the news, but these are merely stills reproduced from the same Dulles footage, some zoomed-in or blown-up, but all lacking authenticity by virtue of their origin. Therefore, two of these photographs show, for example, the al-Hazmi brothers passing through metal detectors before proceeding to board a flight of unknown date and destination.³

The presence of Salem al-Hazmi allegedly preparing to board Flight 77 introduces a *second* problem: both he and al-Mihdhar could not have boarded that flight since they were reported alive after 9-11, and yet they, of all five “hijackers,” are perhaps the most clearly identifiable in the Dulles video images which bear close resemblance to their FBI photographs. In al-Mihdhar’s case, one report comes from the FBI itself, which warned all banks to watch for him after 9-11. (see Note 12.) As for Salem, he testified for himself that on 9-11 he was working at a Saudi petrochemical complex in Yanbou (Harrison, 2001).

The *third* problem visible in the Dulles video is the category of exterior lighting and shadows covered by Paul Zarembka (2006) in this volume following on the research of Vialls (2004). Suffice to say here that in the brief beginning of the 57s version of the Dulles video available at http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/hijackers_video.html, an exterior view shows the time would be around mid-day and not 7:18 AM when the hijackers allegedly entered the security checkpoint. The exterior lighting is too bright and the shadows are wrong for an early D.C. September morning.

A *fourth* problem with the Dulles video involves camera movement and visual manipulation both of which betray human intervention in what should be the purely mechanical operation of a closed-circuit security camera. The zoom-in on al-Mihdhar, for example, shows selectivity as well as

the exclusion of other passengers, also not possible in the alleged “closed-circuit” to which the Commission (2004, p. 3) refers. Of the three Dulles video versions we have seen, the longest one, CourtTV’s 2 1/2 min at <http://www.courtstv.com/video/archive/>, best illustrates the evidence that the Dulles video is not anything like an original, unedited “closed-circuit” security camera video. The CourtTV version is full of heavy editing and manipulation of the image: numerous cuts/splices, zoomed-in shots, even a shot where the camera follows-on-motion (of al-Mihdhar) (also in the CBS version), segments in which there is a change from normal to slow motion in mid-shot (also in the CBS version), close-ups, medium shots, and even, inexplicably, *two distinctly different ceiling camera set-ups* from which the normally *establishing* long-shot of the security checkpoint is videotaped. Are we then to conclude there were two airport surveillance cameras embedded in the ceiling about six feet apart? (Click on the CourtTV site above, scroll down one-quarter of the way to “9-11 Hijackers Screened before Flight,” view the video, and watch the floor line.) The first 47 s show al-Mihdhar and Moqed in an establishing long-shot from a ceiling camera positioned about six feet to the right of the floor line (which divides the checkpoint area). Then there is a zoom-in on al-Mihdhar, followed by a slow-motion pan to follow him in close-up. From 01:07 to 01:46, a slightly different establishing long-shot occurs – impossible to explain as taped from the same “closed-circuit” camera position which taped the first 47 s before the zoom-in on al-Mihdhar. In fact, if it were not for this intervening zoom-in of al-Mihdhar, the shift from the first camera’s position to this one would be perceived readily as what is known as a “jump cut.” The effect would be jarring. The only explanation is that the second establishing shot has been taped from a new camera set-up located slightly to the left of the floor line and therefore about six feet away from the original establishing shot’s camera set-up. The segment taped from the new set-up covers the second duo, the al-Hazmi brothers, as they pass through the screening.

Simultaneous with this new set-up, yet another problem has occurred: the 2 1/2-min CourtTV version, while temporally the longest Dulles video we have found, has somehow *omitted* Hanjour between the arrival of the two duos. We get only a brief glimpse of him in the 57 s What Really Happened version. Was whoever provided the Dulles video trying to hide Hanjour for some reason?

The overall difficulty in viewing these versions made available to the public is that they contain only a mere fraction of the approximately 22 min minimum of this Dulles footage. This estimate is based upon data provided

by the Commission (2004, p. 3): at 7:18 AM the first two “hijackers,” al-Mihdhar and Moqed, arrived at the security screening checkpoint, both of them setting off alarms. Then at 7:35 AM “Hani Hanjour placed two carry-on bags on the X-ray belt ... and proceeded, without alarm, through the metal detector ... [and] ... a short time later Nawaf and Salem al-Hazmi entered the same checkpoint” and, while Salem cleared with no problem, Nawaf set off all the alarms (Commission, 2004, p. 3). Assuming that someone just deleted all the videotape without any “hijackers,” what remains should still total about nine minutes of video. Significantly in this scenario, Hanjour was not accompanied by any of the others, did not set off any alarms, and had his photo ID ready, unlike one of the al-Hazmi brothers who drew added suspicion to himself because he did not have a photo ID and could not understand English (Commission, 2004, p. 3). Historically, Hanjour was one of the most traveled of the entire group, in-and-out of the US many times in the previous ten years he resided there. Conceivably he could have smoothly cleared the checkpoint in a matter of 30s or less. In any case, he would not have merited much attention for one very important reason: he was *not* Hanjour at all. Hence, the *fifth* factor challenging the integrity of the Dulles video concerns the fact that the FBI and the Commission, having access to the FBI’s photographs, would surely have noticed that the man dressed in dark slacks and dark short-sleeve shirt *does not remotely resemble Hanjour*. And yet they passed him off as Hanjour. From all the accounts we have of him, he was slightly built, thin, gaunt, and according to Levi (2002) only “just over 5 ft tall.”

Examine this photograph of “Hanjour” taken from the Dulles video, available at <http://cooperativeresearch.org/entity.jsp?id=1521846767-425>, and compare it to the familiar photographs of him taken by both the FBI and the ATM machine on September 5, 2001, just six days before 9-11, available at http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/hijackers_fit_77.html. Note especially the more recent ATM photo of a rather gaunt Hanjour, with receding hairline, and loving-cup ears, none of which are present in the Dulles video’s darkly dressed man of medium, more muscular build who has a full head of hair, no receding hairline, and the one visible ear pinned against the side of his head. Remember too that dark clothes tend to make one look *thinner*. Thus the discrepancy is striking: it is not Hanjour at all in the photo from the Dulles video. Could someone have mixed up the photographs? But the man in black who shows up for a whopping 8s of the 57s of the What Really Happened version, and inexplicably not at all in any other version we have seen, is the man in the

photo at the cooperative research website. Confirmation that this heavier set, taller, darkly dressed man was passed off as Hanjour is at the *China Daily* site:

Moments after Hanjour passed alone through the security checkpoint, wearing dark slacks and short-sleeved shirt, the final two hijackers, the al-Hazmi brothers, walked through ...⁴

It was not possible for Hani Hanjour to transform himself from gaunt, wiry build and receding hairline in the ATM photograph taken on September 5, 2001 to a more muscular build, with full, almost chubby face and a full head of black hair six days later in the Dulles video. Having lived in the US the previous 10 years, Hanjour's records and photographs would have been no problem for the FBI to acquire and pass on to the Commission, and certainly the two groups could not have missed the difference between the real Hanjour and this completely different impostor. With three years to familiarize themselves with the appearance of Hanjour and other "hijackers," how could the FBI and 9-11 Commission have allowed that man to pass for Hanjour in the Dulles Airport video?

The government's case that the "hijackers" were agents of bin Laden's al-Qaeda had as its best evidence the Dulles video purportedly showing them preparing to board the plane which crashed into the Pentagon. All five of our problems with the evidence combine to undermine the Dulles video's authenticity and corroborate its forgery. It is the flimsiest evidence upon which the entire weight of the official story collapses. No airport security video has appeared for the other flights. Therefore, no evidence exists that any of the "hijackers" ever boarded planes that crashed on 9-11.

2.2. *The bin Laden "Confession" Video Forgery*

The major proof the Bush administration touted to incriminate bin Laden, the hijackers, and al-Qaeda, the so-called bin Laden "confession" video, should have become a major embarrassment for Bush. In this "smoking gun" video, which aired December 20, 2001,⁵ bin Laden praises five great martyrs who were alive after 9-11. However, inaccuracies and distortions of White House and Pentagon translations from the Arabic went unreported in the American press. Saudi experts and German investigators alike have found these translations "manipulative" in misleading the American people.⁶ Correctly translated, the bin Laden video, far from providing proof to support the official story, actually discredits itself and the official

story. Whereas only *one* hijacker is named in the White House translation, and only *three* in the Pentagon version, Ali al-Ahmed, director of the Saudi Institute, accurately translates bin Laden identifying *nine* of the suspected hijackers: Mohamed Atta, Nawaf al-Hazmi, Salem al-Hazmi, “four from the al-Ghamdi tribe,” and “two others, both named al-Shehri” (Ensor, 2001). Of these nine, *five* turned up alive. But the US government’s showcasing of the bin Laden video as proof of his self-confessed guilt would only have boomeranged had the correct translation become known to a receptive American media who in turn reported it to the American people. Bin Laden erroneously praising uninvolved men makes no sense. At the expense of embarrassing himself, bin Laden would also be proliferating propaganda in support of the US war effort. Most likely US intelligence moles created this video forgery for that reason. Abnormalities in the video prevent us from determining when or where it was taped, and chances are good that the soundtrack was tampered with and therefore fabricated. Who has the kind of sophisticated technical assets to pull off such an operation? *Qui bono?* Who benefited from this “confessional” video precisely because they knew that the correct translation of names of men who were alive and uninvolved in the attacks would be withheld from the American public? Sadly, four years later, the vast majority of Americans still do not know. If the real bin Laden had masterminded 9-11, he certainly would have known not to name *those* names. An illogical and un-self-serving absurdity, this “confession” video chock-full of abnormalities and practically screaming forgery only makes sense when we notice the “bin Laden” in it is a double, and just one of many doubles who functioned in a covert US intelligence operation.

2.3. Atta Senior Drops out of Venice Video onto FBI Cutting Room Floor

A pharmacist at the Venice, Florida, Barclay Pharmacy recognized hijacking ringleader Atta’s father being interviewed on a post-9-11 broadcast, and phoned the FBI to let them know he had been there two weeks before 9-11. The FBI picked up the pharmacy’s security video and later returned it. Contacted by the pharmacist, local independent investigator David Hopsicker (2005a) meticulously examined the videotape and found the splices where the FBI had edited Atta Senior out of the tape for the afternoon of August 28, 2001, effectively erasing the evidence. The FBI has not breathed a word about Atta Senior’s short-lived film debut in Florida. Confirmation that this FBI suppression of Atta’s father’s visit reveals a cover-up comes

from the fact that, after seeing Atta Senior on television shortly after 9-11, according to Hopsicker “a number of credible witnesses called the Sarasota office of the FBI to report they had seen Atta’s father in Venice with his son ten days to two weeks before the attack.” This is proof that the closed-circuit videotape provided to the FBI as evidence of Atta Senior’s presence in Venice two weeks pre-9-11 had its evidence excised. Combine this proof with further local Venice eyewitness accounts that the FBI showed up in Venice, just hours after the attacks, and that the FBI then neglected to inform the 9-11 Commission either about the fact they knew of Atta and company’s prolonged presence there before 9-11, or about Mohamed Atta Senior’s visit to the US and his stay in Venice, and what we have is corroborating evidence that the FBI not only lied but has also engaged in a massive cover-up.

In the visit to the pharmacy, Atta’s father was accompanied by his son and Marwan al-Shehhi. The pharmacist told Hopsicker (2005a) that Atta Senior had been there to send a fax “to a number in New Jersey.” Not only do these disclosures discredit the FBI’s official story of Atta’s timeline and activities as a story riddled with discrepancies, but they also reveal that the FBI erased and effectively confiscated other information that would show Atta had ties to numerous close non-Arab associates in Florida as well as meetings with visitors from abroad during the final weeks of preparations for the attacks.

Atta’s father was not the innocently concerned father we saw in interviews after 9-11 denying his son had ever been to the United States or participated in the attacks. In retrospect, Atta Senior is also not the man he pretends to be, and his statement that his son phoned him the day after the attacks, as evidence his son was still alive, cannot be trusted.

3. PROBLEMS WITH THE FBI’S LIST OF 19 AND FBI FLIGHT MANIFEST CHANGES

3.1. The FBI’s Flawed Final List: 11 Errors out of 19

Four years later, after at least ten named on the FBI’s final list of 19 have been verified to be alive, with proof that at least one other, Ziad Jarrah, had his identity doubled and therefore fabricated, the FBI has nevertheless refused to make the necessary corrections to exonerate those falsely accused.

Here is the list of those 11, with citations and endnotes to their documented sources:

- (1) Waleed al-Shehri (Petherick, 2001)
- (2) Wail al-Shehri⁷
- (3) Mohand al-Shehri (Petherick, 2001)
- (4) Abdulrahman al-Omari⁸
- (5) Abdul Aziz al-Omari⁹ (Harrison, 2001)¹⁰
- (6) Khalid al-Mihdhar^{11,12,13}
- (7) Salem al-Hazmi (Harrison, 2001)
- (8) Marwan al-Shehhi (*Saudi Gazette*, 9/18/01; *The Khaleej Times*, 9/20/01)
- (9) Saeed al-Ghamdi (Harrison, 2001)¹⁴
- (10) Ahmed al-Nami (Harrison, 2001)
- (11) Ziad Jarrah (Although missing and presumed dead, he is proven to have been innocent later in this chapter.)

The documents cited above reveal that many of these “stolen identities” are pilots or work for airlines. Apparently, terrorists with pilot credentials and/or pilots with terrorist experience are in short supply. Alternatively, someone from inside Saudi Airlines assisted in the acquisition of these identities. Whatever entity was the source for the 19 FBI-named hijackers, what this list shows is that someone took pains to provide either actual pilot identities or fabricated terrorist characters with certified pilot identities.

3.2. 9-11 Dropouts: Two Bukharis, Abdulrahman al-Omari, and Amer Kamfar

In an early, September 12, 2001 disclosure, CNN reported being provided with a list of 19 hijackers from the flight manifests which the FBI presumably possessed.¹⁵ This particular list of 19 is instructive for the kinds of *errors* it contains, and for the four names the FBI had quickly changed. Two of these corrections involved the deletion of Adnan and Ameer Bukhari who were called brothers in most press releases (for example, Allison, 2001).¹⁶ But in others Adnan denied Ameer was his brother (Fish, 2001).¹⁷ After deleting the two Bukhari names, could the FBI have then discovered what the real identities of the people on the plane were within 24–48 h when all evidence lay destroyed under a pile of rubble? The fact is the FBI *did* implement and hastily release changes within two days of 9-11. It seems they merely substituted two new names of post-mortem recruits who, because they were not in the US, would not immediately show up at a local FBI

office as had Adnan Bukhari, giving the lie to the FBI's list. The name of Ameer Bukhari on the original flight manifest soon presented the FBI with a very unusual and different kind of embarrassment. Although Ameer was indeed dead, he had died, strangely enough, in a small Piper Cadet collision with another Piper, on his maiden solo flight from Vero Beach Airport where he was taking lessons (Madsen, 2001). Strangely, the plane crash occurred on September 11, 2000, exactly one year to the day earlier than the Flight 11 crash to which the FBI had mistakenly named him. Ironically, the name of the flight school, which *Adnan* – no relation to Ameer – Bukhari then subsequently attended, in an apparently remarkable coincidence, was Flight Safety Academy. Also coincidental was the fact that Flight Safety had a business arrangement with Embry Riddle, another flight school attended by alleged 9-11 hijackers, and a school which shared Flight Safety's flight simulator (Fish, 2001).

Levi (2002) presents proof that from the very beginning US authorities, especially the FBI, engaged in lies and the fabrication of evidence against 9-11 hijacker suspects. By its own account, the FBI initiated its investigation by searching American Airlines' and United Airlines' flight manifests for the names of possible suspects.¹⁸ Next, the FBI found where these suspects lived and traced their movements before 9-11. Levi supplies us with a list of five suspects the FBI says it allegedly chose from the manifests and investigated immediately after the attack: "Mohamed Atta, Adnan Bukhari,¹⁹ Ameer Bukhari, Abdulrahman al-Omari, and Amer Kamfar" (Levi, 2002).

While Atta, as we shall see, was going through the motions of flight training in Venice, Florida, the other four were, as Levi points out, all Saudi Arabian pilots who lived either with or next door to one another in Vero Beach, Florida, as follows:

Abdulrahman al-Omari (and family) and Amer Kamfar lived at the same address.²⁰

Adnan Bukhari (and family) lived next door to al-Omari.

Ameer Bukhari was listed under the same address as Adnan. (Levi, 2002)

Up to this point, Levi's argument that the FBI has fabricated evidence is solid. He next speculates that the FBI must have felt dismay when it turned out that four of the five people on the Flight 11 manifest were using the names and identities of the above named individuals. This speculation assumes: (1) that there were hijackers who used the stolen identities of the Bukharis and company; (2) that the FBI did not fabricate the names as those of hijackers; and (3) that there were hijackers on these planes.

From the assumption Levi makes that, because four of the five “hijackers” on Flight 11 turned up alive, then other hijackers must have been “actually using these IDs” in their stead, he jumps to another assumption that “this poses a problem for our investigators – proving who was actually using these IDs...” and the additional problem of determining just “why ... they have to steal so many IDs from pilots.” But then Levi poses another question which, we believe, solves the problem. They had to get pilot IDs in order to “create the illusion that the hijackers flew the planes into the buildings” (Levi, 2002). We continue his questioning: Why did “they” have to create the illusion hijackers flew the planes into buildings? The answer is fivefold: (1) to implicate an outside, foreign, Arab source and, more specifically, to set up al-Qaeda as overall patsy. Conveniently for the US war machine, al-Qaeda lacks a specific national identity, a fact which makes it necessary for the US military to hunt them down in multiple countries: Afghanistan, Iraq ... ; (2) to give the perpetrators a decidedly fanatic, fundamentalist Islamic “face,” captured so well in Atta’s “death-mask” photograph, and thereby convince us that this enemy had the necessary religious extremism to martyr themselves as the hijacker/“suicide bombers” the official story needed as cover story; (3) to act as a red-herring used to divert attention away from government insider moles, the only perpetrators capable of carrying out an attack using multiple war games as a crucial part of its strategy; (4) to divert attention away from the use of computer technology and Global Hawk by which piloting of the planes could have been overtaken from a remote location, for example the military command bunker that the Vice President occupied;²¹ and (5) with the construction of hijackers flying planes in suicide missions as the agency that brought down the WTC twin towers, to divert attention from the actual agency of the towers’ destruction: pre-planted, controlled demolition explosives.

Because so many of the details about the 9-11 hijacker patsies are hearsay evidence or disinformation spread by the FBI, they must be sifted through and ignored. In the list of 19 hijackers the FBI took from the flight manifests, most of the identities offered are frauds, composites, or myths. A good example is the Flight 11 manifest from which the FBI allegedly named five hijackers, only one of which – the so-called ringleader Mohamed Atta – remained in its final version. The FBI just deleted Adnan Bukhari, Ameer Bukhari, Abdulrahman al-Omari, and Amer Kamfar from their initial list when those individuals began showing up alive and simply substituted new names. With the exception of Atta, the only constant in its two

lists, the FBI changed all the rest of its first list of names aboard Flight 11, and its manifest evolved as follows:

- (1) Adnan Bukhari replaced by Waleed al-Shehri;
- (2) Ameer Bukhari replaced by Wail al-Shehri;
- (3) Abdulrahman al-Omari replaced by Abdul Aziz al-Omari; and
- (4) Amer Kamfar replaced by Satam al-Suqami.

This “new and improved” second (and final) FBI list, however, failed as well since all except Satam al-Suqami have turned up alive. Such revelations pretty much discredit the FBI’s method of rounding up and investigating hijacker suspects.

Cognizant of these obstacles, this analysis focuses both on evidence of hijacker handlers – the government moles and controllers of the cover story – and on evidence that shows tampering, fabrication, the use of doubles, and other methods indicative of a covert intelligence operation.

The identities of the alleged “muscle” needed to put over the idea that the planes’ other passengers could be contained can be thought of as place holders, easily substituted for, as we have seen four have been, by other equally fraudulent identities about whom very little is known, except that many of them are still alive. Out of the first flight, Atta’s legend – an essential ingredient of which is the famous photograph of his death-like stare – was too important for him to be expendable.

Levi (2002) observes that all four “drop-outs” acted rather guiltily, either fleeing in a hurry just two weeks before 9-11, as al-Omari²² and Kamfar (Fish, 2001), or sending the family to Saudi Arabia, as Adnan Bukhari (Allison, 2001). Ameer Bukhari, of course, did not have to flee, being already deceased. The timing of the others’ fleeing behavior seems to indicate foreknowledge of the attacks to come in just two weeks. These abrupt departures, Levi (2002) says, “enhance the official story” and “appear to be more than a coincidence in light of the fact that all their names were on the manifests.” However, the fact that the FBI interrogated Adnan Bukhari under a polygraph and were satisfied that he was not an accomplice, and also deleted al-Omari and Kamfar from their suspect lists, would indicate that none of the four were guilty of aiding in the alleged hijacking. So rather than “enhance” the original story, the guilty appearance of their abrupt departure is anomalous behavior since they were not in fact guilty. Or were they?

The explanation for the hasty departures, according to CNN, comes from the fact that Saudi Airlines was “eliminating flight engineers from its three-member crews.” The program which “sent flight engineers to Florida for

pilot training ... ended ... suggesting ... why some have recently left the Vero Beach area” (Fish, 2001). Whoever was in charge of *timing* the 9-11 attacks had been “carefully observing the movements of these men and knew they were heading home just before Sept. 11th” (Levi, 2002). If the hijacker handlers also had influence inside Saudi Airlines’ corporate office, then it would explain how and when certain employees in Florida were picked to be recalled to Saudi Arabia, and the *coincidence* of their sudden departures would be, alas, no coincidence. The part of the plot where the unwitting patsy hijackers, who we have shown were not on the planes, have somehow to be liquidated is also taken care of without bloodshed or loss of life, through job cutbacks or employee recall program.

3.3. FBI Replaces Two Bukharis with Atta and al-Omari: Two Abandoned Rental Cars

The two Bukharis chapter of the official 9-11 myth is instructive for an additional reason. The press reported they rented a Nissan Altima at Boston’s Logan Airport, drove it to Portland, Maine, the day before 9-11, and just abandoned it at the Portland Jetport on the morning of the attacks when they took the connecting flight back to Boston, there to board Flight 11 into history books.²³ Strike the word “history,” however, and write in “unexplained mystery,” because, due to the problems the FBI had with one Bukhari having been dead for a year and the other turning up alive on its doorstep, the FBI had to perform a quick switcheroo. Now, it is uniformly reported that Atta and Abdul Aziz al-Omari rented the Nissan Altima at Boston Logan, drove to Portland, left the Nissan there, and took the connecting flight back to Boston. Add to this latter inexplicable mystery the fact that *another* car rented allegedly by Atta, a White Mitsubishi, was abandoned at Boston Logan. When their destination was Boston, why would Atta and al-Omari rent one car in Boston and leave it at the Boston airport, then rent another car in Boston and leave it at the Portland, Maine, airport, and take a flight back to Boston? The whole story makes no sense. From the point of view of the alleged Arab perpetrators, why would they go out of their way to rely on a connecting flight into Boston in the first place when they risked the danger of missing their connection? What this story does suggest, however, is that just as the story about the two Bukharis renting the Nissan was found to be an impossibility – one of them being dead – and as such a fabrication by the FBI, so also was the substitute story of Atta and al-Omari a fabrication and a myth.

While the White Mitsubishi left at Logan contained very little evidence, it is interesting to note that the handlers had doubtlessly preferred the association of the Nissan Altima left in Maine with Atta and al-Omari because it was chock-full of incriminating goodies to ensure there'd be enough convincing evidence. Actually, the evidence was too plentiful and obvious not to have been planted.²⁴ As also was the evidence found in Atta's luggage, which conveniently missed the connecting flight and was left in the airport to be found by the authorities. In Atta's two bags were: a copy of the Koran, Boeing flight simulator manuals, a religious cassette, a note to other hijackers regarding mental preparation, Atta's personal Will, a passport, and an international driver's license.²⁵ If Atta knew he was going to hijack and crash Flight 11, and everything would be burnt to a crisp, why would he pack, among other things, his Will? This is yet another point the 9-11 Commission failed to address (Griffin, 2005).

Such fabrications were very fortuitous: the leaving behind of Atta's Nissan Altima rental and Atta's luggage both replete with just the right kind of evidence to yield an image of Atta as a meticulously prepared, well-organized, religiously focused terrorist leader, the kind of image desired by those who wrote the cover story. In the same vein, the flight attendant's phone call that the FBI Affidavit also lists conveniently makes reference to the hijackers' specific seat numbers, which was probably a fabrication as well.

3.4. FAA Cover-Up of Adnan Bukhari to the FBI's Rescue

Having familiarized ourselves with this account of the Bukharis and company, we would think that the FBI, acting alone, tried to cover-up an embarrassing episode of stolen identity. But as we have shown, the FBI did not have time to discover that an identity had been stolen or by whom. Then we would have written off the Bukharis as just more unwitting patsies. There is, however, yet another twist to this story thanks to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employee who was fired for his alert efforts. On September 13, 2001, James P. Hopkins, an International Aviation Operations Specialist with the FAA in Washington, DC, searched the FAA database for the name Adnan Bukhari and found a match (Levi, 2002). A Saudi Arabian national, Adnan Bukhari had trained in Aviation Security for the FAA in Oklahoma. Now why would a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight engineer, who later turns up training to fly just before 9-11, have had

training in Aviation Security for the FAA? And how did he come to be on the FBI's original list of 19 hijackers? Hopkins' FAA supervisors reprimanded him and then fired him for his detective work. Hopkins took his case to the US Office of Special Counsel (OSC) (2001), which had him reinstated in his job.²⁶ This case not only illustrates the sensitivity of this Bukhari identity, whether he was to be used as a would-be hijacker or not by the hijacker handlers, but also shows that the FAA was, like the FBI, *in* on the cover-up. Ultimately, Hopkins had risked his job – his life with the FAA will probably never be the same – only to find that Adnan Bukhari was cleared of any wrongdoing by the FBI.

Believers in the official story will say that, whoever the hijackers were, they stole the Bukharis' identities. This answer begs the question why they chose to steal the identities of two men who just so happened to have recent pilot training at the same flight school, albeit one of them very briefly, and the other with a suspicious background in FAA Aviation Security. We might also ask why anyone allegedly competent enough to hijack and maneuver a Boeing 757 by the seat of his pants would need the identity of two novice "flight students" to accomplish his cover? The choice of the Bukhari identities only makes sense if we throw out the official story and posit the agency of handlers or controllers who did not need pilots but only the identities of pilots, if only trainees, who were also Arabs – moreover ones associated with Saudi Airlines – for their cover story of Arabs hijacking planes on 9-11 to work. Most of the "hijackers" were then easily monitored patsies, unwitting flight students used for their identities and later discarded, moved into and out of the US in an arrangement between a highly placed US government mole and Saudi Airlines, for the most part. But Adnan Bukhari, with his background in Aviation Security at the FAA and with the FAA's demonstrated sensitivity to keeping his connection with them unknown, seems to be much more than an unwitting flight student or patsy. Like Atta, he could have been a double agent until his cover was blown, or one of the hijacker handlers imbedded in the flight student community of sleepy suburban Vero Beach, Florida.

The more of these names that could be established as pilots, the better for the controllers, however, should last minute drop outs or other unforeseen problems occur with their primary choices for pilots. For, training these Arabs how to fly even Pipers or Cessnas, many of whom had poor English language skills and lacked a driver's license, was a major feat, problematic for some, seemingly impossible for others.

4. COULD HIJACKERS PILOT AND TERRORIST MASTERMINDS COORDINATE 9-11 ATTACKS?

4.1. *Could ‘Hijackers’ Fly Boeing 757s and 767s into the WTC and Pentagon?*

Before assuming that Atta and company boarded the respective Boeing 757 and 767 airliners on 9-11, for which there is no credible evidence, we would also have to assume that these men were psychologically motivated enough, fanatically fundamentalist Muslims with a deep desire to martyr themselves for their religion. A close look at the characters of two of the alleged hijacker pilots, Ziad Jarrah and Mohamed Atta, has found their lifestyles betray quite the contrary.

Setting all speculation and accounts of these hijackers’ deficiencies aside, and focusing solely upon the question of whether it was physically possible for these men to crash Boeing airliners into the 9-11 targets, it is the consensus of professional airline and military jet pilots that they could not have piloted them with the degree of competence necessary to do so. Most of the respondents added that the hijackers needed much more than the practice only some of them had flying Cessnas, Pipers, and Lear jets; they would have needed a substantial amount of practice flying Boeing 757s and 767s, and not just on flight simulators, to be able to fly them with any kind of accuracy (Tarpley, 2005, pp. 192–193). Two veteran Boeing German pilots said that “neither a real professional flight simulator, nor flight simulation software on a PC ... could ever suffice to impart the skills demonstrated by the supposed 9-11 suicide pilots” (ibid., p. 190). An airline pilot who owns an airline, Nikki Lauda emphasized:

You have to know exactly what the turning radius of a plane like that is ... these had to be fully trained 767 or 757 pilots, because otherwise they would have missed ... Certainly some half-trained pilot ... will not hit it ... coming out of a curve... he has to know precisely the turning radius that derives from the speed of the plane. (Tarpley, 2005, p. 191)

A 35-year veteran Pan Am and United jetliner pilot, Russ Wittenberg claimed that the Boeing airliners could not have performed the high-speed maneuvers the government said they did, *no matter who flew them* (Szymanski, 2005). Wittenberg convincingly argued it was not possible for Flight 77 to have “descended 7,000 feet in two minutes, all the while performing a steep 270 degree banked turn before crashing into the Pentagon’s first floor wall without touching the lawn” (Szymanski, 2005). According to Wittenberg, no amount of experience flying commercial jetliners could have

helped to accomplish such a high-speed maneuver without stalling the Boeing and sending it into a nosedive. Moreover, Wittenberg responded to a blatant inconsistency in the government's story of Flight 77 related by a flight controller on ABC's "20/20" television program airing in April 2005:

Remember the transponder was turned off on Flight 77 and when this occurs, all the particular flight data like air speed and even the plane's flight identification goes with it. All that's left on the controller's screen is a green blip ... But here you have this flight controller on 20/20 saying she was tracking the flight with specific air speed and other coordinates which was totally impossible once the transponder was turned off. How would she even have known the flight number? (Szymanski, 2005)

4.2. Could Arab Masterminds have Coordinated the 9-11 Attacks with War Games?

Four Arrows (2006) deals with the question of the 9-11 attacks taking place on a day of at least five different sets of war games. Superficially, it would seem that hijackers and their masterminds could not have pulled off the 9-11 attacks because they could not have arranged to synchronize them with so many different military exercises. However, because this question demands an in-depth scientific understanding of both the aeronautic and computer technologies involved and the codes terrorists would have had to break, steal, or be given to coordinate their flights on 9-11, we leave it to more scientifically sophisticated minds to answer.

Considering the depth and widespread reach of the US intelligence community, the most plausible answer is the one that accounts for the vast resources it would have taken not only to plan and execute the attacks but also to maintain the cover-up and to foil investigation with a paralyzing atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

We only note here the significance of the Amalgam Virgo drills in the context of the 9-11 hijackings which they so closely paralleled. Amalgam Virgo *simulated* the 9-11 attacks even as the attacks took place. Thus, they relate to a discussion of the CIA's use of the "double" in covert intelligence operations. Just as human doubles were used both to confuse investigators and to perform actions which hijacker-patsies could not perform, so also Amalgam Virgo consisted not only of military planes (Boeings resembling passenger airliners) or false radar blips used as decoys for the "hijacked" Boeings, but also of an entire drill exercise which doubled the 9-11 attacks. In other words a mole in the military who had already designed the 9-11 attacks could also have designed the military drill that simulated the

designed attacks and thereby caused major confusion in our military air defense response system. Recall Tarpley's reference to this drill: "preparations for carrying out 9-11 were conducted under the cover of being preparations for Amalgam Virgo. Most of those who took part in Amalgam Virgo could hardly have been aware of this duplicity" (Tarpley, 2005, p. 205). Such a drill would have required only a couple at the top to know about it; all the rest would have been unwitting patsies.

5. THE US COVERT INTELLIGENCE USE OF DOUBLES

The subject of covert intelligence operation is, by definition, a complex one not easily accessible to scrutiny given the technologically advanced state of the art. And this technology lends itself well to the process of duplication and simulation of identities, or the creation of doubles, which play a crucial role in covert intelligence operations. Attention to the timelines of the locations and movements of hijackers reveals their role in 9-11 is not simply a question of stolen identity, but more importantly of the doubles at work. For example, neighbors at the Parkwood Apartments witnessed that Hanjour, al-Hazmi, and al-Mihdhar all remained in San Diego through the month of August up to September 8, 2001. However, these eyewitness accounts are contradicted by other August sightings of them on the opposite coast, obtaining drivers licenses in Falls Church, Virginia, crossing back to Las Vegas, returning across country to Baltimore, and then spending ten days in Newark. How could they be holed up in San Diego while simultaneously crisscrossing the US for the whole month preceding the attacks? Short answer: doubles. The role of doubles sheds significant explanatory light on an entire covert operation of 911, which, without the discovery of their existence, would be an impossible riddle. As Tarpley's model of moles and patsies demonstrates, doubles not only explain the apparently impossible, they are extremely useful in standard covert intelligence practice: "If there is something the terrorist controllers need a patsy to do, but which the patsy is unwilling or incapable of accomplishing, then a double will step in to see that the necessary action is indeed carried out" (Tarpley, 2005, p. 197). He cites the Lee Harvey Oswald doubles whose several appearances in 1963 made it seem like Oswald was in two places at once. If there were a "Lee Harvey Oswald Award" for 9-11, it would certainly go to Ziad Jarrah (and his double[s]).

5.1. The Use of Doubles to Frame Ziad Jarrah (and Implicate al-Qaeda)

On January 30, 2001, a four-hour interrogation of Ziad Jarrah transpired in the Dubai, Emirates airport, known CIA intercept point, which Jarrah simply walked into. During the interrogation, *this* Ziad Jarrah said that he had spent “the previous two months and five days” in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where bin Laden was known to have his al-Qaeda terrorist training base, and that he was returning to Florida (*Chicago Tribune*, 12/13/01). But he did not. After his release, according to CNN’s MacVicar and Faraj (2002), “Jarrah boarded a KLM flight in the early hours of January 31 and flew to Europe.” Someone must have inputted “national security override” into US government computers next to his name for, in the next seven months before 9-11, at least one of the two Jarrahs would travel to the US, Lebanon, Germany, and back to the US, without so much as metaphorically raising an intelligence agency eyebrow.

After 9-11, investigators confirmed that “Jarrah had spent at least three weeks in January 2001 at an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan” (MacVicar & Faraj, 2002). However, this itinerary must belong to Ziad Jarrah of Lebanon’s *double* because, according to Arne Kruithof’s Florida Flight Training Center, Jarrah of Lebanon had been a student there continuously for the previous six months and because the flight school later confirmed he was there in Venice, Florida, until January 15, 2001 (Thompson, 2004, p. 192). With the flight school’s confirmation, we already know that Jarrah of Lebanon could not have been the Jarrah at the al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. But the testimony of Ziad’s family that he arrived in Lebanon on January 26th to be with his father who had just undergone open-heart surgery, and that he visited him in the hospital every day until after January 30th (Longman, 2002, pp. 101–102), corroborates Ziad’s whereabouts and eliminates the possibility of his presence in Dubai en route from Afghanistan.

So it had to be Ziad Jarrah of Lebanon’s double, a covert intelligence operative, who just waltzed into the known CIA intercept, as if the whole episode had been scripted in advance. Emirates and European intelligence sources confirmed the following to CNN:

The questioning of Jarrah fits a pattern of a CIA operation begun in 1999 to track suspected al-Qaeda operatives who were traveling through the United Arab Emirates. These sources told CNN that UAE officials were often told in advance by US officials which persons were coming through the country and whom they wanted questioned. One source provided CNN a drawing of the Dubai airport and described how people wanted for questioning were intercepted, most often at a transit desk. US officials declined to comment on whether the CIA operated this way at the Dubai airport. (MacVicar & Faraj, 2002)

Keeping in mind the purpose and historical role of the double in covert intelligence agency operations, the use of this particularly well-prepared double – who not only supplied documentation but also somewhat resembled Jarrah of Lebanon – smacks of a well-orchestrated setup geared to call attention to this incident as one that would later incriminate not only the real Ziad Jarrah, an unwitting patsy, but through him all of the 19 “hijackers,” as terrorist agents of al-Qaeda. Through the double, covert operative Jarrah’s sojourn and three-month stay in al-Qaeda stronghold Afghanistan, he became the desired link that moles inside the US government need to pin the 9-11 rap on al-Qaeda. Another piece of evidence that should have cast suspicion on this Jarrah double is that he carried a valid US multiple-entry visa in his passport, a fragment of which, according to [MacVicar and Faraj \(2002\)](#), turned up in the Flight 93 debris field. This fragment of evidence, its identification by UAE officials in Dubai as belonging to the multiple-entry visa they inspected there, combined with the fact that the person carrying this visa and passport could not have been the real Ziad Jarrah from Lebanon because he was in Florida and Lebanon while his double was showing up in Afghanistan and Dubai, UAE, effectively clears the accused Ziad Jarrah of Lebanon of involvement in the 9-11 attacks and the US government’s charges against him.

The role the CIA played in the Dubai airport subterfuge was to alert authorities there in advance to watch for Ziad Jarrah and to interrogate him for them, a fact which, according to [MacVicar and Faraj \(2002\)](#), the CIA then later vigorously denied. This CIA denial combined with their claim that they never had any knowledge of Ziad Jarrah before 9-11, and that they therefore had no reason to put him on a terrorist watch list are all contradicted by this careful testimony of a UAE official who, for obvious reasons, wished to remain anonymous:

Jarrah, who with Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, is considered one of the hijacking plot’s three main instigators, was detained ... because his name previously had been placed on an Emirati “watch list” of terrorist suspects at the request of the US. ... “The Americans told us that he was a supporter of terrorist organizations, that he had connections with terrorist organizations,” the source said. “His name was given to us as someone to check. The US said he should be questioned. He was questioned at the request of the US.”

During questioning by Emiratis, Jarrah, 26, divulged that he had spent the previous “two months and five days” in Pakistan and Afghanistan – the only acknowledgment of an Afghan visit by any of the hijackers – and that he was returning to Florida, where he had been living and taking flying lessons for more than six months. “He had a visa to the US, so he was allowed to proceed,” the source said. ([Crewdson, 2001](#))

5.2. The Debut of a Ziad Jarrah Double, 1995, in Brooklyn, New York

Ziad Jarrah's double's controllers probably could not have anticipated the real Jarrah of Lebanon's father's open-heart surgery or that someone in management at the flight school he attended would supply the exact dates of his presence there, especially after Jeb Bush had shown up at 2:00 AM on the morning after 9-11 to personally supervise the massive confiscation of police station and flight school records by the FBI as they were loaded, file cabinets and all, into Ryder rental trucks and then onto a C130 transport to be flown to ... the Bermuda triangle for all we know. But since the controllers had apparently picked the wrong time for Jarrah's double to visit bin Laden's al-Qaeda camp and incriminate his namesake, the plan did not entirely work and documentation of the existence of Jarrah's double has been possible. Moreover, it is not unprecedented. The "debut" of a Ziad Jarrah double, possibly a different one, occurred in Brooklyn, New York, a performance which lasted from March 1995 through February 1996, at which time Jarrah of Lebanon was in Lebanon finishing his Catholic high school education in Beirut while in frequent contact with his family and friends (*Los Angeles Times*, 10/23/01). One month after this period in which his look-alike by the same name is living under a lease in New York, in April 1996, the real Jarrah of Lebanon leaves Lebanon for the first time to attend a technical institute in Hamburg, Germany (*Boston Globe*, 9/25/01). The New York lease and the landlord's identification of Jarrah's 9-11 hijacking photograph in the news as his former tenant provide incontrovertible proof of the existence of a Ziad Jarrah double. The fact that the apartment lease was signed and the monthly rent was paid for not by "Ziad Jarrah," but by a man named Ihassan Jarrah who lived with Ziad, also casts suspicion on this double who may have been reluctant to have his signature cross checked in the future. Equipped with camera, this Ziad told his landlords he was a photographer, disappeared periodically for days, and sometimes arrived with a prostitute. Some of the neighbors had their suspicions at the time. The owner's son, who lived in a basement apartment there, remembered joking with his brother that the Jarrahs were "terrorists" (Thompson, 2004, p. 183).

*5.3. Photographic Evidence of Two Ziad Jarrahs Ignored
by 9-11 Commission*

Of the Jarrah photographs released through the media, a recent Lebanese document with a circular ink stamp on the upper left is an especially clear

photo representative of all but one other photograph: the passport photo – one-third burnt away – that was recovered from the wreckage of Flight 93. That passport photo shows marked differences from the rest: the nose and cheeks are full with higher, well-defined cheekbones, and the hair is wavy. All of these characteristics are missing in the Lebanese document as in all of the other recent photos including one taken at the Florida flight school, a two-shot with his fiancé, Senguen, who was visiting from Germany at the time.²⁷ They are at one of the school's computer terminals, and have turned to face the camera. Both of them are at ease and look very relaxed together, smiling very genuinely and in an unforced manner. This photograph had to have been taken between February 1st and September 2001. Contrast this description of Ziad Jarrah with the portrait the 9-11 Commission paints of him:

... his visits to Senguen became less and less frequent. He began criticizing her for not being religious enough and for dressing too provocatively. He grew a full beard and started praying regularly. He refused to introduce her to his Hamburg friends ... religious Muslims and her refusal to become more observant embarrassed him. At some point in 1999, Jarrah told Senguen that he was planning to wage a jihad ... (9/11 Commission, 2004, p. 163)

Viewing the photograph described above, we ask: Is this the face of a man uncomfortable with and embarrassed by the woman next to him because her short sleeve blouse and uncovered flowing hair demonstrate a refusal to be more observant of fundamentalist Islamic precepts? Our answer: Who wrote this propaganda for the Commission?

Another factor which calls the authenticity of the paper passport photo of Jarrah into question is its almost miraculous survival after the black box was never found and most of the Flight 93 wreckage was reduced to ashes or blown to metal bits in a debris field strewn over eight miles. It seems likely this passport photograph was planted, and no credible evidence exists that any of these hijackers boarded Flight 93. While the Jarrah family has been eager to give DNA samples, none have been taken, and only the deceased of non-hijackers have been verified through their DNA. No DNA samples are needed for two of the other three hijackers allegedly on Flight 93: al-Nami and Saeed al-Ghamdi have both been confirmed alive. While 10 of 19 have turned up alive, the Ziad Jarrah case goes against the grain because, while it contains the best evidence of at least one double who went by the same name, neither the one who was stopped in Dubai en route from Afghanistan nor the one who had rented an apartment in Brooklyn has shown up alive to claim that his passport was stolen. All the best evidence shows the accused Jarrah was framed by his double, and he no doubt had to be liquidated for

the cover story to hold. The 9-11 Commission (2004) appears to be complicit in this framing of Jarrah, albeit after-the-fact, since they never even consider the documented existence of Ziad Jarrah's double in their report. Providing neither proof nor evidence of Jarrah's guilt, their report just assumes his guilt-by-association with statements like, "In Hamburg ... he apparently never resided *with his future co-conspirators*. It is not clear how and when he became *part of Atta's circle*" (9-11 Commission, 2004, p. 163).

6. EVIDENCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY OVERRIDES AND "PROTECTED" ACTIVITIES: AL-HAZMI AND AL-MIHDHAR

In one of the most significant omissions in 9-11 hijacker history, the [Congressional Intelligence Committee \(9/20/02\)](#) neglected to mention that both Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar lived in San Diego with a tested FBI undercover asset named Abdussattar Shaikh from September until December 2000. Instead, their report stated, "official records have al-Mihdhar leaving the US on June 10, 2000, and not returning until July 4, 2001" ([Congressional Intelligence Committee, 9/20/02](#)), which contradicts all previous media reports, accounts from neighbors, and quotes from Abdussattar Shaikh himself (*Los Angeles Times*, 9/27/01; *The Wall Street Journal*, 9/17/01; *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 9/16/01; *Newsweek*, 9/9/02). Similarly, despite all the eyewitness testimony, which never made it onto the report, the Committee was unwilling to admit Hanjour was even in the US in the year 2000 before December because his immigration records did not so indicate (*ibid*). Contradictions and omissions such as these demonstrate that the Congressional investigation, rather than uncovering the truth, served to obscure it. As Paul Thompson points out, the Committee report on "who knew what and when about al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar resembles more a whitewash than a true investigation. The FBI, CIA and others are taken at their word, even though they are known to have lied" ([Thompson, 2003](#)). A good example of this is the way in which the Dulles Airport surveillance videotape, submitted by the FBI as evidence, has been taken to be authentic by the 9-11 Commission, while it so obviously lacks any verifiable sign of authentication and has so many other flaws that point to its forgery. Yet many who view it probably think the FBI or CIA would not forge evidence in such an obvious fashion, nor would the Commission accept it as evidence if it were so obvious a forgery.

Who were these two alleged hijackers and what is the evidence of their contacts both with FBI (under an agent's 24-hour surveillance prior to 9-11 for a period of at least four months) and with as many as 13 of the alleged hijackers months before 9-11? Unlike the resumes of the rest of the notorious 19 which the FBI has seen fit to provide us, the backgrounds of al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar show them to have been involved in al-Qaeda-like militant activities. Both apparently participated in the Bosnian conflict and then fought in Chechnya several times between 1996 and 1998 (*Observer*, 9/23/01; CIA Director Tenet Testimony, 6/18/02; *Los Angeles Times*, 9/1/02). According to Thompson (2004), al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar were not like any of the other hijackers; they were experienced, battle-hardened militants. Failure of any of the US intelligence agencies to take them out cannot be explained by bureaucratic error or failure to share information with each other, because an exhaustive examination of the literature of news accounts and of the presentations before the Congressional Intelligence Committee reveals that any one of the intelligence agencies, unassisted by the others, had both the means and at least one opportunity each to do so. In short, the two should have been caught. They could easily have been turned in by Abdussattar Shaikh after they moved to San Diego, somehow located this undercover FBI agent, paid him rent, and moved into his house. Another earlier opportunity for their capture was reported by NSA Director Michael Hayden:

“In early 2000, at the time of the meeting in Kuala Lumpur, we had the al-Hazmi brothers, Nawaf and Salem, as well as Khalid al-Mihdhar, in our sights. We knew of their association with al-Qaeda, and we shared this information with the [intelligence] community. I've looked at this closely.” (NSA Director Congressional Testimony, 10/19/02)

According to a Congressional Inquiry report, however, the NSA did not share this information with other US intelligence agencies even though “it was in the NSA's database.” Nor did the NSA submit the names of al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar to the TIPOFF database (*Congressional Intelligence Committee*, 9/20/02; *Associated Press*, 9/26/02). From their biographical backgrounds as veteran mujahideen, much vaunted by intelligence agencies, one would think the security threat this duo posed would have forced them to act in a more surreptitious fashion. However, from the way they casually moved about in the open, one gets the impression they knew they were “protected.” Such was probably the role of reassurance their live-in landlord Abdussattar Shaikh assumed, even while as an undercover agent he provided the FBI with a means to infiltrate their very living space and keep them under surveillance 24/7.

Meanwhile, the FBI claimed it was left out of the loop by the CIA even though it was discovered later that al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar were, from September through December 2000, actually living with one of their undercover agents. al-Hazmi even confided in him concerning personal matters.

Before moving in with Abdussattar Shaikh, the two took up residence early in 2000 at San Diego's Parkwood Apartments where they were joined in February 2000 by Hanjour who lived there for at least a year (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, 9/21/01). Oddly, the Congressional Inquiry reported Hanjour was out of the US until December 2000 and, upon returning, took up residence not in San Diego but in Arizona (*Congressional Intelligence Committee*, 9/20/02). This report conflicts with eyewitnesses who saw Hanjour with al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar in May 2000. What possible purpose could this official alteration of dates serve? Meanwhile, according to several mainstream-press reported eyewitness accounts, the Parkwood Apartments were visited by Hanjour, Haznawi, al-Shehhi, Ahmed al-Ghamdi, and other Arabs who may have helped them. In federal court in 2002, a State Department official filed a sworn statement mentioning "the high number of hijackers and associates who lived, worked, and studied" in the area. Had al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar been trailed, intelligence agencies would have uncovered their contacts with the other "hijackers," which would have led to the uncovering of the entire 9-11 cell. But, from a detailed look at US intelligence agency behavior, it must be questioned if that was indeed their goal. That question becomes academic, however, when al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar moved in with an undercover FBI agent at whose residence they were visited by even more hijacker associates including – according to several eyewitness neighbors but denied by their FBI landlord – Mohamed Atta, the FBI-named ringleader:

Marna Adair said ... that the polite, clean-shaven Atta was frequently at the home of Abdussattar Shaikh between August and early December of 2000. Another neighbor, Deborah Fortner, remembered that Atta "was the one that was scary. He's got these piercing eyes. That's something you never forget about him." Atta wore Western clothes and drove a red car, neighbors said. He was often cheerful ... (*Associated Press*, 9/29/01)

An article in the *Las Vegas Review Journal* (10/26/01) referred to Atta as a "regular visitor" to the home of Abdussattar Shaikh, while Shaikh, the Congressional Inquiry, and the FBI all deny Atta visited Shaikh's residence (*Associated Press*, 9/29/01). The neighbors must have all been mistaken or delusional then.

Nevertheless, al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar should be discredited in their official story roles as viable sleeper-cell al-Qaeda terrorists because they lived with an undercover FBI informant who provided them with both housing and advice when they confided in him. On October 5, 2002, Shaikh became the key 9-11 witness nobody heard testify before the 9-11 Congressional Inquiry because the FBI, in a move that was unconstitutional, refused to produce him before Congress.

Who was Abdussattar Shaikh? Was he a double agent disguised as an FBI informant who failed to inform? Or was he in fact an undercover FBI agent whose testimony was so damaging to the official story that it was blocked by the FBI's own unconstitutional refusal to allow him to testify?

The revelation of such a strategically placed undercover FBI agent must have been an embarrassment to the entire US intelligence community. The CIA admitted they had al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar on some sort of watch list but bemoaned "losing" them. The NSA claimed to have had them "in their sights" in early 2000 at the al-Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, but failed somehow to bug the place so they missed the terrorists' detailed conversations. The FBI's tired refrain was that it was left out of the loop by the CIA. As far as al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar were concerned, with Shaikh, the FBI had effectively infiltrated their lodgings and their very lives. The FBI had claimed that it knew so little that it had to prevent Shaikh from talking to Congress about how *little* the FBI knew. At the very least, the FBI was caught lying and engaging in a cover-up. And al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar lived out in the open, like two enemy agents living under its enemy's protection, or as if their files were flagged in US government databases as having National Security overrides.

The Congressional Inquiry turned up so many instances of "intelligence failure" claims by the CIA alone that these redundant claims soon began to lack credibility, especially after the much heralded Kuala Lumpur "top-level al-Qaeda summit," the most pivotal gathering of al-Qaeda prior to 9-11 (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, 9/27/02) that took place on January 5–8, 2000. After that meeting, the CIA's claims of ignorance and intelligence failure rapidly escalated. The CIA Director later claimed that, at the time of Kuala Lumpur, he thought the meeting was only to plan an attack elsewhere in Southeast Asia (CIA Director Congressional Testimony, 10/17/02). Thus, although the CIA knew this would be a top-level meeting of all the al-Qaeda bigwigs, for surveillance it allegedly requested Malaysia's security service to perform in its stead. Thus, since CIA agents were not themselves present, photographs were taken for them of the suspected terrorists as they did their shopping or ducked into cyber cafes to email friends. Captured on videotape were some of the

attendees, including al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi (*Observer*, 10/7/01; *CNN*, 3/14/02). However, for some unaccountable reason, the meeting was not wire-tapped and the CIA failed to have the actual discussions monitored. So they said. At the Kuala Lumpur summit were the alleged masterminds of the 9-11 hijackings, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), and the logistics specialist who was slated to be the 20th hijacker, Ramzi bin al-Shibh (*Independent*, 6/6/02; *CNN*, 8/30/02). Bin al-Shibh had tried to get a visa for the US on four separate occasions and failed each time according to the official story. (Perhaps his US handlers had other plans in store for him, like being caught after 9-11 to reveal *convincing* details of the plot in Al-Jazeera interviews.) Interestingly, although the US had known KSM was a mastermind terrorist since his connection with Operation Bojinka in 1995, the Congressional Inquiry revealed that CIA Director Tenet had blocked the declassification of all information regarding KSM. Consequently, KSM's name was not even allowed to appear in the report (*Congressional Intelligence Committee*, 9/18/02; *New York Times*, 9/22/02). Also curious is the fact that, although bin al-Shibh's presence at the January 2000 summit had also been videotaped (*Newsweek*, 11/26/01), his attendance at the meeting had not been publicly disclosed until nearly two years later, in September 2002, one full year after the 9-11 attacks he had allegedly helped to orchestrate (*Los Angeles Times*, 9/1/02; *Time*, 9/15/02).

Associated with the "wanted" KSM and bin al-Shibh, the presence of al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar at the Kuala Lumpur summit plus all the more detailed and incriminating evidence the CIA had in its possession would indicate they had ties allegedly to bin Laden due to their attendance at this high-level – allegedly al-Qaeda – summit, to their use of multiple-entry visas, and to their choice of travel through a Yemeni organization considered by the CIA to be a "logistical center" for al-Qaeda. All of these significant breadcrumbs left a trail that would have required the CIA to flag al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar on their watch list, but the CIA failed even to add them to the extremely low-threshold TIPOFF database.

In the transcript of these so-called "intelligence failures" disclosed at the Congressional Inquiry, there are so many examples in which the CIA learns something crucial and then "does nothing with the information," or "fails to follow up," or again "failed to do anything about it," or "failed to act." Worse still, there were CIA cables which *routinely required that no action be taken*. For example, a March 5, 2000, CIA cable sent to CIA headquarters announcing the presence of accused hijacker al-Hazmi in the US was marked, "Action Required" followed by a space that was routinely filled in "None" (*Joint Intelligence Committee Inquiry (JICI)*, 9/20/02). Perhaps the real reason that nothing was done or there was a "failure to follow up," was

precisely because the system was generating the explicit instruction: “Action Required: None.” Why was intelligence not shared on different intelligence agencies’ databases? Was there some kind of National Security “override” in effect whenever the names of al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar were entered into the US government computer system? The instruction, “Action Required: None,” while apparently innocuous, reveals a consistent pattern that may be evidence of inside government moles.

7. MORE OVERRIDES, DEEP POLITICAL CONNECTIONS, PENTAGON SURVEILLANCE, AND FBI COVER-UP OF MOHAMED ATTA’S “PROTECTED” ACTIVITIES

7.1. More Overrides: Atta and al-Shehhi

A similar anomaly occurred on March 6, 2002 when the US Immigration and Naturalization Service sent Huffman Aviation proprietor, Rudi Dekkers, letters informing him that Atta and al-Shehhi – allegedly deceased – had met necessary requirements and were now eligible to apply for extensions of their visas to remain in the US. How had the INS made this mistake concerning perhaps the two most infamous of the 19-named hijackers? According to Tarpley, the INS mistake supports the following hypothesis, which is corroborated by other historical evidence:

[T]he names of Atta and al-Shehhi had been flagged in government computers with national security overrides, which had served to make them virtually immune from watch lists, criminal checks ... A lazy mole had evidently neglected to remove the override when the usefulness of these two patsies had come to an end, and so the posthumous visa approval forms were sent out. ... Atta’s name had been on the CIA-FBI-INS watch list for many years, since an older person with the same name bombed an Israeli bus in the occupied territories of the West Bank on October 12, 1986 (Hopsicker, 2004a, pp. 144–145). This indicates that the name was flagged with a national security override to allow him to enter the country. Atta was stopped by police for a traffic violation in Broward County, Florida on the night of April 26, 2001; he was even arrested for not having a drivers [*sic*] license. But he was soon released on bail – presumably the national security override again. (Tarpley, 2005, p. 174)

7.2. Deep Political Connections of Mohamed Atta

Mohamed Atta’s first immediately visible American hosts were Rudi Dekkers and Wallace Hilliard, owners of Huffman Aviation in Venice where

Atta's cadre trained. Like much else about this setting – foreigners who frequented the flight school, and the unexplored history of CIA presence in Venice – these two men were not at all who they pretended to be. We know their flight school business was just getting by and not a real source of money. Not the kind of money that could support an extravagant life style entailing ownership of helicopters, half-a-million dollar yachts, and much more. Nine months before the “hijackers” arrived, neither of these men had a clue how to run a flight school business. While it was never the type of business they were *in* even while they ran it, the flight school did serve as perfect cover for two off-the-shelf CIA “cut-outs.” In spy parlance, a cut-out is a party used to conceal the contact between two other parties, usually a handler and an agent, who do not want to meet because they know one or both of them could be under surveillance. Thus, the CIA could plausibly deny it was ever near Atta while, at the same time, it employed Hilliard, for example, who in turn employed Atta, and perhaps al-Shehhi, to fly his Lear jets to pick up some interesting packages in the Bahamas.

Atta's association with these nefarious members of the wealthy elite in south Florida was just the tip of the iceberg of his connections. The deeply submerged part of the berg is where we find those with the deepest pockets, powerful American political figures like David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger who, according to Hopsicker (2004a, pp. 336–337), were closely tied to a little-known private organization that ran an elite international exchange program known variously as “Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft,” CDS, or Carl Duisberg Society International. The list of CDS' elite power-broker supporters also includes Bill and Hillary Clinton (Hopsicker, 2004a, p. 337). In 1987, both Kissinger and Clinton praised CDS International's service not only for keeping close business ties between Germany and the US, but also for supporting career development programs for its participants, namely young German engineers. More recently the program was widened to include participants from *other countries* as well.

In 1992, Atta became a participant from one of these *other countries* although he was not exactly a young engineer. He had not done well enough in his studies at Cairo University to gain admission to its graduate school, and had “no particular idea where he should go,” was what he told a mysterious German couple during their visit to the Egyptian capital in the fall of 1991 (Hopsicker, 2004a, p. 338). As the story goes, the couple just happened to be introduced to Atta by friends of his father. The reason this whole setup wrecks of cover story is one crucial omission. Not one press account, some of them 1,200 words in length, ever bothered to mention who

this couple was (Hopsicker, 2004a, p. 339). What, When, Where, Why, but no Who. A mortal sin for any journalist.

Since 1992, according to Hopsicker, secret US government hosts were grooming and financially supporting Atta and other key operative patsies. From the moment Atta arrived in Hamburg, Germany, on July 24, 1992, his room and board were taken care of by the mystery couple. Three years later, he was on the payroll of the “Congress-Bundestag Program,” which, although they tried to disguise themselves, was the “exchange program” responsible for actually bringing Atta to Germany (Hopsicker, 2004a, pp. 336–339). Why would CDS International’s elite sponsors, apparently influential enough to keep their organizational name out of the media, want to keep their generous support of such an international student secret in the first place? Were they psychic? Or did they know what role Atta might play in the future because they had a hand in grooming him for it? Hopsicker noticed something else curious about reports of Atta’s time in Hamburg. Atta chose to visit home, Cairo, for three months in 1995, the very time when, coincidentally, the Egyptian government was beginning to crack down on Islamic fundamentalists. And he also chose that exact time to grow a beard, traditionally a sign of Muslim devotion. What we should now know about Atta is that the official story of his radical Islamist fundamentalism was a lie from the start, and that his non-flight-training activities since his arrival in Florida in 2000 betray the life of a playboy heavily into drinking, using cocaine (according to the testimony of his stripper girlfriend, Amanda Keller), carousing, and even eating pork. With these anti-fundamentalist-Muslim activities in mind, Hopsicker presents an insightful alternative interpretation for Atta’s actions during the 1995 secular Egyptian government’s crackdown:

A more plausible explanation might be that growing a beard and assuming an “Islamic fundamentalist” pose was the act of a man “singing for his supper,” by going undercover in behalf of people who were paying his room and board in Hamburg. (Hopsicker, 2004a, p. 340)

And, we might add, these were probably people who paid for his subsequent vacations to far-away places like Governor Jeb Bush’s “Sunshine State” of Florida. Given that the FBI, CIA, DEA, DIA, and Able Danger have never whispered a word about Atta’s presence in Venice, Florida, from early in 2000 until just a few days before September 11, 2001, it is only thanks to Hopsicker’s investigative work that we have eyewitness testimony from many of the locals – waitresses, strippers, bartenders, employees of the flight school, pharmacists, cab drivers, Yellow Cab management, and more – that Atta lived in Venice and participated in much more than flight training.

7.3. Pentagon Tracked Atta Pre-9-11; FBI Erased Atta's Traces Post-9-11

In “Was Pentagon Tracking Mohamed Atta Just Days Before 9-11 Attack?” Hopsicker (2005b) investigates whether some major part of the US government, which we call insider moles in our model, not only allowed the 9-11 attacks to happen, but orchestrated them, cleverly using Arab-looking types as patsies to pose as their cover of “flight students” who go through the motions of appearing to acquire sufficient flight training to carry out the attacks.

We now know the Pentagon assigned a crack top-secret “Able Danger” team to track al-Qaeda agents in sleeper cells in the US, and this team had begun to track Mohamed Atta and his cadre as early as the end of 1999. Add to the Pentagon’s surveillance, the even closer monitoring of Atta by off-line CIA cut-outs Dekkers and Hilliard, and Atta and company were doubly watched. But there was another agent, albeit a temporary one, who trumped the CIA cut-outs because, as Venice’s sole night-shift cab driver, he had almost a monopoly watch over Atta’s nightly activities. Due to Atta’s propensity to drink to excess, he would invariably hire a cab for his nightly escapades. According to Hopsicker, “on August 6, 2001, the same day Atta and ... al-Shehhi returned to Venice ... a self-described former Navy Seal named Joe Gesell applied for and was hired as the night driver ... [and] ... quit a month later, just one day after Atta left town for the last time” (three days before 9-11) (Hopsicker, 2005b).

Three days *after* 9-11, the day cab driver, Bob Simpson, was contacted by the FBI who “was intent on finding and interviewing Gesell” (Hopsicker, 2005b). With his Navy Seal credentials and the suspicious timing of his arrival and departure, Gesell was most likely working for military intelligence, which, quite obviously, was right on top of Atta’s every move. Just as interesting is how the FBI takes up where military intelligence leaves off, cleaning up all the evidence as it were. Perhaps the best evidence of the sensitive nature of Atta’s activities is Hopsicker’s exposure of the FBI’s blanket implementation of all the resources at its disposal to ensure a cover-up. Unfortunately, the mainstream US media have been effectively steered astray or, like many eyewitnesses, silenced by FBI tactics of intimidation, harassment, and bullying. Were it not for Hopsicker’s on-the-ground investigations in Venice, Florida, we might never have known, for example, who Mohamed Atta really was, of his numerous trips to neighboring Tampa – where Able Danger was conveniently headquartered, or to Orlando, from where Atta flew Lear jets for Wallace Hilliard to Rum Cay. Hopsicker (2004a) shows Hilliard’s connections to the CIA, Governor Jeb Bush, and

Saudi billionaire arms and drugs trafficker Adnan Khashoggi, a long-known CIA asset. Without Hopsicker's (2004a) investigative interviews, we would not have discovered the multitude of credible local residents who witnessed the real conspirators' use of intimidating FBI silencers in Venice, Florida, to cover up those connections. We would also have missed stunning accounts by numerous credible Venice witnesses who, after seeing Atta's father on television news after 9-11, phoned the Sarasota FBI office to report he had been there visiting his son just two weeks before 9-11. The FBI never whispered a word of this visit; in fact, it returned to Venice to intimidate these witnesses into silence. Meanwhile, when it was not busy trying to destroy the people's history, it was hunting down leads, not to uncover information, but to kill it (see my earlier section entitled "Atta Senior Drops Out of Venice onto FBI Cutting-Room Floor").

CIA cut-out Dekkers asserted that Atta departed Huffman Aviation and Venice for good in December 2000, nine months before 9-11. The FBI concurred with this wanted criminal, international con man's assertion that Atta had indeed left Venice, Florida, in December 2000, never to return. While the entire FBI timeline has been shown by many independent investigators, to be seriously flawed, on just this one date there is proof that the FBI is not merely incompetent or mistaken; it is in fact lying. According to testimony to Hopsicker by Bob Simpson, and other Venice Yellow Cab employees who also testify to having been interviewed by the FBI itself just three days after 9-11, "Atta took numerous cab rides to and from Huffman Aviation as well as several other locations in Venice during August 2001 [and] on at least two of these occasions Atta was traveling with Rudi Dekkers" (Hopsicker, 2005b). Thus, both Dekkers and the FBI are lying. Evidence that corroborates Atta and Dekkers carousing together at least twice as late as August 2001 is provided by the Yellow Cab office manager in Sarasota, Florida, who confirmed the trips were recorded in the firm's cab logs (Hopsicker, 2005b).

Historically, the FBI has been silent about most sensitive evidence that might reveal the FBI's – and, later, the 9-11 Commission's official account – to be a tissue of lies, with major misdirection and deception thrown in, and on this tissue the FBI rests its case. Despite all the evidence the FBI had collected from credible witnesses to the contrary, it refuses to alter its story or its timeline of the hijackers. What information is so dangerous about Atta's activities in and out of Venice during those nine months leading up to 9-11 that the FBI has done its best to cover-up? More specifically, what doesn't the FBI want us to know about Atta that the Pentagon has also done its best to block the public's right to know during the "Able Danger"

Senate hearings? What are all these agencies of the US government lying to conceal and protect from disclosure?

7.4. Protected Drug Trafficking

Daniel Hopsicker predicted that the 9-11 Commission would not examine what is four years after the attack still largely covered up: the trafficking in narcotics by agencies of the US government together with elites, both American and Saudi, for the most part (Hopsicker, 2004b). It is also the reason, Hopsicker posits, why the 9-11 Commission intentionally failed to interview firsthand eyewitnesses, and why Mohamed Atta, the ringleader, was free to travel around the United States – despite the fact that his name was on CIA, FBI, and INS watch lists. Atta was contributing as a pilot in a very lucrative heroin trafficking operation linking Osama bin Laden’s thugs with their counterparts in America. One key witness to that effect was Yellow Cab driver Bob Simpson in Venice, Florida:

“I’m the day driver ... and he [Atta] was in my cab a bunch of times in August [2001],” explained Simpson. “The night driver had him even more than I did. The FBI was especially interested in a rich Saudi guy – dressed in Armani, shades, manicure, a gold Rolex – that I’d been sent to pick up at the Orlando Executive Airport. They [the FBI] knew he’d ridden in my cab because they’d gotten my cab number from a surveillance camera there.” (Hopsicker, 2004b)

From interviews with the cab-driver Simpson, Hopsicker ascertained that, at the very same time when the two terrorists, Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, were taking frequent one-way trips from Venice to the Orlando Executive Airport, DEA agents were “brandishing submachine guns” there and seizing a Lear jet belonging to Wallace J. Hilliard. Hilliard was the secret financier/owner of Dekkers’ Huffman Aviation, the flight school attended by Atta and al-Shehhi, two of the alleged hijacking pilots. The DEA found 43 pounds of heroin in Hilliard’s jet, “the largest seizure in Central Florida’s history” read the *Orlando Sentinel* (8/2/00).

The reason for the DEA’s successful drug bust was, according to the agents themselves, “because this airplane is known for running drugs in and out of the country” (Hopsicker, 2004b). Hopsicker discovered the bust had actually been an accidental one performed by “low-level DEA operatives not clued-in to the protected nature of the trade. Nor was this the only time Hilliard’s name came up in connection with narcotics trafficking. One of Hilliard’s former drug-running pilots confided in Hopsicker (2004b): “I flew Wally’s Turbo-Commander, a 698, twin turbo prop, till I got stopped one time in Haiti.”

Hopsicker is not alone in his discovery of the officially protected drug trafficking network. He cites FBI whistle-blower Sibel Edmonds' brush with the arms for drugs deal after 9-11: "Edmonds alleged that the US State Department blocked investigations showing links between criminal drug trafficking networks and the terror attacks on 9-11" (Hopsicker, 2004b). The use of a large-scale drug trafficking network to finance a similarly large covert intelligence operation such as 9-11 has at least two historical precedents according to John Judge of 9-11 CitizensWatch:

William Casey, former DCI at the CIA under President Reagan developed at least two large "off-the-shelf" covert operations that carried out US foreign policies abroad without Congressional or public approval, both with similar funding and operational sources. Funding for the first, the mujahideen movement in Afghanistan and elsewhere, came from CIA through ISI and from Saudi Arabia through BCCI. This included profits from the opium trade which armed paramilitary forces linked to the CIA plans. The second, Conragate, was similarly funded through CIA and BCCI, and followed the same pattern of ties to paramilitary groups and illicit drug profits. (Judge, 2003)

According to Venice cabbie Bob Simpson, local trafficking in heroin and other drugs was conducted in 2000 and 2001 by "deep bellied Cessna":

"One was even found abandoned at Huffman with traces of both cocaine and heroin I remember it really well because I was out fishing at 5:00 in the morning, when a plane swooped over us flying really low, and landed ... then later that day I heard the plane had been abandoned at Huffman, and no one knew who or where the owner was." There is no record of this plane seizure in the Venice newspaper ... [T]he idea that a drug trafficking network could operate with official sanction and protection on US soil seems beyond the ken of most Americans. (Hopsicker, 2004b)

The drug trafficking network's flights out of Venice extend at least as far back as the Iran-Contra Affair in the early 1980s when small airstrips were used to transport and exchange guns for drugs with the entrepreneurial aid of arms traders like Saudi super-billionaire Adnan Khashoggi. For decades Khashoggi was a free-wheeling CIA asset known to operate out of Tampa and Miami. To this day, such illegal arms and drug trafficking has been kept as secret as possible with the help not only of official sanction and protection on US soil, but also, apparently, of the 9-11 Commission which never addressed the issue of drug trafficking by the 9-11 terrorist "hijackers" despite the fact that the FBI was their major source of information and the FBI knew Atta's stay in Venice had begun much earlier than it divulged and also that Atta had made frequent trips between Venice and the Orlando airport whence CIA cut-out Hilliard's fleet of Lear jets would take off for Rum Cay Island in the Bahamas, an insiders' well-known drop-off point for heroin/opium from Afghanistan, the world's top supplier (Ridgeway, 2004,

pp. 152–153). According to Tarpley, Hilliard “had a special interest in Rum Cay ... a suspicious island patrolled by a single policeman, [which] was said to be the scene of operations linked to Saudi moneybags Adnan Khashoggi, who figured prominently in Bush 41’s and Oliver North’s Iran–Contra gun-running operations during the 1980s” (Tarpley, 2005, p. 175).

7.5. Atta’s Cadre Surrounded by Spies

It is not plausible that fake fanatic fundamentalist and sybaritic playboy Atta would have chosen the tiny, sedate, retirement community of Venice to satisfy his needs for nighttime excitement, or as his cadre’s home away from home. Almost certainly Venice was chosen for them by US government moles with the proximity, convenience and ease of surveillance of the CIA, DIA, “Able Danger,” SOCOM, and the US Central Command in mind for the purposes of controlling their patsy prey. CENTCOM’s headquarters were just down the road at Tampa’s MacDill Air Force Base, as was the top-secret Able Danger Army intelligence team, and the CIA – all over the history of Venice – was represented from inside the flight school itself by cut-outs Dekkers and Hilliard who, coincidentally, arrived just in time to set up shop for the “hijackers” arrival. Also, there are indications of an NSA presence in Venice as well.

The choice of Venice locates the hijackers center stage both geographically and historically in the theater of covert operations. A brief review of that history turns up obvious links to the CIA whose agents – in particular E. Howard Hunt, Frank Sturges, and Felix Rodriguez – reveal a continuity of involvement in scandal after scandal, from the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy assassination, and Watergate, to Iran–Contra (exposed in 1986 with Felix Rodriguez serving as Bush Senior’s operative) to the not-yet-sufficiently-exposed “Hijackingate.” The presence of George Bush, Senior, former Director of the CIA, is also prominent throughout this continuity of CIA scandals as Tarpley (2005, p. 176) points out:

[T]here is a persistent connection between Operation Mongoose, the US government plan to assassinate Castro, and the killing of JFK. George Bush 41 allegedly chartered ships used by the CIA in the Bay of Pigs invasion, was part of the Kennedy assassination cover-up, was a leading Watergate figure, and directed most of what is known as Iran–Contra. Underlying many of these connections is the sinister presence of CIA Miami Station, which was created in the early 1960s as the CIA’s large-scale domestic facility. This is the infamous JM/WAVE which is described in the unauthorized biography of George Bush. (Tarpley & Chaitkin, 1992)

If Hijackingate could be said to have a home, it would be Florida. On September 14, 2001, US Senator Bob Graham had choice words about his home state of Florida. As Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, the Senator said: “Florida has long been a lair for spies and now terrorists. Florida itself is a significant crossroads of international ... clandestine collection” (Orlando Sentinel, 9/14/01).

Shortly before September 11th, Atta cashed a \$100,000 check he received from a group of people led by Mahmud Ahmed. The check was allegedly delivered by Saeed Sheikh who was later captured for involvement in the beheading of reporter Daniel Pearl. As the planes were crashing on the morning of September 11, Mahmud Ahmed who was head of the ISI – Pakistan’s version of our CIA – was meeting with US Senator Bob Graham and Porter Goss, who became head of the CIA after the events of 9-11. The official story tells us nothing about the connection between the head of the ISI and the alleged financiers of 9-11, nor about the history of the connection between the ISI and the CIA. The official story would rather have us believe that terrorist Islamic fundamentalist groups financially supported *their own* terrorist hijackers, Atta included.

8. CONCLUSION

According to [Chossudovsky \(2004\)](#), the 9-11 attacks have been used as “a war pretext incident,” in which the over twenty-year history of the CIA inventing and supporting the terrorist network that is now called al-Qaeda has been “shoved to the background”:

The fact that successive US governments since the Soviet–Afghan war have supported and abetted the Islamic terror network is no longer mentioned, for obvious reasons. It would break the consensus regarding al-Qaeda as the outside enemy of America, which is a crucial building block of the entire National Security doctrine. ([Chossudovsky, 2004](#))

Focusing on the 9-11 “hijackers,” we have shown that the US government withheld crucial evidence from the public for no justifiable reason, fabricated other evidence in support of its story, and confiscated and destroyed still other evidence which would prove that story a falsehood. As Levi has shown for Flight 11’s manifest, the FBI has been caught altering the evidence in the investigation of the murder of over 3,000 people. The FBI changed the names of the “hijacker” passengers from the original flight manifests, from the first list the FBI submitted – then hastily withdrew – to the second one which it kept despite the fact that at least 10 of the 19 named

“hijackers” it contained have turned up alive. We submit that all the crucial government evidence depicting Islamic hijacker terrorists were responsible for 9-11 – the videos, the photographs, the alleged in-flight phone calls, the cockpit audiotapes, and these “doctored” flight manifests – have been proven to lack authentication if not also proven, with corroboration from other evidence, to be fabrications or forgeries. A close investigation of most of the hijackers has revealed the use of “doubles,” a staple of any US intelligence covert operation, especially one dealing with the forging of evidence against “terrorists,” most of whom, if not all, were unwitting patsies whose doubles had to be introduced to engage in certain incriminating activities the patsies either would not or, lacking competence, physical presence, and/or motivation, could not have performed.

The official story and the evidence in support of it had been manufactured with the intent to mislead the American people and to justify the US government’s rush to pre-emptive war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Patriot Act, the huge increases in defense and Homeland Security budgets, and all else. The significance of demonstrating that Islamic hijacker terrorists were not the agency responsible for 9-11, and that evidence to show they were had been manufactured, is to force us to confront the hollow, indeed falsified pretext upon which all these policies have been based and, hopefully, turn the US government around from the dangerous direction in which it has headed.

NOTES

1. US House of Representatives (2005), “Press Conference of Rep Curt Weldon: 9/11 Commission and Operation ‘Able Danger’: 9/11 Commission suppressed the evidence,” September 17, available at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=20050917&articleId=965>.

2. “Video shows 9/11 security check,” BBC News, July 22, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3915471.stm>.

3. “In pictures: Flight 77 hijackers,” BBC News, last updated July 23, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/3920113.stm.

4. “Video shows 9/11 hijackers’ security check,” *About China Daily*, July 22, 2004, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-07/22/content_350582.htm.

5. “Bin Laden Names Hijackers on Tape,” CBS News, December 20, 2001. In the CBS version of the audio, however, bin Laden only names “Nawaf [*sic*] al-Hazmi, Salem al-Hazmi, and Wail al-Shehri,” and not the other six. For the full list and accurate translation of the nine hijacker names, bin Laden in fact named, see [Ensor \(2001\)](#).

6. Morris, Craig (2001) “Mistranslated Osama bin Laden Video: The German Press Investigates,” http://www.fpp.co.uk/online/02/01/Laden/tapes9_Monitor.html.

7. *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 2001, link now available at http://www.what-reallyhappened.com/hijackers_ft11.html.

8. "‘Suicide hijacker’ is an airline pilot alive and well in Jeddah," *The Independent*, September 17, 2001, http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article216142.ece.

9. "Alleged 9/11 Hijackers: American Airlines Flight 11 Crashed into WTC 1," http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/hijackers_ft_11.html.

10. "Hijack ‘suspects’ alive and well," BBC, September 23, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/1559151.stm.

11. *Ibid.*

12. "On September 19, the FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) distributed an official document clearly stating that al-Mihdhar is alive." *Source*: "Khalid al-Mihdhar," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khalid_al-Mihdhar. Also at: <http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/searchResults.jsp?searchtext=Khalid+al+Mihdhar&events=on&entities=on&articles=on&topics=on&timelines=on&projects=on&titles=on&descriptions=on&dosearch=on&search=+Go+#events>.

13. "Details of hijacking suspects released," CNN, September 28, 2001, <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/27/inv.suspects/>.

14. "Hijack ‘suspects’ alive and well," *op. cit.*

15. "FBI: Early probe results show 18 hijackers took part," CNN, September 13, 2001, posted at 10:33 PM EDT, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/13/investigation.terrorism/>.

16. "Two Brothers among Hijackers: CNN Report," September 13, 2001, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200109/13/eng20010913_80131.html. The CNN retraction followed at:

"Arrests made at New York airports," September 13, 2001, posted at 11:29 PM EDT, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/13/america.attack/>. Buried late in the CNN report is this statement: "Federal sources initially had identified Adnan Bukhari and Ameer Bukhari as possible hijackers who had boarded one of the planes that originated in Boston." Adnan's attorney said, "the brothers' identification had been stolen," Adnan was not involved, and Ameer died in a small plane crash last year. Some press releases state that Adnan and Ameer Bukhari lived together at an address in Vero Beach, Florida, and that they were brothers, while others quote Adnan denying Ameer was his brother. One account even states that they were not related. How could Adnan and his attorney contradict each other about Ameer having been Adnan's brother? Also, how could they have lived at the same address, shared the same surname, and not be related? Certainly this issue casts suspicion on Adnan, as does the following: even if Ameer was not Adnan's brother, the fact that he died in his maiden solo flight and that Adnan then decided to follow in Ameer's flight path and enroll at the same flight school is more than passing strange. The school's name, ironically, was "Flight Safety Academy." Did Adnan have a death wish, or did he have no choice but to attend the academy? Also strange is the business connection Flight Safety shared with Embry Riddle, another flight school attended by prospective "hijackers." This story does have a resonance with some of Hopsicker's accounts of flight students at Huffman in Venice, Florida, a virtual hotbed of hijackers-in-training, some who did not want to fly at all, but said they had no choice in the matter. It was like someone was making the decision for them.

17. "Two Brothers among Hijackers: CNN Report," op cit.
18. The Bukhari names were on the manifest found at the First Coast News website, now available at http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/bukhari_914.html.
19. Ibid.
20. Farrington, Brendan (2001), "FBI Investigates Possible Fla. Links," *Associated Press*, September 14, available at <http://www.poconorecord.com/report/wtc/39.htm>.
21. In this context, read the account of Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Norman Mineta. Available in Griffin (2004, pp. 174–175).
22. Sack, Kevin (2001), "After the Attacks: Missed Cues; Saudi May Have Been Suspected in Error, Officials Say," *New York Times*, September 16, <http://www.wanttoknow.info/010915nytimes>.
23. "Two Brothers Among Hijackers: CNN Report," op. cit.
24. Levi provides this link to the FBI Affidavit submitted by special agent James Lechner regarding the contents of the Nissan Altima and Atta's luggage: <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/atta/resources/documents/fbiaffidavit1.htm>.
25. Ibid.
26. However, the FAA stubbornly rejected the OSC's request to reinstate Hopkins. The OSC had to file a formal petition for a stay before the FAA would relent and rescind Hopkins' dismissal. However, instead of returning Hopkins to his job, it placed him on leave until further notice. Apparently the FAA has no use for protected whistleblowers among their ranks, especially as the FAA may have had much more to hide.
27. This photograph of Jarrah and Senguen together at the flight school is available for viewing at: http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/inside911/images/gallery_ziadJarrah.jpg.

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**PART II:
THE MORNING OF 9-11-2001**

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INITIATION OF THE 9-11 OPERATION, WITH EVIDENCE OF INSIDER TRADING BEFOREHAND

Paul Zarembka

ABSTRACT

This chapter first examines evidence concerning departures of the four flights out of Boston, D.C., and Newark, including identifications of the aircrafts involved, some evidence regarding the flight paths, and then the hijackings. Alleged video evidence at airports for the hijackers themselves is examined, but found to be unacceptable.

The fact of a conspiracy is uncontested by all. Three alternative conspiracy possibilities regarding the planes are examined: the 'official' one of suicide hijackers skillfully guiding planes with steeled determination into targets (independent of the hijackers' identities); use of beaconing or electronic control, similar to ordinary commercial landings, into the targets; and use of 'drone' airplanes. The third alternative is not supportable at this time, but the other two are possible explanations, not necessarily equally likely.

The issue of insider trading before 9-11 is addressed. Publicly available data from OptionMetrics are provided and analyzed, indicating that many early reports were not using accurate data. Turning to an academic study in the Journal of Business which relies upon confidential, superior data, the findings are summarized that, indeed, there is evidence of insider

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 49-77
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23002-5

trading before 9-11 on American Airlines and United Airlines. Larger concerns of insider trading are also summarized. Lastly, we give brief consideration to the profits certain capitalists make out of 9-11.

A simple story of the 9-11 operation is easiest to convey to the public at large. And there is nothing inherently wrong with simplicity. Scientists of all genre continually undertake such efforts, while attempting to retain consistency with available evidence. The official/simple story goes something like this: Osama bin Laden assembled together an Arab group of hijackers willing to commit suicide (apparently, with few accomplices), who booked cross-country flights on four heavily fueled planes, somehow got past airport securities with knives, overwhelmed the crew of the planes in mid-flight, surprised air traffic controllers and air defenses, and then, with steeled and coordinated determination, skillfully guided three planes into the World Trade Center (WTC) 1 and 2 (both soon to collapse) and the Pentagon. Due to passenger heroism, the hijackers only failed on the last flight which went down in a Pennsylvania field. The nation as a whole was surprised, to say the least, as Condolezza Rice exploited in her initial statement. Doubts and concerns began to be expressed about various elements of the story, but then the bi-partisan 9-11 [Commission \(2004\)](#) confirmed the story. Any significant contesting of the story would be called “conspiracy theory”. In this context, the very word “theory” implies opposition to “truth”, that is, the story as verified by the Commission.

We could leave well enough alone ... except that, on the basis of this story, tens of thousands of people are already dying, millions already suffering increasingly, an national/international context is being changed, and world war cannot be excluded as an eventual outcome ... except that the Commission report is sloppy, at best, and clearly serves the Bush administration (see [Griffin, 2005](#)) and the Commission’s membership can hardly be considered independent (see, e.g., [Sacks’, 2006](#), chapter in this volume). Anyway, the person serving the office of U.S. President has his own conspiracy theory and has dominated the public discourse.

The chapters in this Part of the volume represent an attempt to close the circle at least somewhat concerning what happened on 9-11. We have worked on the set of chapters independently, while being knowledgeable about the efforts of the others. Section 1 of this chapter carefully considers whether the flights actually took off as described and whether they were truly hijacked. The answer to both is found to be “yes”. We will not consider hijackers themselves (in this volume, [Kolar, 2006](#), considers the issue),

except to question the purported video evidence we have been offered about them. This does not answer whether other planes were involved, nor even if each of these planes hit described targets.

Section 2 considers the operation of hitting targets, major tasks themselves. Specifically, suicide, homing, and drone possibilities are addressed, with homing considered to be at least equally likely as suicide missions. Also considered are the possible roles of the Newark and D.C. originating flights, without offering a conclusion. Collapses at the WTC (which is addressed in the chapter by [Griffin, 2006](#); [Jones, 2006](#)) and the damaged Pentagon are not considered, except to note: the Commission did not even mention, let alone analyze, the 5:20 p.m. collapse of the huge 47 story WTC 7, it being the building where Mayor Guiliani had his bunker on the 23rd floor, was not struck by any plane nor even directly situated next to the twin towers, and looks as much like a controlled demolition as anyone – experts on demolition or not – could contemplate. Silence about the WTC 7 has been so effective that this editor missed it, even one year after 9-11 (see [Zarembka, 2002](#)).

Section 3 discusses the issue of insider trading in anticipation of the event. It was a fairly major mainstream story and is slightly mentioned in the 9-11 Commission (2004) report. Contrary to the Commission, available evidence does support the occurrence of insider trading.

Indisputably, there are individuals who benefited from the destructive events of 9-11. Thus, there may well be something to learn in knowing more about those buildings themselves, who and what were inside them, who received/who lost what, what is happening afterwards. This topic is much too big for this chapter, but I'll suggest a few items in Section 4, by way of conclusion. We could call this issue a “mafia” connection, recognizing it as part of the spectrum of possibilities, but we could also consider it the “capitalist” way of exploitation.

1. THE PLANES AND HIJACKINGS

1.1. Planes Departing Gates at Boston, D.C., and Newark

We begin with details of the flights, all of which were scheduled for Los Angeles, except the one from Newark scheduled for San Francisco. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) has a website on flights which should provide basic historical information, including scheduled departure, gate departure, and wheels-off in the air (Boeing 757's and 767's electronically

Table 1. Basic Flight Information for 9-11.

Flight	Scheduled Departure	Gate Departure	Wheels-off	Time at Target	Target
AA 11 (Boston)	7:45 B	7:40 C	7:59 C	8:46 C	WTC 1
UA 175 (Boston)	8:00 B	7:58 B	8:14 C (8:23 B)	9:03 C	WTC 2
AA 77 (D.C.)	8:10 B	8:09 C	8:20 C	9:38 C	Pentagon?
UA 93 (Newark)	8:00 B	8:01 B	8:42 C (8:28 B)	10:06 ^a (10:03 C)	PA field

Sources:

B: Bureau of Transportation Statistics at www.bts.gov/programs/airline_information/airline_ontime_statistics (however, UA 175 wheels-off at 8:23 a.m. is inconsistent with later flight data; similarly, UA 93 wheels-off at 8:28 a.m. is inconsistent).

C: Commission (2004), reported when there are no BTS data or are problematic.

^aI put the crash 3 minutes later than the Commission – see www.team8plus.org/content.php?article.12 for an analysis of the event. However, using the Commission timing would not affect our analysis.

transmit such information from the aircrafts to carriers).¹ Yet, for 9-11-01, while data for United Airlines (UA) are included, for American Airlines (AA) only the schedules are displayed. Using AA data from the Commission and including eventual targets, we obtain the information given in Table 1.

The first point to notice is that scheduled times are within 25 min of each other. Conspirators planning for that day obviously work on the schedules. Yet everyone knows that planes can be delayed, sometimes significantly so, and sometimes do not even depart at all. The only significant delay, for this particular set of planes, was about 25 min for Newark's UA 93 from when wheels-off would be expected. Still, for planners, there must have been some type of contingency contemplated for an eventuality of delays. One possibility would be that each plane had an assigned target; should an operation fail, for any reason, so be it. Another possibility is that targets were given priorities, with another plane assigned in the event of a failure. For example, UA 93 out of Newark and quite able to view the Towers could have been a backup for either flight out of Boston into the Towers, extremely important if the planes were designed as cover-ups for WTC demolitions.

Concern has been expressed that none of the planes were close to being full. The Commission (2004, p. 452, fns. 21, 40) addressed this issue by reporting comparison data for summer 2001, regarding passenger loads on these flights, curiously ignoring altogether that UA 93 was only first scheduled on 9-05-01 (did it use data for UA 837, the prior scheduled flight?). From the data

obtained from the airlines for the three prior months, apparently for Tuesdays, it concluded that 9-11 passenger loads were not unusual for AA 11 with its 76 passengers² nor for AA 77 with its 53 passengers. Loads, however, for both of the UA flights were “well below their averages” – UA 175 is reported to have had 51 and UA 93, only 33 (p. 454, fn. 40 and 456, fn. 72). The Commission did not undertake further consideration, except to say that it did not find evidence that hijackers influenced loads (e.g., buying extra tickets but not using them). We undertook one check of our own: For the similarly situated day in 2005, i.e., the second Tuesday after Labor Day, i.e., September 13, 2005, American Airlines had a flight AA 25 out of Boston to Los Angeles at 8:00 a.m., almost the same as for AA 11. The AA website allows persons planning a flight to examine the available seats, and one-half hour before the scheduled departure showed all 22 first/business class seats taken and at least 107³ of 166 coach seats taken; in other words, at least 129 seats taken together were booked, suggesting perhaps 120 actual passengers after considering “no shows”. Other early flights were UA which had a 7:35 a.m. flight, while Delta had just added, since September 8, a 7:00 a.m. service. Comparing this 2005 datum of 120 to those 76 passengers flying in 2001 on AA 11 does suggest a low load on 9-11, given that 9-11 also had three early flights on the same carriers (AA 11, UA 175, and Delta 1989).⁴ This exercise, therefore, raises somewhat more concern about passenger loads than the Commission mentions.

Table 2 adds the times planes previously arrived before their 9-11 flights, along with tail numbers which identify each aircraft, the last radio contacts, the timings that hijackings seem to have taken place, and when the transponders were turned off. Table 2 displays a question mark by the Pentagon hit, indicating awareness of substantive doubts that AA 77 hit the Pentagon, but also indicating that it is not examined to a conclusion in this chapter.

Now consider evidence whether these four flights did take off on 9-11 as reported. For those with no doubts about this, let us just say that thoroughness requires such consideration. Evidence that all four planes took off include (a) phone calls of passengers and crew before the planes departed – cell phones surely being available for this period, (b) communications between cockpits and air traffic controllers, (c) transponder identifications up until transponders no longer functioned, and (d) calls made in the air from airphones at any altitude or possibly cell phones if at low altitudes (the latter being very questionable at higher altitudes – cell phone companies themselves are quite aware of inability of using cell phones on planes and are considering steps to solve this problem). Regarding calls while still on the ground, Frank Levi at www.team8plus.org/content.php?article.8 researched

Table 2. Expanded Flight Information for 9-11.

Flight	Prior Arrival & Tail numbers*	Wheels-off	Last Radio Transmit ^a	Hijack Time ^b	Transponder Off ^c	Time at Target	Target
AA 11 (Boston)	5:52 a.m. N334AA	07:59	08:14	08:14	08:21	08:46	WTC 1
UA 175 (Boston)	9:50 p.m. N612UA	08:14	08:42	~8:44	08:47**	09:03	WTC 2
AA 77 (D.C.)	8:22 p.m. N644AA	08:20	08:51	~8:53	08:56	09:38	Pentagon?
UA 93 (Newark)	6:54 a.m. N591UA	08:42	09:27	09:28	09:41	10:06	PA field

^aCommission (2004, pp. 32–33) referring to last routine communication.

^b*Ibid.*, summarizing its textual assertions (pp. 7, 8, and 11) for UA 175, AA 77, and UA 93, and a more elaborate survey for the case of AA 11 as follows: “Given that the cockpit crew of AA 11 had been acknowledging all previous instructions from air traffic control that morning within a matter of seconds, and that when the first reporting of the hijacking was received a short time later (the 8:19 a.m. call from Betty Ong), a number of actions had already been taken by the hijackers, it is most likely that the hijacking occurred at 8:14 A.M.” (p. 452, fn. 24).

^cCommission (2004, pp. 32–33 and p. 454, fn. 54).

*“Prior arrival” refers to wheels-on, and to 9-10-01 if p.m. and to 9-11-01 if a.m. Concerning tail numbers, see the sidebar on “Identifications of Planes.” These same numbers are reported at the NTSB site www.nts.gov/ntsb/month.asp.

**Transponder change, rather than transponder off.

as many statements as possible from persons who knew persons on UA 93, it also being the flight with the lowest number of passengers, 33 excluding reported hijackers, and the only flight of the four representing a new schedule. It turns out that very many passengers had explained beforehand to other persons why they were taking this flight, sometimes at the last minute; also, some passengers may have been from a canceled UA 91 scheduled to the same destination one hour and twenty minutes later. We are confident that similar research for the other three flights would show similar information, even if less prevalent. Furthermore, we do not have reports from crew and passengers of their calling others to say that their planes weren’t taking off. Added to widely-accepted transponder identifications and communications with air traffic controllers (our ‘b’ and ‘c’), we therefore have no doubts the planes took off as described. Regarding ‘d’, some planes also had communications from the air, reportedly by airphones, by crew or passengers. Indeed, the Commission (2004, p. 454, fn. 46) reports the ease with

which UAL crew could do so: “flight crew on board UAL aircraft could contact the United office in San Francisco (SAMC) simply by dialing *349 on an airphone”. Regarding the possibility of cell phone calls, only those at lower altitudes can be accepted as evidence, yet are unneeded for this particular verification. In other words, we confirm that each plane took off.

Identifications of Planes

Some theorists of 9-11 question the role of the planes, sometimes based solely upon BTS reporting. We are not convinced. According to the BTS website, the tail number of UA 175 was N612UA, having arrived the preceding night at 9:50 p.m. from S.F. (as UA 170). The tail number for UA 93 was N591UA but the arrival needs to be calculated. It is reported as wheels-off from S.F. headed to Newark the preceding night at 11:15 p.m. (as UA 78) with an airborne time of 279 min, implying arrival at 6:54 a.m. Newark time on 9-11 (the BTS data for Newark arrivals report UA 78 scheduled on 9-11 for 6:31 a.m., but nothing additional).

For the AA flights, neither tail numbers nor departure information beyond the schedules is listed on the BTS site, a site which does sometimes omit verifiable flight information. Some consider this particular missing data as evidence that AA 11 and AA 77 flights did not even occur (particularly since neither flight was posted at all before November 2003). However, we have validated, using the site in the last week of August 2005, four other missing data just for flights scheduled to arrive Boston before 9:00 a.m. on 9-11: UA 78 from S.F. (leaving later as UA 175 – see above), UA 168 from L.A. (wheels-off there at 10:29 p.m. on 9-10), UA 534 from Chicago (wheels-off at 9:07 p.m., 9-10), and UA 726 from Denver (wheels-off at 6:57 p.m., 9-10). Three other UA arriving flights into Boston are provided with full information – UA 1846 and 1960 from Dulles and UA 988 from JFK; other UA flights were canceled. There is also an earlier identifiable error which actually clarifies matters: UA 78 is posted as leaving S.F. the evening of 9-9 (sic) with tail number N570UA, but arriving the next morning of 9-10 in Newark as N591UA at 6:54 a.m., exactly the time we calculated for UA 78’s arrival on 9-11 (itself unposted). That N591UA must be an error as the plane was in Boston then, while N570UA was indeed in S.F. in the evening of 9-9. It appears 9-11 data were inserted into the 9-10 date.

As a further illustration of problems with the BTS site, on 9-2-01, a plane with tail number N330AA flew from Boston to L.A. as AA 11 (wheels-off, 7:53 a.m.), then flew from L.A. to JFK later that day as AA 4 (wheels-off, 12:15 p.m.), yet again flies from Boston (sic) for Los Angeles early on 9-03-01 as AA 11 (wheels-off, 8:30 a.m.), with no record of its having gotten from JFK to Boston in the interval (i.e., no departure indication from JFK and no arrival indication into Boston). Was this merely an unreported repositioning of a plane from JFK to Boston?

Absence of the AA tail numbers on the BTS site is insufficient evidence of a problem larger than data omissions. Therefore, other leads need to be pursued. Using Air Disaster at www.airdisaster.com/cgi-bin/view_year.cgi?year=2001 for AA 11 and AA 77 tail numbers, AA 11 is listed with tail number N334AA. Returning to BTS data, it had arrived into Boston from S.F. at 5:52 a.m. on 9-10 (as AA 198), judging from airborne time. While BTS data do not report arrival into Dulles (any time in September 2001) of an aircraft with tail number N644AA, <http://airgames.bravehost.com/tailnumbers.html> ascertained that the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) tail number N644AA is replaced in American Airlines reporting procedures by N5BPAA. To verify this, go to photographs of a plane with the N644AA tail number, as offered at www.airliners.net, photos being from three airports on separate dates earlier in 2001. In each case, a plane with tail number N644AA is not reported by BTS data, but one with tail number N5BPAA is reported. And BTS data does report N5BPAA arriving into Dulles from L.A. the night of 9-10 at 8:27 p.m. (as AA 144).

1.2. Hijackings

Were the planes truly hijacked, by which is meant that the cockpits were taken over by persons who had no authority to be in control (without consideration regarding who were such individuals)? Evidence here is less overwhelming than for the simpler question of being airborne. Radio communications between cockpit crew and air traffic controllers, information from radar in conjunction with transponders while on, radar alone without transponders, and air phone calls are the more reliable evidentiary sources, while cell-phone calls are suspect except at low altitudes. If we want to be as independent of government (dis-)information as possible, particularly in

circumstances where government employees have been told to shut-up, we would want as much as possible to rely upon less suspect sources. Yet, we have not seen contradictory “leaks” being reported by air traffic controllers or other persons actually monitoring flights that day, for the hijacking times listed in Table 2. We do have reports from inside the planes, which require examination.

For AA 11, we have what could seemingly be the most reliable evidence, namely, phone calls from stewardesses Betty Ong and Amy Sweeney, both reportedly being long, airphone calls. Ong’s phone call, beginning at 8:20 a.m., and lasting for 25 min with a reservations desk in Cary, North Carolina, was only taped for the first four minutes and later publicly broadcast on January 27, 2004. The transcript includes the phrase “I think we’re getting hijacked”. After the four minutes we can only rely upon reports of the persons she was talking with – Minter, Sadler, and Gonzalez (only Gonzalez appeared before the Commission) – and upon a separate tape between Gonzalez and American Airlines emergency operations, reporting what Gonzalez is learning from Ong, but without Ong’s own voice. The tape of Ong “was difficult to understand at times” (*New York Times*, January 28, 2004). Still, the transcript would seem to provide the full confirmation needed for the AA 11 hijacking (see www.thememoryhole.org/911/911-ong-tape.htm). The Sweeney evidence is a bit more difficult to accept. Sweeney’s call with her manager Michael Woodward was for 12 min, according to the Commission (2004, p. 453, fn. 32), but her initial attempted call was at 8:22 a.m. and she talked with one other before Woodward. First of all, there is no tape to listen to, and the only evidence we have is the reported notes taken by Woodward (who did know her well). These notes were seized by the FBI, Woodward himself probably not being allowed to keep his own copy. In addition, notes taken under great stress may be or may not be so reliable. Finally, the FBI has not seen fit to release a copy of the notes, so the report of what Woodward is said to have noted is unverifiable. But even this is not all that casts a cloud on the Sweeney evidence. Sweeney’s husband Michael Sweeney asked American Airlines to be able to talk with Woodward about the last conversation of his wife, but was denied (*The New York Observer*, Feb. 16, 2004).

Regarding phone calls from UA 175, five are reported, one from an unidentified stewardess to the United office in San Francisco speaking to Marc Policastro at 8:52 a.m. and reporting the plane being hijacked (Commission 2004, pp. 7–8 and 454, fn. 46, using FBI interviews, an airphone being implicitly suggested), and another four from two passengers. One passenger Roger Hanson is reported to have called his father Lee Hanson of Easton,

Connecticut at 9:00 a.m. and also earlier in a short call at 8:52 a.m. (Commission, 2004, pp. 7–8 and 454, fns. 45 and 49, based upon one FBI interview on 9-11 itself). Since the plane was at a lower altitude by 9:00 a.m., we don't doubt the possibility of Roger Hanson reaching his father by cell phone in the later call, but the earlier 8:52 a.m. call is more problematic. Another passenger Brian Sweeney is reported to have first tried to call his wife Julie Sweeney at 8:59 a.m. but was only able to leave an answering machine message, and then called his mother Louise Sweeney in a short call mentioning that the plane had been hijacked (Commission, 2004, pp. 8, and 454, fns. 48 and 50, using FBI interviews). Given low altitude, we do not doubt the possibility of his having made those calls.

Regarding AA 77, only two calls have been reported, that of stewardess Renee May speaking to her mother at 9:12 a.m. saying that “her flight was being hijacked” and “to alert American Airlines” (Commission, 2004, p. 9) – the type of phone is not explicitly indicated, but a reading of the Commission (2004, p. 455, fns. 56 and 57) implies that a cell phone was being used as its cited American Airlines report of airphone calling from AA 77 is only linked to the other caller. Somewhat later, Barbara Olson is said to have called to her husband U.S. Solicitor General Ted Olson, the evidence being what Ted Olson said she said. Regarding Ted Olson, in 2002 in his official capacity, Olson told the U.S. Supreme Court that it is “easy to imagine an infinite number of situations ... where government officials might quite legitimately have reasons to give false information out” (*Washington Post*, March 21, 2002). That's enough to render his report of a hijacking as less than credible, although the Commission does report evidence of calls being connected from the aircraft to four “unknown numbers” (fn. 57). The report regarding May would be credible, except if a cell phone were used (as reported by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, September 13 & 15, 2001, and implied by the Commission), then how could she have gotten connected and, if she could not, did not an imposter make that short call?

UA 93 had the most calls reported from it (12 separate individuals using airphones or cell phones, according to the Commission, 2004, pp. 12–13), many seemingly from cell phones often at what should have been higher altitudes. Some reports seem unusually strange, like a son calling his mother and identifying himself with his full name. The Commission (2004, p. 456, fn. 77) says that “all calls placed on airphones were from the rear of the aircraft. There was one airphone installed in each row of seats on both sides of the aisle. The airphone system was capable of transmitting only eight calls at any one time”. However, the Commission does not say which calls were from airphones. When a person alleged to have called another who

would not have known the voice, then anything is possible. Nevertheless, there were some calls to known persons who have not expressed doubts regarding whom they were speaking to. And the cockpit voice recorder up until the last four minutes, albeit not very clear, was played to family members.

Overall, there is enough evidence here to confirm that hijackings did take place on AA 11, UA 175, and UA 93, less confirmation for AA 77.

1.3. Alleged Video Evidence of the Hijackers

Analysis of the alleged hijackers is undertaken thoroughly in Kolar's (2006) chapter. Here we wish to briefly comment only upon the evidence proffered from airport security cameras. This is important because full flight manifests, which should include identities of alleged hijackers, have never been made public either by AA or the UA, or by any other entity. That is, we do not know all identities on the flights and can only accept, or not, official assertions, that is, unless something else concrete is offered.

Two pieces of concrete evidence regarding hijackers have been offered by the Commission and also made at least partially available to the media. First, a video from Portland, Maine, of two alleged hijackers Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz al-Omari shows them passing security with appropriate date and time stamping, on their way to a Portland–Boston flight to arrive in time to connect to AA 11. Yet, whatever else it is, it is not a video from the Boston airport security. It is as simple as that. That is, even if they were on board the Portland to Boston flight, it says nothing about if they boarded AA 11 after their arrival in Boston. The Commission (2004, p. 451, fn. 2) asserts that CAPPS, the automated security profiling system, marked 9 out of 10 of the alleged AA hijackers before their boardings of AA 11 and AA 77, but no evidence is offered into the public record.

The second piece of video evidence only appeared a day before the Commission would officially present its report. It is purported to be a video of Dulles airport hijackers going through security check. It was reported on July 21, 2004, as obtained by the Associated Press from a law firm representing some victims' families. We have not located the full video (some news reports which linked to the video are now broken), but a 57-second version is available from the news report at www.whatreallyhappened.com/hijackers_video.html. The existence of such evidence is affirmed by the Commission (2004, p. 3). In the available clip, note the cars arriving with short shadowing on the sunny day. This shadowing does not match the

alleged 7:18 a.m. time of the video, being only one-half hour after D.C. sunrise on 9-11 and a time of long shadowing. Second, unlike the Portland video, there is no date, time, and location imprinted on the video; therefore, it could be any day and any time (and possibly not even fully Dulles airport security). Third, one of those alleged to have gone through that security was Salem al-Hazmi (Commission, 2004, p. 3). Salem al-Hazmi was alive after 9-11-01 (Harrison, 2001). That the Commission offered such ‘evidence’ and the press reproduced it unquestioned, often as stills, tells us something, but not about the hijackers. And this problem is only the tip of the iceberg regarding naming of hijackers.

2. TARGETS

2.1. Operation against the World Trade Center

The two planes out of Boston seem closely coordinated. For attacking the Towers, one possibility, the official one, is two appropriately skilled pilots willing to engage suicide operations to the very end. Accomplices need not necessarily know the suicide element of such a plan. A second possibility is to rely upon the devices which “home” the planes into targets, similar to commercial landings that occur almost every minute. Pilots follow “homing beacons” or the planes are automatically controlled by computerized guidance systems, any crews rendered helpless to change the result. A third possibility is to substitute the commercial planes with other planes, probably pilotless, and control these “drones” into the target while disposing of the commercial planes elsewhere. The first possibility will be called the “suicide” theory (hijacking is not enough, as suicide need not be contemplated in a hijacking). The second will be called the “homing” theory, even as it includes the computerized guidance alternative. The third will be called the “drone” theory. As we consider these possibilities, consider the benefits, for planners, of avoiding reliance upon a steeled human commitment to a suicide act being followed through to completion. As to why hijacking might then be needed at all, a desire to place blame would be sufficient and planners could set them up to believe what has been reported to have been said by one AA 11 hijacker at 8:24:38: “We have some planes. Just stay quiet, and you’ll be OK. We are returning to the airport” (Commission, 2004, p. 19). The “drone” scenario seems the most complicated to implement and for us to piece together, and also implies that any disposing of the commercial planes risks observation by someone unintended.

Is there evidence to discriminate at least between the “homing” theory and the “drone” theory, neither of which has direct evidence in its favor? Some evidence perhaps could be gleaned from radio transmissions from the planes, except that none directly suggest where the planes were at the time of transmissions and so leave room for almost any possibility. Another possibility is forensic evidence on the ground, i.e., human remains from the Towers identified as from those of crew and passengers on AA 11 and AA 77. The *New York Daily News* reported on September 11, 2002, that, according to the New York City’s medical examiners office, 1,401 persons had been identified who had died at the Towers and that these included “45 of those aboard the hijacked planes – 33 from Flight 11, which struck the north tower, and 12 from Flight 175, which hit the south tower”. Subsequent identifications were closed in February 2005 with a total of 1,585 persons identified, but without a breakdown regarding those on the two planes (Hudson, 2005). Going up against such evidence would require direct lying by that office and its chief examiner, Dr. Charles S. Hirsch (who also has been Chair of the Department of Forensic Medicine at New York University), or require human remains to be smuggled from elsewhere to the site sifting through debris of the Towers, or require other manipulation of the DNA evidence (see below as we discuss AA 77). We are not prepared, at this time, to consider such possibilities worth inclusion (at least until such time as other evidence of the “drone” theory becomes more conclusive).

Before rejecting further consideration of the “drone” theory because of the forensic evidence, there is intriguing circumstantial evidence presented by Frank Levi at www.team8plus.org/the-movement/radar/Radar.htm. This evidence indicates that when AA 11 deviated from its westward flight path still in Massachusetts by turning somewhat more northerly, that it was then going directly toward Griffiss Air Base in New York (home of NEADS, the North Eastern base for NORAD), and that the next claimed turn of AA 11 toward N.Y.C. was precisely at the point of interface between radar control ranges, at a “hole” in the radar information. This suggests to him the possibility that, in fact, AA 11 did not change direction, but, rather, that another plane – the “drone” – came in as a substitute and was the one which flew toward N.Y.C. Given that the AA 11 transponder was now off, identification of the substitution would not be known by air traffic controllers. As to UA 175, when it headed out on its flight path it virtually crossed UA 93’s flight path, opening the possibility for UA 175 to continue flying westward under the cover of the UA 93 radar track, the cross-over itself being again at a radar interface. Again, a drone was substituted for UA 175. This evidence is interesting and is consistent with additional

information from the FAA website on “Aircraft Inquiries” http://registry.faa.gov/aircraftinquiry/NNum_inquiry.asp that neither United plane is reported as destroyed, but both, only in late 2005, are reported as “cancelled”, based upon their tail numbers (both American planes are reported as de-registered on January 14, 2002, by reason of having been “destroyed”). Apart from the contrary forensic evidence, it leaves un-addressed the issue of UA 93 having had wheels-off some 25 min behind expectations. With several planes being delayed that morning, a planned delay of UA 93 would seemingly have to be coordinated from the air traffic control tower at Newark, yet we lack relevant evidence.

Discriminating between the “suicide” theory and the “homing” theory is more complicated, particularly since “homing” could be done by hijackers themselves. Regarding AA 11, stewardess Betty Ong, reportedly using an airphone for 25 min, is reported to have said at 8:38 that her plane was “flying erratically again” (Commission, 2004, p. 6). Since only the first four minutes of the phone call between Ong and the reservations center was recorded (Commission, 2004, p. 453. fn. 29), the time would be well after the tape’s end and no note taking has been indicated, so we wind up with no physical evidence for the “flying erratically again” comment. Another stewardess Amy Sweeney reportedly said to her manager about 8:44 a.m. (according to a description of the manager’s notes), “we are in a rapid descent ... we are all over the place” (Commission, 2004, p. 6), the crash itself being at 8:46:40. Yet, the Commission did not publish a copy of the manager Michael Woodward’s notes nor even indicate it saw the notes. Again, we wind up with no physical evidence for the substantive content of the call.

Regarding UA 175, passenger Roger Hanson is reported to have phoned his father Lee Hanson of Easton, Connecticut, at 9:00 a.m. that “the plane is making jerky movements – I don’t think the pilot is flying the plane – I think we are going down – I think they intend to go to Chicago or someplace and fly into a building” (Commission, 2004, p. 8), the crash itself being at 9:03:11. This reported information is cited as being from an FBI interview of the father on September 11, 2001 itself (Commission, 2004, p. 454, fn. 49). Yet no Commission follow-up is indicated to what is really an extraordinary statement: how would a passenger even consider hijackers flying “into a building” **before** 9-11 had happened? As to the reference to Chicago, it is possible that his son would not have been aware that the plane had changed direction. (An earlier 8:52 a.m. call to the father, reporting that the “plane is making strange moves” (Commission, 2004, p. 7), is problematic since the aircraft may not have been at a low enough altitude for a cell phone to connect.)

An alternative possibility is misinformation or subterfuge by someone in describing the contents of the calls from AA 11 and UA 175. In any case, a reasonable conclusion is that evidence from these callers is unauthenticated and insufficiently convincing to render acceptance of flying irregularities of the planes. Even if there were irregularities, they could be part of a “homing” system taking control of planes (not considered by the Commission), including the possibility of pilots flying irregularly in trying to get on a homing beacon. We move on to other evidence regarding the “suicide” theory versus the “homing” theory.

Keep in mind that there is no direct **evidence** for the “suicide” theory, i.e., no one claims direct proof that pilots were in control to the end without aid of any “homing”. Rather, the “homing” possibility is ignored, while presumption of control by pilots is sustained by our common experience when on planes, an experience which may well be a poor guide. Also, keep in mind that it is certainly possible to control a plane independently of pilots, that it has been done, that it has been reported, that it is no secret, and, given modern technology with automatic pilots, who would doubt it. Any doubt is the specific case, not the general possibility, and, for this case, the doubt is sustained by derisive reaction, but not by evidence.

Is there evidence that flights AA 11 and UA 175 were “homed” into WTC 1 and WTC 2? Already in 2002, Eric Hufschmid (2002) published such reasoning in a book of 158 pages, illustrated with higher resolution pictures than obtainable on the internet. While speculative, there is partial evidence in its favor. Three buildings are of significance in his scenario – the North Tower WTC 1, the South Tower WTC 2, and the building which was constructed last and included Mayor Guiliani’s 23rd floor bunker, often labeled WTC 7. Hufschmid (2002, pp. 90–91) says that the flight paths for AA 11 into WTC 1 and for UA 175 into WTC 2 are consistent with their being guided by a homing device from WTC 7. That is, AA 11 entered the targeted air space on a flight path taking it over the WTC 7, aiming directly toward WTC 1. Then it started to bank – just as AA 11 was, in fact, doing when it crashed into the tower – after it passed over WTC 7 as the “homing” signal would then be guiding the plane for a turn. Similarly, UA 175 was guided in from the southwest, aligned toward WTC 7, with WTC 2 “in the way”. It would be similarly banking in the manner evidenced by the position of the plane crashing into that tower. Hufschmid (2002, pp. 91–92) notes that both planes, in their flight paths had crossed over Stewart International Airport at nearly the same time and that the airport had an abandoned, windowless building owned by the Air Force which could also have had another “homing” device.

This is a reasonably “simple” theory to understand, particularly after studying Hufschmid’s pictorial representation. It does explain why both planes would be banking. It does permit the operation to be independent of piloting skills (or lack thereof) and suicide intentions of hijackers, certainly an important consideration, perhaps extremely important. Otherwise, there is little else to discriminate it from the “suicide” theory. Yet, in a context of a larger theory of the whole 9-11 operation, it has at least as much credibility, based upon reported evidence, as the “suicide” theory.

2.2. Flights AA 77 and UA 93

Two planes were flown out of Boston, but why not, say, out of Newark? Many would not even consider this question an issue, but if an answer is thought needed, it can be simply said that acts of hijacking take time and some 45 min of airborne time into a target seems quite reasonable. On the other hand, AA 77 out of Dulles airport in Washington, DC, and UA 93 out of Newark, each included a significant abnormality that they were still in the air much past the attacks on the Towers. UA 93 was not even hijacked until 9:28, thereby becoming an invitation to be shot down. The delay in wheels-off departure by 25 min for UA 93 should have suggested to perpetrators a quick hijacking or cancellation of plans (or did a lead hijacker hesitate to execute, followed by some type of reasoning of it being better to execute the plan than to cancel altogether?). Were the explanation for delays of AA 77 and UA 93 in turning toward targets to be explained by a fully anticipated stand-down/war-games interference with the execution of air defenses (as discussed in the chapter by Four Arrows, 2006), still, delays of this magnitude would open questions afterwards regarding defense capabilities, avoidable altogether by simply having all attacks occur within a short time interval.

Can an explanation be provided why AA 77 and UA 93 were so much behind AA 11 and UA 175 in executing whatever their assignments? Levi’s “drone” theory mentioned earlier could explain the UA 93 abnormality by arguing the necessity for it to create a radar shadow for UA 175 until the latter reached the area of lack of radar coverage, followed by a landing of UA 175, perhaps in Cleveland.

Regarding AA 77, the one with the alleged target of the Pentagon, this plane was supposedly lost after its transponder was turned off at 8:56 a.m. Before this time, the plane was described in news reports to have turned northward off its flight path about 8:46 a.m., then turned westward, then southward, returning to its scheduled flight path shortly before last radio

communication at 8:51 a.m., seemingly with the original pilot in control (*USA Today*, n.d., based upon Flight Explorer, not reproduced in the Commission report). If the original pilot was not in control, it is possible that this plane was positioning itself to strike WTC 1 were AA 11 to have failed (WTC 2 being struck at 9:03 a.m. could then have been followed by WTC 1 being struck around 9:25 a.m.). In any case, according to the Commission, AA 77 was lost to radar about 8:56 a.m. and almost anything was possible (“there is no evidence to indicate that the FAA recognized Flight 77 as a hijacking until it crashed into the Pentagon”, *Commission, 2004, p. 455, fn. 66*).

Forensic identification is claimed by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology for all but five passengers and crew of AA 77 (*Hudson, 2005*). Did those human remains truly come from the Pentagon, at the same time as the plane itself seems to have so disintegrated that it left minimal evidence? If not, what happened to AA 77? Was the damage at the Pentagon consistent with a Boeing 757? For one suggestion otherwise, see *Dewdney and Longspaugh (2004)*, Dewdney being mathematician and computer scientist and Longspaugh, an aerospace engineer. Relatedly, this article also addresses the DNA issue used for forensic analysis of victims. Others, even some quite critical of the official story, accept that AA 77 did crash into the Pentagon, often upon the basis of eyewitness reports (usually without considering the persons cited and less than fully examined under the precision of psychological theories for memory accuracy). In any case, it is more widely accepted that the alleged hijacking pilot Hani Hanjour (named as the pilot in news reports, but not specifically by the Commission) did not have the skills to fly a commercial plane very, very close to the ground into the Pentagon at 530 mph along the looping flight path. Also, why were the Pentagon’s own defensive placements inoperative?

Concerning UA 93, there are some special issues with this flight. On 9-10-01, a plane with tail number N591UA, i.e., UA 93’s the next day, departed Chicago as flight UA 642 for Newark (10:43 a.m. wheels-off), but was posted by the BTS as “diverted”, no airborne time indicated. It had been scheduled to depart at 2:30 p.m. from Newark to San Francisco. It is posted with much delayed wheels-off from Newark at 7:40 p.m., but is not posted as arriving beforehand in Newark. Diversion after Chicago is consistent with the long delay for departure out of Newark, but where did UA 642 land, or how did N591UA get to Newark?

UA 93 was the only plane that represented newly scheduled service, having begun only on September 5, 2001 (this being the Wednesday after the U.S. Labor Day on Monday, not an untypical date for schedule changes). It had the fewest number of passengers – 33 apart from hijackers (for a plane

with a capacity for 182), was the only one scheduled for San Francisco, and had four instead of five alleged hijackers. A collection of reports from family and friends indicates that a majority of the passengers were last minute and some may have been transferred from a canceled flight UA 91 scheduled one hour and twenty minutes later.⁵ More importantly, we don't know whether it had a specific target, or any target at all other than perhaps as a backup. Along with eyewitness reports, reports from the plane, evidence pointing to the widespread scattering of plane debris – including a one-ton engine sector found 500 yards from the crash site (actually, though, downhill), the crash site itself is very strange in that it is only a crater and quite atypical of plane crash sites. We could conclude that it was shot down (the Commission notwithstanding). On the other hand, forensic identification is again claimed by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, this time for all UA 93 passengers and crew (Hudson, 2005), even as the plane disintegrated. In sum, at this time, there are too many variables in consideration to conclude what might have been UA 93's role.

Since DNA forensic analysis comes up for all flights, we should note that analysis for these two flights was undertaken by a military agency, while analysis for the Towers was undertaken by a civilian agency. Dewdney and Longspaugh (2004) point out the decisive importance of the process of evidence collection, indicating that it is perfectly possible to get two or more pieces of single human's remains from any source (like a morgue), arbitrarily identify one set as from a crash site and another set from the home of a named person believed to have perished, take them separately to evaluating agency, and obtain (who could be surprised?) DNA matches. It would be a complete fraud, even as the evaluating agency spends countless hours of honest, exacting work. To overcome any suspicion of fraud, we'd have to know exactly how the set of material from homes was obtained and exactly how it got to the evaluating forensic agency marked as such. And Colford's (2005) report on the DNA work to identify hijackers in the case of the Towers simply invites taking the possibility of manipulation seriously. On the other hand, no one has come forward with actual evidence suggesting manipulation.

3. INSIDER TRADING

Shortly after 9-11 there were fairly widespread news reports claiming very substantial financial transactions operating ahead of 9-11 in order to take profitable advantage of the events soon to unfold. Such a practice is known

as “insider trading”, trading in financial instruments when having inside knowledge which the public does not know. Insider trading in expectation of a stock price decline resulting from a tragic event can take the form of (a) selling stocks one owns before the anticipated sharp decline occurs, (b) “short-selling” stocks anticipated to fall, but not otherwise owned (i.e., “selling” today stocks not owned – through arrangement with a broker – and buying the stock later to “cover” the short position, hopefully at a substantially lower price), or (c) engaging in “put option” trading in which the person expects to buy a stock at a low price at a later date while simultaneously exercising an option to sell that same stock for the contracted higher price, of course, within the term period for that option. **Table 3** provides pertinent data for the parent companies of American Airlines (AMR) and United Airlines (UAL).

The insider trading commentary after 9-11 was dramatic indeed, reproduced, for example, by [Hence \(2002\)](#) and [Ruppert \(2004, pp. 238–240\)](#). [Hence \(2002\)](#) reports such statements as:

According to Phil Erlanger, a former Senior Technical Analyst with Fidelity, and founder of a Florida firm that tracks short selling and options trading, insiders made off with billions (not mere millions) in profits by betting on the fall of stocks they knew would tumble in the aftermath of the WTC and Pentagon attacks. Andreas von Bulow, a former member of the German Parliament, once responsible for the oversight of the German secret services, estimated that profits by insider traders were \$15 billion ... Jonathan Winer, an ABC News Consultant said ‘it’s absolutely unprecedented to see cases of insider trading covering the entire world from Japan to the US to North America to Europe’ ... ‘I saw put-call numbers higher than I’ve ever seen in 10 years of following the markets, particularly the options markets,’ said John Kinnucan, principal of Broadband Research.

From [Ruppert](#), two other commentaries can be reproduced: According to *CBS News*, there was, unlike other airline stocks, “a jump in UAL put options 90 times (not 90 percent) above normal between September 6 and

Table 3. Closing Prices P and Trading Volumes ($\times 1000$) V on AMR and UAL.

<i>Stock</i>	8-31	9-4	9-5	9-6	9-7	9-10	9-17	9-21
AMR P	\$31.99	32.28	31.99	31.15	30.15	29.70	18.00	17.90
AMR V	500	813	753	842	1,661	1,314	17,163	5,362
UAL P	\$32.68	32.67	32.70	31.75	31.55	30.82	17.50	17.13
UAL V	224	372	479	568	662	610	10,020	2,163

September 10, and 285 times higher than average on the Thursday before the attack ... [as well as] a jump in American Airlines put options 60 times (not 60 percent) above normal on the day before the attacks”. According to Ratigan of the *Bloomberg Business News*, “this could very well be insider trading at the worst, most horrific, most evil use you’ve ever seen in your entire life”.

The principal source for historical data on options is OptionMetrics and the data before 9-11 are reported in Table 4. Ruppert got onto this insider trading story from an article by Radlauer (2001) in the week after 9-11 which included trading data (Ruppert, 2004, p. 248). Radlauer’s data are the same as reported by some others, e.g. Blackhurst (2001). Berthelsen’s (2001) data are different. Yet, all these reports show larger put volumes than are provided by the data from OptionMetrics. Data in Mathewson and Nol (2001) and in a later article by O’Meara (2002) are the same as OptionMetrics.⁶ In any case, profit figures in the several millions mentioned by O’Meara would not seem to suggest profits in the billion-plus dollar range,⁷ even after considering other stocks and other trading activity around the world (gold, oil, and Treasury bonds have all been suggested for investigation, in addition to individual stocks and the general stock market).

The 9-11 Commission lamely deposed of the issue of insider trading in one sentence: “Exhaustive investigations by the Securities and Exchange Commission, FBI, and other agencies have uncovered no evidence that anyone with advance knowledge of the attacks profited through securities transactions” (p. 172). That sentence did, however, have an elaborating footnote to it, which should be reproduced fully:

Highly publicized allegations of insider trading in advance of 9/11 generally rest on reports of unusual pre-9/11 trading activity in companies whose stock plummeted after the attacks. Some unusual trading did in fact occur, but each such trade proved to have an innocuous explanation. For example, the volume of put options – investments that pay off only when a stock drops in price – surged in the parent companies of United Airlines on September 6 and American Airlines on September 10 – highly suspicious trading on its face. Yet, further investigation has revealed that the trading had no connection with 9/11. A single U.S.-based institutional investor with no conceivable ties to al-Qaeda purchased 95 percent of the UAL puts on September 6 as part of a trading strategy that also included buying 115,000 shares of American on September 10. Similarly, much of the seemingly suspicious trading in American on September 10 was traced to a specific U.S.-based options trading newsletter, faxed to its subscribers on Sunday, September 9, which recommended these trades. These examples typify the evidence examined by the investigation. The SEC and the FBI, aided by other agencies and the securities industry, devoted enormous resources to investigating this issue, including securing the cooperation of many foreign governments. These investigators have found that the apparently suspicious consistently proved innocuous. Joseph Cella interview (Sept. 16, 2003; May 7, 2004; May 10–11, 2004); FBI briefing (Aug. 15, 2003); SEC

Table 4. Put-Option Volumes on AMR and UAL.

Date	AMR \$30 or Any Contract Expiring 9-22	AMR \$30 or Any Contract Expiring 10-20	AMR Totals Any Expiration	UAL \$30 or Any Contract Expiring 9-22	UAL \$30 or Any Contract Expiring 10-20	UAL Totals Any Expiration
9-4-01	0/0	55/55	133	0/0	0/0	105
9-5-01	20/20	15/15	131	0/506 [#]	10/10	605
9-6-01	0/0	23/23	98	0/0	2,000 ^{a/} 2,075	2,075 ^b
9-7-01	187 [*] /297	125 ^{**} /125	485	96/96	10/10	606 ^{c,##}
9-10-01	67 [*] /67	1,535 ^{a,**} / 1,799	2,282 ^{d,***}	0/0	100/100	186 ^e

Note: These data represent not only purchases of put options, but sometimes also sales. Examining changes in open interest can aid understanding what is behind the volume data, while also considering possible exercising of options. Unless otherwise indicated, all data in the table for contracts expiring 9-22 or 10-20 are purchases.

Source: OptionMetrics.

^aAlso, Mathewson and Nol (2001).

^bAlso, O'Meara (2002).

^cAs discussed in footnote 6, Radlauer (2001), followed by Blackhurst (2001), reported 4,744 for September 6 and 7 together; after subtracting 2,075 for September 6 alone, this would imply 2,669 for September 7, far higher than OptionMetrics reports.

^dAlso, O'Meara (2002). As discussed in footnote 6, Radlauer (2001), followed by Blackhurst (2001), both reported 4,516.

^eAlso, O'Meara (2002, sidebar). There is an unfortunate duplication in the sidebar for 2001 of "previous day" put volumes for AMR as if the same for UAL also (606 being correct for UAL on 9-7, not 485).

^{*}For 9-7, at most 40 could be sales; for 9-10, at most 47 could be sales.

^{**}For 9-7, at most 35 could be sales; for 9-10, at most 111 could be sales.

^{***}At \$25, volume expiring on 11-17 was 155; at \$30, volume expiring on 2-19-02 was 96.

[#]At \$40, volume was 500, of which at most 115 could be sales. An open interest of 845 put contracts at the beginning of 9-6 trading, while 465 for 9-7 with no trading volume on 9-6, implies 380 contracts were exercised on 9-6. (At \$35, a volume of 6 appears to be a sale).

^{##}At \$30, volume expiring on 11-17 was 100 (at most 55 of which could be sales), expiring on 1-19-02 was 62 (of which at most 20 could be sales), expiring on 1-17-04 was 334 (of which at most 17 could be sales).

memo, Division of Enforcement to SEC Chair and Commissioners, "Pre-September 11, 2001 Trading Review", May 15, 2002; Ken Breen interview (Apr. 23, 2004); Ed G. interview (Feb. 3, 2004) (Commission, p. 499, fn. 130, including the citations, but not made available to the public).

This footnote downgrades the problem to be investigated as to be only "some unusual trading".

Analyzing the Commission's representation, Griffin (2005, pp. 52–57) explains logical problems with the footnote, noting also the delimitation to the sole question as to whether al-Qaeda was involved, i.e., the Commission's reference to a "single U.S.-based institutional investor with no conceivable ties to al-Qaeda". Suppose this investor were an insider to the events to follow, but was not connected to al-Qaeda? Ruppert (2004, p. 243), with the acuteness of his own background as a Los Angeles police officer, noted a report by Winokur (2001) that the Securities and Exchange Commission probe behind the possibility of insider trading "effectively deputized hundreds, if not thousands, of key players in the private sector". Ruppert then points out that the SEC had, thereby, also made it illegal for these same persons to go public with any information they had, presumably with a legal force even beyond normal requirements of holding specific client information confidential.

In any case, we examine the Commission's footnote for the limited evidence provided. Two pieces of partial evidence are proffered: (a) An unnamed institutional investor who bought "95 percent of the UAL puts on September 6" purportedly related this purchase to a purchase of 115,000 American shares on 9-10-01, and (b) a "U.S.-based options trading newsletter" which, on 9-9-01, recommended to subscribers put options the next day on American (actually, AMR, the parent company). Beyond these two pieces of rather vague evidence, one is simply asked to take the Commission's word for it that an overall investigation led to the conclusion that the option trades were "innocuous".

Regarding the report of a newsletter recommendation to subscribers, considering the vast numbers of newsletters being put out, it is hardly a surprise to find one which made such a recommendation. The issue is whether this recommendation was unusual, whether opposite recommendations were or were not being made, and whether **these** subscribers were in fact heavily involved in AMR option trading on 9-10-01. Since a spokesperson for the Chicago Board of Option Exchange (CBOE) has said that information connecting persons to trades could be easily obtained as names and social security numbers associated with trades are immediately available, and that even transactions from offshore accounts can be traced (O'Meara, 2002), a simple check against a list of subscribers should not be either difficult nor unreportable. Furthermore, note that the option volume was already increasing the prior Friday before the newsletter came out. To such issues, the Commission is silent, claiming simply that the appropriate investigation was undertaken.

When the Commission says that one institutional investor bought “95 percent of the UAL puts on September 6” (2000 of 2075 on that date is actually 96%, but no matter), fortunately, we do have some other evidence regarding what must be meant. Arvedlund (2001) reported that, “one large UAL put order was sent to the bustling CBOE floor in the days prior to September 11 by a customer of Deutsche Bank ... the customer split that into chunks of 500 contracts each, directing each order to various exchanges around the country simultaneously, according to people familiar with the trade”. Arvedlund could be referring to a 500 trade at \$40 on 9-5 followed by additional trades at \$30 totaling 2,000 on 9-6; or else the order was actually for 2,000.⁸ The put buying of 2,000 UAL options at a \$30 strike price represented a \$6 million option. Now consider AMR stock trading on 9-10 mentioned by the Commission. The stock was priced just under \$30 throughout that day and trading volume was 1,314,000 (see Table 3). Therefore, 115,000 shares, purportedly bought by the same prior purchaser of UAL put options, represented 8.75% of total AMR volume with a cost for that one investor of just under \$3,450,000. This writer does not know what to make of this juxtaposition.

One issue so far left unexplored is put-option volumes relative to call-option volumes, calls providing the right to buy a stock during the term of a contract for a specified price. We could discuss this but there is no need, as we can more fruitfully skip to an important academic study on AMR and UAL option volumes and what that evidence suggests about insider trading before 9-11. It is based upon the relation of put to call volumes as well as upon simple put volumes.

The peer-reviewed study in the *Journal of Business* by Allen Poteshman (2006), “Unusual Option Market Activity and the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001”, trumps casual news remarks about whether the stock market, and/or airline stocks, were going down before 9-11 as an explanation for rising put-option purchases. It trumps whether this or that newsletter suggested one or another market strategy. In other words, it goes beyond anecdotal comments and compares option behavior in specific stocks (or stock indexes) to measures of the historical patterns in these options. The study offers more general research into identifying insider trading, while also exploring the specific case of AMR and UAL stocks for 9-11. It is a complicated statistical exercise but will be described here as simply as possible, absent professional jargon, with particular attention to the evidence regarding 9-11. The basic data, provided to the author Poteshman by the CBOE, are open interest at the end of each trading day,

for non-market makers, compared to the prior day. Open interest here refers to outstanding contractual positions in an option and, in contrast to our examination above, is undifferentiated according to specific strike prices or specific expiration dates. His result is total net volume of put and call option trades each day in the specific stock or stock index, undertaken by non-market makers.

Poteshman then offers three measures. The first is close to a traditional calculation of the ratio of put volume to call volume. The second measure takes account of the fact that purchase of a put option (similarly for a call option) needs, rather obviously, to be distinguished from a sale of a put option (again, similarly for a call), yet the traditional ratio simply sums purchases and sales before arriving at the ratio. For example, total puts on AMR on 9-10 were 2,282 (see Table 4), while calls were 374, for a traditional put-call ratio of 6.10, yet those 2,282 puts could include some sales as well as purchases, as could those 374 calls.⁹ Lest one thinks that the purchase of an option is exactly matched by the sale of the option, Poteshman is using data only on non-market makers, i.e., those who are buying and selling from the market makers¹⁰ (not those market makers, correspondingly, selling and buying). The third measure examines only the behavior of put-purchase volumes, since put purchases are the most obvious technique for insider trading before 9-11. Poteshman (2006) undertakes his statistical analysis both unconditioned upon other factors, and conditioned upon “total option volume, the return on the underlying asset, the abnormal trading volume of the underlying asset, and the return on the overall stock market”, using both classical linear regression as well as quantile regression, developed by other researchers as a generalization of median regression. To get to the quick of our concern, it is the purchasing of put options on AA on 9-10 where Poteshman finds, using his third measure, the most statistical evidence of insider trading; these purchases had only one percent probability of occurring simply randomly. Put purchases on UA on 9-6 also provide evidence of insider trading.

We have focused on option trading in AA and UA. But there is a lot more to be discussed in a more complete study. For example, Mathewson and Nol (2001) report:

At Morgan Stanley, trading in October \$45 put options jumped to 2,157 contracts between Sept. 6 and Sept. 10, almost 27 times a previous daily average of 27 contracts. Options to sell Merrill Lynch shares for \$45 apiece before Sept. 22 had 12,215 contracts traded from Sept. 5 to Sept. 10, 12 times the earlier daily average of 252 ... Other brokerage and insurance companies where options trading surged include: Citigroup Inc., which has estimated that its Travelers insurance unit may pay \$500 million in claims

from the World Trade Center attack. It had a jump in trading of October options that profit if shares fall below \$40 apiece. Almost 14,000 of those options contracts were traded from Sept. 6 to Sept. 10 – about 45 times the previous daily average ... Bear Stearns & Cos., where investors traded 3,979 contracts from Sept. 6 to Sept. 10 on September options that profit if shares fall below \$50. The previous average volume for those options was 22 contracts ... Marsh & McLennan Cos., the biggest insurance brokerage, which had 1,700 employees working in the World Trade Center. Traders on Sept. 10 exchanged 1,209 contracts on options that profit if company shares fall below \$90 through the third week of September. Previously, 13 contracts had traded on an average day.

The Center for Global Research has a web page devoted to stories on insider trading¹¹. It links, for example, to an article in *USA Today* referring to high levels of short interest in UAL, rather than put options:

Phil Erlanger, who tracks short interest and options on www.erlangersqueeze.com, says that level of short interest in UAL is unprecedented. Compared with the 12-month average daily trading volume, UAL's short interest ratio reached 11.1 days. It was 7.8 in August. That means the number of shares sold short equaled more than 11 trading days of UAL's average volume. That ratio stood at 1.1 last year and has been building for 12 months. "You haven't seen this kind of short ratio in years", says Erlanger. (Farrell, 2001)

Yet, there are also concerns outside of those directed toward American and United Airlines, Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, and others mentioned. Gasparino and Zuckerman (2001) reported large purchases of 5-year U.S. treasury bonds before 9-11, including one large purchase of \$5 billion (sic). And, not to be dismissed is Ruppert's (2004, pp. 243–244) noting of illegal, last-minute transactions on the WTC computers, minutes before 9-11, and his report of a Deutsche Bank employee who survived 9-11 and contacted him:

According to the employee, about five minutes before the attack the entire Deutsche Bank computer system had been taken over by something external that no one in the office recognized and every file was downloaded at lighting speed to an unknown location. The employee, afraid for his life, lost many of his friends on September 11, and he was well aware of the role that the Deutsche Bank subsidiary Alex. Brown had played in insider trading.

We are not surprised that the Commission avoided any and all such types of information.

Nor are we surprised that the Commission avoided another story of Ruppert's (2004, p. 245; first published on October 9, 2001): A. B. Krongard, Executive Director of the CIA since a Presidential appointment in March 2001, having beforehand in 1998 been counsel to the CIA Director George Tenet, had earlier been Chairman of the investment bank Alex. Brown. When that investment bank merged with Banker's Trust to become in 1997 Banker's

Trust Alex. Brown, Krongard's position was to oversee "private client relations" (an operation connected to laundering of drug money, says Ruppert). In 1999, Banker's Trust was bought by Deutsche Bank, the latter becoming the largest bank in Europe and, coincidentally (?), the same bank which handled that large UAL put option reported by Arvedlund (2001).

4. CAPITALISTS, CRYING ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK

The Pentagon was damaged on 9-11, although in an area being reconstructed and mostly vacant of personnel. Much more horrific, seven buildings of the WTC crashed to the ground by conscious demolition or as a reaction to other collapses, with almost three thousand persons dying immediately and tens of thousands suffering from the after-effects of the dust particules thrown into the air. Common opinion regarding the choice by the terrorists of the Towers for attack is that the destruction would thereby be maximized and that they represent major symbols of American capitalism. However, additional factors require consideration.

Regarding the Towers, Hufschmid (2002, p. 92) claims rumors that some N.Y.C. officials wanted to get rid of the Towers. Yet, the Towers still contained asbestos and would have had to be removed before a demolition could take place, a very costly operation, perhaps more so than the cost of the buildings themselves. If supportive of "more than one motive" (Hufschmid) for the destruction of 9-11, this factor as a single motive seems quite far-fetched. In any case, the WTC complex had to be cleaned up, and we know that the principal no-bid contract went to Controlled Demolition, Inc. The WTC will be re-built; stay tuned for the awarding of contracts.

Strikingly, the Towers were transferred, via a 99-year lease on July 24, 2001 (weeks before 9-11), from the public hands of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to the primary private interests of Silverstein Properties, headed by Larry Silverstein. The WTC 4-6 were also included, and Silverstein Properties was already the developer and lease holder of the WTC 7. Some more detail is available in Paul and Hoffman (2004), such as the generous insurance coverage which stopped lease payments on 9-11-01 but not the high compensation for supposed loss.

These tidbits of information wet our appetites for learning more, but are too voluminous for one chapter and would require much separate investigative work.

NOTES

1. Press reports about all these flights often refer to “departure time”, but that could mean scheduled time, gate departure, or wheels-off.

2. Holmgren (2003) discusses in detail how the list of AA 11 passengers moved around in being reported in the press; yet the Commission did not provide a definitive list.

3. Actually 135 were shown as unavailable but as many as 28 of them could have been blocked to be used only on full flights (seats in the last row and beside exits).

4. Regarding AA 77, a comparable flight out of Dulles was scheduled on 9-13-05, 30 min later, and was rather more available than the 2005 AA flight out of Boston but it competed against three UA flights (7:05, 8:40, and 9:15 a.m.), rather than two on 9-11. On the other hand, UA 93 on 9-11-01 represented a schedule change starting just a few days earlier, i.e., 9-5-01, and could well be an important factor in explaining its low seating.

5. A survey is available at <http://team8plus.org/content.php?article.8>.

6. Radlauer, described as “qualified as a floor trader for the New York Futures Exchange”, does not describe his data source, while reporting that “between September 6 and 7, the Chicago Board Options Exchange saw purchases of 4,744 put options on UA, but only 396 call options”, although “there was no news at that time to justify so much ‘left-handed’ trading”. Similarly, “on September 10, 4,516 put options on AA were bought on the Chicago exchange, compared to only 748 calls. Again, there was no news at that point to justify this imbalance”. He also reports that “no similar trading in other airlines occurred on the Chicago exchange in the days immediately preceding Black Tuesday”. In any case, Radlauer’s call figures are **exactly twice** OptionMetrics data and his put data are not far from twice; this suggests that Radlauer was using Options Clearing Corp. (OCC) data which are exactly double the number of contracts since the purchase and sale sides of contracts are each counted in the data. To account for this, OptionMetrics divides OCC numbers by a factor of two.

Berthelsen (2001), using OCC data, reported similar put-volume numbers as Radlauer for AMR (4,556 to be precise) but larger numbers for UAL: “Investors this year have on average bought fewer than 200 put contracts per day on UAL stock. By contrast, on Sept. 6 investors bought 3,150 contracts, followed by 2,194 purchases the next day”. After being informed of the data discrepancy with OptionMetrics, Berthelsen wrote this author, “I was confident in the data at the time and this is the first I have ever heard different numbers on the put purchases. From what I recall the information came from an options clearinghouse, and I also talked with a Chicago floor trader who took the order, who never suggested the information was wrong”. (private communication, October 7, 2005).

In sum, there seems to be a lack of accurate knowledge by some writing in the press regarding the data.

7. O’Meara does not exhibit careful knowledge of the option market, although her figures are not far off. That is, she forgets that the price when the contract is “put” would be the strike price of \$30, not \$31, when she writes “with United there were 2,075 put options, with each put option representing 100 shares of stock. So someone had control of 207,500 shares of United. The stock dropped from \$31 to \$18, so

that's a \$13 profit, or \$2.7 million on the put options". On the other hand, Ruppert (2004, pp. 247–248) criticizes her for focusing on put volumes rather than put-call ratios, while results to be reported below provide evidence of insider trading on precisely the put-volume basis, rather than the ratios.

8. Arvedlund claimed, regarding AMR, that "heaviest trading was not in the cheapest, short-dated puts", yet an examination of Table 4 does not support such a statement. While Arvedlund also said that "some of the options have yet to be exercised [by early October 2001], possibly because those customers' accounts have been frozen", by the day before expiration of the contracts, open interest on puts expiring October 20 was down to 423, and virtually all of those quite likely contracted after September 11.

9. In fact, open interest on all AMR puts increased by 1996. This could be the result of 2,282 put purchases, no sales, with 286 contracts exercised; or 2,139 put purchases and 143 sales, no contracts exercised; or numbers in between. Open interest in calls declined by 150, and a similar exercise could calculate as many as 374 call purchases (no sales, 524 contracts exercised), or as few as 112 purchases (262 sales, no contracts exercised). Therefore, put-call purchase ratios could be as high as $2,282/112 = 20.4$ or as low as $2,139/374 = 5.72$.

10. Market makers are those licensed by the exchanges to handle the transactions, including setting pricing and being obligated to honor contracts.

11. www.cooperativeresearch.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=complete_911_timeline&before_9/11=insiderTrading

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THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER: WHY THE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT CANNOT BE TRUE

David Ray Griffin

ABSTRACT

I argue that the official story about the collapses of the Twin Towers and building 7 of the World Trade Center, according to which the collapses were caused by fire – combined, in the case of the Twin Towers, with the effects of the airplane impacts – cannot be true, for two major reasons. One reason is that fire has never, except allegedly three times on 9/11, caused the total collapse of steel-frame high-rise buildings. All (other) such collapses have been produced by the use of explosives in the procedure known as “controlled demolition.” The other major problem is that the collapses of all three buildings had at least 11 features that would be expected if, and only if, explosives had been used.

I also show the importance of the recently released of 9/11 Oral Histories recorded by the New York Fire Department. With regard to the Twin Towers, many of the firefighters and medical workers said they observed multiple explosions and other phenomena indicative of controlled demolition. With regard to building 7, many testimonies point to widespread foreknowledge that the building was going to collapse, and some of

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 79–122
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23003-7

the testimonies contradict the official story that this anticipation of the building's collapse was based on objective indications. These testimonies further strengthen the already virtually conclusive case that all three buildings were brought down by explosives.

I conclude by calling on the New York Times, which got the 9/11 Oral Histories released, now to complete the task of revealing the truth about 9/11.

In *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about 9/11 and the Bush Administration* (Griffin, 2004), I summarized dozens of facts and reports that cast doubt on the official story about 9/11. Then in *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions* (Griffin, 2005a), I discussed the way these various facts and reports were treated by the 9/11 Commission, namely, by distorting or simply omitting them. I have also taken this big-picture approach, with its cumulative argument, in my previous essays and lectures on 9/11 (Griffin, 2005b, d).¹ This approach, which shows every aspect of the official story to be problematic, provides the most effective challenge to the official story.

But this way of presenting the evidence has one great limitation, especially when used in lectures and essays: It means that the treatment of every particular issue must be quite brief, hence superficial. People can, thereby, be led to suspect that a more thorough treatment of any particular issue might show the official story to be plausible after all.

In the present essay, I focus on one question: why the Twin Towers and building 7 of the World Trade Center (WTC) collapsed. One advantage of this focus, besides the fact that it allows us to go into considerable detail, is that the destruction of the WTC provides one of the best windows into the truth about 9/11. Another advantage of this focus is that it will allow us to look at revelations contained in the 9/11 Oral Histories, which were recorded by the New York Fire Department shortly after 9/11 but released to the public only in August of 2005.

I will begin with the question of why the Twin Towers collapsed, then raise the same question about building 7.

1. THE COLLAPSE OF THE TWIN TOWERS

Shortly after 9/11, President Bush advised people not to tolerate “outrageous conspiracy theories about the attacks of 11 September” (Bush, 2001).² Philip Zelikow, who directed the work of the 9/11 Commission, has likewise

warned against “outrageous conspiracy theories” (Hansen, 2005). What do these men mean by this expression? They cannot mean that we should reject *all* conspiracy theories about 9/11, because the government’s own account is a conspiracy theory, with the conspirators all being members of al-Qaeda. They mean only that we should reject *outrageous* theories.

But what distinguishes an outrageous theory from a non-outrageous one? This is one of the central questions in the philosophy of science. When confronted by rival theories – let’s say Neo-Darwinian Evolution and Intelligent Design – scientists and philosophers of science ask which theory is better and why. The mark of a good theory is that it can explain, in a coherent way, all or at least most of the relevant facts and is not contradicted by any of them. A bad theory is one that is contradicted by some of the relevant facts. An *outrageous* theory would be one that is contradicted by virtually *all* the relevant facts.

With this definition in mind, let us look at the official theory about the Twin Towers, which says that they collapsed because of the combined effect of the impact of the airplanes and the resulting fires. The report put out by FEMA said: “The structural damage sustained by each tower from the impact, combined with the ensuing fires, resulted in the total collapse of each building” (FEMA, 2002).³ This theory clearly belongs in the category of outrageous theories, because it is contradicted by virtually all the relevant facts. Although this statement may seem extreme, I will explain why it is not.

1.1. No Prior Collapse Induced by Fire

The official theory is rendered implausible by two major problems. The first is the simple fact that fire has never – *prior to* or *after* 9/11 – caused steel-frame high-rise buildings to collapse. Defenders of the official story seldom if ever mention this simple fact. Indeed, the supposedly definitive report put out by NIST – the National Institute for Standards and Technology (2005) – even implies that fire-induced collapses of large steel-frame buildings are normal events (Hoffman, 2005).⁴ Far from being normal, however, such collapses have never occurred, except for the alleged cases of 9/11.

Defenders of the official theory, of course, say that the collapses were caused not only simply by the fire, but the fire combined with the damage caused by the airliners. The towers, however, were designed to withstand the impact of airliners about the same size as Boeing 767s.⁵ Hyman Brown, the construction manager of the Twin Towers, said: “They were over-designed to withstand almost anything, including hurricanes, ... bombings and an

airplane hitting [them]” (Bollyn, 2001). And even Thomas Eagar, an MIT professor of materials engineering who supports the official theory, says that the impact of the airplanes would not have been significant, because “the number of columns lost on the initial impact was not large and the loads were shifted to remaining columns in this highly redundant structure” (Eagar & Musso, 2001, pp. 8–11). Likewise, the NIST Report, in discussing how the impact of the planes contributed to the collapse, focuses primarily on the claim that the planes dislodged a lot of the fireproofing from the steel.⁶

The official theory of the collapse, therefore, is essentially a fire theory, so it cannot be emphasized too much that fire has *never* caused large steel-frame buildings to collapse – never, whether *before* 9/11, or *after* 9/11, or anywhere in the world *on* 9/11 except allegedly New York City – *never*.

One might say, of course, that there is a first time for everything, and that a truly extraordinary fire might induce a collapse. Let us examine this idea. What would count as an extraordinary fire? Given the properties of steel, a fire would need to be very hot, very big, and very long-lasting. But the fires in the towers did not have even one of these characteristics, let alone all three.

There have been claims, to be sure, that the fires were very hot. Some television specials claimed that the towers collapsed because the fire was hot enough to melt the steel. For example, an early BBC News special quoted Hyman Brown as saying: “steel melts, and 24,000 gallons of aviation fluid melted the steel.” Another man, presented as a structural engineer, said: “It was the fire that killed the buildings. There’s nothing on earth that could survive those temperatures with that amount of fuel burning The columns would have melted” (Barter, 2001).⁷

These claims, however, are absurd. Steel does not even begin to melt until it reaches almost 2,800°F.⁸ And yet open fires fueled by hydrocarbons, such as kerosene – which is what jet fuel is – can at most rise to 1,700°F, which is almost 1,100°F below the melting point of steel.⁹ We can, accordingly, dismiss the claim that the towers collapsed because their steel columns melted.¹⁰

Most defenders of the official theory, in fact, do not make this absurd claim. They say merely that the fire heated the steel up to the point where it lost so much of its strength that it buckled.¹¹ For example, Thomas Eagar, saying that steel loses 80 percent of its strength when it is heated to 1,300°F, argues that this is what happened. But for even this claim to be plausible, the fires would have still had to be pretty hot.

But they were not. Claims have been made, as we have seen, about the jet fuel. But much of it burned up very quickly in the enormous fireballs produced when the planes hit the buildings, and rest was gone within

10 minutes,¹² after which the flames died down. Photographs of the towers 15 minutes after they were struck show few flames and lots of black smoke, a sign that the fires were oxygen-starved. Thomas Eagar, recognizing this fact, says that the fires were “probably only about 1,200 or 1,300°F” (Eagar, 2002).

There are reasons to believe, moreover, that the fires were not even that hot. As photographs show, the fires did not break windows or even spread much beyond their points of origin (Hufschmid, 2002, p. 40). This photographic evidence is supported by scientific studies carried out by NIST, which found that of the 16 perimeter columns examined, “only three columns had evidence that the steel reached temperatures above 250°C [482°F],” and no evidence that any of the core columns had reached even those temperatures (2005, p. 88).

NIST (2005) says that it “did not generalize these results, since the examined columns represented only 3 percent of the perimeter columns and 1 percent of the core columns from the fire floors.” That only such a tiny percent of the columns was available was due, of course, to the fact that government officials had most of the steel immediately sold and shipped off. In any case, NIST’s findings on the basis of this tiny percent of the columns are not irrelevant: They mean that any speculations that some of the core columns reached much higher temperatures would be just that – pure speculation not backed up by any empirical evidence.

Moreover, even if the fire had reached 1,300°F, as Eagar supposes, that does not mean that any of the steel would have reached that temperature. Steel is an excellent conductor of heat. Put a fire to one part of a long bar of steel and the heat will quickly diffuse to the other parts and also to any other pieces of steel to which that bar is connected.¹³

For fires to have heated up some of the steel columns to anywhere close to their own temperature, they would have needed to be very big, relative to the size of the buildings and the amount of steel in them. The towers, of course, were huge and had an enormous amount of steel. A small, localized fire of 1,300°F would never have heated any of the steel columns even close to that temperature, because the heat would have been quickly dispersed throughout the building.

Some defenders of the official story have claimed that the fires were indeed very big, turning the buildings into “towering infernos.” But all the evidence counts against this claim, especially with regard to the south tower, which collapsed first. This tower was struck between floors 78 and 84, so that region is where the fire would have been the biggest. And yet Brian Clark, a survivor, said that when he got down to the 80th floor: “You could

see through the wall and the cracks and see flames ... just licking up, not a roaring inferno, just quiet flames licking up and smoke sort of eking through the wall.”¹⁴ Likewise, one of the fire chiefs who had reached the 78th floor found only “two isolated pockets of fire.”¹⁵

The north tower, to be sure, did have fires that were big enough and hot enough to cause many people to jump to their deaths. But as anyone with a fireplace grate or a pot-belly stove knows, fire that will not harm steel or even iron will burn human flesh. Also in many cases it may have been more the smoke than the heat that led people to jump.

In any case, the fires, to weaken the steel columns, would have needed to be not only very big and very hot but also very long-lasting.¹⁶ The public was told that the towers had such fires, with CNN saying that “very intense” fires “burned for a long time.”¹⁷ But they did not. The north tower collapsed an hour and 42 minutes after it was struck; the south tower collapsed after only 56 minutes.

To see how ludicrous is the claim that the short-lived fires in the towers could have induced structural collapse, we can compare them with some other fires. In 1988, a fire in the First Interstate Bank Building in Los Angeles raged for 3.5 h and gutted 5 of this building’s 62 floors, but there was no significant structural damage (FEMA, 1988). In 1991, a huge fire in Philadelphia’s One Meridian Plaza lasted for 18 h and gutted 8 of the building’s 38 floors, but, said the FEMA report, although “[b]eams and girders sagged and twisted ... under severe fire exposures ... , the columns continued to support their loads without obvious damage” (FEMA, 1991). In 2004, a fire in a 50-story building in Caracas raged for 17 h, completely gutting the building’s top 20 floors, and yet it did not collapse (Nieto, 2004). And yet we are supposed to believe that a 56-minute fire caused the south tower to collapse.

Unlike the fires in the towers, moreover, the fires in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Caracas were hot enough to break windows.

Another important comparison is afforded by a series of experiments run in Great Britain in the mid-1990s to see what kind of damage could be done to steel-frame buildings by subjecting them to extremely hot, all-consuming fires that lasted for many hours. FEMA, having reviewed those experiments, said: “Despite the temperature of the steel beams reaching 800–900°C (1,500–1,700°F) in three of the tests ... , no collapse was observed in any of the six experiments” (1988, Appendix A).

These comparisons bring out the absurdity of NIST’s claim that the towers collapsed because the planes knocked the fireproofing off the steel columns. Fireproofing provides protection for only a few hours, so the steel

in the buildings in Philadelphia and Caracas would have been directly exposed to raging fires for 14 or more hours, and yet this steel did not buckle. NIST claims, nevertheless, that the steel in the south tower buckled because it was directly exposed to flames for 56 minutes.¹⁸

A claim made by some defenders of the official theory is to speculate that there was something about the Twin Towers that made them uniquely vulnerable to fire. But these speculations are not backed up by any evidence. And, as Norman Glover, has pointed out: “[A]lmost all large buildings will be the location for a major fire in their useful life. No major high-rise building has ever collapsed from fire. The WTC was the location for such a fire in 1975; however, the building survived with minor damage and was repaired and returned to service” (Glover, 2002).

1.2. Multiple Evidence of Controlled Demolition

There is a reverse truth to the fact that, aside from the alleged cases of 9/11, fire has never caused large steel-frame buildings to collapse. This reverse truth is that every previous total collapse has been caused by the procedure known as “controlled demolition,” in which explosives capable of cutting steel have been placed in crucial places throughout the building and then set off in a particular order. Just from knowing that the towers collapsed, therefore, the natural assumption would be that they were brought down by explosives.

This *a priori* assumption is, moreover, supported by an empirical examination of the particular *nature* of the collapses. Here we come to the second major problem with the official theory, namely, that the collapses had at least 11 features that would be expected if, and only if, explosives were used. I will briefly describe these 11 features.

Sudden Onset. In controlled demolition, the onset of the collapse is sudden. One moment, the building is perfectly motionless; the next moment, it suddenly begins to collapse. But steel, when heated, does not suddenly buckle or break. So in fire-induced collapses – if we had any examples of such – the onset would be gradual. Horizontal beams and trusses would begin to sag; vertical columns, if subjected to strong forces, would begin to bend. But as videos of the towers show,¹⁹ there were no signs of bending or sagging, even on the floors just above the damage caused by the impact of the planes. The buildings were perfectly motionless up to the moment they began their collapse.

Straight Down. The most important thing in a controlled demolition of a tall building close to other buildings is that it come straight down, into, or at least close to, its own footprint, so that it does not harm the other buildings. The whole art or science of controlled demolition is oriented primarily around this goal. As Mark Loizeaux, the president of Controlled Demolition, Inc., has explained, “to bring [a building] down as we want, so ... no other structure is harmed,” the demolition must be “completely planned,” using “the right explosive [and] the right pattern of laying the charges” (Else, 2004).²⁰ If the 110-story Twin Towers had fallen over, they would have caused an enormous amount of damage to buildings covering many city blocks. But the towers came straight down. Accordingly, the official theory, by implying that fire produced collapses that perfectly mimicked the collapses that have otherwise been produced only by precisely placed explosives, requires a miracle.²¹

Almost Free-Fall Speed. Buildings brought down by controlled demolition collapse at almost free-fall speed. This can occur because the supports for the lower floors are destroyed, so that when the upper floors come down, they encounter no resistance. The fact that the collapses of the towers mimicked this feature of controlled demolition was mentioned indirectly by *The 9/11 Commission Report*, which said that the “South Tower collapsed in 10 seconds” (Kean & Hamilton, 2004, p. 305).²² The authors of the report evidently thought that the rapidity of this collapse did not conflict with the official theory, known as the “pancake” theory. According to this theory, the floors above the floors that were weakened by the impact of the airliner fell on the floor below, which started a chain reaction, so that the floors “pancaked” all the way down.

But if that is what happened, the lower floors, with all their steel and concrete, would have provided resistance. The upper floors could not have fallen through them at the same speed as they would fall through air. However, the videos of the collapses show that the rubble falling inside the building’s profile falls at the same speed as the rubble outside²³ (Jones, 2006). As Dave Heller (2005) explains:

the floors could not have been pancaking. The buildings fell too quickly. The floors must all have been falling simultaneously to reach the ground in such a short amount of time. But how? ... In [the method known as controlled demolition], each floor of a building is destroyed at just the moment the floor above is about to strike it. Thus, the floors fall simultaneously, and in virtual freefall.

Total Collapse. The official theory is even more decisively ruled out by the fact that the collapses were *total*: These 110-story buildings collapsed into piles of rubble only a few stories high. How was that possible? The core of each tower contained 47 massive steel box columns.²⁴ According to the pancake theory, the horizontal steel supports broke free from the vertical columns. But if that is what had happened, the 47 core columns would have still been standing. *The 9/11 Commission* came up with a bold solution to this problem. It simply denied the existence of the 47 core columns, saying: “The interior core of the buildings was a hollow steel shaft, in which elevators and stairwells were grouped” (Kean & Hamilton, 2004, p. 541, n. 1). Voila! With no 47 core columns, the main problem is removed.

The NIST Report handled this most difficult problem by claiming that when the floors collapsed, they pulled on the columns, causing the perimeter columns to become unstable. This instability then increased the gravity load on the core columns, which had been weakened by tremendously hot fires in the core, which, NIST claims, reached 1,832°F, and this combination of factors somehow produced “global collapse” (NIST, 2005, pp. 28, 143).

This theory faces two problems. First, NIST’s claim about tremendously hot fires in the core is completely unsupported by evidence. As we saw earlier, its own studies found no evidence that any of the core columns had reached temperatures of even 482°F (250°C), so its theory involves a purely speculative addition of over 1,350°F.²⁵ Second, even if this sequence of events had occurred, NIST provides no explanation as to why it would have produced global – that is, total – collapse. The NIST Report asserts that “column failure” occurred in the core as well as the perimeter columns. But this remains a bare assertion. There is no plausible explanation of why the columns would have broken or even buckled, so as to produce global collapse at virtually free-fall speed, even if they had reached such temperatures.²⁶

Sliced Steel. In controlled demolitions of steel-frame buildings, explosives are used to slice the steel columns and beams into pieces. A consultant for Controlled Demolition, Inc., has said of RDX, one of the commonly used high explosives, that it slices steel like a “razor blade through a tomato.” The steel is, moreover, not merely sliced; it is sliced into manageable lengths. As Controlled Demolition, Inc., says in its publicity: “Our DREXS™ systems ... segment steel components into pieces matching the lifting capacity of the available equipment.”²⁷

The collapses of the Twin Towers, it seems, somehow managed to mimic this feature of controlled demolitions as well. Jim Hoffman (2004), after

studying various photos of the collapse site, said that much of the steel seemed to be “chopped up into ... sections that could be easily loaded onto the equipment that was cleaning up Ground Zero.”²⁸

Pulverization of Concrete and other Materials. Another feature of controlled demolition is the production of a lot of dust, because explosives powerful enough to slice steel will pulverize concrete and most other non-metallic substances into tiny particles. And, Hoffman (2003) reports, “nearly all of the non-metallic constituents of the towers were pulverized into fine power.”²⁹ That observation was also made by Colonel John O’Dowd of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “At the World Trade Center sites,” he told the History Channel, “it seemed like everything was pulverized” (History Channel, 2002).

This fact creates a problem for the official theory, according to which the only energy available was the gravitational energy. This energy would have been sufficient to break most of the concrete into fairly small pieces. But it would not have been anywhere close to the amount of energy needed to turn the concrete and virtually all the non-metallic contents of the buildings into tiny particles of dust.

Dust Clouds. Yet another common feature of controlled demolitions is the production of dust clouds, which result when explosions eject the dust from the building with great energy. And, as one can see by comparing videos on the Web, the collapses of the towers produced clouds that are very similar to those produced by controlled demolitions of other structures, such as Seattle’s Kingdome. The only difference is that the clouds produced during the collapses of the towers were proportionally much bigger.³⁰

The question of the source of the needed energy again arises. Hoffman (2003), focusing on the expansion of the north tower’s dust cloud, calculates that the energy required simply for this expansion – ignoring the energy needed to slice the steel and pulverize the concrete and other materials – exceeded by at least 10 times the gravitational energy available.

The official account, therefore, involves a huge violation of the laws of physics – a violation that becomes even more enormous once we factor in the energy required to pulverize the concrete (let alone the energy required to break the steel).

Besides the sheer quantity of energy needed, another problem with the official theory is that gravitational energy is wholly unsuited to explain the production of these dust clouds. This is most obviously the case in the first few seconds. In Hoffman’s words: “You can see thick clouds of pulverized

concrete being ejected within the first two seconds. That's when the relative motion of the top of the tower to the intact portion was only a few feet per second."³¹ Jeff King (2003), in the same vein, says: "[A great amount of] very fine concrete dust is ejected from the top of the building very early in the collapse ... [when] concrete slabs [would have been] bumping into each other at [only] 20 or 30 mph."

The importance of King's point can be appreciated by juxtaposing it with the claim by Shyam Sunder, NIST's lead investigator, that although the clouds of dust created during the collapses of the Twin Towers may create the impression of a controlled demolition, "it is the floor pancaking that leads to that perception" (*Popular Mechanics*, 2005). The pancaking, according to the official theory being defended by Sunder, began at the floor beneath the holes created by the impact of the airliners. As King points out, this theory cannot handle the fact, as revealed by the photographs and videos, that dust clouds were created far above the impact zones.

Horizontal Ejections. Another common feature of controlled demolition is the horizontal ejection of other materials, besides dust, from those areas of the building in which explosives are set off. In the case of the Twin Towers, photos and videos reveal that "[h]eavy pieces of steel were ejected in all directions for distances up to 500 feet, while aluminum cladding was blown up to 700 feet away from the towers" (Paul & Hoffman, 2004, p. 7). But gravitational energy is, of course, vertical, so it cannot even begin to explain these horizontal ejections.

Demolition Rings. Still another common feature of collapses induced by explosions are demolition rings, in which series of small explosions run rapidly around a building. This feature was also manifested by the collapses of the towers.³²

Sounds Produced by Explosions. The use of collapses to induce explosives produces, of course, sounds caused by the explosions. Like all the previous features except the slicing of the steel columns inside the building, this one could be observed by witnesses. And, as we will see below, there is abundant testimony to the existence of such sounds before and during the collapses of the towers.

Molten Steel. An 11th feature that would be expected only if explosives were used to slice the steel columns would be molten steel, and its existence at the WTC site was indeed reported by several witnesses, including the two main

figures involved in the clean up, Peter Tully, president of Tully Construction, and Mark Loizeaux, president of Controlled Demolition, Incorporated. Tully said that he saw pools of “literally molten steel” at the site. Loizeaux said that several weeks after 9/11, when the rubble was being removed, “hot spots of molten steel” were found “at the bottoms of the elevator shafts of the main towers, down seven [basement] levels” (both statements quoted in [Bollyn, 2004](#)).³³ Leslie Robertson, a member of the engineering firm that designed the Twin Towers, said: “As of 21 days after the attack, the fires were still burning and molten steel was still running” ([Williams, 2001](#)). Other witnesses also spoke of molten steel.³⁴ This testimony is of great significance, since it would be hard to imagine what, other than high explosives, could have caused some of the steel to melt.

The importance of the nature of the collapses, as summarized in these 11 features, is shown by the fact that attempts to defend the official theory typically ignore most of them. For example, an article in *Popular Mechanics* (2005), seeking to debunk what it calls some of the most prevalent myths about 9/11 fabricated by “conspiracy theorists,” completely ignores the suddenness, verticality, rapidity, and totality of the collapses and also fails to mention the testimonies about molten steel, demolition rings, and the sounds of explosions.³⁵

2. TESTIMONIES ABOUT EXPLOSIONS AND RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE 9/11 ORAL HISTORIES

Most of these 11 features – all but the slicing of the core columns and the molten steel in the basements – are features that, if they occurred before or during the collapses of the towers, could have been observed by people in the area. And, in fact, testimonies about some of these phenomena have been available, since shortly after 9/11, from reporters,³⁶ fire fighters,³⁷ police officers,³⁸ people who worked in the towers,³⁹ and one prominent explosives expert, Van Romero,⁴⁰ who said on that very day, after viewing the videotapes, that the collapses not only resembled those produced by controlled implosions but must, in fact, have been caused by “some explosive devices inside the buildings” because they were “too methodical” to have been chance results of the airplane strikes ([Uyttebrouck, 2001](#)).⁴¹ Some of these testimonies were very impressive. There were, however, only a few of them and they were scattered here and there. No big body of testimony was readily accessible.

But this situation has dramatically changed. Shortly after 9/11, the New York Fire Department recorded over 500 oral histories, in which firefighters and emergency medical workers recounted their experiences of that day. (Emergency Medical Services had become a division within the Fire Department [Dwyer, 2005a].) Mayor Bloomberg's administration, however, refused to release them. But then the *New York Times*, joined by several families of 9/11 victims, filed suit and, after a long process, the New York Court of Appeals ordered the city to release the bulk of these oral histories, which it did in August 2005⁴² (Dwyer, 2005b). The *Times* then made them publicly available (NYT, 2005).⁴³

These oral histories contain many dozens of testimonies that speak of explosions and related phenomena characteristic of controlled demolition. I will give some examples.

2.1. Explosions

Several individuals reported that they witnessed an explosion just before one of the towers collapsed. Battalion Chief John Sudnik said: "we heard ... what sounded like a loud explosion and looked up and I saw tower two start coming down" (NYT, Sudnik, p. 4).

Several people reported multiple explosions. Paramedic Kevin Darnowski said: "I heard three explosions, and then ... tower two started to come down" (NYT, Darnowski, p. 8).

Firefighter Thomas Turilli said: "it almost sounded like bombs going off, like boom, boom, boom, like seven or eight" (NYT, Turilli, p. 4).

Craig Carlsen said that he and other firefighters "heard explosions coming from ... the south tower There were about ten explosions We then realized the building started to come down" (NYT, Carlsen, pp. 5–6).

Firefighter Joseph Meola said, "it looked like the building was blowing out on all four sides. We actually heard the pops" (NYT, Meola, p. 5).

Paramedic Daniel Rivera also mentioned "pops." Asked how he knew that the south tower was coming down, he said:

It was a friggling noise. At first I thought it was – do you ever see professional demolition where they set the charges on certain floors and then you hear "Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop"? ... I thought it was that. (NYT, Rivera, p. 9)

2.2. Collapse Beginning below the Strike Zone and Fire

According to the official account, the "pancaking" began when the floors above the hole caused by the airplane fell on the floors below. Some

witnesses reported, however, that the collapse of the south tower began somewhat lower.

Timothy Burke said: “the building popped, lower than the fire ... I was going oh, my god, there is a secondary device because the way the building popped. I thought it was an explosion” (*NYT*, Burke, pp. 8–9).

Firefighter Edward Cachia said: “It actually gave at a lower floor, not the floor where the plane hit ... [W]e originally had thought there was like an internal detonation, explosives, because it went in succession, boom, boom, boom, boom, and then the tower came down” (*NYT*, Cachia, p. 5).

The importance of these observations is reinforced by the fact that the authors of the NIST Report, after having released a draft to the public, felt the need to add the following statement to the Executive Summary:

NIST found no corroborating evidence for alternative hypotheses suggesting that the WTC towers were brought down by controlled demolition using explosives planted prior to September 11, 2001 ... Instead, photos and videos from several angles clearly showed that the collapse initiated at the fire and impact floors and that the collapse progressed from the initiating floors downward.

Firefighters Burke and Cachia presumably now need to ask themselves: What are you going to believe, your own eyes or an official government report?

2.3. Flashes and Demolition Rings

Some of the witnesses spoke of flashes and of phenomena suggestive of demolition rings. Assistant Commissioner Stephen Gregory said: “I thought ... before ... No. 2 came down, that I saw low-level flashes ... I ... saw a flash flash flash ... [at] the lower level of the building. You know like when they demolish a building?” (*NYT*, Gregory, pp. 14–16).

Captain Karin Deshore said: “Somewhere around the middle ... there was this orange and red flash coming out. Initially it was just one flash. Then this flash just kept popping all the way around the building and that building had started to explode ... [W]ith each popping sound it was initially an orange and then a red flash came out of the building and then it would just go all around the building on both sides as far as I could see. These popping sounds and the explosions were getting bigger, going both up and down and then all around the building” (*NYT*, Deshore, p. 15).

Firefighter Richard Banaciski said: “[T]here was just an explosion. It seemed like on television [when] they blow up these buildings. It seemed like it was going all the way around like a belt, all these explosions” (*NYT*, Banaciski, pp. 3–4).

Deputy Commissioner Thomas Fitzpatrick said: “It looked like sparkling around one specific layer of the building My initial reaction was that this was exactly the way it looks when they show you those implosions on TV” (*NYT*, Fitzpatrick, pp. 13–14).

2.4. Horizontal Ejections

A few witnesses spoke of horizontal ejections. Chief Frank Cruthers said: “There was what appeared to be . . . an explosion. It appeared at the very top, simultaneously from all four sides, materials shot out horizontally. And then there seemed to be a momentary delay before you could see the beginning of the collapse” (*NYT*, Cruthers, p. 4).

This testimony is important, because the official theory holds that the ejections were produced by the floors collapsing. So listen to firefighter James Curran, who said: “I looked back and . . . I heard like every floor went chu-chu-chu. I looked back and from the pressure everything was getting blown out of the floors before it actually collapsed” (*NYT*, Curran, pp. 10–11).

Battalion Chief Brian Dixon said, “the lowest floor of fire in the south tower actually looked like someone had planted explosives around it because . . . everything blew out on the one floor” (*NYT*, Dixon, p. 15).⁴⁴

2.5. Synchronized Explosions

Some witnesses said that the explosions seemed to be synchronized. For example, firefighter Kenneth Rogers said, “there was an explosion in the south tower I kept watching. Floor after floor after floor. One floor under another after another [I]t looked like a synchronized deliberate kind of thing” (*NYT*, Rogers, pp. 3–4).⁴⁵

2.6. Why does the Public not know of these Reports?

If all these firefighters and medical workers witnessed all these phenomena suggestive of controlled demolition, it might be wondered why the public does not know this. Part of the answer is provided by Auxiliary Lieutenant Fireman Paul Isaac. Having said that “there were definitely bombs in those buildings,” Isaac added that “many other firemen know there were bombs in the buildings, but they’re afraid for their jobs to admit it because the

‘higher-ups’ forbid discussion of this fact” (Lavello, n.d.). Another part of the answer is that when a few people, such as Isaac, have spoken out, the mainstream press has failed to report their statements.

3. IMPLICATIONS

The official theory about the collapse of the towers, I have suggested, is rendered extremely implausible by two main facts. First, aside from the alleged exception of 9/11, steel-frame high-rise buildings have never been caused to collapse by fire; all such collapses have been produced by carefully placed explosives. Second, the collapses of the Twin Towers manifested at least 11 characteristic features of controlled demolitions. The probability that any of these features would occur in the absence of explosives is extremely low. The probability that all 11 of them would occur is essentially zero.⁴⁶

We can say, therefore, that the official theory about the towers is disproved about as thoroughly as such a theory possibly could be, whereas all the evidence can be explained by the alternative theory, according to which the towers were brought down by explosives. The official theory is, accordingly, an outrageous theory, whereas the alternative theory is, from a scientific point of view, the only reasonable theory available.⁴⁷

4. OTHER SUSPICIOUS FACTS

Moreover, although we have already considered sufficient evidence for the theory that the towers were brought down by explosives, there is still more.

Removal of the Steel. For one thing, the steel from the buildings was quickly removed before it could be properly examined,⁴⁸ with virtually all of it being sold to scrap dealers, who put most of it on ships to Asia.⁴⁹ Generally, removing any evidence from the scene of a crime is a federal offense. But in this case, federal officials facilitated the removal.⁵⁰

This removal evoked protest. On Christmas day, 2001, the *New York Times* said: “The decision to rapidly recycle the steel columns, beams and trusses from the WTC in the days immediately after 9/11 means definitive answers may never be known.”⁵¹ The next week, *Fire Engineering* magazine said: “We are literally treating the steel removed from the site like garbage, not like crucial fire scene evidence (Brannigan, Corbett, & Dunn, 2002)

The destruction and removal of evidence must stop immediately” (Manning, 2002).

However, Mayor Bloomberg, defending the decision to dispose of the steel, said: “If you want to take a look at the construction methods and the design, that’s in this day and age what computers do.⁵² Just looking at a piece of metal generally doesn’t tell you anything.”⁵³ But that is not true. An examination of the steel could have revealed whether it had been cut by explosives.

This removal of an unprecedented amount of material from a crime scene suggests that an unprecedented crime was being covered up.⁵⁴

Evidence that this cover-up was continued by NIST is provided by its treatment of a provocative finding reported by FEMA, which was that some of the specimens of steel were “rapidly corroded by sulfidation” (FEMA, 2002, Appendix C). This report is significant, because sulfidation is an effect of explosives. FEMA appropriately called for further investigation of this finding, which the *New York Times* called “perhaps the deepest mystery uncovered in the investigation” (Killough-Miller, 2002). A closely related problem, expressed shortly after 9/11 by Dr. Jonathan Barnett, Professor of Fire Protection Engineering at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, is that “[f]ire and the structural damage ... would *not* explain steel members in the debris pile that appear to have been partly evaporated” (Glanz, 2001). But the NIST report, in its section headed “Learning from the Recovered Steel,” fails even to mention either evaporation or sulfidation.⁵⁵ Why would the NIST scientists apparently share Mayor Bloomberg’s disdain for empirical studies of recovered steel?

North Tower Antenna Drop. Another problem noted by FEMA is that videos show that, in the words of the FEMA Report, “the transmission tower on top of the [north tower] began to move downward and laterally slightly before movement was evident at the exterior wall. This suggests that collapse began with one or more failures in the central core area of the building” (FEMA, 2002, Chapter 2).⁵⁶ This drop was also mentioned in a *New York Times* story by James Glanz and Eric Lipton, which said: “Videos of the north tower’s collapse appear to show that its television antenna began to drop a fraction of a second before the rest of the building. The observations suggest that the building’s steel core somehow gave way first” (Glanz & Lipton, 2002). In the supposedly definitive NIST Report, however, we find no mention of this fact. This is another convenient omission, since the most plausible, and perhaps only possible, explanation would be that the core columns were cut by explosives – an explanation that would fit with the testimony of several witnesses.

South Tower Tipping and Disintegration. If the north tower's antenna drop was anomalous (from the perspective of the official theory), the south tower's collapse contained an even stranger anomaly. The uppermost floors – above the level struck by the airplane – began tipping toward the corner most damaged by the impact. According to conservation-of-momentum laws, this block of approximately 34 floors should have fallen to the ground far outside the building's footprint. "However," observe Paul and Hoffman, "as the top then began to fall, the rotation decelerated. Then it reversed direction [even though the] law of conservation of angular momentum states that a solid object in rotation will continue to rotate at the same speed unless acted on by a torque" (Paul & Hoffman, 2004, p. 34).

And then, in the words of Steven Jones, a physics professor at BYU, "this block turned mostly to powder *in mid-air!*" This disintegration stopped the tipping and allowed the uppermost floors to fall straight down into, or at least close to, the building's footprint. As Jones notes, this extremely strange behavior was one of the many things that NIST was able to ignore by virtue of the fact that its analysis, in its own words, "does not actually include the structural behavior of the tower after the conditions for collapse initiation were reached" (NIST, 2005, p. 80, n. 12). This is convenient because it means that NIST did not have to answer Jones's question: "How can we understand this strange behavior, without explosives?" (Jones, 2006).

This behavior is, however, not strange to experts in controlled demolition. Mark Loizeaux, the head of Controlled Demolition, Inc., has said:

[B]y differentially controlling the velocity of failure in different parts of the structure, you can make it walk, you can make it spin, you can make it dance We'll have structures start facing north and end up going to the north-west. (Else, 2004)

Once again, something that is inexplicable in terms of the official theory becomes a matter of course if the theory of controlled demolition is adopted.

WTC Security. The suggestion that explosives might have been used raises the question of how anyone wanting to place explosives in the towers could have gotten through the security checks. This question brings us to a possibly relevant fact about a company – now called Stratesec but then called Securacom – that was in charge of security for the WTC. From 1993 to 2000, during which Securacom installed a new security system, Marvin Bush, the president's brother, was one of the company's directors. And from 1999 until January 2002, their cousin Wirt Walker III was the CEO (Burns, 2003).⁵⁷ One would think that these facts should have made the evening news – or at least *The 9/11 Commission Report*.

These facts, in any case, may be relevant to some reports given by people who had worked in the WTC. Some of them reportedly said that although in the weeks before 9/11 there had been a security alert that mandated the use of bomb-sniffing dogs, that alert was lifted five days before 9/11 (Taylor & Gardiner, 2001).

Also, a man named Scott Forbes, who worked for Fiduciary Trust – the company for which Kristen Breitweiser’s husband worked – has written:

On the weekend of [September 8–9, 2001], there was a “power down” condition in ... the south tower. This power down condition meant there was no electrical supply for approximately 36 hours from floor 50 up The reason given by the WTC for the power down was that cabling in the tower was being upgraded Of course without power there were no security cameras, no security locks on doors [while] many, many “engineers” [were] coming in and out of the tower.⁵⁸

Also, a man named Ben Fountain, who was a financial analyst with Fireman’s Fund in the south tower, was quoted in *People Magazine* as saying that during the weeks before 9/11, the towers were evacuated “a number of times” (*People Magazine*, 2001).

Foreknowledge of the Collapse. One more possibly relevant fact is that then Mayor Rudy Giuliani, talking on ABC News about his temporary emergency command center at 75 Barkley Street, said:

We were operating out of there when we were told that the World Trade Center was gonna collapse, and it did collapse before we could get out of the building.⁵⁹

This is an amazing statement. Prior to 9/11, fire had never brought down a steel-frame high-rise building. The firemen who reached the 78th floor of the south tower certainly did not believe it was going to collapse. Even *The 9/11 Commission* reported that to its knowledge, “none of the [fire] chiefs present believed that a total collapse of either tower was possible” (Kean & Hamilton, 2004, p. 302). So why would anyone have told Giuliani that at least one of the towers was about to collapse?

The most reasonable answer, especially in light of the new evidence, is that someone knew that explosives had been set in the south tower and were about to be discharged. It is even possible that the explosives were going to be discharged earlier than originally planned because the fires in the south tower were dying down more quickly than expected, because so much of the plane’s jet fuel had burned up in the fireball outside the building.⁶⁰ This could explain why although the south tower was struck second, suffered less structural damage, and had smaller fires, it collapsed first – after only 56 minutes. That is, if the official story was going to be that the fire

caused the collapse, the building had to be brought down before the fire went completely out.⁶¹

We now learn from the oral histories, moreover, that Giuliani is not the only one who was told that a collapse was coming. At least four of the testimonies indicate that shortly before the collapse of the south tower, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) had predicted the collapse of at least one tower.⁶² The director of OEM reported directly to Giuliani.⁶³ So although Giuliani said that he and others “were told” that the towers were going to collapse, it was his own people who were doing the telling.

As *New York Times* reporter Jim Dwyer has pointed out, the 9/11 Commission had access to the oral histories.⁶⁴ It should have discussed these facts, but it did not.

The neglect of most of the relevant facts about the collapses, manifested by *The 9/11 Commission Report*, was continued by the NIST Report, which said, amazingly:

The focus of the Investigation was on the sequence of events from the instant of aircraft impact to the initiation of collapse for each tower. For brevity in this report, this sequence is referred to as the “probable collapse sequence,” although it does not actually include the structural behavior of the tower after the conditions for collapse initiation were reached ... [Our simulation treats only] the structural deterioration of each tower from the time of aircraft impact to the time at which the building ... was poised for collapse. (pp. 80n, 140)

Steven Jones comments, appropriately:

What about the subsequent complete, rapid and symmetrical collapse of the buildings? ... What about the antenna dropping first in the North Tower? What about the molten metal observed in the basement areas ... ? Never mind all that: NIST did not discuss at all any data after the buildings were “poised for collapse.” Well, some of us want to look at *all* the data, without computer simulations that are “adjusted” to make them fit the desired outcome. (Jones, 2006)

Summary. When we add these five additional suspicious facts to the 11 features that the collapses of the Twin Towers had in common with controlled demolitions, we have a total of 16 facts about the collapses of these buildings that, while being inexplicable in terms of the official theory, are fully understandable on the theory that the destruction of the towers was an inside job.

5. THE COLLAPSE OF BUILDING 7

As we have seen, the 9/11 Commission simply ignored the facts discussed above. Still another matter not discussed by the Commission was the collapse of building 7. And yet the official story about it is, if anything, even more problematic than the official story about the towers – as suggested by the title of a *New York Times* story, “Engineers are Baffled over the Collapse of 7 WTC” (Glanz, 2001).⁶⁵

5.1. Even More Difficult to Explain

The collapse of building 7 is even more difficult to explain than the collapse of the towers in part because it was not struck by an airliner, so none of the theories about how the impacts of the airliners contributed to the collapses of the towers can be employed in relation to it.

Also, all the photographic evidence suggests that the fires in this building were small, not very hot, and limited to a few floors. Photographs of the north side of the building show fires only on the 7th and 12th floors of this 47-floor building. So if the south side, which faced the towers, had fires on many other floors, as defenders of the official account claim, they were not big enough to be seen from the other side of the building.⁶⁶

It would not be surprising, of course, if the fires in this building were even smaller than those in the towers, because there was no jet fuel to get a big fire started. Some defenders of the official story have claimed, to be sure, that the diesel fuel stored in this building somehow caught fire and created a towering inferno. But if building 7 had become engulfed in flames, why did none of the many photographers and TV camera crews on the scene capture this sight?

The extreme difficulty of explaining the collapse of building 7 – assuming that it is not permissible to mention controlled demolition – has been recognized by the official bodies. The report prepared under FEMA’s supervision came up with a scenario employing the diesel fuel, then admitted that this scenario had “only a low probability of occurrence.”⁶⁷ Even that statement is generous, because the probability that some version of the official story of building 7 is true is the same as it is for the towers, essentially zero, because it would violate several laws of physics. In any case, the 9/11 Commission, perhaps because of this admission by FEMA, avoided the problem by simply not even mentioning the fact that this building collapsed.

This was one of the Commission's most amazing omissions. According to the official theory, building 7 demonstrated, contrary to the universal conviction prior to 9/11, that large steel-frame buildings *could* collapse from fire alone, even without having been hit by an airplane. This demonstration should have meant that building codes and insurance premiums for all steel-frame buildings in the world needed to be changed. And yet the 9/11 Commission, in preparing its 571-page report, did not devote a single sentence to this historic event.

5.2. Even More Similar to Controlled Implosions

Yet, another reason why the collapse of building 7 is especially problematic is that it was even more like the best-known type of conventional demolition – namely, an implosion, which begins at the bottom (whereas the collapse of each tower originated high-up, near the region struck by the plane). As Eric Hufschmid has written:

Building 7 collapsed at its bottom ... [T]he interior fell first ... The result was a very tiny pile of rubble, with the outside of the building collapsing on top of the pile.⁶⁸

Implosion World.com, a web site about the demolition industry, states that an implosion is “by far the trickiest type of explosive project, and there are only a handful of blasting companies in the world that possess enough experience ... to perform these true building implosions.”⁶⁹ Can anyone really believe that fire would have just happened to produce the kind of collapse that can be reliably produced by only a few demolition companies in the world? The building had 24 core columns and 57 perimeter columns. To hold that fire caused this building to collapse straight down would mean believing that the fire caused all 81 columns to fail at exactly the same time. To accept the official story is, in other words, to accept a miracle. Physicist Steven Jones agrees, saying:

The likelihood of near-symmetrical collapse of WTC 7 due to random fires (the “official” theory) – requiring as it does near-simultaneous failure of many support columns – is infinitesimal. I conclude that the evidence for the 9/11 use of pre-positioned explosives in WTC 7 (also in Towers 1 and 2) is truly compelling.⁷⁰

5.3. Much More Extensive Foreknowledge

Another reason why the collapse of building 7 creates special problems involves foreknowledge of its collapse. We know of only a few people with

advance knowledge that the Twin Towers were going to collapse, and the information we have would be consistent with the supposition that this knowledge was acquired only a few minutes before the south tower collapsed. People can imagine, therefore, that someone saw something suggesting that the building was going to collapse. But the foreknowledge of building 7's collapse was more widespread and of longer duration. This has been known for a long time, at least by people who read firefighters' magazines.⁷¹ But now the oral histories have provided a fuller picture.

Widespread Notification. At least 25 of the firefighters and medical workers reported that, at some time that day, they learned that building 7 was going to collapse. Firefighters who had been fighting the fires in the building said that they were ordered to leave the building, after which a collapse zone was established. As medical worker Decosta Wright put it: "they measured out how far the building was going to come, so we knew exactly where we could stand," which was "5 blocks away" (NYT, 2005, Wright, pp. 11–12).

Early Warning. As to exactly when the expectation of the collapse began circulating, the testimonies differ. But most of the evidence suggests that the expectation of collapse was communicated for 4 or 5 h in advance.⁷²

The Alleged Reason for the Expectation. But why would this expectation have arisen? The fires in building 7 were, according to all the photographic evidence, few and small. So why would the decision makers in the department have decided to pull firefighters out of building 7 and have them simply stand around waiting for it to collapse?

The chiefs gave a twofold explanation: damage plus fire. Chief Frank Fellini said: "When [the north tower] fell, it ripped steel out from between the third and sixth floors across the facade on Vesey Street. We were concerned that the fires on several floors and the missing steel would result in the building collapsing" (NYT, Fellini, p. 3).

There are at least two problems with each part of this explanation. One problem with the accounts of the structural damage is that they vary greatly. According to Fellini's testimony, there was a four-floor hole between the third and sixth floors. In the telling of Captain Chris Boyle, however, the hole was "20 stories tall" (2002). It would appear that Shyam Sunder, the lead investigator for NIST, settled on somewhat of a compromise between these two views, telling *Popular Mechanics* that, "On about a third of the face to the center and to the bottom – approximately 10 stories – about 25 percent of the depth of the building was scooped out" (*Popular Mechanics*, March 2005).

The different accounts of the problem on the building's south side are not, moreover, limited to the issue of the size of the hole. According to Deputy Chief Peter Hayden, the problem was not a hole at all but a "bulge," and it was "between floors 10 and 13" (Hayden, 2002).

The second problem with these accounts of the damage is if there was a hole that was 10 or 20 floors high, or even a hole (or a budge) that was 4 floors high, why was this fact not captured on film by any of the photographers or videographers in the area that day?

With regard to the claims about the fire, the accounts again vary greatly. Chief Daniel Nigro spoke of "very heavy fire on many floors" (NYT, 2005, Nigro, p. 10). According to Harry Meyers, an assistant chief, "When the building came down it was completely involved in fire, all forty-seven stories" (quoted in Smith, 2002, p. 160). That obvious exaggeration was also stated by a firefighter who said: "[Building 7] was fully engulfed . . . [Y]ou could see the flames going straight through from one side of the building to the other" (NYT, 2005, Cassidy, p. 22).

Several of the testimonies, however, did *not* support the official line. For example, medical technician Decosta Wright said: "I think the fourth floor was on fire . . . [W]e were like, are you guys going to put that fire out?" (NYT, Wright, p. 11). Chief Thomas McCarthy said: "[T]hey were waiting for 7 World Trade to come down . . . They had . . . fire on three separate floors . . . , just burning merrily. It was pretty amazing, you know, it's the afternoon in lower Manhattan, a major high-rise is burning, and they said 'we know'" (NYT, 2005, McCarthy, pp. 10–11).

The second problem with the official account here is that if there was "very heavy fire on many floors," why is this fact not captured on any film? The photograph that we have of the north side of the building supports Chief McCarthy's view that there was fire on three floors. Even if there were fires on additional floors on the south side of the building, there is no photographic support for the claim that "the flames [on these additional floors went] straight through from one side of the building to the other."

Moreover, even if the department's official story about the collapse of building 7 were not contradicted by physical evidence and some of the oral histories, it would not explain why the building collapsed, because no amount of fire and structural damage, unless caused by explosives, had ever caused the total collapse of a large steel-frame building.⁷³ And it certainly would not explain the particular nature of the collapse – that the building imploded and fell straight down rather than falling over in some direction, as purportedly expected by those who gave the order to create a large collapse zone. Battalion Chief John Norman, for example, said: "We

expected it to fall to the south” (Norman, 2002). Nor would the damage-plus-fire theory explain this building’s collapse at virtually free-fall speed or the creation of an enormous amount of dust – additional features of the collapses that are typically ignored by defenders of the official account.

The great difficulty presented to the official theory about the WTC by the collapse of building 7 is illustrated by a recent book, *102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers*, one of the authors of which is *New York Times* reporter Jim Dwyer, who wrote the stories in the *Times* about the release of the 9/11 oral histories. With regard to the Twin Towers, Dwyer and his coauthor, Kevin Flynn, support the theory put out by NIST, according to which the towers collapsed because the airplanes knocked the fireproofing off the steel columns, making them vulnerable to the “intense heat” of the ensuing fires.⁷⁴ When they come to building 7, however, Dwyer and Flynn do not ask why it collapsed, given the fact that it was *not* hit by a plane. They simply say: “The firefighters had decided to let the fire there burn itself out” (Dwyer & Flynn, 2005, p. 258). But that, of course, is not what happened. Rather, shortly after 5:20 that day, building 7 suddenly collapsed, in essentially the same way as did the Twin Towers.

Should this fact not have led Dwyer and Flynn to question NIST’s theory that the Twin Towers collapsed because their fireproofing had been knocked loose? I would especially think that Dwyer, who reported on the release of the 9/11 oral histories, should reassess NIST’s theory in light of the abundant evidence of explosions in the towers provided in those testimonies.⁷⁵

Another Explanation. There is, in any case, only one theory that explains both the nature and the expectation of the collapse of building 7. Explosives had been set, and someone who knew this spread the word to the fire chiefs.

Amazingly enough, a version of this theory was publicly stated by an insider, Larry Silverstein, who owned building 7. In a PBS documentary aired in September 2002, Silverstein, discussing building 7, said:

I remember getting a call from the, er, fire department commander, telling me that they were not sure they were gonna be able to contain the fire, and I said, “We’ve had such terrible loss of life, maybe the smartest thing to do is pull it.”⁷⁶ And they made that decision to pull and we watched the building collapse.⁷⁷ (PBS, 2002)

It is very puzzling, to be sure, that Silverstein, who was ready to receive billions of dollars in insurance payments for building 7 and the rest of the WTC complex, on the assumption that they had been destroyed by acts of terrorism, would have made such a statement in public, especially with TV

cameras running. But his assertion that building 7 was brought down by explosives, whatever the motive behind it, explains why and how it collapsed.

We still, however, have the question of why the fire department came to expect the building to collapse. It would be interesting, of course, if that information came from the same agency, the OEM, that had earlier informed the department that one of the towers was going to collapse. And we have it on good authority that it did. Captain Michael Currid, the president of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, said that some time after the collapse of the Twin Towers, "Someone from the city's Office of Emergency Management" told him that building 7 was "basically a lost cause and we should not lose anyone else trying to save it," after which the firefighters in the building were told to get out (Murphy, 2002, pp. 175–176).⁷⁸

But that answer, assuming it to be correct, leaves us with more questions, beginning with: Who in the OEM knew in advance that the towers and building 7 were going to collapse? How did they know this? And so on. These questions could be answered only by a real investigation, which has yet to begin.

6. CONCLUSION

It is, in any case, already possible to know, beyond a reasonable doubt, one very important thing: the destruction of the WTC was an inside job, orchestrated by domestic terrorists. Foreign terrorists could not have gotten access to the buildings to plant the explosives. They probably would not have had the courtesy to make sure that the buildings collapsed straight down, rather than falling over onto surrounding buildings. Federal officials, however, could have gotten access and would have had motivation to bring the buildings straight down. They would also have had the ability to orchestrate a cover-up, from the quick disposal of the steel to the FEMA Report to *The 9/11 Commission Report* to the NIST Report.

The evidence that the destruction of the WTC was an inside job has thus far been largely ignored by the mainstream press, perhaps under the guise of obeying President Bush's advice not to tolerate "outrageous conspiracy theories." We have seen, however, that it is the Bush administration's conspiracy theory that is the outrageous one, because it is violently contradicted by numerous facts, including some basic laws of physics.

There is, of course, another reason why the mainstream press has not pointed out these contradictions. As a recent letter to the *Los Angeles Times* said:

The number of contradictions in the official version of ... 9/11 is so overwhelming that ... it simply cannot be believed. Yet ... the official version cannot be abandoned because the implication of rejecting it is far too disturbing: that we are subject to a government conspiracy of 'X-Files' proportions and insidiousness.⁷⁹

The implications are indeed disturbing. Many people who know or at least suspect the truth about 9/11 probably believe that revealing it would be so disturbing to the American psyche, the American form of government, and global stability that it is better to pretend to believe the official version. I would suggest, however, that any merit this argument may have had earlier has been overcome by more recent events and realizations. Far more devastating to the American psyche, the American form of government, and the world as a whole will be the continued rule of those who brought us 9/11, because the values reflected in that horrendous event have been reflected in the Bush administration's lies to justify the attack on Iraq, its disregard for environmental science and the Bill of Rights, its criminal negligence both before and after Katrina, and now its apparent plan not only to weaponize space but also to authorize the use of nuclear weapons in a preemptive strike.

In light of this situation and the facts discussed in this essay – as well as dozens of more problems in the official account of 9/11 discussed in my books – I call on the *New York Times* to take the lead in finally exposing to the American people and the world the truth about 9/11. Taking the lead on such a story will, of course, involve enormous risks. But if there is any news organization with the power, the prestige, and the credibility to break this story, it is the *Times*. It performed yeoman service in getting the 9/11 oral histories released. But now the welfare of our republic and perhaps even the survival of our civilization depend on getting the truth about 9/11 exposed. I am calling on the *Times* to rise to the occasion.

NOTES

1. Both lectures are also available on DVDs edited by Ken Jenkins (kenjenkins@aol.com). See also Griffin (2005c).

2. His more complete statement was: "We must speak the truth about terror. Let us never tolerate outrageous conspiracy theories concerning the attacks of 11 September – malicious lies that attempt to shift the blame away from the terrorists themselves, away from the guilty." Excellent advice.

3. This report was carried out by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The public was exposed to this theory early on, with CNN saying shortly after 9/11: "The collapse, when it came, was caused by fire ... The fire weakened that portion of the structure which remained after the impact ... to the point where it could no longer sustain the load" (CNN, September 24, 2001).

4. NIST describes the collapses of the towers as instances of “progressive collapse,” which happens when “a building or portion of a building collapses due to disproportionate spread of an initial local failure” (NIST Report, p. 200). NIST thereby falsely implies that the total collapses of the three WTC buildings were specific instances of a general category with other instances. NIST even claims that the collapses were “inevitable.”

5. Leslie Robertson, a member of the firm that provided the structural design, said that the Twin Towers were designed to withstand the impact of a Boeing 707, at that time (1966) the largest airliner. See “The Fall of the World Trade Center,” BBC 2, March 7, 2002 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/2001/worldtradecentertrans.shtml>). For a comparison of the 707 and the 767, see “Boeing 707-767 Comparison,” What Really Happened (http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/boeing_707_767.html). Also relevant is the fact that in 1945, a B-25 bomber struck the Empire State Building at the 79th floor, creating a hole 20 ft high. But there was never the slightest indication that this accident would cause the building to collapse (see Glover, 2002).

6. The NIST Report (2005, pp. xliii, 171) says: “the towers withstood the impacts and would have remained standing were it not for the dislodged insulation (fire-proofing) and the subsequent multifloor fires.”

7. Supported by these authorities, the show went on to claim that “as fires raged in the towers, driven by aviation fuel, the steel cores in each building would have eventually reached 800°C [1472°F] – hot enough to start buckling and collapsing.”

8. In Griffin (2004, pp. 12–13), I cited Professor Thomas Eagar’s acknowledgment of this fact.

9. Given the fact that the claim that the fires in the towers melted its steel is about as absurd, from a scientific point of view, as a claim could be, it is amazing to see that some scientific journals seemed eager to rush into print with this claim. On the day after 9/11, for example, *New Scientist* published an article that said: “Each tower [after it was struck] remained upright for nearly an hour. Eventually raging fires melted the supporting steel struts” (Samuel & Carrington, 2001). The article title, “Design Choice for Towers Saved Lives,” reflects the equally absurd claim – attributed to “John Hooper, principal engineer in the company that provided engineering advice when the World Trade Center was designed” – that “[m]ost buildings would have come down immediately.”

10. Stating this obvious point could, however, be costly to employees of companies with close ties to the government. On November 11, 2004, Kevin Ryan (2004), the Site Manager of the Environmental Health Laboratories, which is a division of Underwriters Laboratories, wrote an e-mail letter to Dr. Frank Gayle, Deputy Chief of the Metallurgy Division, Material Science and Engineering Laboratory, at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). In this letter, Ryan stated: “We know that the steel components were certified to ASTM E119. The time temperature curves for this standard require the samples to be exposed to temperatures around 2000°F for several hours. And as we all agree, the steel applied met those specifications. Additionally, I think we can all agree that even un-fireproofed steel will not melt until reaching red-hot temperatures of nearly 3000°F. Why Dr. Brown would imply that 2000°F would melt the high-grade steel used in those buildings makes no sense at all.” After Ryan allowed his letter to become public, he was fired.

His letter is available at <http://www.septembereleventh.org/newsarchive/2004-11-11-ryan.php>.

11. One well-known attempt to defend the official account has tried to use the absurdity of the steel-melting claim *against* those who reject the official account. In its March issue of 2005, *Popular Mechanics* magazine published a piece entitled “9/11: Debunking the Myths” (<http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/defense/1227842.html?page=1&c=y>). This article sets out to debunk what it alleges to be “16 of the most prevalent claims made by conspiracy theorists.” One of these claims, according to *Popular Mechanics*, results from these “conspiracy theorists” having created a straw-man argument – pretending that the official theory claims that the buildings came down because their steel melted – which the conspiracy theorists could then knock down. *Popular Mechanics* “refutes” this straw-man argument by instructing us that “[j]et fuel burns at 800°F to 1500°F, not hot enough to melt steel (2750°F). However, experts agree that for the towers to collapse, their steel frames didn’t need to melt, they just had to lose some of their structural strength.” As we have seen, however, the idea that the towers collapsed because their steel melted was put into the public consciousness by some early defenders of the official theory. For critics of this theory to show the absurdity of this claim is not, therefore, to attack a straw man. The idea that the official theory is based on this absurd claim is, in any case, *not* one of “the most prevalent claims” of those who reject the official theory.

12. Even Shyam Sunder, the lead investigator for the NIST study, said: “The jet fuel probably burned out in less than 10 minutes” (Field, 2004). The NIST Report itself says (2005, p. 179): “The initial jet fuel fires themselves lasted at most a few minutes.”

13. The NIST Report (2005, p. 68), trying to argue that steel is very vulnerable unless it is protected by insulation, says: “Bare structural steel components can heat quickly when exposed to a fire of even moderate intensity. Therefore, some sort of thermal protection, or insulation, is necessary.” As Hoffman (2005) points out, however: “These statements are meaningless, because they ignore the effect of steel’s thermal conductivity, which draws away heat, and the considerable thermal mass of the 90,000 tons of steel in each Tower.” Also, I can only wonder if the authors of the NIST Report reflected on the implications of their theory for the iron or steel grating in their fireplaces. Do they spray on new fireproofing after enjoying a blazing hot fire for a few hours?

14. Quoted in “WTC 2: There was No Inferno,” What Really Happened (http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/wtc2_fire.html).

15. Quoted in “Tape Sheds Light on WTC Rescuers,” CNN, August 4, 2002 (<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/08/04/wtc.firefighters/>). The voices of the firefighters reportedly “showed no panic, no sense that events were racing beyond their control” (Dwyer & Fessenden, 2002).

16. As Eric Hufschmid (2002, p. 33) says: “A fire will not affect steel unless the steel is exposed to it for a long ... period of time.”

17. CNN, September 24, 2001.

18. Kevin Ryan, in his letter to Frank Gayle (see note 10), wrote in criticism of NIST’s preliminary report: “This story just does not add up. If steel from those buildings did soften or melt, I’m sure we can all agree that this was certainly not due to jet fuel fires of any kind, let alone the briefly burning fires in those towers

Please do what you can to quickly eliminate the confusion regarding the ability of jet fuel fires to soften or melt structural steel.”

19. See, for example, Eric Hufschmid’s “Painful Deceptions” (available at www.EricHufschmid.Net); Jim Hoffman’s web site (<http://911research.wtc7.net/index.html>); and Jeff King’s web site (<http://home.comcast.net/~jeffrey.king2/wsb/html/view.cgi-home.html-.html>), especially “The World Trade Center Collapse: How Strong is the Evidence for a Controlled Demolition?”

20. Incredibly, after explaining how precisely explosives must be set to ensure that a building comes straight down, Loizeaux said that upon seeing the fires in the Twin Towers, he knew that the towers were “going to pancake down, almost vertically. It was the only way they could fail. It was inevitable.” Given the fact that fire had never before caused steel-frame buildings to collapse, let alone in a way that perfectly mimicked controlled demolition, Loizeaux’s statement is a cause for wonder. His company, incidentally, was hired to remove the steel from the WTC site after 9/11.

21. The fire theory is rendered even more unlikely if the first two characteristics are taken together. For fire to have induced a collapse that began suddenly and was entirely symmetrical, so that it went straight down, the fires would have needed to cause all the crucial parts of the building to fail simultaneously, even though the fires were not spread evenly throughout the buildings. As Jim Hoffman has written: “All 287 columns would have to have weakened to the point of collapse at the *same instant*” (“The Twin Towers Demolition,” 9-11 Research.wtc7.net, n.d., <http://911research.wtc7.net/talks/towers/slides.html>).

22. That statement is probably a slight exaggeration, as the videos, according to most students, seem to suggest that the collapses took somewhere between 11 and 16 seconds. But this would still be close to free-fall speed through the air.

23. As physicist Steven Jones puts it, “the Towers fall very rapidly to the ground, with the upper part falling nearly as rapidly as ejected debris which provide free-fall references Where is the delay that must be expected due to conservation of momentum – one of the foundational Laws of Physics? That is, as upper-falling floors strike lower floors – and intact steel support columns – the fall must be significantly impeded by the impacted mass. . . . [B]ut this is not the case. . . . How do the upper floors fall so quickly, then, and still conserve momentum in the collapsing buildings? The contradiction is ignored by FEMA, NIST and 9-11 Commission reports where conservation of momentum and the fall times were not analyzed” (Jones, 2006, until then available at <http://www.physics.byu.edu/research/energy/htm7.html>).

24. Each box column, besides being at least 36 by 16 inches, had walls that were at least 4 inches thick at the base, then tapered off in the upper floors, which had less weight to support. Pictures of columns can be seen on page 23 of Hufschmid (2002). The reason for the qualification “at least” in these statements is that Jim Hoffman has recently concluded that some of them were even bigger. With reference to his article, “The Core Structures: The Structural System of the Twin Towers,” 9-11 Research.wtc7.net, n.d. (<http://911research.wtc7.net/wtc/arch/core.html>), he has written (e-mail letter of October 26, 2005): “Previously I’ve been saying that the core columns had outside dimensions of 36” × 16”, but I now think that at least 1/3 of them had dimensions of 54” × 22”, based on early articles in the *Engineering News Record* and photographs I took of close-up construction photos on display at the

Skyscraper Museum in Manhattan. ... Also, according to the illustration in the *Engineering News Record*, the thickness of the steel at the bases was 5", not 4".

25. And, as Hoffman (2005) says, NIST's claim about these tremendously hot fires in the core is especially absurd given the fact that the core "had very little fuel; was far from any source of fresh air; had huge steel columns to wick away the heat; [and] does not show evidence of fires in any of the photographs or videos." All the evidence, in other words, suggests that none of the core columns would have (from the fire) reached the highest temperatures reached by some of the perimeter columns.

26. NIST rests its theory largely on the idea that collapse began with the failure of the trusses. Being much smaller and also less interconnected, trusses would have been much easier to heat up, so it is not surprising that the NIST Report focuses on them. To try to make its theory work, however, NIST claims that the trusses became hotter than their own evidence supports. That is, although NIST found no evidence that any of the steel had gotten hotter than 1,112°F (600°C), it claims that some of the steel trusses were heated up to 1,292°F (700°C) (2005, pp. 96, 176–177). A supposedly scientific argument cannot arbitrarily add 180°F just because it happens to need it. In any case, besides the fact that this figure is entirely unsupported by any evidence, NIST's theory finally depends on the claim that the core columns failed as "a result of both splice connection failures and fracture of the columns themselves," because they were "weakened significantly by ... thermal effects" (2005, pp. 88, 180). But there is no explanation of how these massive columns would have been caused to "fracture," even if the temperatures had gotten to those heights. As a study issued in the UK put it: "Thermal expansion and the response of the whole frame to this effect has *not* been described [by NIST] as yet" (Lane & Lamont, 2005).

27. The RDX quotation is from Held (2000); the DREXS quotation is in Hufschmid's video, "Painful Deceptions" (www.EricHufschmid.Net).

28. In that statement, Hoffman said that most of the sections seemed to be no more than 30-ft long. He later revised this, saying that, judging from an aerial image taken 12 days after the attacks, most of the pieces seemed to be between 24- and 48-ft long, with only a few over 50 ft. He also noted that "the lengths of the pieces bears little resemblance to the lengths of the steel parts known to have gone into the construction," which means that one could not reasonably infer that the pieces simply broke at their joints (e-mail letter, September 27, 2005).

29. The available evidence, says Hoffman (2003), suggests that the dust particles were very small indeed – on the order of 10 microns.

30. Hoffman ("The Twin Towers Demolition") says that the clouds expanded to five times the diameter of the towers in the first 10 s. The Demolition of the Kingdome can be viewed at the web site of Controlled Demolition, Inc. (<http://www.controlled-demolition.com/default.asp?reqLocId=7&reqItemId=20030317140323>). The demolition of the Reading Grain Facility can be seen at ImplosionWorld.com (<http://implosionworld.com/reading.html>).

31. Jim Hoffman, "The Twin Towers Demolition."

32. For visual evidence of this and the preceding characteristics (except sliced steel), see Hufschmid's *Painful Questions*; Hufschmid's video "Painful Deceptions" (available at www.EricHufschmid.Net); Jim Hoffman's web site (<http://911research.wtc7.net/index.html>); and Jeff King's web site (<http://home.comcast>).

[net/~jeffrey.king2/wsb/html/view.cgi-home.html-.html](http://www.americanfreepress.net/09_03_02/NEW_SEISMIC_/new_seismic_html)), especially “The World Trade Center Collapse: How Strong is the Evidence for a Controlled Demolition?”

33. Bollyn says (e-mail letter of October 27, 2005) that these statements were made to him personally during telephone interviews with Tully and Loizeaux, probably in the summer of 2002. Bollyn added that although he is not positive about the date of the telephone interviews, he is always “very precise about quotes” (http://www.americanfreepress.net/09_03_02/NEW_SEISMIC_/new_seismic_html).

34. Professor Allison Geyh (2001) of Johns Hopkins, who was part of a team of public health investigators who visited the site shortly after 9/11, wrote: “In some pockets now being uncovered they are finding molten steel.” Dr. Keith Eaton, who somewhat later toured the site with an engineer, said that he was shown slides of “molten metal, which was still red hot weeks after the event” (*Structural Engineer*, 2002, p. 6). Herb Trimpe (2002), an Episcopalian deacon who served as a chaplain at Ground Zero, said: “[I]t was actually warmer on site. The fires burned, up to 2,000 degrees, underground for quite a while I talked to many contractors and they said . . . beams had just totally had been melted because of the heat.” Knight-Ridder journalist Jennifer Lin, discussing Joe “Toolie” O’Toole, a Bronx firefighter who worked for many months on the rescue and clean-up efforts, wrote: “Underground fires raged for months. O’Toole remembers in February seeing a crane lift a steel beam vertically from deep within the catacombs of Ground Zero. ‘It was dripping from the molten steel,’ he said” (Lin, 2002). Greg Fuchek, vice president of sales for LinksPoint, Inc., which supplied some of the computer equipment used to identify human remains, described the working conditions as “hellish,” partly because for six months, the ground temperature varied between 600 °F and 1,500 °F or higher. Fuchek added that “sometimes when a worker would pull a steel beam from the wreckage, the end of the beam would be dripping molten steel” (Walsh, 2002).

35. This article in *Popular Mechanics* is, to be blunt, spectacularly bad. Besides the problems pointed out here and in notes 11 and 39, the article makes this amazing claim: “In the decade before 9/11, NORAD intercepted only one civilian plane over North America: golfer Payne Stewart’s Learjet, in October 1999.” In reality, as genuine 9/11 researchers know, the FAA reported in a news release on August 9, 2002, that it had scrambled fighters 67 times between September 2000 and June 2001, and the *Calgary Herald* (October 13, 2001) reported that NORAD scrambled fighters 129 times in 2000. By extrapolation, we can infer that NORAD had scrambled fighters over 1000 times in the decade prior to 9/11. The claim by *Popular Mechanics* could be true only if in all of these cases, except for the Payne Stewart incident, the fighters were called back to base before they actually intercepted the aircraft in question. This is a most unlikely possibility, especially in light of the fact that Major Mike Snyder, a NORAD spokesperson, reportedly told the *Boston Globe* a few days after 9/11 that “[NORAD’S] fighters routinely intercept aircraft” (Johnson, 2001).

As to why *Popular Mechanics* would have published such a bad article, one clue is perhaps provided by the fact that the article’s “senior researcher” was 25-year-old Benjamin Chertoff, cousin of Michael Chertoff, the new head of the Department of Homeland Security (see Bollyn, 2005a). Another relevant fact is that this article was published shortly after a coup at this Hearst-owned magazine, in which the editor-in-chief was replaced (see Bollyn, 2005b). Young Chertoff’s debunking article

has itself been effectively debunked by many genuine 9/11 researchers, such as Jim Hoffman, "Popular Mechanics' Assault on 9/11 Truth," *Global Outlook* 10 (Spring-Summer 2005), 21–42 (which was based on Hoffman, "Popular Mechanics' Deceptive Smear Against 9/11 Truth," 911Review.com, February 15, 2005 [<http://www.911review.com/pm/markup/index.html>]), and Peter Meyer, "Reply to Popular Mechanics re 9/11," http://www.serendipity.li/wot/pop_mech/reply_to_popular_mechanics.htm. To be sure, these articles by Hoffman and Meyer, while agreeing on many points, take different approaches in response to some of the issues raised. But both articles demonstrate that *Popular Mechanics* owes its readers an apology for publishing such a massively flawed article on such an important subject.

36. NBC's Pat Dawson reported from the WTC on the morning of 9/11 that he had been told by Albert Turi, the Fire Department's Deputy Assistant Chief of Safety, that "another explosion ... took place ... an hour after the first crash ... in one of the towers here. So obviously ... he thinks that there were actually devices that were planted in the building" (Watson & Perez, 2004). A *Wall Street Journal* reporter said: I heard this metallic roar, looked up and saw what I thought was just a peculiar site of individual floors, one after the other exploding outward. I thought to myself, "My God, they're going to bring the building down." And they, whoever they are, HAD SET CHARGES ... I saw the explosions" (Shepard & Trost, 2002). BBC reporter Steve Evans said: "I was at the base of the second tower ... that was hit. ... There was an explosion. ... [T]he base of the building shook. ... [T]hen when we were outside, the second explosion happened and then there was a series of explosions" (BBC, September 11, 2001; quoted in Bollyn, 2002).

37. In June 2002, NBC television played a segment from tapes recorded on 9/11 that contained the following exchange, involving firefighters in the south tower:

Official: Battalion 3 to dispatch, we have just had another explosion.

Official: Battalion 3 to dispatch, we have had additional explosion.

Dispatcher: Received battalion command. Additional explosion ("911 Tapes Tell Horror of 9/11," Part 2, "Tapes Released for First Time," NBC, June 17, 2002 [www.wnbc.com/news/1315651/detail.html]).

Firefighter Louie Cacchioli reported that upon entering the north tower's lobby, he saw elevator doors completely blown out and people being hit with debris. "I remember thinking ... how could this be happening so quickly if a plane hit way above?" When he reached the 24th floor, he encountered heavy dust and smoke, which he found puzzling in light of the fact that the plane had struck the building over 50 stories higher. Shortly thereafter, he and another fireman "heard this huge explosion that sounded like a bomb. It was such a loud noise, it knocked off the lights and stalled the elevator." After they pried themselves out of the elevator, he reported, "another huge explosion like the first one hits. This one hits about two minutes later ... [and] I'm thinking, 'Oh. My God, these bastards put bombs in here like they did in 1993!' ... Then as soon as we get in the stairwell, I hear another huge explosion like the other two. Then I heard bang, bang, bang – huge bangs" (Szymanski, 2005a). A briefer account of Cacchioli's testimony was made available

in the Sept. 24, 2001, issue of *People* magazine, some of which is quoted in Griffin, 2004, Ch. 1, note 74.

38. Terri Tobin, a lieutenant with the NYPD public information office, said that during or just after the collapse of the south tower, “all I heard were extremely loud explosions. I thought we were being bombed” (Fink & Mathias, 2002, p. 82). A story in the *Guardian* said: “In New York, police and fire officials were carrying out the first wave of evacuations when the first of the World Trade Centre towers collapsed. Some eyewitnesses reported hearing another explosion just before the structure crumbled. Police said that it looked almost like a ‘planned implosion’” (Borger, Campbell, Porter, & Millar, 2001).

39. Teresa Veliz, who worked for a software development company, was on the 47th floor of the north tower when suddenly “the whole building shook . . . [Shortly thereafter] the building shook again, this time even more violently.” Veliz then made it downstairs and outside. During this period, she says: “There were explosions going off everywhere. I was convinced that there were bombs planted all over the place and someone was sitting at a control panel pushing detonator buttons” (Murphy, 2002).

William Rodriguez worked as a janitor in the north tower. While he was checking in for work in the office on sub-level 1 at 9:00 AM, he reports, he and the other 14 people in the office heard and felt a massive explosion below them. “When I heard the sound of the explosion,” he says, “the floor beneath my feet vibrated, the walls started cracking and everything started shaking . . . Seconds [later], I hear another explosion from way above. . . . Although I was unaware at the time, this was the airplane hitting the tower.” Then co-worker Felipe David, who had been in front of a nearby freight elevator, came into the office with severe burns on his face and arms yelling “explosion! explosion! explosion!” According to Rodriguez: “He was burned terribly. The skin was hanging off his hands and arms. His injuries couldn’t have come from the airplane above, but only from a massive explosion below” (Szymanski, 2005b).

Stationary engineer Mike Pecoraro, who was working in the north tower’s sixth sub-basement, stated that after his co-worker reported seeing lights flicker, they called upstairs to find out what happened. They were told that there had been a loud explosion and the whole building seemed to shake. Pecoraro and his co-worker then went up to the C level, where there was a small machine shop, but it was gone. “There was nothing there but rubble,” said Pecoraro. “We’re talking about a 50 ton hydraulic press – gone!” They then went to the parking garage, but found that it, too, was gone. “There were no walls.” Then on the B Level, they found that a steel-and-concrete fire door, which weighed about 300 pounds, was wrinkled up “like a piece of aluminum foil.” Finally, when they went up to the ground floor: “The whole lobby was soot and black, elevator doors were missing. The marble was missing off some of the walls” (*The Chief Engineer*, 2002).

One of the “prevalent claims” of 9/11 skeptics that *Popular Mechanics* tries to debunk (see note 11) is the claim that explosives were detonated in the lower levels of the towers. The magazine, however, conveniently ignores the testimonies of Veliz, Rodriguez, and Pecoraro.

40. Romero is vice president for research at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. He had previously been the director of this institute’s Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center, which studies the effects of the explosions on buildings.

41. Romero, it is true, changed his public stance 10 days later, as announced in Fleck (2001). But this account of his retraction is not convincing. “Subsequent conversations with structural engineers and more detailed looks at the tape,” according to this article, led Romero to conclude that “the intense heat of the jet fuel fires weakened the skyscrapers’ steel structural beams to the point that they gave way under the weight of the floors above.” But there is no indication as to what any structural engineer said, or what Romero saw in his “more detailed looks at the tape,” that led him to change his earlier view that the collapses were “too methodical” to have been produced by anything except explosives. There is no suggestion as to how weakened beams would have led to a total collapse that began suddenly and occurred at virtually free-fall speed. Romero has subsequently claimed that he did not change his stance. Rather, he claimed that he had been misquoted in the first story. “I was misquoted in saying that I thought it was explosives that brought down the building. I only said that that’s what it *looked like*” (*Popular Mechanics*, 2005). But if that is the truth, it is strange that the second story, written by Fleck, did not say this but instead said that Romero had changed his mind. Romero clearly did change his mind – or, to be more precise, his public stance.

A clue to the reason for this change may be provided by another statement in the original article, which said that when the Pentagon was struck, “[Romero] and Denny Peterson, vice president for administration and finance [at New Mexico Tech], were en route to an office building near the Pentagon to discuss defense-funded research programs at Tech” (Uyttebrouck, 2001). Indeed, as pointed out in a later story on the New Mexico Tech web site (“Tech Receives \$15 million for Anti-Terrorism Program” [<http://infohost.nmt.edu/mainpage/news/2002/25sept03.html>]), the December 2003 issue of *Influence* magazine named Romero one of “six lobbyists who made an impact in 2003,” adding that “[a] major chunk of [Romero’s] job involves lobbying for federal government funding, and if the 2003 fiscal year was any indication, Romero was a superstar,” having obtained about \$56 million for New Mexico Tech in that year alone. In light of the fact that Romero gave no scientific reasons for his change of stance, it does not seem unwarranted to infer that the real reason was his realization, perhaps forced upon him by government officials, that unless he publicly retracted his initial statements, his effectiveness in lobbying the federal government for funds would be greatly reduced. Romero, to be sure, denies this, saying: “Conspiracy theorists came out saying that the government got to me. That is the farthest thing from the truth” (*Popular Mechanics*, 2005). But that, of course, is what we would expect Romero to say in either case. He could have avoided the charge only by giving a persuasive account of how the buildings could have come down, in the manner they did, without explosives.

42. As Dwyer explained, the oral histories “were originally gathered on the order of Thomas Von Essen, who was the city fire commissioner on Sept. 11, who said he wanted to preserve those accounts before they became reshaped by a collective memory.”

43. The 9/11 Oral Histories are available at a *New York Times* web site (http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/20050812_WTC_GRAPHIC/met_WTC_histories_full_01.html). I am heavily indebted to Matthew Everett, who located and passed on to me virtually all the statements I have quoted from these oral histories.

44. Like many others, Dixon indicated that he later came to accept the official interpretation, adding: “Then I guess in some sense of time we looked at it and realized, no, actually it just collapsed. That’s what blew out the windows, not that there was an explosion there but that windows blew out.” I have here, however, focused on what the witnesses said they first experienced and thought, as distinct from any interpretation they may have later accepted.

45. Some of the testimonies also mentioned the creation of a dust cloud after the explosions. One firefighter said: “You heard like loud booms ... and then we got covered with rubble and dust” (*NYT*, Viola, p. 3). Another said: “That’s when hell came down. It was like a huge, enormous explosion The wind rushed. ... , all the dust ... and everything went dark” (*NYT*, Rivera, p. 7). Lieutenant William Wall said: “[W]e heard an explosion. We looked up and the building was coming down We ran a little bit and then we were overtaken by the cloud” (*NYT*, Wall, p. 9). Paramedic Louis Cook, having said that there was “incredible amount of dust and smoke,” added that there was, “without exaggerating, a foot and a half of dust on my car” (*NYT*, Cook, pp. 8, 35).

46. Even if we were generous to a fault and allowed that there might be a 1-in-10 chance that any one of the 11 features would occur without explosives, the chance that all 11 of them would occur together would be one in 100 billion. This calculation assumes, to be sure, that the 11 features are independent of each other. If only 6 were independent, so that 5 of them were correlated to others, the chance that all eleven would occur would still be one in a million. If the 11 features are independent and we say, a little more realistically, that there is a 1-in-100 chance for each to occur without explosives, the chance that all 11 would occur would be one in ten-to-the-22nd-power. Were we to add in the idea that all these features would occur in three buildings on the same day, the probability would become so vanishingly small as to be virtually indistinguishable from zero. But if explosives were used in the buildings, there would be a high probability that all 11 features would have occurred in all three buildings. (For this argument, I am indebted to James Fetzer, who inspired it, and to Paul Zarembka, who helped with the final formulation.)

47. A nice summary of the argument for this conclusion has been provided by Nila Sagadevan (e-mail communication of November 8, 2005) in response to a person who asked: “Are you saying all the floors simply fell down as though there were nothing supporting them?” Stating that this is precisely what he was saying, he then suggested the following thought-experiment:

Imagine a massive steel cable, lowered from a tall crane, firmly secured to the middle of the uppermost (110th) floor of one of the towers.

Now, imagine that this floor were somehow decoupled from the rest of the structure beneath it.

Summon your personal genie and have him make all 109 floors and supporting structures beneath this now-supported slab magically disappear.

What we now have is our concrete floor slab dangling 1,350 feet up in the sky, suspended by a cable from our imaginary crane.

Now, have your genie cut the cable.

Your 110th floor would now *freefall* through the air and impact the ground in about 9 seconds (which is about how long it took for the top floors of both towers to reach the ground).

Now, imagine a variation of this scenario: We will *not* decouple the top floor nor dabble with a crane.

Instead, we shall ask our genial genie to magically “soften” all the supporting columns of the lower 109 floors.

Wouldn’t every one of these floors and their now-softened supporting structures immediately begin to buckle under the weight of the 110th floor?

Wouldn’t this buckling significantly slow down the descent of the top floor by continuing to offer a degree of resistance to its descent?

Wouldn’t these progressive viscous “arrests” – the sagging steel aided by ripping rivets, shearing bolts and tearing welds – slow down the top floor’s fall significantly?

Wouldn’t this cause the top floor to take a lot longer than 9 seconds to eventually reach the end of its descent and come to rest atop the crushed pile of floors beneath it?

But on September 11, 2001, *every floor, of every tower, fell as though nothing existed below it but air.*

For that to happen, every supporting (i.e., resisting) column beneath every collapsing floor would have had to have been taken out of the way.

Only well-placed explosives can do that.

This is what happens in a controlled demolition.

Sagadevan’s point is not significantly affected if we say that the collapse was closer to 15 seconds, since that is still very close to free-fall speed through the air.

48. The official investigators found that they had less authority than the clean-up crews, a fact that led the Science Committee of the House of Representatives to report that “the lack of authority of investigators to impound pieces of steel for examination before they were recycled led to the loss of important pieces of evidence” (see the report at <http://www.house.gov/science/hot/wtc/charter.htm>).

49. “Baosteel Will Recycle World Trade Center Debris,” Eastday.com, January 24, 2002 (<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Jan/25776.htm>).

50. This removal was, moreover, carried out with the utmost care, because “the loads consisted of highly sensitive material.” Each truck was equipped with a vehicle location device, connected to GPS. “The software recorded every trip and location, sending out alerts if the vehicle traveled off course, arrived late at its destination, or deviated from expectations in any other way. ... One driver ... took an extended lunch break of an hour and a half ... [H]e was dismissed” (Emigh, 2002).

51. *New York Times*, December 25, 2001. This protest was echoed by Professor Abolhassan Astaneh-Asl, Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of California at Berkeley, who said: “Where there is a car accident and two people are killed, you keep the car until the trial is over. If a plane crashes, not only do you keep the plane, but you assemble all the pieces, take it to a hangar, and put it together. That’s only for 200, 300 people, when they die. In this case, you had 3,000 people dead. You had a major ... manmade structure. My wish was that we had spent whatever it takes. ... Get all this steel, carry it to a lot. Instead of recycling it. ... After all, this is a crime scene and you have to figure out exactly what happened” (CBS News, March 12, 2002).

52. Bloomberg was thereby recommending precisely what Bill Manning, the editor of *Fire Engineering*, had warned *against* when he wrote: “As things now stand ... , the investigation into the World Trade Center fire and collapse will amount to paper-and-computer-generated hypotheticals” (Manning, 2002). What

Bloomberg desired and Manning feared is exactly what we got with the NIST Report. It is, in fact, even worse. Physicist Steven Jones, after pointing out that there are “zero examples of fire-caused high-rise collapses” and that even NIST’s “actual [computer] models fail to collapse,” asks: “So how does the NIST team justify the WTC collapses?” He answers: “Easy, NIST concocted computer-generated hypotheticals for very ‘severe’ cases,” and then these cases were further modified to get the desired result. The NIST Report, Jones adds, admits this, saying on page 142: “The more severe case ... was used for the global analysis of each tower. Complete sets of simulations were then performed for [these cases]. To the extent that the simulations deviated from the photographic evidence or eyewitness reports [e.g., complete collapse occurred], the investigators adjusted the input” (Jones, 2006).

53. “Baosteel Will Recycle World Trade Center Debris.”

54. Bill Manning wrote: “The structural damage from the planes and the explosive ignition of jet fuel in themselves were not enough to bring down the towers. *Fire Engineering* has good reason to believe that the ‘official investigation’ blessed by FEMA ... is a half-baked farce that may already have been commandeered by political forces whose primary interests, to put it mildly, lie far afield of full disclosure. Except for the marginal benefit obtained from a three-day, visual walk-through of evidence sites conducted by ASCE investigation committee members – described by one close source as a ‘tourist trip’ – no one’s checking the evidence for anything” (Manning, 2002).

55. See the section headed “The ASCE’s Disclosures of Steel Sulfidation” in Hoffman (2005).

56. For visual evidence, see Hoffman, “North Tower Collapse Video Frames: Video Evidence of the North Tower Collapse,” 9-11 Research.wtc7.net, n.d. (http://911research.wtc7.net/wtc/evidence/videos/wtc1_close_frames.html).

57. Marvin Bush’s role in the company is mentioned by Craig Unger (2004, p. 249).

58. Forbes’ statement is posted at www.apfn.org/apfn/patriotic.htm.

59. For Giuliani’s complete statement, see “Who told Giuliani the WTC Was Going to Collapse on 9/11?” What Really Happened, n.d. (http://www.whatreally-happened.com/wtc_giuliani.html); it can be heard at www.wireonfire.com/donpaul.

60. As Hufschmid (2002, p. 38) points out, “photos show the spectacular flames vanished quickly, and then the fire ... slowly diminished.”

61. “If the ... intention was to blame the collapse on the fires,” Peter Meyer has written, “then the latest time at which the towers could be collapsed would be just as the fires were dying down. Since the fire in the South Tower resulted from the combustion of less fuel ... , the fire in the South Tower began to go out earlier. ... Those controlling the demolition thus had to collapse the South Tower before they collapsed the North Tower” (Peter Meyer, n.d.).

62. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division Chief John Peruggia said that he was told that the “north tower was in danger of a near imminent collapse.” Medical technician Richard Zarrillo, evidently a liaison between the OEM and EMS, said that he was told that “the buildings are going to collapse.” Fire Marshal Stephen Mosiello and Deputy Assistant Chief of Safety Albert Turi also used the plural (“buildings”) in reporting what they heard from Zarrillo. Turi reported that when Zarrillo was asked “where are we getting these reports?”, his reply was: “you know,

we're not sure, OEM is just reporting this" (NYT, 2005, Oral Histories of Peruggia, Zarrillo, Mosiello, and Turi).

63. In "A Brief History of New York City's Office of Emergency Management," we read: "1996: By executive order, the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management is created. The Director reports directly to the Mayor, and serves as the local Director of Civil Defense" (http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/other/oem_history.html).

64. "The city ... initially refused access to the records to investigators from ... the 9/11 Commission" but "relented when legal action was threatened" (Dwyer, 2005b).

65. Glanz wrote that "[e]xperts said no building like it, a modern, steel-reinforced high-rise, had ever collapsed because of an uncontrolled fire."

66. For photographs and discussion, see Hufschmid (2002, pp. 62–65) and the section entitled "The 'Raging' Fires at WTC Tower Seven" in "The World Trade Center Fires (Not So Hot Eh?)," Global Research, September 27, 2004 (<http://globalresearch.ca.myforums.net/viewtopic.php?t=523>).

67. FEMA (2002, Chapter 5, Section 6.2), "Probable Collapse Sequence," discussed in Griffin (2004, p. 22).

68. Hufschmid (2002, p. 64). The collapse of building 7 also had all the other features of conventional demolitions, such as beginning suddenly and then going down at virtually free-fall speed – which in this case meant under 7 s. This similarity to conventional implosions was mentioned by Dan Rather. Showing a video of the collapse of building 7 on CBS that very evening, Rather said that it was "reminiscent of those pictures we've all seen too much on television before when a building was deliberately destroyed by well-placed dynamite to knock it down" (CBS News, September 11, 2001). Videos of the collapse of building 7, which have seldom appeared on mainstream television, can be viewed at various web sites, including www.geocities.com/killtown/wtc7.html and www.whatreallyhappened.com/wtc7.html. Particularly good for this purpose is Eric Hufschmid's DVD, "Painful Deceptions" (available at www.EricHufschmid.Net).

69. Implosion World.com (<http://www.implosionworld.com/dyk2.html>).

70. Steven Jones, e-mail letter, October 10, 2005.

71. See Norman (2002) and *Firehouse Magazine* (2002a, b).

72. Chief Frank Fellini said that the collapse zone was established "five or six hours" before the building came down, which would have been around noon (NYT, 2005, Fellini, p. 3). This time fits with the testimony of a firefighter who said he "heard reports all day long of 7 World Trade possibly coming down" and of another who said: "We hung out for hours waiting for seven to come down" (NYT, Murray, p. 12, and Massa, pp. 17–18).

73. Even earthquakes, which have produced some partial collapses, have never produced total collapses.

74. "[F]ederal investigators concluded that it had been primarily the impact of the planes and, more specifically, the extreme fires that spread in their wake, that had caused the buildings to fall After the planes hit, ... [m]uch of the spray-on fireproofing in the impact zone was dislodged, leaving the structural steel exposed and mortally vulnerable to the intense heat" (Dwyer & Flynn, 2005, p. 252). These coauthors even (p. 253) endorse NIST's claim – which is totally unsupported (Hoffman, 2005) – that the collapses became "inevitable."

75. Dwyer, in fact, wrote an article entitled “Vast Archive Yields New View of 9/11,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2005 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/13/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/13records.html?ex=1131339600&en=e619ef623287178f&ei=5070>). But he did not mention the “new view” that would be suggested by the testimonies about explosions.

76. Silverstein’s statement has been quoted in many places, including Morgan and Henshall (2005). A critique of this book entitled “9/11 Revealed? New Book Repeats False Conspiracy Theories,” put out by the U.S. State Department (<http://usinfo.state.gov/media/Archive/2005/Sep/16-241966.html>), claims that “[t]he property owner was referring to pulling a contingent of firefighters out of the building in order to save lives because it appeared unstable.” But that is hardly a plausible interpretation, especially given the following sentence and the fact that elsewhere during the documentary (see note 77), we hear the expression clearly used to mean, “bring the building down.”

77. Silverstein’s statement can be viewed (www.infowars.com/Video/911/wtc7_pbs.WMV) or heard on audio file (<http://VestigialConscience.com/PullIt.mp3>). For a discussion, see Baker (n.d.).

78. Currid, incidentally, was reelected as president in 2002 (www.uniondemocracy.com/UDR/34-NYC%20Public%20Employees.htm).

79. Letter to the *LA Times Magazine*, September 18, 2005, by William Yarchin of Huntington Beach, California, in response to an interview with me in that magazine, conducted by Mark Ehrman, entitled “Getting Agnostic about 9/11,” published on August 28, 2005.

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THE MILITARY DRILLS ON 9-11: “BIZARRE COINCIDENCE” OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Four Arrows (aka Don Jacobs)

ABSTRACT

Short-term military simulations of scenarios or conditions that U.S. military personnel might meet are generally the largest, in terms of cost and personnel, of all operational training events. That at least six such exercises were scheduled for September 11, 2001 raises serious questions about whether or not the events of 9/11 were at least partially orchestrated by U.S. command.

In light of the aforementioned military exercises and the fact that the 9/11 Commission's Final Report barely mentions them, neither were they significantly discussed nor investigated during the hearings, this essay briefly explores four key questions that will hopefully stimulate further inquiries, investigations and perhaps subpoenas that will ultimately break the silence and force declassification of the information surrounding the war games.

1. *Has there been a high-level suppression of information about the military drills?*
2. *Might the military drills have been a significant factor in the success of the attacks?*

3. *Who was in charge of the military drills and what motives may have been operating for this person?*
4. *In what way might Zacarias Moussaoui, the only person charged in the United States for the attacks, be a link that connects to the person in charge of the games to another tragedy that may have been “an inside job” – i.e. Senator Paul Wellstone’s death, and how might Moussaoui connect all of this to the Pentagon?*

Thomas H. Kean-9-11 Commission Chairman: Three questions, then I know the general has to leave.

Audience Member: Ask about the war games that were planned for 9/11.

Kean: Commissioner Gorelick?

Audience Member: Tell us about the 9/11 war games!

Jamie S. Gorelick, Commission Member: Could you please be quiet? We have only a few minutes with General Myers, and I’d like to ask a question. General Myers, the – I’m sorry.

Kean: I would ask please people in the audience to be quiet if you want to stay here.

– Testimony as delivered before the Sept. 11 commission on
Thursday, June 17, 2004.¹

During the past decade, nearly 100 pilots have flown through prohibited airspace protecting the white house.² Although the Federal Aviation Association (FAA) has been criticized for not punishing the pilots more stringently, there were seldom problems with scrambling military jets to escort their planes quickly out of the protected area. The FAA hijack coordinator simply requested, “escort service” from the National Military Command Center, then North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) escort aircraft took the required action.³

However, for some reason, normal procedures did not occur on September 11, 2001. In fact, responses at many levels were so unusually slow or absent, many 9/11 researchers have written about the possibility that “stand down” orders had been given prior to the attacks. Others, however, like Michael Ruppert, Michael Kane and Barbara Honegger, believe it is more likely that “war games” that were scheduled for that day were responsible for the problems (Ruppert, 2004).

According to an *Associated Press* release, the U.S. government referred to one of these military drills as “a bizarre coincidence.”⁴ This essay will present evidence with which to consider whether or not the 9/11 pre-planned events were coincidences.

For the purposes of this essay, I will use the word “war games” or “military exercises” or “terrorist drill,” etc., to mean any exercises involving governmental agencies designed to simulate situations involving attacks on the United States and subsequent responses. (Distinctions between war games and terrorist drill may be significant. Although there is a difference, for convenience sake, either “war games” or “drills” will be used here mean to describe military exercises of all varieties.) That such drills or war games occurred on and around September 11th in ways that may have caused people to confuse them with “real time” responses should be of grave concern. It is hoped that this overview, relating to six different drills scheduled for or held on this date, will encourage more in-depth research by official agencies.

9/11 Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste also expressed the significance of this matter, even if indirectly, in his questioning of Col. Alan Scott and General Craig McKinley about the one of these terror drills, “Amalgam Virgo.” The following exchange can be watched in an actual on-line video segment:

Richard Ben-Veniste, Commissioner: Isn't it a fact, Sir, that prior to September 11th, 2001, NORAD had already in the works, plans to simulate in an exercise, a simultaneous hijacking of two planes in the United States?

Maj. Gen. Craig McKinley: Col. Scott, do you have any data on that? I'm not aware of that, Sir. I was not present at the time.

Richard Ben-Veniste, Commissioner: That was operation Amalgam Virgo.

Col. Alan Scott: Yes, Sir. Specifically, operation Amalgam Virgo, which I was involved in before I retired ...⁵

Ben-Veniste's official position is only that NORAD should have been more prepared for such an event since they had this particular drill just in June 2001. However, the fact that his bringing up this issue or the fact that Amalgam Virgo was not mentioned in the final 9/11 Commission Report should give pause. Why was an exercise, so similar to actual 9/11 events, not given more attention? Perhaps Amalgam Virgo was continuing during 9/11? This is the position of Nico Haupt of *Global Free Press*.⁶

Another exercise that was scheduled on 9/11 was called “Timely Alert II.” Its existence and timing was also officially categorized as a “coincidence.” A U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command article by Debbie Sheehan of this department's Public Affairs Office quotes a garrison commander named Col. Stephen N. Wood as saying, “By sheer coincidence we were scheduled to conduct ‘Timely Alert II,’ a force protection exercise

on Sept. 11 and because of that, some of the concrete barriers were already in place.” The article continues:

Wood said people on post told him when they first saw live footage of the events unfolding at the World Trade Center, they thought it was some elaborate training video to accompany the exercise. Firefighters here said others told them the same thing. “You really outdid yourself this time,” a worker said to Captain “Jack” Rindt, training officer for the Fort Monmouth Fire Department. Rindt could only express his sorrow while he acknowledged that indeed, what people were seeing was not a movie, even if it looked like one.⁷

“Operation Northern Vigilance” was a third exercise planned for 9/11. For that, according to Alex Jones and Paul Joseph Watson in their online article, “Wargames Were Cover For the Operational Execution of 9/11,” on the morning of 9/11, jets were removed from patrolling the U.S. east coast and sent to Alaska and Canada.⁸ This is confirmed from “the horse’s mouth” in a newsroom release directly from NORAD on September 9, 2001 entitled “NORAD maintains Northern Vigilance.” It states, “The North American Aerospace Defense Command shall deploy fighter aircraft as necessary to Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in Alaska and Northern Canada to monitor a Russian air force exercise in the Russian arctic and North Pacific Ocean.”⁹

Yet another drill was a bio-warfare exercise called Tripod II. According to Michael Ruppert, “The ‘Tripod II,’ joint New York City-Department of Justice bio-warfare exercise, scheduled for Sept 12th, 2001 at New York’s Pier 29, and mentioned in testimony by former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani at the 9/11 Commission, may become one of the single most important disclosures of 9/11.”¹⁰ Giuliani apparently knew about the exercise because the New York-Department of Justice was a participant in the drill.

“Operation Vigilant Guardian,” a fourth drill, simulated hijacked planes. During this event, Lt. Col. Dawne Deskins, a NORAD control and warning officer, took the call from the Boston Center warning that it was tracking a hijacked airliner. Her first words were, “It must be part of the exercise” (Seely, 2002).

“Operation Northern Guardian” may have been part of Vigilant Guardian, but related to simulating hijacked plans in different sector. Operation Northern Guardian involved deployment of aircraft from Langley Air Force Base to Iceland (Pevey, 2002). In late August 2001, 6 jets and 70 people deployed to Iceland for Operation Northern Guardian. Another 6 jets and 115 people deployed to Turkey to enforce the northern Iraqi no-fly zone. The members in Operation Northern Guardian in Iceland returned on December 3rd, 2001.¹¹ John Fulton of the CIA gave a presentation at a Law

Enforcement Seminar on June 6, 2002 confirming this. He told his audience that on the morning of September 11th, 2001, he and his team at the CIA were running a pre-planned simulation to explore the emergency response issues that would be created if a plane were to strike a building. The keynote speaker for this seminar, coincidentally, was Rudolph Giuliani.¹²

Another drill, "Operation Vigilant Warrior," was referenced in Richard Clarke's book, *Against All Enemies*. He writes that acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Richard Myers, tells him via video link that "We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise" (Clark, 2004, p. 5). This exercise may have been the attack component of the Vigilant Guardian exercise. It is also discussed in "*Air Force Magazine Online*."¹³ In a published transcript of the 9/11 hearings, the lead pilot for the exercise who was finally dispatched for the real thing on 9/11 stated, "I reverted to the Russian threat. I'm thinking cruise missile threat from the sea. You know, you look down and see the Pentagon burning and I thought the bastards snuck one by us. You couldn't see any airplanes, and no one told us anything."¹⁴

The Center for Cooperative Research has an extensive time-line relating to the military exercises of 9/11 with ample documentation on a number of them (See footnote 15 for the web address). One of the drills discussed is "Global Guardian" that was scheduled for October 2001 but apparently was rescheduled for early September. According to the Center's research, Stratcom may have incorporated a computer network attack into Global Guardian with the claimed ability to actually shut down its own systems. It is not known if this occurred or what the effects might have been on the air defense system, but it is another item that demands further inquiry.¹⁵ The existence of these drills and others, like "Amalgam Virgo," which is discussed later and others yet unconfirmed, begin to paint a picture that is beyond coincidence.

United States military training exercises had been used as a cover for real events a number of times prior to 9/11.¹⁶ Members of the current federal government administration were in power during all of them.¹⁷ In each case, they have created confusion or fostered assumptions that may have caused "the enemy" to believe that what was happening was merely part of the exercise. Recall that Lt. Col. Dawne Deskins, regional Mission Crew Chief for the Vigilant Guardian exercise, illustrated that this is what happened on 9/11. She also said that everyone at the North East Air Defense Sector (NEADS), part of NORAD, initially thought the first call received about the real 9/11 hijackings was part of the war games scenario (Seely, 2002).

This essay will now briefly explore four key questions that will hopefully stimulate further inquiries, investigations and perhaps enforceable subpoenas that will ultimately break the silence and force declassification of the information surrounding the war and terrorists exercises:

1. Has there been a high-level suppression of information about the exercises?
2. Might they have been a significant factor in the success of the attacks?
3. Who was in charge of the exercises and what motives may have been operating for this person?
4. In what way might Zacarias Moussaoui, the only person charged in the United States for the 9/11 attacks, be a link that connects to the person in charge of the exercises (Dick Cheney) to another tragedy that may have been “an inside job” (the death of Senator Paul Wellstone) and how might Moussaoui connect all of this to the Pentagon?

1. THE BIG HUSH

The U.S. Government Printing Office has made the final 9/11 Commission Report available on the web, all 585 pages of it. It is published as a single PDF file.¹⁸ I used it to search for places in the report where the Commission may have discussed the war games conducted on 9/11. Before doing this, I tested the process with some random key words. For example, I inserted “fire department” and got 13 hits. “Rumsfeld” was mentioned 71 times and Bush 175. The word, “building” was used in the report 105 times and “terrorist” 416 times. I searched for “Zacarias Moussaoui” and found his name in the report in 128 places. I plugged in “plane into building.” This also came up nil, although the word “plane” had 128 references that were not applicable.

I then searched for the specific names of military drills that I understood may have been relevant to 9/11. These were Vigilant Guardian, Vigilant Warrior, Northern Vigilance, Northern Guardian and Tripod II. Still I found nothing except for one reference in the endnotes for Chapter 1 that were cited on page 467 of the Final Report:

116 On 9/11, NORAD was scheduled to conduct a military exercise, Vigilant Guardian, which postulated a bomber attack from the former Soviet Union. We investigated whether military preparations for the large-scale exercise compromised the military's response to the real-world terrorist attack on 9/11. According to General Eberhart, “it took about 30 seconds” to make the adjustment to the real-world situation. Ralph

Eberhart testimony, June 17, 2004. We found that the response was, if anything, expedited by the increased number of staff at the sectors and at NORAD because of the scheduled exercise. (See Robert Marr interview, January 23, 2004)

The text to which this endnote referred was simply a conversation, noted by the Commission on page 20, between the FAA and the Boston Traffic Management Unit:

FAA: Hi Boston TMU. We have a problem here. We have a hijacked aircraft headed toward New York, and we need you guys to, we need someone to scramble some F-16s.

TMU: Is this a real world or exercise?

FAA: No, this is not an exercise, not a test.

As for the June 17th interview with Eberhart, the Commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, recall from the opening transcript dialog that this was the meeting where members of the audience wanted some questions asked about the war games. (Actually, there were two people. One was escorted out. The other was intimidated into silence.) Later, Commissioner Tim Roemer did ask Eberhart the only question about military exercises that would be asked during the entire 9/11 Commission hearings:

Roemer: My question is, you were postured for an exercise against the former Soviet Union. Did that help or hurt? Did that help in terms of were more people prepared? Did you have more people ready? Were more fighters fueled with more fuel? Or did this hurt in terms of people thinking, “No, there’s no possibility that this is real world; we’re engaged in an exercise,” and delay things?

Eberhart: Sir, my belief is that it helped because of the manning, because of the focus, because the crews – they have to be airborne in 15 minutes and that morning, because of the exercise, they were airborne in six or eight minutes. And so I believe that focus helped.

According to researcher and reporter, Michael Kane, of the *Global Free Press*, who was on the scene for this interview, “after General Eberhart’s sworn testimony, I asked him who was in charge of coordinating the multiple war games running on 9/11.” He replied: “No Comment.” Kane goes on to say,

If the war games helped “because of the focus,” why was General Eberhart reluctant to comment on just who was at the center of that focus? Tim Roemer’s question is posed as if there was only one exercise running that morning, but this was not the case. There were at least three, as has been documented by the mainstream press, and there may have been more than five such exercises running.¹⁹

Kyle Hence, the co-founder of 9/11 Citizens Watch, asked Commissioner Gorelick about fighter jets from Andrews Air Force base that were off on a bombing run exercise 200 miles away from Washington, DC on 9/11, leaving the capitol defenseless. Gorelick also refused to comment.²⁰

Col. Robert Marr, commander of the Northeast Defense Sector of the National Guard in Rome, NY, was also mentioned in the endnote. I could not find any statement by him in the published report, however, he did tell the British Broadcasting Corporation on the program, “Clear the Skies,” that he had unarmed jets flying training missions when it became clear the terrorists intended to crash airliners into buildings:

“If you had to stop an aircraft, sometimes the only way to stop an aircraft is with your own aircraft if you don’t have any weapons,” Marr said in an interview on the BBC program, “Clear the Skies.” “It was very possible that would have been asked to give their lives themselves to try to prevent further attacks if need be.” Marr said that “on the morning of the attacks at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, only 14 armed planes were available to defend the U.S. mainland. Only four of those planes were patrolling the Northeast”²¹

Besides the official hush on the war games, mainstream media also neglected the subject by and large. Early in 2004, independent researcher, Mark Robinowitz, published the results of his research for news on the exercises and found mention only in a January 5, 2002 article in *Newhouse News*; an August 21, 2002 *Associated Press* article; a June 3, 2002 *Aviation Week and Space Technology* piece; and a December 9, 2001 news article published in the *Toronto Star*.²² There were undoubtedly more, but the fact remains that most American citizens still have no idea about military exercises scheduled for 9/11 and their possible effects.

As mentioned earlier, Richard Clarke talks about Vigilant Warrior in his best selling book, *Against All Enemies*. Clarke, the counter-terrorism advisor on the U.S. National Security Council and Chair of the Crisis Strategy Group, describes his first minutes after the 9/11 attacks:

They were frantically looking for Norman Mineta, the Secretary of Transportation, and, like me, a rare holdover from the Clinton administration. At first FAA could not find him. “Well, Jan, (Jan Garvey, Federal Aviation Administration administrator) can you order aircraft down? We’re going to have to clear the airspace around Washington and New York.”

“We may have to do a lot more than that, Dick. I already put a hold on all take-offs and landings in New York and Washington, but we have reports of eleven aircraft off course or out of communications, maybe hijacked.”

“I turned to the radar screen . . . ” JCS, JCS, I assume NORAD has scrambled fighters and AWACS. How many? Where?

“Not a pretty picture Dick.” Dick Myers, himself a fighter pilot, knew that the days when we had scores of fighters on strip alert had ended with the cold war. “We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise...” (Clark, 2004, pp. 3-9)

There was also an interesting article on an exercise conducted *prior* to 9/11 in the mainstream news on April 18, 2004. *USA Today* published a piece by Steven Komarow and Tom Squitieri in “Washington/Politics” entitled, “NORAD had drills of jets as weapons.” It opens:

WASHINGTON – In the two years before the Sept. 11 attacks, the North American Aerospace Defense Command conducted exercises simulating what the White House says was unimaginable at the time: hijacked airliners used as weapons to crash into targets and cause mass casualties. One of the imagined targets was the World Trade Center. In another exercise, jets performed a mock shoot-down over the Atlantic Ocean of a jet supposedly laden with chemical poisons headed toward a target in the United States. In a third scenario, the target was the Pentagon – but that drill was not run after Defense officials said it was unrealistic, NORAD and Defense officials say. NORAD, in a written statement, confirmed that such hijacking exercises occurred.²³

Much more could be written about the great hush that clouds information about the 9/11 war games. Of course, Bush’s “secret government” would simply dismiss the problem by saying that military exercises are classified. Or, as some generals have indicated, in any case they probably enhanced the U.S. response to 9/11. Before the truth about the military exercises can illuminate what was really behind 9/11, a full and authentic investigation would have to break through these excuses.

At least one publicly elected official has started asking such questions. Cynthia McKinney, voted back into Congress in 2004 by the people of Georgia’s 4th Congressional District, has a history of asking the hard questions. The following exchange represents one of the few efforts of a congressperson to get people to talk about the 9/11 planned exercises. It is from a transcript of Representative Cynthia McKinney’s exchange with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers and Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) Tina Jonas, on March 11th, 2005.

CMK: The question was, we had four war games going on on September 11th, and the question that I tried to pose before the Secretary had to go to lunch was whether or not the activities of the four war games going on on September 11th actually impaired our ability to respond to the attacks.

RM: The answer to the question is no, it did not impair our response, in fact General Eberhart who was in the command of the North American Aerospace Defense Command as he testified in front of the 9/11 Commission I believe – I believe he told them that it enhanced our ability to respond, given that NORAD didn’t have the overall responsibility for responding to the attacks that day. That was an FAA responsibility.

But they were two CPXs; there was one Department of Justice exercise that didn't have anything to do with the other three; and there was an actual operation ongoing because there was some Russian bomber activity up near Alaska. So we –

CMK: Let me ask you this, then: who was in charge of managing those war games?

RM: The important thing to realize is that North American Aerospace Defense Command was responsible. These are command post exercises; what that means is that all the battle positions that are normally not filled are indeed filled; so it was an easy transition from an exercise into a real world situation. It actually enhanced the response; otherwise, it would take somewhere between 30 minutes and a couple of hours to fill those positions, those battle stations, with the right staff officers.

CMK: Mr. Chairman, begging your indulgence, was September Eleventh declared a National Security Special Event day?

RM: I have to look back; I do not know. Do you mean after the fact, or

CMK: No. Because of the activities going on that had been scheduled at the United Nations that day.

RM: I'd have to go back and check. I don't know.²⁴

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WAR GAMES

On September 11, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) was running a drill simulating an off-course aircraft crashing into NRO headquarters in Virginia at 8:30 a.m., about the same time the real thing was occurring. The NRO is the spy satellite agency and its involvement shows how war games had moved beyond the control of individual services. This is emphasized by Navy Adm. Edmund P. Giambastiani Jr. as quoted in a U.S. Department of Defense news article:

“Before in the Defense Department, war games were essentially just done by services, and they would sprinkle in joint entities,” Giambastiani explained. Now, he said, fundamentally the services are cooperating and co-hosting war games with Joint Forces Command. “I am co-hosting with the chief of a service, a joint war game which the Army and the Joint Forces Command come together to play,” he said. “Primarily, the majority of people in it are actually joint.” “We do it with the Navy, we do it with the Marine Corps, we’ve done it with the Air Force, we’re doing it with agencies such as a National Reconnaissance Office, we’ve done it with other combatant commanders,” he said. “It’s pretty darn significant.” (Sample, 2005)

Associated Press journalist, John J. Lumpkin also wrote about the NRO exercise:

WASHINGTON – In what the government describes as a bizarre coincidence, one U.S. Intelligence Agency was planning an exercise last Sept. 11 in which an errant aircraft

would crash into one of its buildings. But the cause wasn't terrorism – it was to be a simulated accident ...²⁵

American Airlines Flight 77, the Boeing 767 that was supposedly crashed into the Pentagon, took off from Dulles at 8:10 on 9/11, 50 minutes before the exercise was to begin.

Michael Ruppert's research regarding this and other planned military exercises reveals that "possibly many aircraft were posing as hijacked airliners." He claims that on the day of 9/11 The Joint Chiefs of Staff (Richard B. Myers) and NORAD were conducting a joint, live-fly, hijack Field Training Exercise (FTX) which involved at least one (and almost certainly many more) aircraft under US control that was posing as a hijacked airliner" (Ruppert, 2004).

To what degree might knowledge of such exercises influenced responses and non-responses to 9/11? Besides the obvious problem of not being able to tell the difference between real and drill blips on NORAD screens, being on alert for such games generally has a disruptive effect. Col. Steve Jones, the commander of the Air National Guard's 147th Squadron out of Houston, explains this in *Code One*, an official Lockheed Martin publication. The 147th provides air defense for the Gulf Coast region and for the Houston petrochemical base, but also for missions around the world. Jones was on combat alert, sitting in the cockpit of his F-16 when he first heard about the 9/11 attack (after being told to look at the television set!). In describing alert status exercises in general, he stated:

People who are not used to flying alert missions may be a little tense about it ... They can be in such a hurry that they forget something that delays them. They can get bogged down by command and control functions if their units don't have the infrastructure to support an alert mission. They can get bogged down in the notification procedures as well. (Hehs, 2002)

Bogged down may be an understatement if this is what happened on 9/11. One squadron of NORAD fighter planes that was eventually scrambled was sent east over the Atlantic Ocean and was 150 miles from Washington, DC, when the third plane struck the Pentagon, farther away from the scene than when they first took off.²⁶

Besides the general confusion, the NRO exercise also involved an emergency evacuation drill running in the morning of 9/11. As a result, many key people who are responsible for watching images from numerous satellites were not even at their stations when the first plane struck its target! NRO spokesman Art Haubold told *United Press International* (UPI), "It was just

a coincidence. It was an emergency response exercise. It was just a strange coincidence.”²⁷

Another example was reported in the book, *Air War Over America*. This book, which is now already out of print and unavailable is published by the Defense Information Access Network (DIANE). For nearly 14 years, it has focused on researching and making available the very best and most important documents and reports produced by various agencies of governments worldwide. It explains how at the time of the first WTC crash, three F-16s were assigned to Andrews Air Force Base, 10 miles from Washington. They flew an air-to-ground training mission in North Carolina, 207 miles away from their base. Not until they are half-way back does lead pilot Major Billy Hutchison receive orders to return to base (Arnold & Filson, 2004, p. 56).

It seems obvious that war games on the day of 9/11 were and are a matter of significance, but so were war games *prior* to 9/11. For example, one of the exercises prior to 9/11 occurred on November 3, 2000. Don Abbott of Command Emergency Response Training organized a simulated crash on the Pentagon with miniature planes and a model of the Pentagon. Such exercises relating to terrorist attacks similar to those that actually happened might have conditioned military personal to expect more of the same. Considering that Bush, Rice and Rumsfeld have all said that they could not have imagined planes being hijacked and crashed into buildings, it makes these exercises even more suspect.

In his highly regarded book, *9/11: Synthetic Terror: Made in the U.S.*, Webster Tarpley (1992) discusses the significance war games may have had on 9/11. In one section he refers to an exercise called “Amalgam Virgo.” This exercise is a U.S.–Canadian multi-agency, bilateral air security exercise sponsored by NORAD. Now an annual event, it made its debut on the morning of 9/11. (In spite of the fact that information about the war games has been classified, the fact that 9/11 was the premier of Amalgam Virgo was announced by the U.S. Department of Defense “Armed Forces Information Services” a year later in announcing its “second annual” exercise.²⁸ Marine Corps Major, Mike Snyder, called the day-long exercise in 2002 a great success.²⁹)

Tarpley talks about how war games can influence coups in general and then about how Amalgam Virgo specifically might have had a significant effect on the events that played out behind the 9/11 scenes:

Staff exercises or command exercises are perfect for a rogue network which is forced to conduct its operations using the same communications and computer systems used by other officers who are not necessarily party to the illegal operation, coup or provocation

as it may be. A putschist (a person plotting or involved in a coup) officer may be working at a console next to another officer who is not in on the coup, and who might indeed oppose it if he knew about it. The putschist's behavior is suspicious: what the hell is he doing? The loyal officer looks over and asks the putschist about it. The putschist cites a staff maneuver for which he is preparing. The loyal officer concludes that the putschist's activities are part of an officially sanctioned drill, and his suspicions are allayed. The putschist may even explain that participation in the staff exercise requires a special security clearance which the loyal officer does not have. The conversation ends, and the putschist can go on with his treasonous work.

The best working hypothesis is that Amalgam Virgo was the cover story under which the 9/11 attacks advanced through the bureaucracy. Preparations for carrying out 9/11 were conducted under the cover of being preparations for Amalgam Virgo. Most of those who took part in Amalgam Virgo could hardly have been aware of this duplicity Here was an exercise which included many of the elements which were put into practice on 9/11. Amalgam Virgo thus provided the witting putschists with a perfect cover for conducting the actual live fly components of 9/11 through a largely non-witting military bureaucracy. Under the cover of this confusion, the most palpably subversive actions could be made to appear in the harmless and even beneficial guise of a drill. (Tarpley, 2005, p. 3)

3. WHO WAS IN CHARGE AND WHY?

After personally questioning many NORAD, NRO and Department of Defense sources, Michael Ruppert became convinced that Cheney was responsible for the war games. "The war games will tie Cheney and Rumsfeld directly into a complete paralysis of fighter response on 9/11," he stated in an article discussing a military exercise held on 9/11 called "Tripod II" and other exercises orchestrated by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).³⁰ Ruppert has studied the war games issue extensively and covers it in his book, *Crossing the Rubicon*. Michael Kane summarizes this research,³¹ which I have condensed further below. Just as Cheney had taken control of the military after the attacks, he was also in control of the military exercises before and during them.³²

1. In May 2001 Dick Cheney was placed directly in charge of managing the "seamless integration" of all training exercises throughout the federal government and military agencies by presidential mandate.
2. The morning of 9/11 began with multiple training exercises of war games and terror drills, which Cheney, as mandated by the president was placed in charge of managing.
3. Cheney was in charge of the war game known as Tripod 2, an exercise set up in downtown New York that set up a command and control center on 9/11 that was configured exactly like the one lost that morning in WTC 7.

4. Dick Cheney was one of the main government officials deciding that such extensive drills would take place on 9/11, in spite of (or because of) the intelligence warning that terrorists would hijack aircraft and crash them into targets during the week of September 9th, 2001.

As for why the Vice-President may have wanted to use the exercises as a way to assure the success of 9/11 attacks, no one should be surprised to hear that the answer relates to oil. First, Cheney understood well the growing need for oil. In an article for the Center for Research in Globalization entitled, "Iraq and the Problem of Peak Oil," F. William Engdahl states that Cheney knew about this problem in 1999:

In a speech to the International Petroleum Institute in London in late 1999, Dick Cheney, then chairman of the world's largest oil services company, Halliburton, presented the picture of world oil supply and demand to industry insiders. 'By some estimates,' Cheney stated, 'there will be an average of two percent annual growth in global oil demand over the years ahead, along with, conservatively, a three percent natural decline in production from existing reserves.' Cheney ended on an alarming note: 'That means by 2010 we will need on the order of an additional fifty million barrels a day.' This is equivalent to more than six Saudi Arabia's of today's size.³³

Second, the war in Iraq was about oil. President Bush's Cabinet agreed in April 2001 that "Iraq remains a destabilizing influence to the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East" and because this is an unacceptable risk to the U.S. "military intervention" is necessary.³⁴

Third, the Iraq war has been in the works since 1996.³⁵ Cheney even tried to sell the idea to Bill Clinton in 1998.

Fourth, Cheney's company, Halliburton, got the contract to rebuild Iraq and he knew his company would get it. Halliburton has contracts worth more billions for its work in Iraq.³⁶ In spite of his claims to the contrary, Cheney should receive financial rewards from Halliburton even though he is no longer directly in charge of it (BBC, 2003). During the first 2 years of the war, Cheney's 433,000 Halliburton stock options jumped to \$26 million in worth.³⁷

Fifth, Cheney needed the 9/11 attacks to rationalize the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq that would set the stage for his financial and ideological ambitions and to assure that the U.S. would not lose its energy advantage as a result of the peak oil problem (Griffin, 2004).

Sixth, Halliburton, headed by Dick Cheney before he became Vice President, and its Kellogg, Brown and Root subsidiary, has a long history of corrupt money-making practices in countries like Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Nigeria. Halliburton had extensive investments

and contracts in Suharto's Indonesia. Indonesia Corruption Watch named Kellogg Brown & Root (Halliburton's engineering division) among 59 companies using collusive, corruptive and nepotistic practices in deals involving former President Suharto's family. Still, the Pentagon continues to offer KBR no-bid contracts.³⁸

4. THE ZACARIAS MOUSSAOUI CONNECTION

To suggest that Dick Cheney and other top officials may have intentionally pre-planned military exercises, as part of a conspiracy to use the events of 9/11 to ultimately lead to U.S. occupation of Iraq is obviously a difficult proposition to digest. Yet, if a case could be made that he and others may have also been involved in a political assassination of a U.S. Senator who stood in the way of the Iraq agenda, then this suggestion becomes more plausible. Furthermore, if he was connected to both events, then "coincidence theory" holds even less water.

Zacarias Moussaoui is the only person who has been charged in the U.S. as a conspirator in the 9/11 attacks. In spite of this, no evidence linking him to the attacks has been released. None of his purported accomplices within the U.S. have been arrested. His case is entirely controlled by the Executive Branch of the government. In 2003, Bush personally asked for a hold on his trial.³⁹ It did not plea bargain with him in order to get more information from him regarding the 9/11 conspiracy.⁴⁰ In fact it has gone to great lengths to prevent him from speaking. All his testimony remains classified. He has spent much time in solitary confinement and is not allowed visitors besides family and his attorneys. The government did not allow him to call for witnesses from al-Qaeda, even though this might have resulted in dismissal of his indictment (Maargasak, 2003).

Even before he was arrested, unusual "precautions" with regard to Moussaoui seem to have been common. For example, while he was living in London, he was observed by French intelligence making several trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan. French investigators claimed the British spy agency MI5 was alerted and requested to place Moussaoui under surveillance but the request appeared to have been ignored.⁴¹

When he was arrested in Minnesota just before 9/11, FBI agent Marion "Spike" Bowman, head of the FBI's National Security Law Unit, denied the Minneapolis FBI's request for a warrant to search Moussaoui's belongings and his computer, which contained a flight simulation program obtained at

a flight training school owned by Northwest Airlines. Minneapolis FBI agents applied for the August 2001 search warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Bowman's decision prevented an adequate search of materials. One of the items in Moussaoui's possession was a letter that could have led investigators to an important meeting relating to the 9/11 attacks. He also possessed phone numbers that could have linked him to major planners of the 9/11 attacks.^{42,43} Instead of being punished for giving the local agents information that was "inexcusably confused and inaccurate" he was given an FBI award in December 2002 for "exceptional performance" (Griffin, 2004, p. 122).

Even after the 9/11 attacks began, the Supervisory Special Agent who was most involved in the Moussaoui matter and who, up to that point, seemed to have been consistently, almost deliberately thwarting the Minneapolis FBI agents' efforts, was still attempting to block the search of Moussaoui's computer. And according to the well-known letter from Coleen Rowley, the FBI was "prevented from even attempting to question Moussaoui on the day of the attacks when, in theory, he could have possessed further information about other co-conspirators."⁴⁴

Moussaoui is a man of African ancestry who hailed from France. He possessed a Masters degree from Southbank University in the United Kingdom and traveled widely. According to the Australian Government's Department of Defense and its Defense Science and Technology Department, Moussaoui was a major player in the 9/11 planning. Using their advanced Computer Forensic Investigative Toolkit, this department used relational network analysis to study all of the 9/11 hijackers and found him to be connected to Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the purported architect of 9/11 and to Mohamed Atta, the leader of the attacks and the presumed pilot of the first plane to crash into the Twin Towers.⁴⁵

Michael Guess, also a man of African ancestry and about the same age as Moussaoui lived in St. Paul about the same time Moussaoui was there. He is the person who let Moussaoui download the flight simulation program for a Boeing 747 onto the laptop computer when he worked in part-time administration at the Pan Am International Flight Academy as a second job. According to an ex-manager of the school, Guess had "inadvertently" placed a CD-ROM containing the 747 software at a workstation in advance of one of the Moussaoui's training sessions, before his flight instructor arrived, and left him in the room alone with it (Four Arrows & Fetzer, 2004). Later Guess was laid off from the school where he had hoped to become a flight instructor. After the event, Guess had gone out of his way to tell people that he played a big role in getting Moussaoui arrested.⁴⁶

Michael Guess was also, “coincidentally,” the co-pilot of the airplane that crashed on October 25, 2002, killing Senator Paul Wellstone. Some believe that he was actually flying the plane when it crashed ([Four Arrows & Fetzer, 2004](#)). Perhaps the reason he talked so openly about being a part of Moussaoui’s capture (which of course he was not) was to distance him from the possibility, which in fact was never a topic of any investigation, including the National Transportation Safety Board’s (NTSB) investigation of the Senator’s plane crash. The book, *American Assassination: The Strange Death of Senator Paul Wellstone*, makes a strong case for Dick Cheney and others being the source for a contract on the Senator. Wellstone’s aggressive opposition to the Iraq war and to Cheney’s leadership role in promoting it, and his successful attempts to stop Halliburton from receiving no-bid defense contracts offered billions of dollars worth of motive. If Cheney was responsible for 9/11 war games; if he was part of a duplicitous, pre-planned strategy for implementing 9/11 events that would serve the interests of those who desired to use them to support wars for oil and profit; and if he was willing to arrange for the assassination of a U.S. Senator to help assure that he achieved his 9/11 goals; then the silencing of Moussaoui might have an additional purpose. What if Moussaoui knows about Cheney’s involvement in the Wellstone incident? What if he and Guess worked for the same agent or agency? Perhaps there is a connection beyond our imagination, but in any case, the overlaps and interconnections are beyond coincidence and warrant further investigation!

Consider that Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, expressed his concern about Bowman’s interference with the search warrant, pointing out that Bowman and others gave testimony during a closed Judiciary Committee hearing that indicated that Moussaoui was connected to a major financier of the hijacking plot:

“If the application for the FISA warrant had gone forward,” Grassley wrote, “agents would have found information in Moussaoui’s belongings that linked him both to a major financier of the hijacking plot working out of Germany, and to a Malaysian al-Qaida boss who had met with at least two other hijackers while under surveillance by intelligence officials.”⁴⁷

Making a connection between Michael Guess and Moussaoui is admittedly speculative. Moussaoui was arrested more than a year before Senator Wellstone’s plane crashed. However, there are too many similarities, overlaps and connections between the two men to allow them to stand without calling for more thorough investigations. One can only guess about possible connections Guess might have had, directly or indirectly, with Moussaoui,

besides the “coincidences” mentioned above, we know, from 50 pages of *Star Tribune* interviews, that Guess

- had been a member of the Air National Guard, but little is known about his service;
- and his connection to Moussaoui was never mentioned by the NTSB in their investigation into his background. The NTSB even went so far as to suppress the name of Pan Am’s flight school where Guess had worked, had let Moussaoui download the flight simulator and from where he had recently been laid off 1 month before the tragic flight;
- was considered a very private person;
- flew regularly with Richard Conry, the pilot that Senator Wellstone often asked for;
- was assigned the Wellstone flight by the President of Aviation Charter after the previously scheduled copilot for the Wellstone flight did not answer his phone; and
- had just been laid off, he was seeking employment prior to taking the Wellstone flight.

We also know from the NTSB final report that the pilot of the aircraft, Richard Conry, had a criminal record relating to financial graft.⁴⁸ We know that Dick Cheney knew well in advance of Paul Wellstone’s stand against the Iraq war resolution that Wellstone would indeed oppose it.

What possibilities exist? Perhaps Moussaoui and Guess and maybe even Conry did work for the same “employer.” Maybe Guess brought something aboard the aircraft that enhanced the mechanism for taking it down, thinking he was merely delivering some secret documents? It is hard to imagine given some of the background information about him, but because the effort to locate his friends and family has been difficult, even a suicide mission like that of the 9/11 pilots should not be ruled out. May be Moussaoui can connect the dots. May be not. However, when we consider more information about connections between Moussaoui, the Pentagon and Cheney, we are compelled to demand more information.

On August 27, 2005 article, sub-titled, “9/11 Ringleader Connected to Secret Pentagon Operation,” by Dr. Daniele Ganser of the Zurich Polytechnic, published by the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), identifies the role of 9/11 ringleader Mohamed Atta and three other hijackers in a secret Pentagon operation. It largely refutes the official U.S. government narrative as presented by the 9/11 Commission.

Recall that Atta is considered to be the “tactical leader of the 9/11 plot” and the suicide pilot who purportedly flew the first plane into the towers.

The Australian Department of Defense's highly sophisticated research system showed numerous meetings between Atta and Moussaoui. Ganser reveals that Atta was also connected to a top-secret operation of the Pentagon's Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in the U.S. She says a top-secret Pentagon project code-named, "Able Danger," had identified Atta as a member of an al-Qaeda cell more than a year before the attacks.⁴⁹ What was the role of Atta in this operation? Did anyone in the Pentagon or higher (as in Dick Cheney) know in advance what Atta was planning? Was Atta working for someone in the administration? Who was really in charge?

Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony Shaffer, a 42-year-old native of Kansas City who worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Washington at the time of the 9/11 attacks, and had insights into the Pentagon's top secret operation, urged the FBI to arrest Atta but the Pentagon's lawyers intervened and "protected Atta for reasons that remain unclear."⁵⁰ Note how similar this is to how Moussaoui has been "protected." The 9/11 Commission Report also fails to mention Operation Able Danger or any other U.S.-based SOCOM operations.⁵¹

Another "coincidence" is that, just as Moussaoui is the only person in U.S. prison for the 9/11 attacks, another French born man of Moroccan Arab descent, the same age as Moussaoui, is the only person outside the U.S. to be convicted for the 9/11 attacks. According to an Amnesty International report, his name is Mounir al-Motassadeq. A Hamburg Germany high court found the 31-year-old man guilty of being part of a terrorist cell led by Mohamed Atta.⁵² The U.S. has refused his defense access to a person held by U.S. authorities on suspicion of terrorist activities whose statements had been used in that trial. As a result, the German high court has declared a mistrial.

In addition to all of these, the recent news that U.S. senators from both parties accused the U.S. Defense Department of obstructing an investigation into "Able Danger" and claims that its documents and personnel could have identified Mohamed Atta and other hijackers well before 9/11! The Pentagon blocked several witnesses here also from testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Even Republican Senator Arlen Specter regarded the assertions as credible. Democrat Joseph Biden took it further, accusing the Pentagon of a cover-up (Jansen, 2005).

How many more "coincidences" must we endure before we demand that they be explained? The use of six or more planned military/CIA "exercises" on September 11, 2001 and their repercussions are indeed "bizarre" but likely not coincidental.

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**PART III:
THE CONTEXT OF 9-11-2001 AND
MEANING FOR THE FUTURE**

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TERRORISM AND STATECRAFT: AL-QAEDA AND WESTERN COVERT OPERATIONS AFTER THE COLD WAR

Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed

ABSTRACT

Al-Qaeda is conventionally portrayed as a monolithic, hierarchical organization whose activities – coordinated by the network’s leader Osama bin Laden – are the source of international terrorism today. Al-Qaeda is considered a radical tendency within the broader Islamist Salafi movement, legitimizing its terrorist operations as a global Islamist jihad against Western civilization. Al-Qaeda’s terrorist activity today is considered, “blowback” from long finished CIA and western covert operations in Afghanistan.

The conventional wisdom is demonstrably false. After the Cold War, Western connections with al-Qaeda proliferated around the world, challenging mainstream conceptions of al-Qaeda’s identity. Western covert operations and military – intelligence connections in strategic regions show that “al-Qaeda” is a network whose raison d’etre and modus operandi are inextricably embedded in a disturbing conglomerate of international Western diplomatic, financial, military and intelligence policies today. US, British, and Western power routinely manipulates al-Qaeda

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 149–188
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23005-0

through a complex network of state-regional and human nodes. Such manipulation extended directly to the 9-11 hijackers, and thus to the events of 9-11 itself.¹

1. AL-QAEDA AS A TOOL OF STATECRAFT

An examination of the conventional understanding of al-Qaeda raises significant doubts. Critical analysis of reports surrounding groups identified as belonging to “al-Qaeda” discloses a clear pattern: that these networks operate according to a common trajectory, conducive to Western interests.

1.1. Defining al-Qaeda

There remains considerable disagreement over the nature of al-Qaeda, whether it actually exists in a concrete sense, pertains to a tenuous ideological tendency among Islamist groups around the world, or indeed whether the term usefully denotes anything objective at all outside the discourse of Western officialdom.

Rohan Gunaratna (2002, p. 296) offers a detailed description of al-Qaeda as “an Islamist organization full of vitality.” It has a “politically clandestine structure,” inspired by “internationalism,” drawing on the “Marxist militant model,” using “noms de guerre” and a strict “cell structure.” It follows “the idea of a cadre party, maintains tight discipline, promotes self-sacrifice and reverence for the leadership and is guided by a program of action.” His work was widely considered the most comprehensive and reliable account of al-Qaeda’s history, development, structure, and operations.

Much of Gunaratna’s claims are deeply flawed. The study’s biggest problem is its largely unverifiable nature, relying almost exclusively on materials made available to the author through his Western intelligence contacts. They provided him with access to alleged al-Qaeda operatives and Western counterterrorism officials whose grandiose stories are accepted uncritically and without corroboration. The lack of credibility pervading Gunaratna’s thesis emerged when many of his most striking claims were disproved. One prominent example is his widely cited narrative of an alleged al-Qaeda plot to fly a hijacked British Airways plane into the houses of parliament in London, foiled by the grounding of planes in US airspace on and after 9-11. Gunaratna’s source alleged al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Afroz detained in Bombay in October 2001, who also claimed to plan to fly a plane into the

Rialto Towers in Melbourne, Australia. An Indian court released Afroz in July 2002 – New Delhi authorities concluded that the claims were fabricated by Bombay police. Australia’s Security and Intelligence Organization similarly dismissed the claim of a Melbourne plan as “lacking in credibility.”²

The most damning admission came from his book’s British publisher, which printed a disclaimer requesting readers to treat its contents not as factual, but as mere “suggestions”:

A wide range of organizations – banks, governmental and non-governmental bodies, financial enterprises, religious and educational institutions, commercial entities, transport companies and charitable bodies are referred to in this book as having had contact or dealings with al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Unless such references specifically state otherwise, they should be treated as *nothing other than a suggestion* that the organisations concerned were the unwitting tools of those who attempted, successfully or otherwise, to infiltrate, use or manipulate them for terrorist purposes. (Gunaratna, 2002)³

Gunaratna’s thesis ought to be viewed cautiously, and perhaps not taken seriously at all. A growing number of experts challenge such conventional analyses. Terrorism expert Naylor (2002) argues that: “al-Qaeda itself does not exist, except in the fevered imaginations of neo-cons and Likudniks, some of whom, I suspect, also know it is a myth, but find it extremely useful as a bogeyman to spook the public and the politicians to acquiesce in otherwise unacceptable policy initiatives at home and abroad.” International terrorism consists of “loose networks of like-minded individuals,” who may occasionally “pay homage to some patron figure who they may never have met and with whom they have no concrete relationship.” Terrorists largely “conduct their operations strictly by themselves, even if they may from time to time seek advice.”⁴ Dr Andrews Sike (2003), a criminologist and forensic psychologist on the UN Roster of Terrorism Experts, notes that al-Qaeda lacks “a clear hierarchy, military mindset and centralised command.” At best, it constitutes a loose network of “affiliated groups sharing religious and ideological backgrounds, but which often interact sparingly.” Al-Qaeda is less an organization than “a state of mind,” encompassing “a wide range of members and followers who can differ dramatically from each other.” Adam Curtis (2004) in his BBC documentaries *The Power of Nightmares* argued that al-Qaeda does not even have members, a leader, “sleepers cells,” or even an overall strategy. As an organization “it barely exists at all, except as an idea about cleansing a corrupt world through religious violence” Beckett (2004).

US terrorism experts Kimberly A. McCloud and Adam Dolnik (2002) from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, note that al-Qaeda is “a loose collection of groups and individuals that doesn’t even refer to itself as al-Qaeda.” Dolnik reports that

“bin Laden never used the term al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. Nor am I aware of the name being used by operatives on trial. The closest they came were in statements such as, ‘Yes, I am a member of what you call al-Qaeda.’” The term “al-Qaeda” was *invented* by American intelligence services as a “convenient label for a group that had no formal name.” Its public use proliferated after the 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania (O’Neill, 2003). Thus, *The Observer’s* chief reporter Jason Burke (2003) concludes that: “al-Qaeda is a messy and rough designation, often applied carelessly in the absence of a more useful term.”

These authoritative observations suggest that al-Qaeda as conventionally described does not exist. This is not reason to deny altogether that al-Qaeda denotes some sort of identifiable entity. The late Robin Cook (2005), former British Foreign Secretary, 1997–2001, and Leader of the House of Commons, 2001–2003, revealed one day after the London bombings that the term “al-Qaeda” referred to a database contained in a computer file, listing “the thousands of mujahideen who were recruited and trained with help from the CIA to defeat the Russians.”⁵

This statement is crucial – it demonstrates that an entity referred to as “al-Qaeda” has indeed existed since the Cold War years; it demonstrates that this existence is not commensurate with conventional discourse – as a CIA computer database of mujahideen recruits, the term “al-Qaeda” denoted a list of individuals related to a specific category of US covert military-intelligence operations. As *Janes Defence Weekly* (Bedi, 2001; Chossudovsky, 2001a, b) reported, “al-Qaeda” was created in 1988 “with US knowledge” by Osama bin Laden, a “conglomerate of quasi-independent Islamic terrorist cells” spanning “at least 26 countries.”

Bin Laden’s “al-Qaeda” network was never external to the US covert operations apparatus, deriving its infrastructure, weapons, advanced training, and core recruits under the careful tutelage of Western military intelligence. The term “al-Qaeda” was coined not by Islamists, but by the CIA to designate a computer database of mujahideen operatives, cells, and groups affiliated principally through this Western military intelligence heritage.

These two strands of fact – firstly, that al-Qaeda as a centralized organization does *not* exist, and secondly, that al-Qaeda as a database of pseudo-Islamist covert operations recruits *does* exist – necessitate a more nuanced working definition. The term “al-Qaeda” can perhaps be applied as a meaningful designation if the following criteria are fulfilled:

1. There is documented evidence that an individual or group has a connection with the CIA-trained mujahideen associated with bin Laden and

related senior mujahideen operatives; i.e. that they are associated with the original CIA database.

2. There is documented evidence that an individual or group is connected to Western military intelligence services, and corresponding financial and strategic interests.

1.2. Al-Qaeda as a Post-Cold War Strategic Instrument

Al-Qaeda and the New Destabilization Doctrine

The CIA never envisaged that the operational scope of its terrorist database would be restricted to Afghanistan. One CIA analyst told Swiss television journalist Richard Labévière, chief editor at Radio France International:

The policy of guiding the evolution of Islam and of helping them against our adversaries worked marvellously well in Afghanistan against the Red Army. The same doctrines can still be used to destabilize what remains of Russian power, and especially to counter the Chinese influence in Central Asia. (Labévière, 2000, prologue)

“Al-Qaeda” activity thus pertained to a new doctrine of covert destabilization, to be implemented in new theatres of operation strategically close to Russian and Chinese influence, namely, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Unholy Triangle

Evidence in the public record substantiates the above cited observations of Labévière’s CIA officer. No sooner had the Cold War ended, the US perpetuated influence over various mujahideen factions in Afghanistan. European intelligence sources reveal that the CIA and the Saudis – intent on securing a regime commensurate with their joint regional interests – agreed that they did not want to give up “the assets of such a profitable collaboration,” referring to the Cold War Afghan-US alliance controlled by bin Laden. In 1991, the CIA, Saudi intelligence, and bin Laden held a series of secret meetings. The CIA was determined to maintain its influence in Afghanistan, “the vital route to Central Asia where the great oil companies were preparing the energy eldorado for the coming millenium.” The Saudis were also intent on preserving the bin Laden-Pakistan alliance “at all costs” (Labévière, p. 104f).

This is corroborated by other sources. Posner (2003, pp. 40–42) cites a classified US intelligence report proving that in April 1991, the then head of Saudi intelligence services Prince Turki al-Faisal struck a secret deal with bin Laden: the regime would publicly disown bin Laden; permit him to leave

Saudi Arabia with funds and supporters; and continue financing his activities on condition that he avoids targeting the monarchy.⁶ US intelligence was obviously aware of the deal but did nothing: tacit consent.

1.3. *Al-Qaeda in Central Asia*

Azerbaijan

No sooner had the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime collapsed in April 1992, the Tajik and Pashtun factions, led by Ahmed Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar respectively, began competing for power. Uzbek and Tajik mujahideen began launching cross-border raids against Tajikistan and later Uzbekistan. Up to 1992, the Tajik rebels were “actively supported” by Massoud and Hekmatyar “when both continued to receive aid and assistance from the United States,” through Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. These raids “contributed materially to the destabilization of the Muslim Republics in the Soviet Union (and after 1992 of its successor, the Conference of Independent States),” a specific objective of US policy both during and after the Cold War (Scott, 2004, 2005).

In 1991, the first Bush administration supported a proposed oil pipeline from Azerbaijan, across the Caucasus, to Turkey. In the same year – during a Congressional ban on US arms sales to the country – three veteran US covert operations experts Richard Secord, Heinie Aderholt, and Ed Dearborn, all formerly active in Laos and later with Oliver North’s Contra operations, landed in Baku under the mantle of front company “MEGA Oil.” They were career US Air Force officers, but had been frequently seconded to the CIA as CIA detailees. In Azerbaijan, they “engaged in military training,” and established an airline “which soon was picking up hundreds of mujahideen mercenaries in Afghanistan” (*ibid.*). Hekmatyar – who was still in receipt of US aid and a bin Laden ally – was recruiting Afghan mujahideen “to fight in Azerbaijan against Armenia and its Russian allies” (Cooley, 2000, p. 180).

By 1993, MEGA Oil had recruited at least 2,000 Afghan mujahideens into Azerbaijan, and armed them with thousands of dollars of weapons (Scott, 2003, 2004, 2005). According to Central Asian specialist Mark Erkali, Kodrarian, and Ruchala (2003), there is:

... considerable evidence that all three prime movers in the company – former Iran-Contra conspirator Richard Secord, legendary Air Force special operations commander Harry ‘Heinie’ Aderholt, and the man known as either a diabolical con-man or a misunderstood patriot, Gary Best – were in the past involved in some of the most infamous activities in the history of the CIA.

The Azeri mujahideen presence was funded and supported by Osama bin Laden, who had established an NGO in Baku which became a launching base for terrorist operations across the region (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004, p. 58).

The US covert operation contributed to the eventual coup that toppled elected president Abulfaz Elchibey, and brought to power Heidar Aliyev. A secret Turkish intelligence report leaked to the *Sunday Times* confirmed that “two petrol giants, BP and Amoco, British and American respectively, which together form the AIOC [Azerbaijan International Oil Consortium], are behind the coup d’etat carried out against Elchibey in 1993.”⁷

Afghanistan and Pakistan

The solidification of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan occurred years after the Soviet withdrawal when Osama bin Laden returned there in June 1996. He had been offered protection by Pakistan in May on condition that he aligned his forces with the Taliban. According to bin Laden, the Pakistan-brokered al-Qaeda-Taliban alliance was “blessed by the Saudis” (Posner, 2003, pp. 105–106). Top secret State Department documents warned that bin Laden’s settlement in Afghanistan “could prove more dangerous to US interests in the long run than his three-year liaison with Khartoum.” The move granted him “the capability to support individuals and groups who have the motive and wherewithal to attack US interests almost worldwide.”⁸

As Ahmed Rashid reported, from 1994 to 1998, the United States supported the Taliban as a vehicle of regional influence. Between 1999 and 2000, US support continued despite growing cautions. When the Taliban conquered Kabul in 1996, a State Department spokesperson explained that the US found “nothing objectionable” in the event (Rashid, 2000, p. 166). Radha Kumar of the Council on Foreign Relations points out that this was because the Taliban:

... was brought to power with Washington’s silent blessing as it dallied in an abortive new ‘Great Game’ in central Asia ... Keen to see Afghanistan under strong central rule to allow a US-led group to build a multi-billion-dollar oil and gas pipeline, Washington urged key allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to back the militia’s bid for power in 1996. (Agence France-Press, 2001)

One year later, in 1997, a US diplomat commented: “The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis ... There will be Aramco [consortium of oil companies controlling Saudi oil], pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that.” (Rashid, 2000, p. 179) US sponsorship of the Taliban was confirmed as late as 1999 and 2000 in Congressional

hearings. Dana Rohrabacher – former White House Special Assistant to President Reagan and now Senior Member of the House International Relations Committee – testified:

Having been closely involved in US policy toward Afghanistan for some twenty years, I have called into question whether or not this administration has a covert policy that has empowered the Taliban and enabled this brutal movement to hold on to power I am making the claim that there is and has been a covert policy by this administration to support the Taliban movement's control of Afghanistan [T]his amoral or immoral policy is based on the assumption that the Taliban would bring stability to Afghanistan and permit the building of oil pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan. (Rohrabacher, 1999; Ahmed, 2005, pp. 22, 23, f77)

To this day, Pakistan continues to be integrally involved in al-Qaeda sponsorship. As intelligence expert George Friedman (2004, p. 223) observes, Pakistan has “the closest connections to al-Qaeda and the least cooperative intelligence service, in spite of the apparent cooperation of Pakistan’s President Musharraf.”

1.4. Al-Qaeda in the Balkans

Bosnia-Herzegovina

From 1992 to 1995, the Pentagon assisted with the movement of thousands of al-Qaeda mujahideen from Central Asia into Europe, to fight alongside Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs (O’Neill, 2003). The air funnel was documented based on 5 years of unrestricted access to Dutch intelligence files by Professor Cees Wiebes (2003) of Amsterdam University in Appendix II of the *Srebrenica Report*. “Mojahedin fighters were also flown in,” reported Professor Richard Aldrich (2002) of the University of Nottingham, “but they were reserved as shock troops for especially hazardous operations.” The “hidden force” behind these operations was not the CIA, but “the Pentagon’s own secret service.”

Other intelligence sources reported that “the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had full knowledge of the operation” to fly in and equip hundreds of mujahideen in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, “the CIA believed that some of the 400 had been detached for future terrorist operations in Western Europe.” Mujahideen landing at Ploce were “accompanied by US Special Forces equipped with high-tech communications equipment.” Their mission was to establish a “command, control, communications and intelligence network to coordinate and support Bosnian Muslim offensives.” The US military, in other words, was actively coordinating on the ground with

bin Laden's mujahideen network.⁹ According to Yossef Bodansky (1996, Chpters 3, 9) their number was more than 10,000.

Kosovo, Macedonia

The US and UK had supplied military assistance to the KLA long before NATO intervention. Tim Judah (2002, p. 120) reports that KLA representatives had met with US, British, and Swiss intelligence services as early as 1996, probably even "several years earlier." British SAS and American Delta Force instructors were training KLA fighters in "weapons handling, demolition and ambush techniques, and basic organization" (*The Herald*, 27 March 2000). The US even gave KLA commanders satellite telephones, global-positioning technology, and the cell phone number of NATO Commander Gen. Wesley Clark (*Sunday Times*, 12 March 2000). According to Ralf Mutschke, Assistant Director of Interpol's Criminal Intelligence Directorate, one of these commanders was an emissary of Osama bin Laden himself, sent to lead "an elite KLA unit during the Kosovo conflict" (Grigg, 2001). The implication is that NATO liaised directly with bin Laden's own emissary via telephone.

By 1998, the KLA was officially designated by the State Department a "terrorist organization financing its operations with money from the international heroin trade and funds supplied from Islamic countries and individuals, including Osama bin Laden" (Bisset, 2001). US, Albanian, and Macedonian intelligence reports prove that KLA fighters – currently operating as the NLA in Macedonia – train in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and Albania, and sponsor border crossings into Kosovo from Albania, of hundreds of al-Qaeda mujahideen from Bosnia, Chechnya, and Afghanistan (Seper, 1999).

In Macedonia, the al-Qaeda backed NLA receives US military intelligence assistance. As noted by Scott Taylor – Canada's top war reporter, former soldier, and editor of *Esprit de Corps Military Magazine* – after a visit to Tetovo in 2001, "there is no denying the massive amount of material and expertise supplied by NATO to the guerrillas."¹⁰ A leaked secret European intelligence report documented the same. The report confirmed the involvement of the Virginian-based private US defense contractor Military Professionals Resources Inc. (MPRI), as well as constant telephone contact between US officials and NLA rebels.¹¹

The US-backed NLA remains the most prominent bin Laden-affiliated network in the Balkans. According to Bodansky, the Albanian network is headed by Muhammad al-Zawahiri, the engineer brother of Ayman al-Zawahiri who is bin Laden's right-hand man and mentor. Fatos Klosi – head

of Shik, the Albanian intelligence services – confirms that a major al-Qaeda network was established in Albania in 1998. The network had “already infiltrated other parts of Europe from bases in Albania through traffic in illegal immigrants” (Dettmer, 2002).

The Macedonian Ministry of the Interior provided the US National Security Council with a detailed report on al-Qaeda activity in the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region, including lists of names and two units consisting of 370 al-Qaeda fighters. NLA members are not only ethnic Albanians, but also mujahideen from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, and Chechnya, some trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. “Officials at the NSC and CIA were polite and received the information with thanks, but little else has happened,” noted one Macedonian official (*ibid.*). Macedonian intelligence complains that NATO political pressure and US interference pose the biggest obstacles to investigating al-Qaeda’s presence (Taylor, 2001).

These covert operations facilitated NATO occupation of the Balkans to service Anglo-American oil and gas interests. As Gen. Sir Mike Jackson, then commander of NATO troops in the region, said in 1999: “We will certainly stay here for a long time in order to guarantee the safety of the energy corridors which cross Macedonia” (Collon, 2000, p. 96). Gen. Jackson’s remark related to plans described in *The Guardian*:

A project called the Trans-Balkan pipeline has been little-reported in any British, European or American newspaper. The line will run from the Black sea port of Burgas to the Adriatic at Vlore, passing through Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania. It is likely to become the main route to the west for the oil and gas now being extracted in central Asia. (Monbiot, 2001)

1.5. Al-Qaeda in North Africa

Algeria

The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) is an al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group in Algeria. The group was first “created in the house of the Muhajirin in 1989 in Peshawar.” From here, on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, “the first hard core of ‘Algerian Afghans’ launched their terrorist campaign against Algeria.” The al-Qaeda veterans of the Afghan war against the Soviets, “trained in the Afghan militias, returned to Algeria with the help of international networks, via Bosnia, Albania, Italy, France, Morocco or Sudan” (Boudjemaa, 2002). According to *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, in the late 1980s between nearly 1,000 Algerian mujahideen who trained under bin Laden in Afghanistan joined Algerian armed groups, which by January 1993 united as the GIA (Robinson, 2003). The latter forged close links to

al-Qaeda “in the early 1990s,” reports the Office of the Attorney-General in Australia, when the UK-based Abu Qatada “was designated by bin Laden as the spiritual adviser for Algerian groups including the GIA.”¹² From 1997 to 1998, al-Qaeda achieved further “large-scale penetration of Algerian groups” (Gunaratna, et al., 2001). According to Algeria expert Stephen Cook of the Brookings Institute, “there are Algerian [terrorist] cells spread all over Europe, Canada, and the United States” (Hiel, 2001).

“Yussuf-Joseph” was a career secret agent in Algeria’s *securite militaire* for 14 years, until he defected to Britain. He told *Guardian* journalists Sweeney and Doyle (1997): “The bombs that outraged Paris in 1995 – blamed on Muslim fanatics – were the handiwork of the Algerian secret service. They were part of a propaganda war aimed at galvanising French public opinion against the Islamists.” Civilian massacres in Algeria, blamed on the GIA, are “the work of secret police and army death squads The killing of many foreigners was organised by the secret police, not Islamic extremists.” GIA terrorism is “orchestrated” by “Mohammed Mediane, head of the Algerian secret service,” and “General Smain Lamari,” head of “the counter intelligence agency.” According to Joseph:

The GIA is a pure product of Smain’s secret service. I used to read all the secret telexes. I know that the GIA has been infiltrated and manipulated by the government. The GIA has been completely turned by the government In 1992 Smain created a special group, L’Escadron de la Mort [the Squadron of Death] The death squads organise the massacres The FIS aren’t doing the massacres.

Joseph confirms that Algerian secret agents sent by Smain organized “at least” two of the bombs in Paris in summer 1995. “The operation was run by Colonel Souames Mahmoud, alias Habib, head of the secret service at the Algerian embassy in Paris.” Joseph’s testimony has been corroborated by numerous defectors from the Algerian secret services (Ahmed, 2005, pp. 65–77; Ahmed, 2001).

Western intelligence agencies are implicated. *The Guardian* (Norton-Taylor, 2000) recorded the collapse of a three-year terrorist case “when an MI5 informant refused to appear in court after evidence which senior ministers tried to suppress revealed that Algerian government forces were involved in atrocities against innocent civilians.” The report refers to “secret documents showing British intelligence believed the Algerian government was involved in atrocities, contradicting the view the government was claiming in public.”

The Foreign Office documents “were produced on the orders of the trial judge” 18 months late, and disproved “the government’s publicly stated view ... that there was ‘no credible, substantive evidence to confirm’

allegations implicating Algerian government forces in atrocities.” The documents showed that according to Whitehall’s Joint Intelligence Committee: “There is no firm evidence to rule out government manipulation or involvement in terrorist violence.” One document stated: “Sources had privately said some of the killings of civilians were the responsibility of the Algerian security services.” A January 1997 document concludes: “[Algerian] military security would have ... no scruples about killing innocent people My instincts remain that parts of the Algerian government would stop at nothing.” Multiple documents “referred to the ‘manipulation’ of the GIA being used as a cover to carry out their own operations.” A US intelligence report confirmed that “there was no evidence to link 1995 Paris bombings to Algerian militants.” On the contrary, “one killing at the time could have been ordered by the Algerian government” (*ibid.*).

Algeria has the fifth largest reserves of natural gas in the world, and is the second largest gas exporter, with 130 trillion proven natural gas reserves. It ranks fourteenth for oil reserves, with official estimates at 9.2 billion barrels. Approximately 90 per cent of Algeria’s crude oil exports go to Western Europe, including Britain, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain. Algeria’s major trading partners are Italy, France, the United States, Germany, and Spain.¹³

Cooley (2000, pp. 205–206) reports the presence of “500 to 600 American engineers and technicians living and working behind barbed wire” in a collection of “protected gas and oil enclaves in Algeria.” The main American firms involved are “Arco, Exxon, Oryx, Anadarko, Mobil and Sun Oil” often in association with European firms, “Agip, BP, Cepsa or the Korean group Daewoo. According to European intelligence sources, CIA meetings with Algerian Islamist leaders from 1993 to 1995 are responsible for the lack of terrorist attacks on US oil and agribusiness installations in Algeria (Labévière, 2000, pp. 182–189).

Libya

David Shayler worked for the international terrorism desk of MI5 for 6 years before resigning in 1997. In 1995, he obtained classified MI6 data detailing a covert British intelligence plan to assassinate Libyan Head of State, Col. Mu’ammar Gaddafi. MI6 paid over £100,000 to al-Qaeda’s network in Libya to conduct the assassination. The operation failed. The al-Qaeda cell planted a bomb under the wrong car, killing six innocent Libyan civilians. The plot came to Shayler’s attention in formal briefings with his MI6 colleagues, and was confirmed to the world when a classified MI6

memo detailing the plot was leaked online (Machon, 2005; Bright, 2002). In a press release on the subject, Shayler observed:

We need a statement from the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary clarifying the facts of this matter. In particular, we need to know how around £100,000 of taxpayers' money was used to fund the sort of Islamic Extremists who have connections to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. Did ministers give MI6 permission for this? By the time MI6 paid the group in late 1995 or early 1996, US investigators had already established that bin Laden was implicated in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Centre. Given the timing and the close connections between Libyan and Egyptian Islamic Extremists, it may even have been used to fund the murder of British citizens in Luxor, Egypt in 1996. (Shayler, 2000)

The British government denied the allegations. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook described them as “pure fantasy” (Hollingsworth, 2000). However, the government went on to accuse Shayler of breaching the 1989 Official Secrets Act – his statements were an alleged threat to British national security – and subsequently prosecuted him to prevent further revelations (McGowan, 2002).

French intelligence experts Guillaume Dasquié and Jean-Charles Brisard documented that among the members of the Libyan al-Qaeda cell was one of bin Laden's most trusted lieutenants, Anas al-Liby. He is among the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists:

... in connection with the August 7, 1998, bombings of the United States Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya The Rewards For Justice Program, United States Department of State, is offering a reward of up to \$25 million for information leading directly to the apprehension or conviction of Anas al-Liby.¹⁴

As *The Observer* reported, “British intelligence paid large sums of money to an al-Qaeda cell in Libya ... and thwarted early attempts to bring Osama bin Laden to justice.” The latest claim “of MI6 involvement with Libya's fearsome Islamic Fighting Group” is embarrassing because the latter is “connected to one of bin Laden's trusted lieutenants.” The cell “included Anas al-Liby” who was “with bin Laden in Sudan before the al-Qaeda leader returned to Afghanistan in 1996.” Despite suspicions of being “a high-level al-Qaeda operative, al-Liby was given political asylum in Britain and lived in Manchester until May of 2000” (Bright, 2002).

2. AL-QAEDA ON 9-11: CONNECT OR DISCONNECT?

The data discussed above demonstrates that the object identified by intelligence services as “al-Qaeda” is really a loose network of individuals,

“mujahideen,” who had been involved, or are associated with people involved, in the Afghan rebellion against Soviet occupation, and thus associated with the CIA’s original “database.” In this context, “al-Qaeda” is not an organization “out there.” Al-Qaeda denotes the *fundamental organizing principle* behind the disparate activities of this amorphous collection of CIA-trained mujahideen; this organizing principle, coordinating the diverse scope of mujahideen operations over space and time, is nothing other than Western financial, strategic, military, and intelligence interests. *Al-Qaeda is therefore a euphemism for Western covert operations specializing in destabilization.* Here, we will attempt to explore whether this “euphemism” functioned on 9-11.

2.1. *The Circumstantial Case for al-Qaeda Hijackers*

The Anomaly: Dead or Alive?

A strong case can be made challenging the US government’s narrative of the activities of alleged al-Qaeda operatives, identified as the 19 hijackers who took control of the four civilian aircraft on the morning of 9-11 (see Kolar, 2006). Credible sources confirmed weeks after the attacks that a number of the named individuals identified by the FBI as hijackers were alive and well (Harrison, 2001).¹⁵

Kolar locates, using reliable documentation, as many as 10 such individuals. As *Newsday* records: “Almost six weeks after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, the identities of several hijackers remain uncertain, complicated by aliases, invalid Social Security numbers, multiple dates of birth and phony addresses.” Alleged hijackers identified by the FBI as Abdulaziz al-Omari, Ahmed al-Ghamdi, Hani Hanjour, Khalid al-Mihdhar, Majed Moqed, and Salem al-Hazmi are known to have obtained fraudulent ID cards in Virginia. Thus, their *real* identities are unknown (Perlmann, 2001). To date, no authority has publicly resolved this anomaly. This is of course a fatal flaw in the official narrative.

However, a strong case can also be made based on circumstantial data in the public record, that some of the individuals identified in accordance with the official narrative did exist, were monitored by the intelligence community prior to 9-11, and were directly connected by members of that community to an al-Qaeda plan to hijack civilian aircraft and target key symbolic structures in the United States. Numerous officials within the FBI, CIA, NSA, and other agencies, independently confirmed to various media outlets that individuals believed by intelligence agencies to be connected to

al-Qaeda – such as Mohamed Atta, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Khalid Almihdhar, Ziad Samir Jarrah, Hani Hanjour, among others – were involved in the ‘planes as weapons’ plot well in advance of the actual attacks. A number of intelligence officials were seriously concerned about the threat apparently posed, and active government efforts to obstruct legitimate intelligence investigations (Ahmed, 2005, pp. 157–230). But this case needs to be scrutinized in relation to contradictory facts and tensions within the data, as performed below.

The Alleged Chief Hijacker Mohamed Atta

What these intelligence sources confirm contradicts the government’s official narrative, which downplays the extent of advanced warning received by the intelligence community. Mohamed Atta is a case in point. According to the 9-11 Commission, Atta was simply not identified by the US intelligence community until *after* the successful completion of the 9-11 attacks. However, journalistic investigations confirmed this to be false.

The German public TV channel ARD (23 November 2001) reported that Atta was monitored for several months in 2000 by US intelligence, when he traveled several times from Hamburg to Frankfurt and bought large quantities of chemicals potentially usable for building explosives. *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry (2002) noted: “The CIA was monitoring hijacking leader Mohamed Atta in Germany until May 2000 – about a month before he is believed to have come to the United States to attend flight school. Does it make sense that the monitoring stopped when he entered this country?”

Further contradicting the official narrative, intelligence sources told the *Miami Herald*: “A secretive US eavesdropping agency monitored telephone conversations before Sept. 11 between the suspected commander of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks and the alleged chief hijacker.” The officials said that “the conversations between Khalid Shaikh Mohammed [KSM] and Mohamed Atta were intercepted by the National Security Agency

The officials declined to disclose the nature of the discussions between Mohammed [KSM], a known leader of Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network who is on the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorists list, and Atta ... Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is believed to be hiding in Pakistan The senior intelligence official said that when the NSA monitored their conversations, Mohammed was overseas and Atta was in the United States.

Mohammed [KSM] was included on the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorist List ... because he had been indicted on charges of being involved in a failed 1995 plot to bomb 11 US airliners flying over the Pacific Ocean on a single day. (Landay, 2002)

This account concords with reports of a highly classified US Army intelligence unit known as “Able Danger” pinpointing four alleged 9-11 hijackers one year before 9-11. Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, Khalid al-Mihdhar, and Nawaf al-Hazmi were identified as members of a “Brooklyn” al-Qaeda cell on a detailed chart that included visa photographs. The Army unit was established by the Special Operations Command in 1999.¹⁶ These credible reports show that disparate agencies of the US intelligence community were pursuing active investigations against individuals carrying these identities, involved in a terrorism plot.

Yet there remain serious tensions. The second member of this Brooklyn al-Qaeda cell uncovered by Able Danger, Marwan al-Shehhi, has turned up “still alive in Morocco” according to the *Saudi Gazette* and *Kaleej Times* (Kolar, 2006). The third cell member, Khalid al-Mihdhar, similarly illustrates the identity confusion. Eight days after 9-11, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. distributed a “special alert” to its member banks asking for information about 21 “alleged suspects” in the attacks. The list said “al-Mihdhar, Khalid Alive,” raising the possibility that the real al-Mihdhar never died on the plane. “Investigators aren’t even entirely sure that al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi are the men’s real names – or that several people weren’t using those names as aliases” (King & Bhatt, 2001).

In any case, the monitoring of conversations between Atta, alleged chief hijacker and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), alleged operational mastermind of 9-11, prior to the attacks is extremely significant. KSM was for years identified by US intelligence as a key member of al-Qaeda, and creator of the 1995 “Project Bojinka” plot. The *Herald* notes only one dimension of this plot – the plan to explode hijacked civilian aircraft over the Pacific.

The plan’s second component was what eventually occurred on 9-11. Federal investigative sources confirmed that Abdul Hakim Murad – “a close confidant and right-hand man” to Ramzi Yousef, “who was convicted of crimes relating to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center” – “detailed an entire plot to dive bomb aircraft in the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley. Yousef had “boasted of the plot to US Secret Service agent Brian Parr and FBI agent Charles Stern on an extradition flight from Pakistan to the United States in February 1995,” as the agents later testified in court. The plan “targeted not only the CIA but other US government buildings in Washington, including the Pentagon.”¹⁷

Rafael M. Garcia III, Chairman/CEO of the Mega Group of Computer Companies in the Philippines, who often works with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), was involved in the intelligence operation that uncovered Project Bojinka. Garcia was responsible for decoding Yousef’s

computer: "... we discovered a second, even more sinister plot." Project Bojinka aimed to crash "planes into selected targets in the United States" including "the World Trade Center in New York; the Sears Tower in Chicago; the TransAmerica Tower in San Francisco; and the White House in Washington, DC." These findings were submitted to NBI officials, who "turned over the report (and the computer) either to the then Senior Superintendent Avelino Razon of the PNP [the Philippine National Police] or to Bob Heafner of the FBI." US authorities confirmed that "many things were done in response to my report" (Garcia, 2001; Cooley, 2000, p. 247).

Professor Paul Monk of the Australian Defense University cites "confidential sources" in Manila and Washington further detailing that: "The flights to be hijacked were specified" in Project Bojinka. "They were all United Airlines, Northwest Airlines and Delta flights." Further evidence suggested a probable date for the plot: "The date of Yousef's conviction was 11 September 1996. From that point, given the fascination terrorists have with anniversaries, 11 September should surely have become a watch date."¹⁸

There is further such evidence. In his July 2003 testimony before the 9-11 Commission, al-Qaeda scholar Gunaratna cited CIA sources and official transcripts of the interrogation of high-level al-Qaeda operatives such as Abu Zubaydah to reveal that: "The Sept. 11 attacks were given the code name 'Operation Holy Tuesday' and precisely planned at an al-Qaeda meeting in Malaysia chaired by terror mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in January 2000." The 3-day conference "was monitored by the Malaysian secret police at the CIA's request," and hosted 12 terrorists at an apartment in Kuala Lumpur, including "two hijackers, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, who flew from there to Bangkok, Thailand and to the United States without interference, as well as Tawfiq Attash, a key planner in the October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen." The conference consisted of detailed discussions on "how the hijackers should train and hide in the United States and how the attacks should be carried out." KSM, who was "in charge of the Malaysia meeting," told some of the participants that "the targets would include the World Trade Center and the date of the attacks would be Sept. 11, 2001, Gunaratna said" (Blomquist, 2003).¹⁹ US officials claimed that this January 9-11 planning meeting was not recorded; this claim is untrue – the entire conference was recorded on video with "surveillance tape" by Malaysian security services on behalf of the CIA.²⁰

When asked about Gunaratna's revelations, US officials vehemently denied that KSM had attended the meeting: "We have no information to suggest that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was at the meeting in Kuala Lumpur. We don't believe it to be true" (Blomquist, 2003). But CNN

(August 30, 2002), citing anonymous US intelligence sources, confirmed that KSM *did* attend. In conclusion, Atta's reported ties to KSM up to the day before the attacks link him directly to an unfolding terrorism plot exactly like what occurred on 9-11. The most plausible interpretation of this evidence is that he and his associates were indeed participating in the planning and preparation for 9-11.

The Plot Itself

At least one of the alleged hijackers was reportedly casing the World Trade Center months before 9-11. The last man to leave the North Tower, 9-11 survivor William Rodriguez – who had worked as a janitor in the World Trade Center for 19 years and won a National Hero Award from the Senate of Puerto Rico for single-handedly saving 15, and helping to save several hundred, lives on 9-11 – had personally seen hijacker Mohand al-Shehri inside the World Trade Center before the attacks. In his testimony before the 9-11 Commission, Rodriguez “swears he saw United Airlines Flight 175 hijacker Mohand al-Shehri in June 2001 and told an FBI agent in the family center at Ground Zero about it a month after the attacks. He never heard back from the bureau ... ”

Rodriguez said he was working overtime one weekend cleaning rest rooms on the concourse and mezzanine levels when al-Shehri approached him. ‘I had just finished cleaning the bathroom and this guy asks me, ‘Excuse me, how many public bathrooms are in this area?’ Rodriguez told the Daily News. ‘Coming from the school of the 1993 [Trade Center] bombing, I found it very strange,’ Rodriguez said. ‘I didn’t forget about it.’ After al-Qaeda’s attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Rodriguez recognized al-Shehri’s mug in newspapers. (Meek, 2004)

At face value, one alleged hijacker appeared to be directly involved in the 9-11 plot, showing unusual interest in the central target, the World Trade Center. Yet a serious tension remains. The Saudi embassy in Washington and Saudi Foreign Minister confirmed that Mohand al-Shehri is alive and had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks (Kolar, 2006).

Zarembka (2006) in this volume documents the strong circumstantial case for concluding the four planes on 9-11 were indeed hijacked. The Flight 93 cockpit voice recording further confirms that there were several Arab hijackers who had taken control of the plane. Families of the victims of the Flight 93 crash who have heard the recording – which has not been released to the wider public – confirm that the hijackers spoke in Arabic. Notably, their account of the recording contradicts that of the FBI, which insists that the terrorists crashed the plane deliberately. According to the families, the

recording shows something far different – that the passengers had breached the cockpit and managed to take control of the aircraft before it crashed. In any case, the most significant conclusion for our purposes is that Arab hijackers were, according to the cockpit voice recording, on board the flight.²¹

The transcript and recording of a lengthy phone call made by stewardess Amy Sweeney on board Flight 11, to American Airlines Flight Service at Boston's Logan airport for the duration of the hijacking, confirms similar details. As Gail Sheehy reports, the transcript and recording, some of which consists of real-time notes made by American Airlines flight service manager on 9-11, Michael Woodward, is ignored by the 9-11 Commission. Despite being urged by 9-11 families to interview Woodward, he has also been boycotted. The transcript shows that Sweeney "gave seat locations and physical descriptions of the hijackers, which allowed officials to identify them as Middle Eastern men by name even before the first crash." She had calmly passed on "the seat locations of three of the hijackers: 9D, 9G and 10B. She said they were all of Middle Eastern descent, and one spoke English very well." Twenty minutes before the plane crashed, "the airline had the names, addresses, phone numbers and credit cards of three of the five hijackers. They knew that 9G was Abdulaziz al-Omari, 10B was Satam al-Suqami, and 9D was Mohamed Atta – the ringleader of the 9/11 terrorists" (Sheehy, 2004). Yet al-Omari is reportedly alive (Kolar, 2006).

According to Robert Bonner, head of US Customs and Border Protection, passenger manifests for the four hijacked flights led to the identification of 19 possible Arab hijackers. "On the morning of 9/11, through an evaluation of data related to the passengers manifest for the four terrorist hijacked aircraft, Customs Office of Intelligence was able to identify the likely terrorist hijackers," he told the 9-11 Commission. "Within 45 minutes of the attacks, Customs forwarded the passenger lists with the names of the victims and 19 probable hijackers to the FBI and the intelligence community."²²

Open questions remain over the government's refusal to release the full passenger manifest. But there are several possible explanations for this. In the absence of contrary testimony, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion – bringing all this 9-11 evidence together with the information revealed by intelligence sources on the extensive surveillance of these individuals prior to 9-11 – that at least some of the said individuals were involved in the hijacked 9-11 flights.

Explaining the Anomaly

There are a number of basic facts that can be drawn from the above documentation, which do not appear to readily cohere:

1. Approximately 10 of the 19 alleged hijackers were *not* who the FBI claims they are. As for the other nine, in the absence of evidence to the contrary we can assume that their identities are not problematic.
2. Many of the alleged hijackers, including those whose identities are both in question and so far undisputed, were monitored by intelligence officials and agencies in the years preceding 9-11, and were connected to just such a terrorist plot – Project Bojinka – including specific details such as method, targets, and even date.
3. Many of these sources confirm intensive intelligence surveillance of the identified alleged hijackers well in advance of the attacks, contradicting the government’s official narrative. This lends credibility to these reports, as they are not government-sponsored.
4. Some specific data indicates that a number of the individuals identified according to the FBI’s narrative were directly connected to, and involved in, the attacks, up to and including the actual hijackings.

We are left then with a fundamental anomaly. On the one hand, there is a reasonably strong circumstantial case supporting the conclusion that there existed a number of individuals identified in accordance with the official FBI list of alleged hijackers, who were connected to the 9-11 plot, and who were under various forms of surveillance and investigation on the part of the US intelligence community. It is plausible to conclude that at least some of these individuals were involved in the hijackings of the four civilian aircraft on 9-11. On the other hand, 10 of them are reportedly alive, and had no connection to 9-11.

In attempting to resolve this anomaly, Kolar (2006) offers an alternative theory – that 10 of the officially identified hijackers were in fact doubles using fraudulent identities and aliases, which is why 10 of the same identities belong to living people. Although the FBI was reluctant to concede this conclusively, this is ultimately the only logically possible explanation – to date, the FBI has failed to resolve the anomaly. We are forced to conclude that at least 10 of the hijackers identified, including those now reported alive yet observed prior to 9-11, were doubles using false identities that did not actually belong to them. Other reliable reports indicate that the cell of 19 hijackers – at least 10 (and possibly all) of whom were doubles – was penetrated by US military intelligence.

2.2. Hijackers Tied to US Covert Operations Apparatus

US Military Training

According to reports in *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*, US military officials confirmed to the FBI “that five of the alleged hijackers received training in the 1990s at secure US military installations.” (Wheeler, Streater, & Graybiel, 2001) *Knight Ridder* news cited defence sources confirming that Mohamed Atta had attended International Officers School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama; Abdulaziz al-Omari had attended Aerospace Medical School at Brooks Air Force base in Texas; and Saeed al-Ghamdi had been to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California (*New York Times*, September 16, 2001). The *Washington Post* revealed that as many as “four of 19 suspected hijackers may have participated during the 1990s” in a “flight training program for foreign military trainees” at Pensacola Naval Air Station. “Two of 19 suspects named by the FBI, Saeed al-Ghamdi and Ahmed al-Ghamdi, have the same names as men listed at a housing facility for foreign military trainees at Pensacola. Two others, Hamza al-Ghamdi and Ahmed al-Nami, have names similar to individuals listed in public records as using the same address inside the base” (Gugliotta & Fallis, 2001). Among these, Abdulaziz al-Omari, Saeed al-Ghamdi, and Ahmed al-Nami are reportedly alive (Kolar, 2006), proving that whoever these US military trainees were, they were using fraudulent aliases.

The US Air Force shortly issued an official statement of denial, arguing that “the name matches may not necessarily mean the students were the hijackers because of discrepancies in ages and other personal data.” Although some terrorists “had similar names to foreign alumni of US military courses,” these biographical discrepancies “indicate we are probably not talking about the same people.” But the government has refused to substantiate the denial, by preventing publication of biographical data proving the discrepancies. On September 16, 2001, news reports asserted that: “Officials would not release ages, country of origin or any other specific details of the three individuals” – and have refused to do so to date (*Washington Post*, 22 September 2001).

Daniel Hopsicker – former producer at PBS *Wall Street Week*, an executive producer of NBC TV’s *Global Business*, and an investigative reporter for NBC News – queried a major in the US Air Force’s Public Affairs Office who “was familiar with the question.” She explained: “Biographically, they’re not the same people. Some of the ages are 20 years off.” When questioned to substantiate the specific discrepancy, she was forced to admit that *there was*

no discrepancy. According to Hopsicker: “‘Some’ of the ages? We told her we were only interested in Atta. military denial of training” Was she saying that the age of the Mohamed Atta who attended the Air Force’s International Officer’s School at Maxwell Air Force Base was different from the terrorist Atta’s age as reported? Um, er, no, the major admitted.” Hopsicker asked if he could contact the other alleged “Mohamed Atta” at the International Officer’s School at Maxwell Air Force Base, who was purportedly confused with the chief 9-11 hijacker, so that he could confirm that they were indeed two different individuals. The major declined without explanation, stating that she did not “think you’re going to get that information.”²³

In a separate interview, Hopsicker was told by a spokesman for the US Defense Department that some terrorists did attend US military installations, but declined to release any further details:

Despite earlier denials, terrorists in the Sept. 11 attacks received training at secure US military bases, a Defense Department spokesman admitted ... the Defense Dept spokesman was asked to explain the particulars of fuzzy statements in which officials said ... “we are *probably* not talking about the same people.”

Pressed repeatedly to provide specifics, the spokesperson finally admitted, “I do not have the authority to tell you who (which terrorists) attended which schools.” So it appears certain that at least some of the previous denials have been rendered inoperative, and that a list exists in the Defense Dept which names Sept 11 terrorists who received training at US military facilities, a list the Pentagon is in no hurry to make public.²⁴

In other words, individuals identified by the FBI as al-Qaeda’s 9-11 terrorists, whether or not those identities were aliases, did receive clearance for training at secure US military facilities.

Government Protection: FBI, CIA, and DEA

In the aftermath of 9-11, authorities were probing the European business associations of Venice flight school owner Rudi Dekkers, “whose school at the Venice airport” – Huffman Aviation – “trained the nucleus of foreign national terrorist pilots.” Three of the airliners involved in 9/11 “were piloted by terrorists who had trained at two flight schools at the Venice, Florida airport.”²⁵ Convincing circumstantial data indicates that the FBI knew about the al-Qaeda flight training long before 9-11. “The FBI was swarming Huffman Aviation by 2 a.m., just 18 hours following the attack. They removed student files from two schools at the Venice airport: Huffman Aviation and the Florida Flight Training Center just down the street.”²⁶ According to one Huffman Aviation executive interviewed by Hopsicker: “How do you think the FBI got here (Huffman Aviation) so fast after the attack? They knew what was going on here. Hell, they were parked in a

white van outside my house less than *four* hours after the buildings collapsed.”²⁷

One federal investigator from the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force in South Florida agreed that the speed at which the FBI furnished the names of the hijackers and located their flight schools proved that they were being monitored. He told the *Miami Herald*:

Right after the hijackings we knew the government had a problem. Within hours of the attack we had names of the hijackers and that we needed to focus on flight schools. It was clear how the information quickly flowed down that someone in Washington must have had previous knowledge. They sat on this and they blew it and it’s finally coming out. (Kuhnenn & Koszczuk, 2002)

As the Huffman Aviation official told Hopsicker: “... early on I gleaned that these guys had Government protection. They were let into this country for a specific purpose. It was a business deal.”²⁸ Law enforcement officials said that Dekkers was officially indicted in his native country, Holland, on financial charges including fraud and money laundering.²⁹ But 48 hours after the attacks, “Dekkers, known to have trained virtually the entire terrorist pilot cadre ... seemed impervious to suspicion.”³⁰

Evidence that Dekkers’ activities were tolerated by elements of the federal government was revealed by a Venice Airport executive who told Hopsicker that Britannia Aviation – which operates from a hangar at Rudi Dekker’s Huffman Aviation in Venice Airport – had a “green light” from the Justice Department’s Drugs Enforcement Administration (DEA). The executive also confirmed that the Venice Police Department “had been warned to leave them alone.” Britannia Aviation had been awarded a five-year government contract to run a large regional maintenance facility at the Lynchburg, Virginia, Regional Airport. Hopsicker reports that: “Britannia Aviation is a company with virtually no assets, employees, or corporate history.” It even lacked “the necessary FAA license to perform the aircraft maintenance services for which it had just been contracted.” Financial statements revealed Britannia to be a “company” worth “less than \$750.”

“Why did a transparent dummy front company like Paul Marten’s Britannia Aviation have a ‘green light’ from the DEA?” asks Hopsicker. “A green light for what?” It also emerged that the company had, according to executive Paul Marten, “for some time been successfully providing aviation maintenance services for Caribe Air, a Caribbean carrier.” Hopsicker rightly reports that Caribe Air is:

... a notorious CIA proprietary air carrier which, even by the standards of a CIA proprietary, has had a particularly checkered past ... Caribe Air’s history includes

“blemishes” like having its aircraft seized by federal officials at the infamous Mena, Arkansas, airport a decade ago, after the company was accused by government prosecutors of having used as many as 20 planes to ship drugs worth billions of dollars into this country.

Britannia – a company reportedly with CIA connections operating illegally out of the same flight school which trained alleged al-Qaeda hijackers – had a “green light” from the Justice Department’s DEA and effective immunity from local police inquiries. In Hopsicker’s view: “The new evidence adds to existing indications that Mohamed Atta and his terrorist cadre’s flight training in this country was part of a so-far unacknowledged US government intelligence operation.”³¹

In summary, the 9-11 cell consisted of at least 10 doubles, had ties to key al-Qaeda figures, was trained by the US military, and protected by the CIA and DEA.

Islamist Identities of Alleged Hijackers in Question

As Professors Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner (2000) point out, al-Qaeda is “a radical tendency within a broader Islamic movement known as the Salafi movement

The term Salafi is derived from the Arabic salaf, which means “to precede” and refers to the companions of the Prophet Muhammed. Because the salaf learned about Islam directly from the messenger of God, their example is an important illustration of piety and unadulterated religious practice. Salafis argue that ... only by returning to the example of the prophet and his companions can Muslims achieve salvation. The label “Salafi” is thus used to connote “proper” religious adherence and moral legitimacy, implying that alternative understandings are corrupt deviations from the straight path of Islam.

Salafism emphasizes and derives its legitimacy from the puritan goal of “piety and unadulterated religious practice” based on Prophetic conduct.

Yet the very behaviour of the alleged 9-11 hijackers, confirmed and corroborated by multiple, credible eye-witness testimonials, demonstrates the impossibility of their having been Islamist fundamentalists. Two key hijackers, Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, visited the popular Woodland Park Resort Hotel in the Philippines several times between 1998 and 2000 according to numerous local residents and hotel workers who recognized them from news photographs. They “drank whiskey with Philippine bargirls.” Al-Shehhi threw a party with six or seven Arab friends in December 2000 at the Hotel according to former waitress Gina Marcelo. “They rented the open area by the swimming pool for 1,000 pesos,” she recounts. “They drank Johnnie Walker Black Label whiskey They came in big vehicles,

and they had a lot of money. They all had girlfriends.” But one big mistake they made was that unlike most foreign visitors, “[t]hey never tipped. If they did, I would not remember them so well.” Victoria Brocoy, a chambermaid at the Woodland, recalls: “Many times I saw him let a girl go at the gate in the morning. It was always a different girl” (Kirk, 2001).

According to US investigators, five of the hijackers including Atta, al-Shehhi, Nawaf al-Hazmi, Ziad Jarrah, and Hani Hanjour visited Las Vegas at least six times between May and August 2001. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reports that here, they “engaged in some decidedly un-Islamic sampling of prohibited pleasures in America’s reputed capital of moral corrosion,” including drinking alcohol, gambling, and visiting strip-clubs (Fagan, 2001). As the *South Florida Sun Sentinel* observed, the hijackers’ frequent debauchery was at odds with the most basic tenets of Islam:

Three guys cavorting with lap dancers at the Pink Pony Nude Theater. Two others knocking back glasses of Stolichnaya and rum and Coke at a fish joint in Hollywood the weekend before committing suicide and mass murder. That might describe the behavior of several men who are suspects in Tuesday’s terrorist attack, but it is not a picture of devout Muslims, experts say. Let alone that of religious zealots in their final days on Earth.

As noted by one specialist in Islamic studies, the prohibition of alcohol, gambling, and sex outside marriage are Islam’s most fundamental precepts: “It is incomprehensible that a person could drink and go to a strip bar one night, then kill themselves the next day in the name of Islam. People who would kill themselves for their faith would come from very strict Islamic ideology. Something here does not add up” (Benjamin, 2001).

Why would individuals of such non-religious, anti-Islamic caliber want to kill themselves for a fundamentalist faith they clearly did not possess? It is possible that they were not fully aware of all details of the plot, and may not have known that one of its essential ingredients was planes being used as devastating suicidal missiles. Five weeks after the attacks, FBI investigators and their European counterparts concluded that “as many as 13 members of the four terrorist teams may have believed they were part of a traditional hijacking operation aimed at landing and issuing demands” (Eggen & Finn, 2001). Then CIA Director George Tenet told the Joint Congressional Inquiry that “most of the Sept. 11 hijackers may not have known details of their mission” (Eggen, 2003). In any case, the conduct of the alleged hijackers was simply not consistent with Islam, Islamic fundamentalism and/or al-Qaeda Salafism. This challenges the conventional interpretation of the nature of this terrorist cell, which interpenetrated with both covert US military operations and al-Qaeda, and consisted of at least ten doubles.

3. AL-QAEDA's HUMAN NODES

The circle closes with evidence that some of the most prominent figures in al-Qaeda are according to reliable reports fundamentally connected to the US covert operations apparatus. Here, we will focus on three high-level al-Qaeda operatives directly linked to 9-11.

3.1. *Ayman al-Zawahiri*

Ayman al-Zawahiri is on the FBI's "Most Wanted Terrorist" list, which refers to him as having "been indicted for his alleged role in the August 7, 1998, bombings of the US Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya The Rewards For Justice Program, United States Department of State, is offering a reward of up to \$25 million for information leading directly to the apprehension or conviction of Ayman al-Zawahiri."³² Al-Zawahiri is described as bin Laden's deputy and top operational commander of al-Qaeda's networks. Intelligence analysts believe he controls much of bin Laden's terrorist finances, operations, plans, and resources. In Afghanistan, al-Zawahiri has reportedly acted as bin Laden's spokesman. His main terrorist vehicle Egyptian Islamic Jihad has been linked with the Islamic Group of Egypt, who perpetrated the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Mohamed Atta and Khalid al-Mihdhar were reportedly members of his Islamic Jihad group (Foden, 2001). Intelligence sources reveal that "Atta and several others in the group" responsible for the attacks, "met with senior Al-Qaida leaders, most notably Ayman al-Zawahiri" in Afghanistan shortly before 9-11 (Waller, 2001).

In an extraordinary report Yossef Bodansky (1998) – Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare – cited intelligence sources confirming "discussions between the Egyptian terrorist leader Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and an Arab-American known to have been both an emissary of the CIA and the US Government in the 1980s." Sources said that in November 1997, the CIA emissary, identified as "al-Amriki," had "made al-Zawahiri an offer: The US will not interfere with nor intervene to prevent the Islamists' rise to power in Egypt if the Islamist Mujahideen currently in Bosnia-Herzegovina [B-H] refrain from attacking the US forces." The CIA also "promised a donation of \$50 million (from undefined sources) to Islamist charities in Egypt and elsewhere." Bodansky notes that "to-date, the independent sources that provided this information have proven highly reliable and forthcoming," and therefore that "there is no doubt" that the CIA meeting with al-Zawahiri occurred. Most disturbingly, "al-Amriki was

talking only about al-Zawahiri's not striking out against the US forces in B-H [Bosnia-Herzegovina]. *Nothing was said about transferring the Islamist Jihad to other 'fronts': Egypt, Israel, or the heart of America, for that matter.*"

On 17th November 1997, al-Zawahiri's forces conducted the terrorist attack in Luxor killing nearly 70 innocent Western tourists, which undermined the very economic foundations of the Mubarak regime by damaging Egypt's tourist industry.³³ According to Bodansky (1999, 2001, p. 213), "The virtually deafening silence of the Clinton administration" in response to the Luxor massacre "had to reassure al-Zawahiri and bin Laden that Abu-Umar al-Amriki had spoken with its backing, and a rejuvenated call to arms followed." In hindsight, the ongoing activities of al-Qaeda mujahideen in the Balkans – in Kosovo and now Macedonia – supports the conclusion not only that al-Zawahiri accepted the CIA offer, but further that the agreement is still active long after 9-11.

3.2. Ahmed Omar Sheikh Saeed

In late September 2001, ABC News reported that the FBI had "tracked more than \$100,000 from banks in Pakistan to two banks in Florida, to accounts held by suspected hijack ringleader, Mohamed Atta." (*Weekly Standard*, October 2001, vol. 7, no. 7) ABC News added that "some of that money came in the days just before the attack and can be traced directly to people connected with Osama bin Laden."³⁴

Then in early October – as the Anglo-American invasion of Afghanistan was about to begin – Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmed, Pakistan's military-intelligence (ISI) chief, suddenly disappeared. According to ISI Public Relations, he had "sought retirement after being superseded" by another officer on 8th October in a routine reshuffling of staff. The *Times of India* found out why:

Top sources confirmed here on Tuesday, that the general lost his job because of the "evidence" India produced to show his links to one of the suicide bombers that wrecked the World Trade Centre. The US authorities sought his removal after confirming the fact that \$100,000 were wired to WTC hijacker Mohamed Atta from Pakistan by Ahmad Umar Sheikh at the instance of Gen Mahmud.

Senior government sources have confirmed that India contributed significantly to establishing the link between the money transfer and the role played by the dismissed ISI chief ... Indian inputs, including Sheikh's mobile phone number, helped the FBI in tracing and establishing the link. Ahmad Umar Sayeed Sheikh is a British national and a London School of Economics graduate who was arrested by the police in Delhi following a bungled 1994 kidnapping of four westerners, including an American citizen. (Joshi, 2001)

The revelations were soon confirmed in Pakistan's *Dawn* magazine citing "informed sources,"³⁵ and again in the *Wall Street Journal* citing "senior government sources" (Taranto, 2001). Ahmed Omar Sheikh Saeed continued these terrorist-financing activities under several aliases. According to the *Washington Post*, a figure identified as "Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi ... played a central role in the financial mechanics of the Sept. 11 plot." US officials believe that "he may be the same man as Mustafa Muhammad Ahmad, alias Shaykh Saiid, who is a top bin Laden financial lieutenant" (Eggen, December, 2001). The *Post* elsewhere notes that US investigators believe al-Hawsawi is "the central financial figure" of the 9-11 plot, as well as "al-Qaeda's finance chief" (Eggen & Day, 2002).

CNN cites a top US government source confirming that investigators have verified beyond doubt that Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi is precisely the same man whose real name is Ahmed Omar Sheikh Saeed:

A man suspected of playing a key role in bankrolling the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States was released from prison in India less than two years ago after hijackers of an Indian Airlines flight demanded his freedom, a senior-level US government source told CNN ... This source said US investigators now believe Sheik Syed, using the alias Mustafa Muhammad Ahmad, sent more than \$100,000 from Pakistan to Mohamed Atta ...

Investigators said Atta then distributed the funds to conspirators in Florida ... sources have said Atta sent thousands of dollars – believed to be excess funds from the operation – back to Syed in the United Arab Emirates in the days before September 11.³⁶

Terrorism expert Magnus Ranstorp describes him as "a node between al-Qaeda and foot soldiers on the ground."³⁷ British police officials believe that Sheikh "trained the [9–11] terrorists in hijacking techniques" (Bamber, Hastings, & Syal, 2001).

Yet Sheikh was protected by elements of Pakistani, American, and British intelligence services. *Newsweek* cites US law enforcement and intelligence officials who believe that "Sheikh has been a 'protected asset,' of Pakistan's shadowy spy service, the Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI" (Klaidman, 2002). According to the *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*: "Saeed Sheikh has acted as a 'go between' for the 'tall man' – as bin Laden is known – and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)." The *Review* quotes high-level Pakistani government officials who also believe that Sheikh is not only an ISI agent, but also an active CIA operative:

There are many in Musharraf's government who believe that Saeed Sheikh's power comes not from the ISI, but from his connections with our own CIA. The theory is that with such intense pressure to locate bin Laden, Saeed Sheikh was bought and paid

for It would be logical for the CIA to recruit an intelligent, young political criminal with contacts in both India and Pakistan.³⁸

Although Sheikh was convicted of the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, the US government obstructed and avoided any attempt to investigate and indict Sheikh for his much wider role in the financial and logistical support for the 9-11 attacks. Sheikh continues to languish in a Pakistani prison with no interest from US authorities in exposing his role on 9-11; the man who issued the order to pay Atta, former ISI chief Mahmud Ahmed, is similarly being tacitly protected by US authorities who pressured Pakistan to quietly remove him from office.

Sheikh is also apparently an MI6 informant. According to the London *Times*, “British-born terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh was secretly offered an amnesty by British officials in 1999 if he would betray his links with al-Qaeda” (Hussain & McGrory, 2002). The *Daily Mail* similarly confirmed that: “Britain offered Sheikh a deal that would allow him to live in London a free man if he told them all he knew” (Williams, 2002). Both reports claim that Sheikh refused the offer. However, by the beginning of the next year, the British Foreign Office inexplicably decided “to allow him to enter Britain,” without even being investigated. The three Britons who had been kidnapped, held hostage, and threatened with death by Sheikh in his 1994 hijacking in India – Rhys Partridge, Miles Croston, and Paul Rideout – were “appalled to learn that Sheikh, a British passport holder, would be allowed to return to Britain without fear of charge.”³⁹ Sheikh subsequently “proceeded to London, where he reunited with family” in “early January 2000” (Anson, 2002). He again visited his London home in “early 2001” where he was spotted by a neighbour.⁴⁰

A Foreign Office spokesman justified the decision: “He has not been convicted of any offences. He has not even been brought to trial.”⁴¹ This was misleading. The British government had ample evidence – including the firsthand testimonials of the three kidnapped British citizens – necessitating that Sheikh be immediately charged and investigated upon his arrival on UK soil. The spuriousness of this position was evident when the US government indicted Sheikh, and when the British government began pursuing a legal investigation with the Indian government, for his role in the 1994 kidnapping, long after 9-11 (Swami, 2001). Why were these measures postponed for so long?

The British security services amnesty offer indicates that the government had sufficient intelligence on Sheikh’s activities to know of his terrorist activities as an al-Qaeda operative; that his track record necessitated his

arrest upon entry into the UK; and that the government was willing to bypass the law if recruited to MI6. The claim that Sheikh refused amnesty is false – Sheikh was only to be permitted amnesty in the UK if he accepted the offer of MI6 recruitment. That the British government subsequently granted free reign to Osama bin Laden’s very financial chief to do as he liked on British soil, indicates that Sheikh was used and tracked as an MI6 asset.

3.3. *Lau Sakra*

Lau Sakra is a little known, but very prominent, al-Qaeda figure. His case provides invaluable insight into the dynamics of al-Qaeda as a vehicle of western covert operations.

Suspected of involvement in the November 2003 bombings of UK and Jewish targets in Istanbul which killed 63 people, Sakra was arrested in Diyarbakir, south-east Turkey.⁴² A Turkish court charged him, a Syrian, with “plotting to slam speedboats packed with explosives into cruise ships filled with Israeli tourists” according to the Associated Press (Meixler, 2005).

Sakra is reportedly “one of the 5 most important key figures in al-Qaeda,” according to Turkish officials. By his own account, “he knew Mohamed Atta” and had “helped the militants” involved in 9-11. “I was one of the people who knew the perpetrators of September 11, and knew the time and plan before the attacks,” he told police off-the-record. “I also participated in the preparations for the attacks to [sic] WTC and Pentagon. I provided money and passports.” He also claimed to have advanced knowledge of the London bombings on 7th July 2005.⁴³ The bulk of these anecdotes are based on official police reports of their informal conversations with Sakra. In his official statement, Sakra exercised his right of silence and limited his admissions.

The Turkish daily *Zaman* reported that: “Sakra, who confessed that he talked with bin Laden both face to face and via a courier very often, said he gave information to Laden about the London attacks.” He admitted to personally sending “many people to the United States (US), Britain, Egypt, Syria and Algeria for terrorist activity.” In his own words:

Al-Qaeda organizes attacks sometimes without even reporting it to bin Laden. For al-Qaeda is not structured like a terrorist organization. The militants have the operational initiative. There are groups organizing activities in the name of al-Qaeda. The second attack in London was organized by a group, which took initiative. Even Laden may not know about it.⁴⁴

Sakra’s description of al-Qaeda contradicts entirely the official narrative. But he went even further than that. *Zaman* reported incredulously the most

surprising elements of Sakra's candid revelations during his four-day interrogation at Istanbul Anti-Terror Department Headquarters: "Amid the smoke from the fortuitous fire emerged the possibility that al-Qaeda may not be, strictly speaking, an organization but an element of an intelligence agency operation." As a result of Sakra's statements:

Turkish intelligence specialists agree that there is no such organization as al-Qaeda. Rather, al-Qaeda is the name of a secret service operation. The concept "fighting terror" is the background of the "low-intensity-warfare" conducted in the mono-polar world order. The subject of this strategy of tension is named as "al-Qaeda."

... Sakra, the fifth most senior man in Osama bin Ladin's al-Qaeda ... has been sought by the secret services since 2000. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) interrogated him twice before. Following the interrogation CIA offered him employment. He also received a large sum of money by CIA ... in 2000 the CIA passed intelligence about Sakra through a classified notice to Turkey, calling for the Turkish National Security Organization (MIT) to capture him. MIT caught Sakra in Turkey and interrogated him ...

Sakra was [later] sought and caught by Syrian al-Mukhabarat as well. Syria too offered him employment. Sakra eventually became a triple agent for the secret services Turkish security officials, interrogating a senior al-Qaeda figure for the first time, were thoroughly confused about what they discovered about al-Qaeda. The prosecutor too was surprised.⁴⁵

In a separate report, *Zaman* revealed that Sakra, like many of the alleged 9-11 hijackers, did not act in accordance with basic Islamic edicts. When Turkish Security Directorate officials told him that "he might perform his religious practices to have a better dialogue with him and to gain his confidence," Sakra responded: "I do not pray. I also drink alcohol." Curiously, his fellow al-Qaeda detainees and underlings, Adnan Ersoz and Harun Ilhan, did "perform their religious practices." Police officials admitted that "such an attitude at the top-level of al-Qaeda was confusing." Sakra was also psychologically unstable. He had been "undergoing psychological therapy," and according to officials, "There were medicines on him for his illness when he was arrested. He is still undergoing therapy either for manic-depression or panic attacks."⁴⁶ According to the Turkish daily *Hurriyet*, Sakra had also deliberately changed his physical facial appearance several times. Sources said he had "undergone plastic surgery and was returning to Istanbul for another operation."⁴⁷

Sakra is a classic example of yet another high-level al-Qaeda figure functioning as a node between loose associations of mujahideen, and multiple intelligence services, particularly the CIA for whom he was by his own confession a paid agent. His description of al-Qaeda concords exactly with

the thrust of this analysis: a collection of terrorist activists mobilized not by an internally cohesive hierarchical structure, but rather under the influence of Western secret services. As such, al-Qaeda denotes not an organization, but a particularly category of intelligence operations controlled by powerful state-actors, particularly the US. His psychological instability, coupled with his repeated plastic surgery to alter his facial appearance, is not merely bizarre, but is consistent with his conceded role as a “triple agent” for multiple intelligence services and with Kolar’s “doubles” theory. This suggests that al-Qaeda itself even at senior levels consists of controlled imposters and doubles. His own lack of traditional Islamic piety at a senior level within al-Qaeda illustrates again that al-Qaeda is less a truly Islamist Salafist group as such, as opposed to an organizing principle applied by Western secret services to penetrate, subvert, and manipulate disparate Islamist networks using unscrupulous human and state-regional nodes.

4. CONCLUSIONS

At several major strategic points in the world, Western power is symbiotically melded with an amorphous association of networks conventionally identified as “al-Qaeda.” During and after the Cold War, al-Qaeda has functioned as a vehicle of Western covert operations in the service of powerful corporate interests, particularly related to the monopolization of global energy resources.

As an international command and control network-structure, al-Qaeda does not exist. Yet there is clearly an underlying structure to the operational trajectory of the collection of networks identified as affiliates within the “al-Qaeda” umbrella. This structure cannot derive from the internal organizational composition of “al-Qaeda” itself, which barely exists. Al-Qaeda cannot be meaningfully identified as a self-directed institution in its own right.

Rather, it derives its geostrategic structure directly from Western interests, mediated through a number of states in strategic regions. The examples of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Algeria have been discussed here. Those, and other, states act as regional nodes, providing financial, military and intelligence assistance to mujahideen groups, while simultaneously benefiting from Western financial, military and intelligence sponsorship and protection, and further serving as permanent providers of their strategic resources, especially oil and gas, to the west. Apart from the role of these state-regional nodes in the facilitation of mujahideen activity, the documentary record additionally evidences direct liaisons between Western military intelligence

services and terrorist networks conventionally identified as part of al-Qaeda, especially in Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Libya. These direct liaisons are facilitated through human nodes, of which three prominent examples were furnished, al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's operations chief; Sheikh Saeed, al-Qaeda's financial chief; Laui Sakra, al-Qaeda's number five. In all cases, including on 9-11 itself, al-Qaeda generated destabilization – through state-regional nodes and direct liaisons – systematically paves the way for, and ultimately sustains the involvement of, Anglo-American interests in the monopolization of regional resources and the establishment of military-backed geopolitical power.

Invariably the single factor consistently pre-eminent in all mujahideen activity, is the directed involvement of Western financial, military and intelligence power through state-regional nodes, direct liaisons, and human nodes. Al-Qaeda is not a foreign enemy external to Western civilization. It has no existence as an independent concrete entity. It designates a highly developed category of Western covert operations designed to secure destabilization through the creation, multiplication, mobilization, and manipulation of disparate mujahideen groups. The evidence suggests that this was certainly the case on 9-11.

NOTES

1. This paper advances an original argument based partially on research in Ahmed (2005), supplemented here with significant new data and analysis. Also see Ahmed (2002).

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SEPTEMBER 11 AS “MACHIAVELLIAN STATE TERROR”

David MacGregor

ABSTRACT

Pyrotechnic effects and spectacular death belong to the symbolism of terror and political assassination – bizarre techniques of miscommunication through fear practiced on the innocent and designed to effect social change. While focusing on the use of terror in 9-11, this article deals with both terror and political assassination as closely related communicative practices of death. It outlines a theory of terrorism that suggests September 11 may be an example of expedient terrorist destruction ordered from within the state, a macabre instance of a state protection racket. Commentators on the left tend to see terrorism as a blow extended by the oppressed against exploiters. However, terrorism is much less likely to be a manifestation of a revolt by – or on behalf of – the underprivileged than a demonstration of brute force by the state or its agents. Machiavellian state terrorism is terror/assassination performed for reasons different from the publicized ones; often initiated by persons or groups other than those suspected of the act; and – most important – secretly perpetrated by, or on behalf, of the violated state itself. Machiavellian state terror advances the ruling agenda, while disguising itself as the work of

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 189–221
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23006-2

individuals or groups opposed to the state's fundamental principles. As an example, the article reviews a mysterious 1971 assassination in Paris that obliquely foreshadows some critical elements of the official story of 9-11. The article underlines the importance of oppositional theorizing: questioning government and looking for connections between events are critical features of what it means to be vitally active in the political universe.

It is even probable that the terrorists (like the experts!) did not anticipate the collapse of the Twin Towers, which was, far more than (the attack of) the Pentagon, the deepest symbolic shock. The symbolic collapse of a whole system is due to an unforeseen complicity, as if, by collapsing (themselves), by suiciding, the towers had entered the game to complete the event.

Jean Baudrillard

[A] wise prince must, whenever he has the occasion, foster with cunning some hostility so that in stamping it out his greatness will increase as a result.

Machiavelli

But you act like America wouldn't destroy two buildings
 In a country that was sponsoring bombs dropped on our children
 I was watching the Towers, and though I wasn't the closest
 I saw them crumble to the Earth like they was full of explosives
 And they thought nobody noticed the news report that they did
 About the bombs planted on the George Washington bridge
 Four Non-Arabs arrested during the emergency
 And then it disappeared from the news permanently

Immortal Technique, "Cause of Death Lyrics"

Yet the world on its own is dark.

G.W.F. Hegel

1. INTRODUCTION

Pyrotechnic effects and spectacular death belong to the symbolism of terror and political assassination – bizarre techniques of miscommunication through fear practiced on the innocent and designed to effect social change. Terror and assassination strike victims without warning, and may turn the flow of history. While focusing on the use of terror in 9-11, this paper deals with both these communicative practices of death.

"[A] wise prince," advises Machiavelli (1979a, p. 148), "must, whenever he has the occasion, foster with cunning some hostility so that in stamping it out his greatness will increase as a result." I introduce a theory of terrorism inspired by Machiavelli's observation. September 11 may be an example of

expedient destruction ordered from within the state, a macabre instance of a state protection racket. What I call, *Machiavellian state terrorism* is terror/assassination performed for reasons different from the publicized ones; often initiated by persons or groups other than those suspected of the act; and – most important – secretly perpetrated by, or on behalf, of the violated state itself. Machiavellian state terror advances the ruling agenda while disguising itself as the work of individuals or groups opposed to the state’s fundamental principles. I present as an example, an obscure 1971 assassination in Paris that obliquely foreshadows some critical elements of the official story of 9-11. I conclude with a discussion on the importance of oppositional theory for maintaining a lively and democratic public discourse.

1.1. Terror and Assassination

A sociological study on the history of political murder examines “the rhetoric of assassinations”: killing as a textual event (Ben-Yahuda, 1993, pp. 52–53). Equally effective at spreading fear, terror and political assassination differ in only one respect: “the target of a political assassination plot is a very specific individual. The target of terrorism is not.”¹ Assassinations, like other terrorist events, may have massive consequences. For example, in the few weeks, following Martin Luther King’s “violent annihilation ... in Memphis ... it would seem that King’s death had been almost a personal enactment of the death of the nonviolent movement in America [and had] extinguished with him the nation’s highest moral adventure in recent history” (Frady, 2002, p. 206). Similarly, the 9-11 terror attack derailed the anti-globalization movement, substituting the “War on Terror” for the fight against exploitative international capitalism. Under the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) invoked as a response to September 11 (but planned well beforehand), anti-globalization protest is now considered “a crime of domestic terror” (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 9).

1.2. Inappropriate Left Response

Jean Baudrillard (2001) famously observed that September 11 rehearsed any number of Hollywood disaster scripts, combining, “the white magic of movies and the black magic of terrorism.” The French theorist may have

originated the default left response to 9-11: “It is almost they who did it, but we who wanted it.” Accordingly, in the aftermath of the 7 July 2005 terror bombing of the London Underground, some progressive voices in the UK opined that that this was payback for UK involvement in the war against Iraq. However, as with September 11 and many other examples in the history of terrorism, the only purposes truly served by the bombings were those of the ruling party. And the unfortunate progressive response itself – by equating the Underground attacks with British participation in the US occupation of Iraq – strangely dovetailed with the claim that the left is on the side of terrorists.

The London 7/7 attacks provided a new legitimacy to those who had ordered the illegal invasion of Iraq. They contributed to significantly weakening the antiwar and civil rights movements, while triggering an atmosphere of fear and racial hatred across Britain and the European Union. (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 328)

The widespread reaction to 9-11 by established figures on the Anglo-American left, such as Noam Chomsky and his followers at *Z Magazine* and ZNet.org, suggests that the New York and Washington terror attacks were a predictable (if imprudent) reaction to US provocation. This view is also common among respected left scholars in the third world. Samir Amin (Amin, 2001, p. 20), for example, Director of the African Office at the Third World Forum in Dakar, Senegal, writes:

The instinctive horror any normal human being must feel at the sight of a massacre of large numbers of innocent people should not make us forget the role in this of U.S. policy and that of its G-7 allies ... The American public needs to know that this is the reason why the attacks on the United States have not met with universal and unqualified opprobrium as it has been led to believe. The strategic choice of targets – New York’s financial center and the Pentagon – has even been applauded and not only by a handful of Islamic fanatics but by a large majority of public opinion in Africa and Asia and a sizeable sector of European opinion.

I argue that this establishment-left position – presented in an array of left-wing and liberal journals and websites, from *Counterpunch* to *The Nation* and from *Socialist Register* to *The New Left Review* is politically dubious and out of touch with the historical realities of terrorism.² Machiavelli (1979b, p. 361) warned that successful assassinations are most often carried out from within the close circle of trusted advisers surrounding the murder target. “[F]or others, if they are not actually mad, cannot conspire, since weak men and men not close to the prince lack all hopes and opportunities which are required for the execution of a conspiracy.” The same is true, I believe, of successful terrorist conspiracies: convenient opportunities for maximum impact of terrorist events may be best known by, and available to those in power.

No hypotheses are put forward in this essay about the methods used to engineer 9-11, or the exact parties who conspired in its production. These likely will never be fully known, just as the famed Reichstag fire, 70 years later, remains shrouded in mystery (although we can imagine how, if transported back in time, the modern left would react to the disaster in Berlin: a bad thing done in a good cause).³ Instead I want to show how September 11 follows a typical pattern: a convenient terrorist event explained by the media in terms of widely shared stereotypical understandings, and then embellished and deepened by compliant intellectuals.

2. BY WAY OF A PREFACE: THE LEFT RESPONSE TO SEPTEMBER 11

In his careful analysis of the September 11 attacks, David Ray Griffin (Griffin, 2004, pp. xv–xvi) suggests that it is not surprising that the mainstream media have ignored questions about US government complicity; similarly, “it is not surprising that ... right-wing and even middle-of-the-road commentators have not raised serious questions about the official account.” But Griffin wonders why, “America’s leftist critics of US policy, who are seldom worried about being called either unpatriotic or sacrilegious, have for the most part not explored, at least in public discourse, the possibility of official complicity.” Left commentators are aware of the perfect symmetry between pre-9-11 Bush administration plans for a greatly expanded military role for the United States, and the government’s revenge attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq that followed September 11. “These critics also know,” adds Griffin, “that the United States has many times in the past fabricated an ‘incident’ as a pretext for going to war – most notoriously for the wars against Mexico, Cuba, and Vietnam.” In place of official complicity, left commentators have embraced “a ‘coincidence theory’ according to which the attacks of 9/11 were, from the US government’s point of view, simply a godsend, which just happened to allow it to carry out its agenda.” Leftist critics have failed to raise questions about the September 11 terror attacks, even though proof of US involvement “would surely be the most effective way to undermine policies of the Bush administration to which they are so strongly opposed.”

The official story of September 11 features many doubtful circumstances that might be profitably explored by the left. Griffin and other 9-11 skeptics have identified striking anomalies in the White House story as painstakingly documented in *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National*

Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004). The essays in this book advance further evidence casting doubt on the official version. A mélange of contradictory facts might have offered a wonderful sub-plot for the Marx Brothers' conspiracy thriller, *Duck Soup* (indeed some of these – such as the Bush/bin Laden family connection – are uproariously explored in Michael Moore's landmark film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*): the US military's redoubtable standard response procedures fail miserably as multiple hijacked passenger planes criss-cross American skies (see Zarembka, 2006). Fanatical Muslim hijackers, already suicided in New York and Washington, turn up alive and well in various parts of the Middle East (see Kolar, 2006). Mohamed Atta – crazed, sternly devout Muslim intent on teaching the West a lesson it will never forget – fortifies himself beforehand with alcohol, lap dancers and pork chops for dinner. He leaves his will and other self-incriminating evidence in two carry-on bags he apparently meant to take with him on his fiery journey to New York (Griffin, 2005, pp. 20–21). Passengers in plain sight of grim-faced hijackers armed with box-cutters make multiple cell phone calls at high altitudes that provide key details for 9-11 – even though most of these calls could not have gone through, given existing cell phone technology (Chossudovsky, 2005, pp. 259–260). Airplane-proof buildings collapse seemingly on cue (see Griffin, 2006), and none of the occupants survive, the stacked bodies warehoused in macabre showrooms, closed to the press. As if to mock Edward Said's criticisms of Orientalism, a comic book Arab terrorist holed up in mountainous Afghanistan feeds the media with grainy videos about his faraway exploits in America.

In my view, there are several key reasons for left resistance to questioning the dubious official story of September 11. In the first place, the left – already anxious about its place in respectable dialogue on international affairs and national politics – fears stepping too far outside acknowledged boundaries of discourse, as these are defined and policed by academia, mass media and the state. Second, commentators on the left are disposed to an idea of terrorism as the understandable reaction of underprivileged groups to oppression. Finally, the left is suspicious of conspiracy theories that cast elite groups as behind-the-scenes directors of socio-political events.

2.1. *Maintaining Boundaries*

“The conclusions [about US complicity in the attacks] are difficult to accept,” observes Michel Chossudovsky,

because they point to the criminalization of the upper echelons of the State. They also confirm the complicity of the corporate media in upholding the legitimacy of the Administration’s war agenda and camouflaging US sponsored war crimes. (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. xxi)

Thanks to 9-11 and other terrorist incidents, including the July 2005 London Underground bombings, governments in the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere, have legislated extremely rigorous limits on dissent regarding the War on Terror. Not only aimed at suspected terrorists “through ethnic profiling,” these sanctions are also directed at human rights organizations and anti-war groups.

People can be arbitrarily arrested under the antiterrorist legislation and detained for an indefinite period. More generally, throughout the Western world, citizens are being tagged and labeled, their emails, telephone conversations and faxes are monitored and archived. Thousands of closed-circuit TV cameras, deployed in urban areas, are overseeing their movements. Detailed personal data is entered into giant Big Brother data banks. Once this cataloging has been completed, people will be locked into watertight compartments. (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. xix)

Government and media clampdown on discourse around September 11 likely has had some impact on the established left, given its legitimate desire for standing in national and international debates. But another factor may be more important. The left’s general view is that terrorism is a manifestation of discontent arising from oppression by the powerful. The Palestinian suicide campaign against the Israeli government, for example, fits this model.

2.2. Terrorism as the Result of Oppression

In the left version of 9-11 (generally following a scenario volunteered by Osama bin Laden), mayhem in New York and Washington was a result of America’s brutal globalization campaign that has marginalized the poor and disenfranchised of the earth. Thus, political analyst Michael Parenti (2002, p. 46) pointed out that bin Laden is a “rich, reactionary religious fanatic ... [who] harnessed the legitimate grievances that people have felt regarding the conditions of their lives and directed them toward irrelevant foes.”⁴ In an article entitled “Globalization and September 11,” political sociologist Michael Mann (2001, p. 60) proffered a similar diagnosis. “September 11 revealed a ... spectacular example of the use of the weapons of the weak. A dozen or so terrorists, armed with knives and civilian airliners, killed just over 3,000 people, demolished the twin towers of the World Trade

Center – just off Wall Street – and one of the Pentagon’s five sides: key symbols of US economic and military power.”

“Blowback”⁵ constitutes an elaboration on the left viewpoint, suggesting that September 11 erupted from the decades-long US sponsorship of *jihadi* fighters, in the struggle against the Former Soviet Union in Afghanistan that created al-Qaeda. “The blowback has been quite direct,” avers Chomsky (2001, pp. 27, 61), “and of a kind very familiar from 50 years of history, including the drug flow and the violence.”⁶

Ironically, the official Washington variant differs only in rhetorical stance: September 11 was a fanatical riposte to America’s crusade for freedom, a wildly successful gamble by vengeful Islam’s dark forces. The Washington version might have little trouble incorporating blowback: this was a case of unworthy Muslims biting the hand that fed them.

The establishment-left response to the destruction in New York and Washington reflects a conventional liberal and critical position on terrorist violence. From this perspective, violent acts against a dominant state are “an understandable response to oppression and exploitation, the last resort of the deprived and desperate” (Turk, 2004, p. 273). Leading liberal sociologist Charles Tilly (2003, pp. 175, 235) – who accepts the official position that “Muslim suicide squads crashed packed passenger jets into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center” – affirms that, “political actors most likely to employ extraordinary forms of threat and violence against their enemies come mostly from the excluded.”

Shut out by the corporate media and other mainstream sources of information, “[s]ympathetic accounts accepting terrorism as an understandable, perhaps even legitimate, form of defense and protest against oppression and threat are more likely to appear in radical, underground or non-Western communications” (Turk, 2004, p. 273). Mary Kaldor (2003), for example, Director of the Center for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics, submits a view of September 11 held by other prominent British left-intellectuals on the Open Democracy Web site, including Tom Nairn, Susie Orbach and Stephen Lukes. She proposes September 11 resulted from “Regressive Globalisation”:

Related to the sense of insecurity is the encounter with globalisation, that is to say with growing interconnectedness, and the sense of impotence that arises when crucial decisions that affect every day life are taken at a further and further remove. The leaders of the team of young Saudis who committed suicide on 11 September 2001 were all educated in the west. This is typical of many religious militants, who are often migrants, either from countryside to town or from south to west, experiencing the loss of ties to their places of origin whilst not yet integrated into their new homes.⁷

The left explanation of 9-11 terror as a response to globalization may be fundamentally misguided. I argue below that a socio-historical understanding of terrorism demands recognizing the close links of most forms of terrorism with state power. Terrorism is much less likely to be a manifestation of a revolt by, or on behalf of, the underprivileged than it is to be a demonstration of brute force by the state or its agents. Moreover, equating 9-11 terrorism with the impact of impersonal economic forces like globalization opens left commentators to the charge that they are excusing terrorism, and have no moral grasp of the enormity of terrorist liquidation of innocent lives (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 238). Norman Geras, a Marxist professor and “darling of the Washington right wing for his outspoken support of the war in Iraq,” (*Sunday Times*, 2005) exploited this weakness following the 7/7 bombings in London.

Within hours of the bombs going off two weeks ago, the voices that one could have predicted began to make themselves heard with their root-causes explanations for the murder and maiming of a random group of tube and bus passengers in London. It was due to Blair, Iraq, illegal war and the rest of it ... It needs to be seen and said clearly: there are, among us, apologists for what the killers do. They make more difficult the fight to defeat them. The plea will be – it always is – that these are not apologists, they are merely honest Joes and Joanies endeavouring to understand the world in which we live. What could be wrong with that? What indeed? Nothing is wrong with genuine efforts at understanding; on these we all depend. But the genuine article is one thing, and root-causes advocacy seeking to dissipate responsibility for atrocity, mass murder, crime against humanity, especially in the immediate aftermath of their occurrence, is something else. (Geras, 2005)

2.3. *Rejecting Conspiracy Theory*

Left resistance to alternative explanations of 9-11 reflects a general antipathy to conspiracy theory even though the official story itself relies on a very elaborate web of conspiracy, involving bin Laden and many others (Griffin, 2005, p. 5; Pratt, 2003, p. 255). This may explain why the editors of the respected left journal *Monthly Review* signaled soon after the tragedies in New York and Washington that independent investigation of the actual events was off-limits.

There is little we can say directly about the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC – except that these were acts of utter, inhuman violence, indefensible in every sense, taking a deep and lasting human toll. (Magdoff & Foster, 2001, p. 1)

The left favors structural explanations of political and social events, with capacious categories such as social class, globalization, international relations and so forth brought to bear on social phenomena, including terrorism. Oppositional theory (which takes a dialectical approach to social relations) emphasizes along with structural factors, *elite agency*: the actions of powerful leaders and organizations with more control over critical events that directly affect our own lives than many leftwing analysts are prepared to accept. Moreover, elites operate within a deep political structure (discussed below) that is an unacknowledged part of the network of political power analyzed by the left.

Commentators on the left, like pundits elsewhere on the political spectrum, are hesitant to go far astray of the limits on accepted discourse regarding controversial questions, especially, as in the case of 9-11, when corporate media and the state heavily police these boundaries. There is a left bias toward explanations of terror as the result of exploitation and revolt of the underprivileged. Finally, the left is averse to conspiracy theories spun by critics of the system, seeing such theories as antithetical to systematic analysis based on larger factors, like class struggle or globalization.

Leftist failure to consider official complicity in the events of September 11 may also arise from a common misapprehension of the historical roots of terror. Most commentators regardless of political stripe regard “terrorism ... as a non- or extra-state menace, rather than as state violence.” However, this perspective ignores “the possibility that the excessive violence of the state might itself, in certain instances, constitute a form of terrorist violence” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 227).

2.4. Sources of Terror

It is useful to look at the main sources of political assassination and terrorist events. Organized groups from the periphery standing in opposition to the state constitute one source of terror. These groups wish to seize power from the centre, and replace it with their own system of government. Terror may also result from two or more contesting “symbolic-moral universes,” (Ben-Yahuda, 1993, p. 15) – as in the dichotomy posited by the official Washington explanation of 9–11: a clash between freedom-loving America projected by President Bush and Osama bin Laden’s thwarted Muslim world. Powerful individuals at the centre of the state constitute another – though less commonly recognized – source of terror. This form of terror is carried out by the state and perpetrated within the state itself.

Left explanations of September 11 typically involve variations on the first and second sources of terrorist violence: the attacks on New York and Washington were a blow from the oppressed periphery against the heart of empire, an explosive, if unwise, response from the radical Muslim universe against that of American-led globalization. But this ignores the third, most virulent source of terror, the state.

3. TAXONOMY OF TERRORISM

I want to suggest that the September 11 terror attacks are most likely an example of the third source of terror, *an attack from within* ordered by those at the centre of the state.

3.1. First Source of Terror: Organized Groups from the Periphery

Most theories of terrorism frame political violence “as being restricted to non-state actors who unlawfully (from the perspective of Western countries) challenge some aspect of the status quo” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, pp. 227–228). Such theories normally deal with the first source of terror discussed above – attacks from the periphery directed at the centre.

Conventional notions of terrorism include *Domestic Terrorism*, violent symbolic acts, usually aimed at government (though these could also target individuals or non-governmental organizations) carried out by autonomous individuals or groups with a grievance, real or contrived. “It is this meaning of terrorism that today is what most people think of when they hear the term terrorism, especially in the light of the spectacular events of 9/11” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 42). Ahmed Aijaz (2004, p. 47), for example, discusses terror from “the peripheries of the capitalist system,” which now involve

... the ideologies of the Hindu far right in India, the sundry fundamentalisms of Islamic mullahs, or the millenarian ideologies of those who brought us September 11th. Terrorism is now where national liberation used to be, and the US today chases these handful of terrorists as assiduously and globally as it used to chase phalanxes of revolutionaries until not long ago.

The terror campaign led by British suffragists in the early twentieth century, which involved among other events, the 1913 mutilation of rare orchids in London’s Kew Gardens, falls short of our definition, since there were no civilian casualties, but it nevertheless gives a most interesting example of domestic terrorism aimed at patriarchal and imperialist symbols. Terrorism

by the *Front de libération du Québec (FLQ)* that began with bombing neighborhood mailboxes in English-speaking areas of Montreal is another instance (mailboxes of the period displayed the British crown, a provocative symbol in Quebec). This early 1960s political movement advocated violence to liberate the Francophone province of Quebec from the rest of Canada, and constructed a model later imitated by the IRA in Northern Ireland, and other terrorist groups. But, as we shall see later, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) may have covertly influenced *FLQ* violence, as it accelerated into kidnapping and murder.⁸ The Red Brigade terror in Italy displays another example of domestic terrorism. However, doubts have been raised as to whether the Red Brigade wasn't actually acting for rightwing elements within the Italian state (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 229).

Terrorist acts against occupying powers – such as IRA violence against the British, or militant fury visited upon America and its allies in 21st century Iraq – are perhaps the most readily understandable instance of political violence. This mode of terrorism aims at “the creation of an independent homeland based on shared religious, ethnic or linguistic ties” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 228). Of course, as in most instances of non-state terrorism, the arms required for domestic terrorist acts are often provided, at great profit, by powerful states.

3.2. *Second Source of Terror: Conflicting Symbolic-Moral Systems*

Intra-civil society terrorism or what Nigerian activist Edwin Madunagu (2002) calls “communal or inter-ethnic ‘clashes’” took many lives during the 1990s, including the Rwandan genocide. “One of the twentieth century’s most effective terrorist forces,” observes Charles Tilly (2003, p. 175), “was the Apartheid regime’s South African Defense Force (SADF) which long deployed intimidation against people – both black *and* white whom it had identified as opposed to the regime.”⁹ White America’s century-long lynch law terror against African Americans, which featured for decades the highly popular exchange of lurid postcards of lynching victims in the US mail, must rank high among history’s most grotesque episodes of inter-ethnic brutality (Allen, Als, Lewis, & Litwack, 2000). Hitler’s genocide against the Jews, Slavs, gays and gypsies constitutes a horrific example of terror arising from conflicting symbolic-moral systems (Ben-Yahuda, 1993, p. 15). The terror war against aboriginal peoples in North American, Australia and New Zealand offers another instance of intra-civil society terrorism. Although Canadians “pride themselves with living in a peaceful society that

places a high premium on human rights” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 234), Canada has a history of malevolence toward aboriginal peoples. In 1995, an Ontario Provincial Police sharpshooter murdered an unarmed protester named Dudley George during a First Nations occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park, built over a native burial ground. The newly elected Conservative provincial government of Mike Harris encouraged, and then covered up the incident, which also involved brutal beatings of First Nations protesters by police (Edwards, 2003).

A less-recognized but very prevalent mode of terror based on conflicting total social systems is *Military–state terrorism*: “warfare deliberately waged against civilians with the purpose of destroying their will to support either leaders or policies that the agents of such violence find objectionable” (Carr, 2002, p. 6). Military historian Caleb Carr suggests this may be the oldest form of terrorism. Rome provided the model for most modern permutations of state terrorism, exhibiting a genius for destructive war against defenseless populations. In the Second World War and since, British and American state terrorism has far surpassed anything the Romans achieved in blood-letting of innocents. The incendiary effects of September 11, as terrible as they were, do not bear comparison with zealous American firebombing of virtually every urban conglomeration in Japan, or allied airpower’s fanatical destruction of hundreds of German cities and towns (Markusen & Kopf, 1995; Sebald, 2003). Japan’s infamous Rape of Nanking – when Japanese soldiers raped and chopped up helpless civilians, day after day – took a third of a million Chinese lives. Tilly (2002) estimates that “about 100 million people died in the twentieth century as a direct result of action by organized military units backed by one government or another. A comparable number of civilians likely died of war-induced disease and other indirect effects.”¹⁰

3.3. *Third Source of Terror: Political Violence from the Centre Directed Within (i)*

The state may be the primary source of terror inflicted on its own citizens. As opposed to intra-civil society terrorism (which may be led by the state, as in Hitler’s genocide), this form of terror is based primarily on ideological as opposed to ethnic or cultural reasons. Indeed, the first use of the concepts of terror and terrorism is associated with the French government under Robespierre, which unleashed a horrendous campaign of *State domestic terrorism*,¹¹ including “mass executions of suspected traitors of the French Revolution, from monarchists loyal to the *ancien régime* to those who

questioned the policies of the new regime. This bloody period of French history has come to be known as the Reign of Terror” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 227). Apart from Robespierre, state-sanctioned murder is hardly novel, stretching from Stalin’s purges to Pol Pot’s elimination of teachers and other knowledge workers. More recent versions of state domestic terrorism include Russian overkill in the Chechen occupation at Beslan, or the ATF/FBI massacre of Branch Davidians, mostly children and women, at Waco, Texas. The United States government’s 1950s Red Scare against citizens suspected of being communists also qualifies as domestic state terrorism. McCarthyism’s record of murderous violence was modest: the public burning of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a “handful of suicides,” and some high-profile fatal heart attacks (Schrecker, 1998, p. 361); but its most barbaric achievement was to frighten and traumatize the American nation, wrecking Hollywood and decimating public education and the academy.

The bombing of the Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile on Tuesday, September 11, 1973 began a campaign of state terror “synonymous with the some of the worst brutality of [the twentieth] century” in a country with “a rich cultural and political tradition” (Sagaris, 1996, p. xxi, 7). Following the overthrow and murder of Chile’s President, Salvadore Allende – whose official funeral was delayed for 17 years – the brutal, U.S.-supported regime of Augusto Pinochet executed or “disappeared” thousands of citizens, and subjected the nation to a sustained period of agony, where secret torture, rape and execution were commonplace. “The repercussions of the coup are still felt today and Chile, generally speaking, has not confronted its past” (Aguilera & Fredes, 2003, p. x). In the days following the coup, the regime imprisoned 5,000 citizens in Santiago’s National Stadium, a soccer venue turned into a “house of horrors” (Chavkin, 1982, pp. 141, 148). The Swedish ambassador to Chile, Harald Edelstam, visited the Stadium in an attempt to rescue captured Swedish nationals and Chilean citizens and witnessed desolate scenes that Pinochet’s evil regime would repeat many times over for almost two decades.

Busloads of newly arrested people were jostled into the stadium by rifle butts. Other groups were shoved out into trucks to begin the trip to remote concentration camps – Dawson Island near the Antarctic, or an isolated outpost in the Andean highlands. Unable to help Edelstam watched, horrified, as hundreds of people were “processed” each day. He became even more horrified when he learned of the tortures that went on in the subterranean passages of the stadium. By now it was an open secret that many prisoners were hooked up with electronic gadgetry through which electric shocks were administered to the nostrils, nipples, or genitalia. Others were mowed down by machine guns, individually or in groups. This had become a daily occurrence.

State domestic terrorism may flow beyond national borders. Stalin’s deadly purges, for example, included the execution of Trotsky, his family and many of his followers while they were living outside the Soviet Union. Operation Condor, through which Argentina, Chile and several other Latin American countries extended their domestic campaign of torture and assassination into Europe offers another instance of state domestic terrorism perpetrated on an international scale (Dinges, 2004). The French government “bombed the Greenpeace ship in New Zealand, killing a Portuguese photographer ... [because it] apparently had not wanted environmental groups to interfere with its nuclear test policy in the South Pacific” (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 233).

In the final decade of the Cold War, the US used the concept of *state-sponsored terrorism*. “Bulgaria, East Germany, Libya, North Korea, and Syria were named as Soviet-controlled sponsors of anti-American terrorism” (Turk, 2004, p. 272). But the term applies also to terrorism sponsored by the United States, or other powers. Thus, the United States funded and directed political violence by the Contras in Nicaragua (Bar-On & Goldstein, 2005, p. 232). Even military state terror by subordinate nations against their rivals may be guided and controlled by hegemonic states.

Most forms of terrorism are inherently vulnerable to manipulation by powerful states. “Authority,” noted C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 316), “is power that is explicit and more or less ‘voluntarily’ obeyed; manipulation is the ‘secret’ exercise of power, unknown to those who are influenced.” Much IRA violence, for example, may have been instigated by British security forces with the broad aim of perpetuating disorder in Northern Ireland (*Sunday Herald*, 2005). Similarly, the United States and its proxies, the jihadis fighting with the Bosnian Muslim army against the Armed Forces of the Yugoslavian Federation, contributed a great deal to the breakup of Yugoslavia (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 40). What Peter Dale Scott (2005) notices about “two kinds of businesses” is true for states also.

There are two kinds of businesses:
 those which flourish from peace
 and the strengthening of law
 and those which require the opposite

Just as powerful governments are a likely source of much political violence, they also successfully influence the public toward certain views on terrorism. The United States government actively discourages use of the term terrorism to describe not only its own murderous actions, but also domestic terrorist acts, such as abortion clinic bombings and assassinations of physicians who

provide reproductive health care (Turk, 2004). Relations between Japan and China have been damaged by Japan's failure to admit its terrorist role in the Rape of Nanking. Similarly, the United Kingdom and the United States have successfully obscured the terrible human cost of strategic bombing in Germany and the firebombing of Japan. In the case of nuclear terror inflicted on Hiroshima, "it is no coincidence that [during the fiftieth anniversary of the nuclear strike] U.S. military authorities strenuously censored reporting of the bombing, especially reporting that foregrounded the suffering of Japanese bodies" (Gusterson, 2004, p. 79).

4. MACHIAVELLIAN STATE TERRORISM AND DEEP POLITICS

4.1. Third Source of Terror: Political Violence from the Centre Directed Within (ii)

September 11, 2001 likely belongs to a long history of terrorist attacks and assassinations secretly ordered by powerful individuals at the centre of the state in order to destroy domestic opposition, or to make possible and/or justify already planned government policy. I call this *Machiavellian state terrorism*. This form of state terror differs from those surveyed above in two respects. It is secretly and deliberately concocted to provide an excuse for achieving certain state objectives; and it is designed to implicate a particular group or individual other than the real perpetrators. Although the U.S.-inspired Pinochet coup in Chile conforms somewhat to this definition, given its initial secrecy and covert methods (Haslam, 2005), the Chilean dictatorship – relying on support from elites and a significant proportion of Chilean citizens – openly acknowledged that it was the source of terror visited upon opponents of the regime.¹²

By contrast, secrecy is paramount in Machiavellian state terrorism. Much evidence indicates, for example, that Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, which severely damaged the U.S. civil rights movement, was a government hit, successfully disguised as the action of a deranged white racist acting alone (Pepper, 2003). Similarly, Stalin probably ordered the assassination of Kirov, leading member of the Soviet politburo and a possible competitor. Stalin used the December 1934 murder as an excuse to unleash the purges against his erstwhile Bolshevik comrades (Knight, 1999). Almost two years earlier, in February 1933, Hitler took advantage of the Reichstag Fire,

which the Nazis started themselves, to promulgate the first exceptional laws against German civil rights.

Using this internally manufactured act of terror, the Nazis passed a series of bills limiting civil liberties, and so managed to scare the population as to score ... a narrow electoral victory. Thereafter, on the strength of this emergency legislation, they annihilated the Leftist opposition in a few months. (Preparata, 2005, p. 203)

Although a frequent occurrence in history, Machiavellian state terrorism is the most difficult to recognize and accept because it involves those “invested with power and legitimacy ... [who] are, supposedly, the guardians of the symbolic moral universe and its boundaries” (Ben-Yahuda, 1993, p. 15). In Machiavellian state terrorism, the “guardians ... abuse their power and twist and mock their moral obligations, committing despised and harmful acts.”

I use the term Machiavellian state terrorism to differentiate it from other forms of terrorism connected with government. To summarize, Machiavellian state terrorism is terror/assassination performed for reasons different from the publicized ones; often initiated by persons or groups other than those suspected of the act; and – most important – secretly perpetrated by, or on behalf, of the violated state itself.

Machiavellian state terrorism may be the most common terrorist variant since it occurs in times of peace as well as war and is funded by agencies with deep pockets, rich technical expertise and limitless connections. It may manifest itself in surprising ways: the bungled 1887 “Jubilee Plot”: an attempt on the life of Queen Victoria by Fenians run by the British government (Campbell, 2002); deliberate spread of lies by agents of the Belgian state in the Congo about rape and murder of Belgian nationals as part of a plan to topple Patrice Lumumba (de Witte, 2001). Machiavellian state terrorism may embrace other facets of terrorism: government officials planned and triggered intra-civil society massacre in Rwanda.

Machiavellian state terrorism forms part of the system of deep politics analyzed in an earlier piece in *Research in Political Economy* (MacGregor, 2002). Deep politics concerns political phenomena that are unacknowledged or repressed in ordinary discourse. The deep political system brings together – along with the criminal underworld (Woodiwiss, 2001, p. 388) and covert government operations – the power elite discussed by C. Wright Mills (1959): great wealthy families, corporate leaders, government officials, top political figures and the military. As with any social system, deep political phenomena are characterized by regularities and hierarchies, identifiable organizations and cultural and symbolic meanings.

Rarely studied in academia, and barely mentioned in mainstream news media, deep politics is integral to the American social imaginary, informing rap music, for example, and other types of protest art. “Why did Bush knock down the towers?” wondered Jadakiss in the best-selling 2004 rap album *Kiss of Death*. Rapper Immortal Technique, born in a Peruvian military hospital and paroled in New York State from a sentence for violent assault in 1999, limns perhaps the most ominous critique in “Cause of Death”:

My words'll expose George Bush and Bin Laden
 As two separate parts of the same seven headed dragon
 And you can't fathom the truth
 so you don't hear me
 You think illuminati's just a fuckin conspiracy theory?
 That's why Conservative racists are all runnin' shit
 And your phone is tapped by the Federal Government.

Most of us are already familiar with deep politics as an unacknowledged cinematic subject. The repressed finds an outlet in Hollywood's dream life (Pratt, 2001).¹³ Cary Grant framed for murder in the terrifying upside-down world of *North By Northwest* might have been an older, nattier, luckier Lee Harvey Oswald. America invented the assassination preview: *Suddenly, The Man Who Knew Too Much, or The Manchurian Candidate* stand as improbable dress rehearsals for the murderous cinematic production in Dealey Plaza that showed – as a review in *Critical Criminology* (MacDonald, 2005, p. 240) puts it – how “a conspiracy involving multiple riflemen killed President Kennedy.” Mr. Zapruder's shocking outtake returned the favor, launching – as convincingly argued by David Lubin (2003) in *Shooting Kennedy* – an entirely new and violent vision in American movies. This vision featured ever more explicit encounters with a deep political universe, as in *Winter Kills, Executive Action, The Parallax View* (which dealt with political assassinations) or *The Godfather* trilogy and *Scarface* (links between politics, business and organized crime). Oliver Stone may be the most influential deep politics filmmaker, constructing film narratives (such as *JFK*) “compellingly evocative of and appropriate to his time, in all his aesthetic excesses, conspiratorial tendencies and public audacity” (Sturken, 1997, p. 64).

Numerous disaster movies, and conspiracy thrillers like *Arlington Road*, which concluded with a massive terrorist bombing in Washington, primed the American collective unconscious for 9-11. A BBC (2002) documentary indicated that “Hollywood had researched scenarios such as hijacks, bombs in New York, manhunts for Muslim extremists and even the use of planes as guided missiles aimed at Washington... Intensive research gave movie

makers uncanny insight into terrorist methods and psychology.” Writing in *New Left Review* Mike Davis (2001, pp. 37–38) observes that

[T]he attacks on New York and Washington DC were organized as epic horror cinema with meticulous attention to *mise en scène*. Indeed, the hijacked planes were aimed to impact precisely at the vulnerable border between fantasy and reality ... George W. Bush, who has a bigger studio, meanwhile responds to Osama bin Laden, as one *auteur* to another, with his own fiery wide-angle hyperboles.

Deep politics may lend itself to moviemaking because of cinema’s anxious focus on good and evil: the Manichean frame plays as well on the screen as it does in Presidential press conferences. To this extent, Baudrillard (2004) is correct: knowledge of evil is mostly repressed and denied in the West. “Evil ... can’t be subdued by any form of rationality. This is the illusion of the West: because technological perfection seems within reach, one believes by extension in the possibility of realizing moral perfection, in a future free of contingencies in the best of all possible worlds.” Machiavellian state terrorism, and other forms of politically inspired malevolence, belongs to a wider category I have called, the political economy of concrete evil: the systematic study of outbreaks of evil in history.

5. GENEALOGY OF MACHIAVELLIAN STATE TERRORISM

A sympathetic student of Machiavelli, G.W.F. Hegel (1995, p. 212) drew attention to police manipulation of innocent parties in his lectures on political theory. Hegel wanted to identify the socio-historical conditions of “concrete evil” – the intermittent, sudden and transitory appearance of large-scale human malevolence. In his Heidelberg lectures on the *Philosophy of Right* of 1817/1818 – not published until almost 170 years after his death – Hegel offered a frank discussion of corrupt police power. Law officers are necessary to prevent the occurrence of evil amidst “all the thrust and bustle of civil society.” However, Hegel worried that the modern state encouraged in the police “a disposition to be false and do all they can to catch someone.” The result could be an alliance of police with the underworld, and a propensity to incite criminal acts, or falsify crimes against the state. Hegel refers to police spies in London who tricked three Irish day labourers into taking part in a counterfeit money operation, and then turned these unfortunates over to the authorities to collect a bounty. Such degenerate practices, he warned, “can give rise to the abyss of depravity.”

Hegel's example of corrupt police power resembles Tilly's (1985, p. 171; Arrighi, 2005, p. 109) notion of a state protection racket. States maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence through their claim to protect citizens from criminals or against external enemies. However, states often follow practices made familiar by organized crime's protection rackets, where the racketeer "creates a threat and then charges for its reduction." From this perspective,

[g]overnment's provision of protection ... often qualifies as racketeering. To the extent that the threats against which a given government protects its citizens are imaginary or are consequences of its own activities, the government has organized a protection racket. Since governments themselves commonly simulate, stimulate, or even fabricate threats of external war and since the repressive and extractive activities of governments often constitute the largest current threats to the livelihoods of their own citizens, many governments act in essentially the same ways as racketeers. There is, of course, a difference: racketeers, by the conventional definition, operate without the sanctity of government.

In the early development of the modern state, Tilly observes, terror played an important role. States cemented their power by commissioning brigands to attack rivals; they encouraged their own soldiers to provide for themselves through plunder and rape of civilians. Similarly, Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) document in *The Many-Headed Hydra*, their study of the rise of the British Transatlantic empire, how governments secretly used domestic terror, or the threat of terror, to discipline and divide citizens, and to maintain absolute state power.

How do rulers achieve and retain authority when they actively engage in terror? Tilly (1985, p. 171) argues that power-holders seek assent not from those over whom power is wielded, but from other power-holders.

Legitimacy is the probability that other authorities will act to confirm the decisions of a given authority. Other authorities, I would add, are much more likely to confirm the decisions of a challenged authority that controls substantial force; not only fear of retaliation, but also desire to maintain a stable environment recommend that general rule.

In other words, Machiavellian state terrorism depends on the acquiescence of rival power holders, who have the means for revealing the truth but choose not to do so. Accordingly, powerful men in the Kremlin like Bukharin, who suspected Stalin's complicity in the murder of Kirov, opted for silence. They did so in part because this revelation would cause conflict that "would bring the system crashing down ... They had helped to build the cult of Stalin, upon which the edifice of the state rested, and they would have thrown the entire regime into jeopardy if they had questioned the official version of what happened to Kirov" (Knight, 1999, pp. 267–268). This sort of reluctance may account for the glaring absences and distortions in the

1964 *Warren Report* that confirmed Oswald as the lone shooter in Dealey Plaza. It certainly may have some bearing on the status of *The 911 Commission Report*, which reveals despite its manifest intentions, evidence of a cover-up at the highest level (Griffin, 2005, p. 291).

6. “INTOXICATION” AND LEFT REACTION TO SEPTEMBER 11

Assassination is technically quite demanding, for, at least in a democracy, it must be convincingly disguised as a suicide, accident, fatal illness, crime of passion or, most elegant of all, a “settling of accounts.” (McLoughlin, 1998, p. 209)

Among highly developed capitalist democracies, Canada may have the most enviable reputation for probity and honest dealing.¹⁴ However, the terror campaign of the *FLQ*, which began in the early 1960s and concluded almost a decade later involved deception and terrorist violence by the RCMP that sparked two official inquiries in 1977. The Mounties engineered the second, federal inquiry to limit damage that might have been caused by the original, Quebec government investigation. Authorities suppressed the first volume of the massive federal McDonald Commission report; it has not yet been released to the public. Nevertheless, the Canadian media dug up disturbing evidence of RCMP brutality disguised as instances of *FLQ* violence, or what I have called, Machiavellian state terrorism.

Almost two decades later an independent investigator uncovered documents showing the RCMP had executed in 1971 a prominent *FLQ* member named Mario Bachand in Paris, France. This state execution contained, in miniature, some elements suggestive of September 11, including the creation of non-existent terrorist groups and intense manipulation of the mass media. It is likely after all that the imagination and resources of intelligence services are circumscribed – like those of any other organization – by history and personal experience.

6.1. *The FLQ, Intoxication, and September 11*

On 29 March 1971 two RCMP operatives – a man and a woman posing as Canadian journalists – shot Mario Bachand, a prominent 27-year-old *FLQ* member, in his friend’s Paris apartment (McLoughlin, 1998). The RCMP may have targeted Bachand to inform the *FLQ* that the game was over.

Indeed, following his assassination there were no further *FLQ* operations. Canadian secret police prepared carefully for the Paris shooting, putting out false news stories about an *FLQ* rift that centered on Bachand months before agents shot him three times in the head with a silencer-equipped 0.22 pistol. The few scattered remnants of the Quebecois terrorist group likely realized Bachand's death was a state execution. But left-wing independantistes in Quebec (who shared the *FLQ*'s aim of a sovereign Quebec, if not its methods) never questioned the official story – the alternative, that Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's government brutally murdered a Canadian citizen overseas was not even considered.

Bachand's death is important for my argument because it provides a fully documented account of a modern secret service assassination/terrorist operation in a Western democracy. (Another thoroughly investigated instance is the assassination of Martin Luther King (Pepper, 2003) but King's murder – unlike Bachand's – does not appear to have involved the deliberate creation of terror groups by government.) The success of the Bachand murder plot depended on what French special services call, "intoxication" – "the cloud of disinformation" that surrounds assassinations and other terrorist events carried out by state security agencies (McLoughlin, 1998, pp. 243, 245).¹⁵ Initial reports (covertly produced by the Canadian embassy in Paris) said that "a mysterious young Canadian" had been found beaten to death in his apartment. Although the body had not been identified, said the press releases, it was likely that of Mario Bachand, an *FLQ* militant who had made sworn enemies with his revolutionary colleagues. "The cover story – that the *FLQ* had killed Bachand – appeared almost immediately ... once the mind has accepted one explanation, it will resist others that are more troublesome." The imprecision and implied mystery of the first reports encouraged readers to accept what they were given.

Reported cell phone calls from Muslim-guided aircraft veering toward New York and Washington apparently provided most of the initial explanation for what happened on September 11. That some of the 19 hijackers were actually alive and living somewhere in the Middle East, combined with other incongruous elements revealed later, added to the mystery of September 11. But the cover story was firmly established before the end of that eventful day. Box-cutter wielding Arab fanatics with a murderous grudge against the West flew packed, heavily jet-fuel laden passenger planes into symbol-charged targets with terrible, almost unforeseen results. It was a story the left would grow to accept as its own. Tariq Ali (2003a) writing in *The New Left Review*, provided a template.

The complacency of this world was severely shaken by the events of 11 September. What took place – a carefully planned terrorist assault on the symbols of US military and economic power – was a breach in the security of the North American mainland, an event neither feared nor imagined by those who devise war-games for the Pentagon. The psychological blow was unprecedented. The subjects of the Empire had struck back.

The left seemed unconcerned that, apart from bin Laden’s cartoon-like videos and some other forms of intoxication surrounding September 11 (such as Al-Jazeera’s “independent” newscasts¹⁶), official government sources provided most of the hard details on the destruction of the World Trade Center and the attack on the Pentagon, including identities of the supposed hijackers retrieved from the wreckage of the Twin Towers. This pattern would reappear in London in July 2005 when police somehow managed to rescue from smoldering ruins in the destroyed Underground tunnel drivers’ licenses and other material proving culpability of four young men, three of whom were Pakistani (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 329).

When Mario Bachand sat down for lunch with two RCMP assassins a cover story for his murder had already been prepared. The same is true for the crazed flights that hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. “The 1993 World Trade Center bombing,” writes Peter Bergen (2002, p. 139), “looks increasingly like a dress rehearsal for al-Qaeda’s devastating attacks on the Twin Towers eight years later.”¹⁷ The elaborate RCMP cover story for Mario Bachand’s extermination contained some items familiar from 9-11 including an extremist Middle Eastern backdrop. In a few short months the RCMP gave birth to two separate, fictional terrorist groups based in exotic climes that would spawn a media frenzy in Canada. The RCMP operation anticipated two important aspects of U.S. intelligence actions surrounding September 11: “The US intelligence apparatus has created its own terrorist organizations. And at the same time, it creates its own terrorist warnings concerning the terrorist organizations which it has itself created” (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 151).

Less than a year before Bachand’s assassination, a Radio-Canada reporter “accidentally” discovered two disguised *FLQ* militants taking lessons in what they called, “selective assassination” in a remote Palestinian guerilla training camp (McLoughlin, 1998, pp. 183–186, 199–202). Televised images broadcast across the globe showed “Sélim” and “Salem,” their faces obscured by keffiyehs, the Palestinian headgear favored by Yassar Arafat. The two men revealed plans to return to Canada and kill high-level officials and others opposed to Quebec’s independence. In January 1971, six months after the impromptu desert meeting United Press International received an envelope containing a photograph of men in Palestinian scarves and carrying

weapons. They looked a lot like “Sélim” and “Salem.” The package also contained a “communiqué from the Armée de libération du Québec (ALQ),” which promised to fight “for the liberation of the Quebec people, so long oppressed by the false cures of capitalism.” The communiqué, which received enormous publicity, concluded:

The ALQ is the military wing of the *FLQ*, like Assifah and Fatha. We claim responsibility for the action last year against the home of Drapeau “the dog” [the mayor of Montreal, whose home was bombed by the *FLQ*]. Throughout the world where there are struggles for popular liberation, our soldiers are in training: Angola, Cuba, the Middle East, Algeria, and soon Peking. See the photo of the training camp at Souf, Javash, in Jordan [in which a man holds a rocket-propelled grenade over his shoulder].

Courage, prisoner comrades and your families!
Victory! ALQ Central Committee

Along with their ALQ communiqué, “Sélim” and “Salem” would create in Algiers an *FLQ* offshoot called the *Délégation extérieure du FLQ (DEFLQ)*. “The Algerian government supported the group with a subsidy of approximately 2,000 francs a month.” In December 1970, about 3 months before Bachand’s death, the *DEFLQ* released in Algiers a *Bulletin* condemning “a self-proclaimed General Secretary of the *FLQ*. This self-proclaimed pseudo-marxist Secretary General is among those who promote among socialist ranks the *petit-bourgeois* ideology of working-class submission to American power.” Of course, “Sélim” and “Salem” were RCMP operatives; the *DEFLQ* was a secret service invention; and the detested “self-proclaimed General Secretary” was Mario Bachand.

Although primitive by today’s standards, the RCMP’s murder operation involved feeding the press with countless items about *FLQ* activities overseas and fueling controversy about its nefarious program of assassination. Strangely, some well-known political commentators who spread the stories had an earlier background with the *FLQ*. These elements are familiar also in relation to September 11.

To sustain “the War on Terrorism” agenda ... fabricated realities, funneled on a day to day basis into the news chain, must become indelible truths which form part of a broad political and media consensus ... The most powerful component rests with the CIA, which secretly subsidizes authors, journalists and media critics, though a web of private foundations and CIA sponsored front organizations. (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 153)

Now largely forgotten, the *FLQ* made plenty of world headlines in the 1960s and early 1970s. The *New Left Review*, for example, then an international bellwether of the radical left, featured an interview with high-ranking *FLQ* militant Charles Gagnon (1970) in its November/December 1970 issue.

Gagnon, who had bombed a shoe factory in 1966 killing a female office worker and severely injuring several others, spoke of an *FLQ* alliance with the Black Panthers. But the bloom quickly faded. London-based Mary Kaldor’s (2003) brief account in the Open Democracy Web site of late twentieth century terrorism is symptomatic: she leaps from the French troubles in Algeria of the 1950s and early 1960s to the IRA uprising after Bloody Sunday, leaving the glory years of the *FLQ* (1963–1971) unmentioned. (When I entered the London School of Economics fresh from hometown Ottawa in 1975 the *FLQ* was well-known in Britain, four years after it had ceased operations). No doubt the script prepared by the RCMP (the CIA lent a hand) for Bachand’s execution was overly intricate. Recently released documents suggest the Trudeau government exaggerated the *FLQ* threat (Ottawa Citizen, 2001). Will the same be said someday of bin Laden and al-Qaeda?

The phony desert meeting with RCMP operatives disguised as *FLQ* militants schooled in deadly Palestinian guerilla techniques provided fuel for months of Canadian television and press commentary critical of the *FLQ*, and aroused much interest elsewhere in the world. The stage was set for Bachand’s termination and the final destruction of the *FLQ*. Similarly, revamped cold-war intellectual Samuel Huntington¹⁸ and his best-selling *The Clash of Civilizations* may have contributed more than anyone else to intoxication around September 11 (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 194) – Huntington’s prophetic book even included Muslim fanatics who wear jeans, sip coke, and blow up passenger planes.

6.2. Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*

“The public reception of *The Clash of Civilizations* has been akin to that of some Hollywood blockbusters: panned by the critics but a box office success,” marveled Gusterson (2004, p. 125). Huntington’s book wasn’t the only one to foresee critical aspects of September 11. Many 9-11 skeptics noted Zbigniew Brzezinski’s, (1997) remarks in *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, where he indicated that a deep trauma, such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, would be necessary to awaken America to its geostrategic destiny in Eurasia and Central Asia. “Brzezinski’s book, authored by a former national security advisor,” observes David Ray Griffin, “cannot be considered simply one book among hundreds offering advice to the government ... three years after Brzezinski’s apparent wish for a Pearl Harbor-type event was

published ... the Project for a New American Century [an influential right-wing think tank] would contain a similar passage.”

Though influential in higher policy circles, Brzezinski’s volume did not have the popular impact of Huntington’s controversial *Clash of Civilizations*, which set the tone for much discussion of Islam in the United States. “We cannot be sure,” remarked Hugh Gusterson (2004, p. 125), “why Huntington’s book sold so many copies and provoked such animated debate in the West.”¹⁹ First published as an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 and released as a book in 1996, *Clash of Civilizations* adopts a “crude cultural determinism” that highlights three civilizations (there are seven civilizations in total, according to Huntington) with “potential for combustible interactions between them”: the Sinic (Chinese), Islamic and Western civilizations. A dynamic civilization with profound commitment to “Enlightenment values of rationality and human rights,” the West may be in decline as its population growth slows, “crime and drug abuse rates rise, the family erodes, and the Protestant work ethic weakens.” Huntington worried that

... the West’s liberal concern to promote human rights and democracy throughout the world and its tendency to see Enlightenment values as universal rather than simply Western will drag it into conflicts with other civilizations in which it will lack the economic, political, and military power to prevail. (Gusterson, 2004, p. 123)

While his book leaves Israel almost unmentioned, Huntington evokes a pugnacious Islam, founded on universalist values but without a central core state that would hold it together. “He suggests that, given the insistent drumbeat of Islamic-sponsored terrorist attacks on American embassies, airliners, and military facilities, the United States has since the Iranian revolution been in a ‘quasi war’ with Islamic civilization (Gusterson, 2004, pp. 123–124).” Don’t take Americanization for genuine adoption of Western values, warns Huntington, in a curiously prescient passage. “Somewhere in the Middle East a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking coke, listening to rap, and, between their bows to Mecca, putting together a bomb to blow up an American airliner” (Huntington, 1996, p. 58; Quoted in Gusterson, 2004, p. 126).

As intoxication around September 11 thickened, influential left intellectuals like Michael Mann (2001, pp. 69–70) eagerly piggybacked on the Huntington thesis, proposing a left-tinted version of the famous clash of civilizations. Mann acknowledges Huntington’s influence on his discussion of “the cosmology [of the weak] ... offered by the combat fundamentalists.”

According to bin Laden, the struggle ranges the Muslim against the infidel. To transplant Judeo-Christian symbols of heroism, it is also David against Goliath, and Robin

Hood, stealing from the rich to give to the poor – not to mention Good against Evil, God against Satan. This is an appeal of some resonance, especially able to recruit young, educated dissidents in authoritarian states and young refugees, displaced by conflicts right across the Muslim world – neither having much future amid stagnating economies. These two groups are not very large, rarely generating the resources to seize power. But their capacity to disrupt and re-group is considerable, since they enjoy the sympathy of much of the poor and the middle class of the Muslim world.

A similar analysis is taken up by Mesnard y Mendez (2005, pp. 7, 19) writing in *Socialism and Democracy*.

What we know of the al-Qaeda cadres indicates that they come from the upwardly mobile middle class of Arab nations, mainly Saudi Arabia and Egypt (the two principal US clients), that is blocked from independence and frustrated ... It does not take much foresight to see that such terrorist groups will become a real threat if they get mass recruits from globalization’s new “informal proletariat,” counting by now two fifths of active population in the [South ...]. The actions of and reactions to al-Qaeda (itself a reaction to US domination) are holy warfare of the monotheistic kind: Good against Evil, In God We Trust vs. The Great Satan.

The successful intoxication fostered around September 11 meant that the corporate mass media would classify Iraqi resistance to U.S. and British occupation as al-Qaeda terrorism. American propaganda consistently identifies so-called Iraqi “militants” with Osama bin Laden’s henchman Abu Musad al-Zarqawi (Chossudovsky, 2005, pp. 194–195). The circle is complete: 9-11 and the destruction of Afghanistan and Iraq may be neatly attributed to the “Islamofascist” bin Laden and his gang of terrorists and gangsters. Of course, the left rejects this equation, but the blowback thesis imprisons it within a narrow focus of debate – pitting Western democracy (globalization in the left variant) against an oppressed Muslim world led by deluded adherents of holy war.

7. CONCLUSION: SEPTEMBER 11 AS MACHIAVELLIAN STATE TERRORISM

It is vital in a democracy to question the state’s own account of itself – to engage in what I call, oppositional theorizing. Rather than accepting the official story of 9-11, which contains so many unsatisfactory elements, the left ought to theorize the attacks on New York and Washington from an oppositional standpoint. “Citizens are free ... so long as nothing is hidden from them. Thus, they must watch, surveil, expose and reveal” (Dean, 2000, p. 16). Sadly, the established left has done the opposite. Respected left

commentators have embraced a radicalized version of the White House 9-11 account of September 11. Claiming the attacks are payback for globalization exposes the left to charges of supporting terrorism. Even while denying stereotyped views of Islam, the left hardly doubts bin Laden's "cartoonish parody ... [of] Muslims as angry and violent" (Gusterson, 2004, p. 144).

The left embraces a distorted notion of political violence that sees it as an understandable response of the weak to provocations of the powerful. Yet, what I have called Machiavellian state terrorism is a common feature in history. Acts of terror are vulnerable to manipulation, and far more likely to be a weapon of state rulers and their agents, than the oppressed masses. As a legitimized protection racket, the state may be tempted to inflict harm secretly on its own citizens in order to achieve unpublicized but highly desired goals. Rival power holders may find it inconvenient to confront lies which help maintain the current regime. This is likely the case with September 11, which provided American power a convenient excuse to conduct wars on Afghanistan and Iraq that had been planned well before. The left abjures conspiracy theory (while accepting the official bin Laden story) but oppositional theorizing – questioning government and looking for connections between events, perceiving the world "to be organized beneath the surface" (Sturken, 1997, p. 77) – is a critical feature of what it means to be vitally active in the political universe.

NOTES

1. Of course, some forms of political assassination also involve victims other than the intended target: such as, when a bomb is used to kill a political figure which also causes a number of other deaths – airplane sabotage, or bombings in busy urban areas.

2. The World Socialist Website (WSWS) is an exception. WSWS has posted several articles questioning U.S. complicity in the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. See, for example, Patrick Martin (2002), "Was the US government alerted to September 11 attack?"

3. As Preparata (2005, p. 208) details, plenty of evidence is available to implicate the Nazis in the Reichstag Fire. "With or without evidence, however, in terror '*is fecit cui prodest*' always: the one who did it is the one benefiting from it – that is, the Nazis themselves."

4. Parenti is described on the book jacket *The Terrorism Trap: September 11 and Beyond* as "one of the country's leading political analysts."

5. Chalmers Johnson (2000, p. 8) introduced the term a year before September 11 but he used it specifically to refer to unintended consequences of U.S. covert operations. "What the daily press reports as the malign acts of 'terrorists' or 'drug

lords’ or ‘rogue states’ or ‘illegal arms merchant’ often turns out to be blowback from earlier American operations.” The left debate has diluted this meaning.

6. Chomsky’s perspective is embraced by a legion of left-writers on ZNet.org.

7. Mary Kaldor (2003), “Regressive Globalisation,” *Open Democracy* 25 September 2003 http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-americanpower/article_1501.jsp. Accessed October 23, 2005.

8. From its inception the *FLQ* was riddled with police spies, and by the time it ceased operations in 1971 many of its key members worked for the state security apparatus. See, for example, Michael McLoughlin (1998) *Last Stop Paris: The Assassination of Mario Bachand and the Death of the FLQ*.

9. We shall see, however, that Tilly understands terrorism as primarily a weapon of excluded groups or individuals.

10. While accepting the blowback theory of September 11, Mesnard y Mendez (2005) unfolds a useful account of state terrorism.

11. J. I. Ross (2003) unveils a useful survey of state and political crime in *The Dynamics of Political Crime*. Tilly (2002) notes two main forms of modern state terrorism: genocide (aimed at certain racial, religious or ethnic groups) and politicide (directed at “populations identified by political affiliation”).

12. Of course, the full extent of the terror – including many assassinations – was kept secret by the Pinochet regime.

13. [C]ritical popular films about militarism,” writes Hugh Gusterson (2004, p. 59), “are sometimes able to penetrate the dominant discourse, opening up fissures and enabling the articulation of doubts and queries that might otherwise remain unvoiced.” His remarks apply as well to other forms of cinema.

14. This reputation is largely unearned (Doughty, 2005). Canadian prime ministers have frequently suspended fundamental rights under the infamous War Measures Act, and recently the Canadian intelligence services have handed over Arab-born citizens for interrogation and torture in Syria.

15. Every form of terrorism involves “rather conscious efforts to manipulate perceptions to promote certain interests at the expense of others. When people and events come to be regularly described in public as terrorists and terrorism, some government or other entity is succeeding in a war of words in which the opponent is promoting alternative designations such as ‘martyr’ or ‘liberation struggle’” (Turk, 2004, p. 272).

16. It is perhaps not inconsequential that Al-Jazeera is located in Doha, Qatar, 20 miles from the site of one of the biggest U.S. armed forces bases in the Middle East.

17. Bergen (2002, pp. 26–28) himself relates an intriguing narrative of possible premature intoxication surrounding 9-11. In late August 2001 Bergen acquired “a two-hour al-Qaeda propaganda videotape circulating around the Middle East that summer.” The tape suggested that bin Laden was planning an imminent attack on American targets. Bergen wrote to reporter John Burns at *The New York Times* about the tape, which by then was circulating in DVD format in clandestine Internet chat rooms. Burns’s story about the looming menace of al-Qaeda “appeared on *The New York Times* Web site on September 9 under the headline, “‘On videotape, Bin Laden Charts a Violent Future.’ But strangely that was the only version of the story that ever appeared, and it was later expunged by the newspaper from the Web site archive.” Bergen laments that “the last best warning to America of what might be

failed to see the light of day. (*The Times* would publish a story by Burns a day after 9/11 that referenced the bin Laden videotape; a piece that had few of the details of the original story and was, alas, too late to make a difference.)”

18. Huntington served as “counterinsurgency expert for the Johnson administration in Vietnam and later director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University” (Ali, 2003b, p. 273).

19. My account of *The Clash of Civilizations* relies heavily on Gusterson’s (2004) critical analysis of the book.

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MAKING HISTORY: THE COMPROMISED 9-11 COMMISSION

Bryan Sacks

ABSTRACT

Despite its stated intention to be independent, impartial and thorough, the 9-11 Commission was none of the three. The Commission was structurally compromised by bias-inducing connections to subjects of the investigation, and procedurally compromised, among other reasons, by (1) its failure to take up promising lines of inquiry and its failure to try to force the release of key documents that were closely guarded by the Bush administration, the FBI and various intelligence agencies; (2) its distortion of information about pre-9-11 military preparedness, foreknowledge of the attacks or attacks of like-kind; and (3) omissions of information related to the funding of the plot and the specific whereabouts of key officials on the morning of September 11, 2001.

These structural compromises and procedural failings converged to assure that the Commission would not challenge core elements of the “official story” of the 9-11 attacks. This failure was compounded by the Commission’s desire to produce a final report that would read as a “historical narrative” rather than as an exhaustive set of findings on the critical unanswered questions that arose after the attacks. The Commission’s unquestioning acceptance of the official narrative also meant that it missed a perhaps larger opportunity to challenge key myths associated with American exceptionalism. Thus, the 9-11 Commission ultimately

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 223–260
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23007-4

functioned as an instrument of cultural hegemony, extending and deepening the official version of events under the guise of independence and impartiality.

1. INTRODUCTION

To say that the “9-11 Commission” was not an independent body is at once obvious, yet also in need of further clarification.

On the first page of the preface of “The 9-11 Commission Report,” (p. xv) Chairmen Kean and Hamilton write that the Commission “has sought to be independent, impartial, thorough and nonpartisan.” For those wishing to accept the Commissioners at their word, it must have been dismaying to read the following two sentences just a few lines later on page xvi:

Our aim has not been to assign individual blame. Our aim has been to provide the fullest possible account of the events surrounding 9-11 and to identify lessons learned.

The first sentence, on its own, might seem unwise given the body’s “sweeping” mandate ([Commission Report, 2004, p. xv](#)). But when followed by the second sentence, the first sentence becomes deeply troubling. How could a body seeking to provide the fullest possible account of an event that literally changed the direction of history place an a priori prohibition on the assignation of blame? What if offering the “fullest possible account” *required* the assignation of individual blame?

Perhaps the Commissioners meant they would stick only to the facts? But if this were the case, we would expect the Report to bypass all value judgments, not merely assignations of blame – *impartiality* would seem to require it. But the Report offers countless value judgments though, true to its aim, blames no US person directly. Thus by promising to withhold blame but not *all* nonfactual judgments, the Commissioners had already departed from their stated goals by the second page of the Report’s preface.

To meet the requirements of the second sentence – producing the “fullest possible account ...” – *independence* would be critical. But independence from what, or whom? At minimum, any independent Commission (1) must not be unduly influenced by any subject of the investigation, nor by any public official seeking to limit or obstruct the investigation; nor (2) be beholden to any unwarranted hypothesis or theory. Independence would also require (3) the consideration of all well-developed theories with even a degree of plausibility, at least until they are discredited. This in turn would require the Commission to be *thorough* in its investigation.

I want to advance the claim that the 9-11 Commission was not independent in two important senses of the word. First, it was not *structurally* independent of troubling connections to the Bush administration, the Justice Department, the National Security Council and major commercial interests directly affected by 9-11.

Second, the Commission also failed to be *procedurally* independent. The Commission had to navigate a series of constraints placed on it by the Bush administration and intelligence agencies regarding the flow of information and documents. Furthermore, the Commission's own conception of its task – namely, the odd decision to produce a “historical narrative” rather than the “findings” a “standard” government investigation would (May, 2005)¹ help undermine the Report's thoroughness.² This failure was compounded by the Commission's decision to seal all documents from its private hearings until January 2009.

The Commission's lack of procedural independence was evident from several facts: the pattern of omissions to, and distortions and falsehoods contained in, its final Report, a priori decisions not to take up sensitive lines of inquiry, evident pressures to balance criticism with praise, and the aforementioned decision to avoid individual criticism. Another crippling, though unacknowledged handicap resulted from the thoroughly bipartisan makeup of the Commission. The Commission Report came out during a hotly contested presidential election, virtually assuring that the Report would be scrubbed of any information that could be used for partisan political benefit.

Additionally, the Commission was not impartial between competing theories. Time and time again it veered away from evidence that, if pursued, would have required the Commission call into question the prevailing narrative of the attacks already well established by the time the Commission began its work. In cases where the evidence was insufficient to determine whether official behavior was the result of some brand of (1) incompetence (be it unpreparedness, shortsightedness, lack of thoroughness, or some sort of well-meaning bumbling) or the result of (2) intentional malfeasance (as in the case of FBI headquarters thwarting a number of field investigations prior to 9-11), the Commission invariably opted for the first category of explanation.

My conclusion is that the Commission's failures to include important parts of the historical record and to shade, elide, distort and even falsify other bits of key evidence are consistent with a *concerted* effort to produce a compromised document. That key members of the Commission who set the agenda and controlled the direction of the investigation also had close ties

with the Justice Department, the State Department, the CIA, the Pentagon and the Bush Administration—entities that should have been, but were not, subject to thorough scrutiny in this matter – only strengthens this possibility.

By opting for a narrative centered around the view that attacks were the result of a “failure of imagination” on the part of the military and that a supposed “wall” blocked communication between law enforcement and intelligence agencies, the Report essentially extends the “official story” of 9-11 that began taking shape literally hours after the attacks, and which was well established by the time the 9-11 Commission began its work.

The Report’s elisions and distortions would be more widely known if the corporate press in the United States had taken a serious interest in the Commission’s process and the details of the Report, but it failed too. One might wonder how a supposedly independent Commission could feel comfortable that its profoundly compromised behavior would not be uncovered by major media news agencies. The answer lies in the fact that the corporate press, like the Commission, also lacks thoroughness, impartiality and “independence.” The need for access to high-level officials, the pressure to be perceived as respectable, the influence of profoundly careerist motivations and of other “heteronomous” influences³ have eroded the practice of journalism to the point that the media no longer can be considered a true check on the actions of concentrated power. The corporate media, after all, were the main disseminators of the official story, despite mountains of evidence – *much of which was published in the corporate media* – contradicting it.⁴

I will not consider further the anatomy of our compromised corporate media, other than to note that the “official story” was a deeply conventional tale (Uricchio, 2004), and that the authority conferred on the commercial media by its ubiquity virtually assured that it would be accepted by the vast majority of the public. The official story was constructed along the lines of the myth of American exceptionalism. Two tenets of this myth are (1) that the US is a uniquely benevolent power that only ever acts defensively in its projection of military power, and (2) that it does not and would not conduct covert action against its own citizens. According to this myth, official complicity in the attacks of 9-11 is not possible and therefore may be ruled out a priori. But as we will see, the evidence tells a different story.

This paper is divided into four parts before concluding. Part I summarizes evidence concerning the lack of structural independence on the part of key Commission figures, and offers evidence that the Commission’s actual stance toward competing theories did not meet the requirements of impartiality.

Part II reviews several of the Commission's key failures to press lines of inquiry that threatened to undermine the official version of events. I focus in particular on the Commission's implicit or explicit claims that:

- (1) an attack of this kind was "not recognized" by NORAD before 9-11;
- (2) there was no forewarning of the attack;
- (3) no foreign government was connected to the funding of the attack;
- (4) all failures of law enforcement and intelligence officials to detect and stop the attacks resulted from inefficiencies and incompetence within the law enforcement-intelligence complex, *not* possible complicity with US enemies; and
- (5) there is nothing suspicious or concerning the whereabouts and performance of high officials on the morning of September 11.

One should not conclude by any means that the examples considered here are the only significant omissions in the report.⁵

Part III discusses how compromised investigative bodies like the 9-11 Commission, quite apart from challenging the dominance of the cultural narratives which shape public discourse, essentially function as instruments for extending cultural hegemony. I also discuss in Part IV why a purely institutional or structural analysis must be supplemented by an instrumental analysis that explains the importance of the specific omissions, distortions and falsehoods of the Commission Report. The Commission *was* structurally compromised, but to understand the actual character of the Commission's shirking of its duty, we need to examine how the compromised Commission conducted its business. Which staffers would see which documents, who would conduct what interviews, which interviewees would have their stories heard and which would be silenced? Ultimately, which information would be included in the official narrative history, and which information would fail to make history? What we will see is that the pattern of exclusions and distortions favors the exoneration of the government and the military virtually at every turn.

2. THE STRUCTURALLY COMPROMISED COMMISSION BODY

The structural non-independence of the Commission is most evident in the connections of the Commissioners to the agencies and interests subject to their investigation. It would be very difficult and impossible to list all of them, as there are multiple potential conflicts of interest for each Commissioner.

The two men originally tabbed to lead the Commission were Chairman Henry Kissinger and Vice Chairman George Mitchell. Both soon stepped aside. Mitchell, who stepped down first, cited time considerations, yet it was also reported that he did not wish to sever his ties with the lobbying firm, Piper Rudnick, with which he was associated. Piper Rudnick counted two Middle Eastern countries and one suspect in US anti-terror investigations among its recent clients (Thompson, 2004, p. 519). Kissinger, a troubling choice to begin with, stepped down two days later claiming he did wish to reveal his list of consulting clients (Thompson, 2004, pp. 520–521).

Most of the remaining Commissioners were lawyers, and their conflicts of interest were widely reported.⁶ Commissioner Slade Gorton's firm, Preston Gates & Ellis, boasts Delta Air lines as a client, as well as the Boeing Employees Credit Union. Commissioner James Thompson's firm, Winston & Strawn, had a contract through June 2002 to lobby for American Airlines in Washington, DC. Commissioner Fred Fielding works for a law firm that lobbies Washington on behalf of Spirit Airlines and United Airlines. Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste represents both Boeing and United Airlines. Jamie Gorelick, a member of the Clinton Administration's national security staff and Deputy Attorney General in the Clinton Justice Department, is a member of the law firm representing a defendant, Prince Mohammed al-Faisal of the Saudi Arabian government, in the lawsuit brought against him and others by the 9-11 victims' family members. The Chairman of the Commission, Thomas Kean, was connected with the CIA-backed National Endowment for Democracy and sat on the board of directors of a company that did business with suspected financiers of terrorism.

Further, as Peter Lance (2004) has chronicled, Thompson and Ben-Veniste both worked closely with the FBI, and during at least one key moment in the Commission's public hearings Ben-Veniste clearly appeared biased toward a favorable opinion of the agency (Lance, 2004, p. 202).

With so many potential conflicts of interest to discuss, I want to focus on a few of the more serious ones involving key Commissioners Lee Hamilton and Jamie Gorelick, staffer Dietrich Snell and, most importantly, Executive Director Philip Zelikow.

2.1. Philip Zelikow: The Bush Administration Investigates the Bush Administration

Philip Zelikow has deep, lasting ties to several members of both the Bush I and Bush II Administrations. Any one of these connections could have

been deemed sufficient to eliminate Zelikow from consideration on the basis of non-independence. Consider:

- Zelikow was an aide to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft for George H.W. Bush;
- Zelikow was part of the Bush II transition team and worked closely with Condoleeza Rice, Bush's National Security Advisor. As advisor to Rice, Zelikow would sit in on high-level meetings on the terror threat.
- In 1999 Zelikow co-authored a book with Rice, entitled "Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft."
- Zelikow was appointed to President Bush's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in the aftermath of 9-11.

Despite what many would consider several grounds for exclusion, Zelikow was appointed Executive Director of the 9-11 Commission in November 2003.⁷

It is also worth noting that Zelikow's intimate relationship with the Bush White House did not end with the publication of the Commission Report. Shortly after departing the Commission he became Counselor of the Department of State where he would once again work alongside Condoleeza Rice.

There are lesser-known facts about Zelikow's connections to the Bush Administration that are equally disturbing. In the early 1990s, Zelikow directed the Aspen Strategy Group, members of which have staffed key positions in both Bush and the Clinton Administrations. Interestingly, Judith Miller, the former NY Times reporter implicated in the outing of CIA operative Valerie Plame, is another emeritus member of ASG. I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, indicted in October 2005 on a total of five counts of obstruction of justice, making false statements and perjury, wrote a cryptic letter to the jail-bound Miller that seemed both to reference Miller's association with the Aspen Group and to attempt to silence her before she testified before the grand jury:

Out West, where you vacation, the aspens will already be turning. They turn in clusters, because their roots connect them.

Several prominent current and former Bush Administration figures are emeritus members of ASG, including Condoleeza Rice, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Armitage.

Evidence of Bias in Zelikow's (and the Commission's) Impartiality

If one wanted to surreptitiously influence the direction of the inquiry, hiring a sympathetic Executive Director would be a good start. As Paul Sperry summarized:

Though he has no vote (Zelikow) arguably has more sway than any member, including the chairman. Zelikow picks the areas of investigation, the briefing materials, the topics for hearings, the witnesses, and the lines of questioning for witnesses In effect, he sets the agenda and runs the investigation (Sperry, 2004).

Straightforward evidence that Zelikow lacked a desire to explore potentially promising lines of inquiry comes from a firsthand account by Thomas Hansen, PhD of an encounter with Zelikow.⁸ On September 10 and October 14, 2004, Zelikow gave two speeches at the University of Virginia at which Hansen was present. Hansen recalls asked Zelikow why the Commission did not address the “specific conspiracy concerns” circulating in the public sphere. Hansen wondered “why the Commission would let these concerns go unanswered and cause unnecessary doubt and dissent in the country.” Hansen asked, by way of an example, whether Zelikow had seen key evidence that would erase any doubt that a commercial airline in fact hit the Pentagon, including surveillance videos, rescue workers’ statements and the NTSB report. Zelikow said he had, but that neither Hansen nor any other private citizen could see them. Zelikow added that the NTSB report contained the following information:

... air traffic controllers at Dulles saw on their radar that a plane was approaching, without its transponder turned on, but they could not identify it just by radar. It was not one scheduled to come into Dulles, so they assumed it was landing at Reagan National, and when it dropped off their radar at the Pentagon they knew something was wrong. This was 35 minutes after the second World Trade Center Tower had been hit.

“I told him this explanation defied reason,” Hansen wrote, recalling their exchange, “but he said it is proven in the NTSB Report, which I can’t see.” (Hansen, 2004)

Hansen makes clear just how frustrating his exchange was with Zelikow:

I asked him why he and the Commission and the staff do not simply release photos and other information to the public so that we can rest assured that the Commission has fully investigated and answered these and other persistent questions. *His answer was that the staff, including himself of course as Executive Director, made a conscious decision not to dignify these “outrageous conspiracy theories” by investigating them or reporting on them.* (Hansen, 2005, emphasis mine)

A month later, during a talk Zelikow gave at Middlebury College⁹ there was perhaps some evidence that Hansen’s concern had impacted Zelikow. He was asked whether the Commissioners considered their “role and

responsibility in educating a largely ignorant and, some would say, prejudiced American public.”

After informing the questioner that the Commission had an “enormous educational mission” and wanted very much to produce a readable document unlike other government documents, Zelikow, without further prompting, launched into a strange riff on the “whole welter of conspiracy theories about 9-11 floating around the internet” that “we are dealing with.” This is surprising, since there was nothing in the question that asked specifically about conspiracy theories.

In his answer (see note 8), Zelikow did two rhetorically important things: first, in a gesture of seeming fairness, Zelikow raises the issue of his own non-independence, saying he understood how he could be “read as the plausible henchman executing the cover-up,” and that is “it’s a legitimate concern.” He is to be commended for taking this risk, since he could know who was in the room and what else might have sprung from this admission. But, he does not give this “legitimate concern” a fair hearing. He provides *no evidence* that he in fact acted independently. He does say that there were “81 other staffers keeping their eagle eye on me” but this claim is disingenuous. Zelikow was beyond the watchful eye of all but a few staff members. He had clearance to see documents that many other Commissioners did not. He negotiated the terms of disclosure where the White House wanted to shield the Commissioners from sensitive materials. He was one of only two Commission members who were permitted to see the confidential pre-9-11 Presidential Daily Briefings deemed too sensitive for the entire Commission (Zelikow and Jamie Gorelick were selected to do so).

Further, as Ernest May has noted in his memoir of the Commission, Zelikow broke up the staff into teams (eight in all), which worked independently of one another for large periods of time. Zelikow and the “front office” performed revisions on all drafts submitted by the teams (May, 2005).¹⁰

Thus in no way was Zelikow truly subject to the scrutiny of 81 staffers, all of whom were below him in rank. An anonymous source on the Commission staff told author Peter Lance that, of the eight teams, only the “New York Team” run by John Farmer had issued subpoenas. “(T)he other teams are completely controlled by Zelikow down in DC ... Zelikow is calling the shots. He’s skewing the investigation and running it his own way,” said Lance’s source (Lance, 2004, p. 140).

The source continued, saying “none of the other team leaders talk with the Commissioners (other than Farmer)” (Lance, 2004, p. 140).

From these accounts it appears Zelikow and his “front office” had plenty of opportunities to cover up, ignore, de-emphasize or steer clear of

information that would be embarrassing or incriminating to the White House. His attempt to dismiss the charge fails; essentially, his audience was asked to accept his word that he was uncompromised, just as readers of the Commission Report are implicitly asked to do on countless pages of the 567-page tome. Had the Able Danger allegations involving Zelikow (discussed below) been made public at the time, perhaps Zelikow would have been challenged on his independence at this talk.

The second rhetorically deft move Zelikow makes is to, once again, not “dignify” conspiracy theories *even though he appears to*. He manipulatively raises one of the least supported claims made by skeptics, the “no-plane” theory of the Pentagon strike, conveniently ignoring the body of strong evidence consistent with government complicity in some fashion, all of which went unexamined in the Commission Report.

All of this is deeply ironic, in that Zelikow’s self-described area of academic expertise is the creation and management of “public myths” or “public presumptions,” which he defines as “beliefs (1) thought to be true (although not necessarily known to be true with certainty), and (2) shared in common within the relevant political community. In his academic work and elsewhere he has taken a special interest in what he has called “searing” or “molding” events [that] take on “transcendent” importance and, therefore, retain their power even as the experiencing generation passes from the scene” (Zelikow, 1999). Almost three years before 9-11, Zelikow said that “generational” public presumptions “are formed by those pivotal events that become etched in the minds of those who live through them The current set begins in approximately 1933, although the New Deal generation is fading” (Zelikow, 1999). No doubt a different set of generational public presumptions will be established after September 11, 2001, and Zelikow’s compromised 9-11 Commission will have played a large role in cementing those presumptions.

Deepening the irony further, in the November–December 1998 edition of *Foreign Affairs*, Zelikow co-authored an article entitled “Catastrophic Terrorism,” with former CIA Director John Deutch and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter. The article speculated that if the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center had succeeded, “the resulting horror and chaos would have exceeded our ability to describe it. Such an act of catastrophic terrorism would be a watershed event in American history. It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented in peacetime and undermine America’s fundamental sense of security, as did the Soviet atomic bomb test in 1949. Like Pearl Harbor, the event would divide our past and future into a before and after. The United States might respond

with draconian measures scaling back civil liberties, allowing wider surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects and use of deadly force. More violence could follow, either future terrorist attacks or US counterattacks. Belatedly, Americans would judge their leaders negligent for not addressing terrorism more urgently” (Carter, Deutch, & Zelikow, 1998).

Thus it cannot be reasonably argued that Zelikow was unaware of the effects of his avoidance on the question of undue influence. Public myths flourish in an information vacuum, and Zelikow was instrumental in creating and maintaining an information vacuum regarding key evidence at the center of the 9-11 Commission. He had to know that by refusing to “dignify” the possibility of official complicity, and by offering the “no plane at the Pentagon” theory as a stand-in for all claims of complicity, he was simply extended a well-worn tactic of officialdom in order to marginalize inquiry into the possibility of US covert actions targeting US citizens.

Furthermore, he had to have been aware that his failure to issue a subpoena to press for the Presidential Daily Briefs pertaining to the threat al-Qaeda posed would only arouse further legitimate suspicion that he was abetting the Bush Administration in allowing it to keep secret anything it might be hiding on this score.¹¹ Of the 360 PDBs requested by the Commission, only 24 were turned over (one Commissioner was permitted to read all 360, but could not share what he/she read with anyone).

2.2. Lee Hamilton and the “Honorable Men” Thesis

The choice of Democrat Lee Hamilton for the 9-11 Commission should have raised eyebrows for anyone concerned about a possible cover-up. A member of Congress since 1965 and chair of the House Intelligence Committee when the Iran-Contra scandal broke, Hamilton failed to show the virtues of independence and thoroughness both as chair of the Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran in 1987, and again in 1992 as chair of the congressional task force charged with investigation the “October Surprise” allegations against the Reagan–Bush campaign in 1980.

Hamilton famously showed his preference for order over justice when he said that he did not favor investigating the then-Vice President George H.W. Bush or President Ronald Reagan for their role in the Iran-Contra scandal because it would not be “good for the country.” What is “good for the country” is not a matter to be contemplated by an independent investigator. His job is to uncover facts and seek truth. But Hamilton chose to believe the

president and vice president, the latter of whom claimed to be “out of the loop” and the former who said he “could not recall” what he had known. (This despite the claims by Oliver North that North was a designated “fall guy”, and that he had had high-level clearance for what he did). Later, Lawrence Walsh’s special investigation backed the claims of North, and demonstrated that Bush was very much “in the loop” regarding knowledge of weapons shipments to Iran (Parry, 1993, Chapter 24).

Hamilton was thus established as a reliable dupe, willing to take the word of “honorable men” at face value, despite the presence of strong counter-evidence (Parry, 1993, Chapter 24). Accepting at face value the testimony of those subject to an “independent” investigation requires justification; it is never simply enough to report what subjects of that investigation say. A truly “independent” investigator must seek out the truth in an unbiased and impartial manner, and not stop until either s/he no longer can continue due to structural constraints, or until she is satisfied that the full story has come out. Hamilton’s role in the Iran-Contra scandal showed little evidence of such standards:

Without doing any independent investigation, Hamilton accepted the words of North and his superiors ... “Congressman Hamilton had the choice of accepting the word of honorable men or the word of your sources,” one Democratic staff aide told me. “It wasn’t a close call” (Parry, 1993, p. 279).

As chair of the House Task Force’s “October Surprise” investigation, Hamilton again acquiesced in not forcing a showdown with the White House over testimony concerning the whereabouts of Bush during the fateful weekend of October 18–22, 1980. He permitted the Bush I Administration to block the questioning of a Bush family friend who supposedly vouched for Bush’s whereabouts on October 19.

Perhaps more importantly, Hamilton ushered the task force to a close despite late-arriving evidence from a journalist corroborating the “Russian Report,” a six-page dossier that lent credence to the claim that the then-Presidential candidate Reagan had set up talks with Iranian officials in October 1980 about the US hostages and placed both William Casey and George Bush at the meetings (*The Russian Report*, 1995). Some members of the task force suspected the report was disinformation, but evidence for its reliability came in December 1992 when journalist David Andelman, a biographer of former French intelligence chief Alexandre deMarenches, “testified that deMarenches had disclosed that he assisted Reagan’s campaign director William Casey set up hostage talks with Iranian officials in Paris in October 1980”.

But Hamilton and the task force chose not to investigate further, having already decided by the time that there was “no credible evidence” supporting the claim that George H.W. Bush was in Paris during the time in question. Just as the 9-11 Commission would more than 10 years later, Hamilton’s Task Force was all too willing to take the word of so-called “honorable men.”

2.3. Jamie Gorelick: Careerism as Motivation for Covering up TWA Flight 800 Evidence

Obvious conflicts of interests arise from impaneling a Commissioner who was a longtime employee of the Justice Department, and who was Assistant District Attorney to Janet Reno during the Clinton administration. It should not have been surprising, then, that Commissioner Jamie Gorelick, like Zelikow, had to recuse herself from the panel and appear as a witness before it during one of the Commission’s hearings. As disturbing as this was, even more troubling was an episode in Gorelick’s tenure at the Justice Department that raised serious questions about her “independence.” Her probative ability may have been compromised not only by affiliations with members of the Justice Department and FBI, but also by her participation in the TWA Flight 800 crash investigation.

Investigative journalist Peter Lance (2004), drawing on the work of Angela Clemente and Stephen Dresch offers compelling evidence that the top-level FBI officials conspired to undermine that credibility of a key witness in the Flight 800 investigation, organized crime member Gregory Scarpa, Jr. In jail and awaiting sentencing at the time, it was Scarpa, Jr. who had supplied credible information to the FBI that convicted World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef had masterminded a plot to detonate a bomb aboard Flight 800. Scarpa, Jr. had been placed in the cell next to Yousef in jail, and the two developed a relationship. But on August 22, 1996, after a high-level FBI meeting at which Jamie Gorelick was present, FBI assistance director James Kallstrom ordered the Flight 800 investigation be shut down, and the FBI closed ranks around the soon-to-be-discredited theory that the plane had been downed by a mechanical failure (Lance, 2004, Chapter 6).

Lance argues that the investigation was shut down because Scarpa, Jr. was also the key witness in a case against deeply corrupt FBI agent Lin DeVecchio. If DeVecchio was shown to be corrupt, as many as nine high-profile convictions that had made careers for a number of prominent law enforcement agents would be jeopardized. Thus, Scarpa, Jr. had to be

discredited for the sake of expediency. But that meant that the best evidence concerning Flight 800 had to be buried along with Scarpa, Jr.'s credibility.

Jamie Gorelick was likely an accomplice to this deceitful bit of utilitarian law enforcement. In April 2004, Clemente and Dresch supplied a detailed summary of pre-9-11 intelligence which, among other things, claimed that current "CIA Leak-gate" special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald had attested to the "credibility, accuracy and value" of Scarpa, Jr.'s information. According to Clemente and Dresch:

Scarpa's intelligence anticipates "shoe bomber" Richard Reed, the authorization for the 9-11 attacks given by Yousef's uncle, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Mohamed Atta's and al-Qaeda's English connections, the single-use passports employed to board the airplanes hijacked on 9-11, and the videotaped death in Pakistan of Wall Street Journal Reporter Daniel Pearl. (*Letter From Dresch and Clemente to 9-11 Commission*, April 5, 2004, cited in *Cover Up*, p. 303)

But not a word of this was to be found in the 9-11 Commission Report. As David Ray Griffin has commented:

Those in the DoJ-FBI who decided to cover up the truth about this crash, such as Jamie Gorelick, may well have believed their decision was justifiable. Nevertheless, they would surely, especially after 9-11, not want to help reveal the fact that they had lied, and in doing so, covered up this prior al-Qaeda attack on America. (Griffin, 2005, p. 294)

The FBI had additional motivation, too, for not wanting the truth to come out: given Scarpa's information the FBI had an opportunity to stop the Flight 800 bombing, and also a chance to monitor or infiltrate the al-Qaeda cell Yousef was connected with in 1996 (Lance, 2004).

There is much more to this highly disturbing case. Executive Director Zelikow chose Dietrich Snell, Commissioner Gorelick's top staffer on the 9-11 Commission, to take Lance's testimony. As Lance recalls:

When Snell led me to a conference room accompanied by staff member Marco Cordero ... there was no stenographer or recording device present. Then Snell sat down at a table across from me, pulled out a small pad, and proceeded to take notes. My source inside the Commission had warned me about this: "people are watching the hearings and thinking that all of the witnesses we talk to are under oath and on the record ... (but) it isn't true. More than ninety percent of the witness intake comes in 'informal' sessions" (Lance, 2004, p. 216)

Lance's statements here suggests that thoroughness was explicitly not a chief goal of the Commission. Lance himself concludes that testimony was in fact manipulated by the Commission to shield the public from the shocking revelation that Ramzy Yousef, and not Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, was the

true architect of the 9-11 plot (Lance, 2004, pp. 213–221). Lance suggests that Dietrich Snell is a likely culprit in this manipulation.

2.4. Dietrich Snell: “One of the Fixers”

Snell is another important figure in the Commission’s compromised structure. A “natural-born historian and a gifted writer” (May, 2005), Snell was also a Department of Justice attorney who prosecuted Abdul Hakim Murad, a co-conspirator along with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ramzi Yousef in the “Project Bojinka” plot to blow up commercial airlines.

But according to Lance, Snell was also “one of the fixers, hired early on to sanitize the Commission’s final report.” In particular, Lance identifies Snell as the likely culprit in the Commission’s whitewashing of the fact that al-Qaeda was responsible for the crash of TWA Flight 800:

an FBI #302 memo from 3/7/96 on my website shows that (Snell) was a direct party to all of the Scarpa-Yousef intelligence on TWA #800. Yet in early April, 2004 when forensic investigators Angela Clemente and Dr. Stephen Dresch, presented these #302s to the 9-11 Commission, not a word of any of this showed up in their final report

Understand the significance of this. Here is evidence from the FBI’s own files of al-Qaeda’s involvement in the second biggest act of terror in U.S. history and the 9-11 Commission – lead by investigators like Dietrich Snell, flushes it all. (*Frontpage Magazine Interview with Peter Lance*, January 27, 2005)

Lance charges further that Snell buried testimony that would have suggested that the 9-11 plot began at least as early as in 1994 (Lance, 2004) not in 1996 as the Report claims (Commission Report, 2004, Chapter 5).

3. THE PROCEDURALLY COMPROMISED 9-11 COMMISSION

3.1. Investigating FBI Obstruction and Corruption: Theory Selection and Prejudice

A bias, admitted in the Commission’s preface, toward blaming faceless institutions and avoiding personal criticism was evident throughout the report. Most notably the FBI, time and again, appears to have been the recipient of a light touch from the Commission despite clear evidence of misconduct. Consider, for example, the frantic attempts by the FBI’s

Minneapolis office to secure a FISA warrant to search the laptop computer of suspected terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui, who had been taken into custody on an INS violation mid-August, 2001. The Commission Report notes that Minneapolis FBI agents had learned Moussaoui was a jihadist, had an unusually large sum of money in his bank account that could not be properly accounted for, and was considered extremely dangerous. They even quote a Minneapolis supervisor who told headquarters that he was “trying to keep someone from taking a plane and crashing it into a World Trade Center” (Commission, p. 275).

A great of controversy ensued from FBI headquarters’ blocking of the Minneapolis office request for an FISA warrant needed in order to search Moussaoui’s laptop has computer. Many believe, and even the Commission Report does say, that had Moussaoui’s laptop been searched and his arrest publicized, the plot may have been derailed (Commission, pp. 275-276).

Despite this, the Commissioners declined to find fault. The Commission Report’s explanation of the failure to send the FISA warrant request forward was that FBI headquarters did not believe the Minneapolis office had sufficiently demonstrated Moussaoui was in fact connected to a “foreign power.” (Of course, they *need not* have, but the Commission simply repeats the FBI’s testimony that it misunderstood this aspect of the FISA warrant requirement.) What the Commission Report fails to mention that the key piece of intelligence connecting Moussaoui with Chechyan rebels was excised by Michael Maltbie of the Radical Fundamentalism Unit (RFU) (*Salon.com*, 2003) before the request reached the FBI’s National Security Law Unit, which officially nixed the application. Yet, there is very good reason to believe that four officials at the Radical Fundamentalism Unit *had in fact* received the Phoenix Memo of July 10, 2001 (See *Time*, 2002). The Commission Report, citing testimony by RFU unit head, David Frasca, again takes a high official at his own word that he received the communication but had not read it before 9-11 (Commission, p. 272).¹²

If, as *Time* reported, RFU chief Dave Frasca saw the “Phoenix Memo” before 9-11 and before the Minneapolis agency’s request for a FISA warrant came to his unit, then he lied to the Joint Inquiry, and the Commission Report repeats the lie. Further, if he lied, it is an open question whether his lie covers incompetence or something more sinister.

It is hard to imagine that a unit chief would have failed to make the connection between the Minneapolis agency’s request and the Phoenix memo information so soon after receiving the Phoenix Memo. Yet the Commission is silent about this possibility, preferring the implausibility of Frasca’s denial, despite the *Time* report’s claim that “law enforcement and congressional

sources” confirmed Frasca *did* receive the Phoenix memo. Recall that the memo had been sent weeks prior, and that others addressees had received it.

Did the Commission subpoena the *Time* reporters who made the claim about Frasca? The Commission Report offers no evidence it did. Instead, the Commission accepted Frasca’s denial, which is of course is uncorroborated outside the Justice Department. Offering no explanation, the Commission took the word of an FBI supervisor (who if we accept the Commission’s narrative misunderstood FISA court procedure and bungled the Moussaoui matter) over the testimony of other “law enforcement and congressional sources.” A truly independent and thorough investigation would not have done so.

3.2. David Schippers’ Warnings go Unheeded, then Uninvestigated

In the aftermath of 9-11, attorney David Schippers, the House Judiciary Committee’s chief investigator in the Clinton impeachment trial, went public with allegations that he had called the office of Attorney General John Ashcroft, former House managers he worked with and even the White House in the weeks prior to 9-11 with specific warnings of impending terrorist attacks on the US.

According to Schippers, none of his calls to Ashcroft or the White House were returned. Schippers claims he was contacted by FBI agents from Chicago and Minneapolis prior to 9-11 with detailed information about a terrorism plot that was imminent. The agents, Schippers said, sought legal guarantees before they would come out publicly (*Alex Jones Interview*, 10/10/01). To date, none have spoken out.

Schippers’ name does not appear in the Commission Report. But does not so detailed a story emanating from a former assistant US attorney and someone trusted enough to lead the House Judiciary Committee’s investigation into presidential misconduct deserve at least a hearing? His claims were fairly specific in nature: that names, dates and the approximate locations of the impending were widely known inside the FBI several weeks before the attacks, and that agents had been obstructed in carrying through their terror-related investigations.

It would be incumbent upon an independent Commission to deal with Schippers’ allegations by taking his testimony and, more importantly, the testimony of the agents he spoke with. Additionally, an independent Commission should have arranged to hear testimony from the three federal agents that reportedly confirmed Schippers’ story to a conservative news

magazine. One of the three, a retired FBI agent, said that the attacks “must have been allowed to happen as part of some other agenda” (Grigg, 2002). On what grounds is the public kept from an exploration of these claims?

3.3. *Sibel Edmonds and the Suppression of Deep Politics*

After the Commission Report was released, former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds wrote an open letter to Commissioner Kean, assailing the Commission for failing to include important testimony offered by Edmonds and another FBI translator, Behrooz Sarshar, concerning specific evidence of internal incompetence and corruption at the FBI. Edmonds has been subject to draconian measures emanating from the State and Justice Departments to silence her on the subject.

Edmonds leveled several specific charges, all of which were omitted from the Commission’s final report. Five of the most important ones follow:

1. After the terrorist attacks of September 11 ... translators at the FBI’s largest and most important translation unit ... were told to slow down, even stop, translation of critical information related to terrorist activities so that the FBI could present the United States Congress with a record of “extensive backlog of untranslated documents,” and justify its request for budget and staff increases. As of August 2004, the administrators in charge of language departments of the FBI remained in their positions and in charge of the information front lines of the FBI’s Counter terrorism and Counterintelligence efforts (*Letter to Commissioner Kean, August 1, 2004*).
2. Melek Can Dickerson, a Turkish Translator, was hired by the FBI after September 11, and was placed in charge of translating sensitive information related to international terrorism and other criminal activity. She was granted “top secret clearance” despite working for organizations that were targets of FBI investigations, and the fact that she had ongoing relationships with two individuals who were also targets of FBI investigations. According to Edmonds, Dickerson blocked the investigation of organizations and individuals she and her husband were associated with by stamping “hundreds, if not thousands” of documents “not pertinent.” But these documents in fact contained important information, and Dickerson tried blocking others from translating them as well (*Letter to Commissioner Kean, August 1, 2004*).
3. Dickerson’s direct supervisor, Mike Feghali, took hundreds of pages of top-secret sensitive intelligence documents outside the FBI to unknown recipients (*Letter to Commissioner Kean, August 1, 2004*).

4. Dickerson and Feghali conspired to forge signatures on top-secret documents related to certain 9-11 detainees. After all these incidents were confirmed and reported to FBI management, Melek Can Dickerson was allowed to remain in her position, maintaining her top secret clearance. The reason offered Edmonds for this was that “bureaucratic mid-level FBI management and administrators decided that it would not look good for the bureau if this security breach and espionage case was investigated and made public, especially after going through Robert Hanssen’s case (FBI spy scandal)” (*Letter to Commissioner Kean, August 1, 2004*);

Dickerson and several FBI targets of investigation hastily left the United States in 2002, and have not remained uninvestigated to Edmonds’ knowledge. Feghali has since been promoted to supervising Arabic language units of the FBI’s Counterterrorism and Counterintelligence investigations.

5. In April 2001, a long-term FBI informant/asset who had been providing the bureau with information since 1990, provided two FBI agents and a translator with specific information regarding a terrorist attack being planned by Osama bin Laden. This asset/informant was previously a high-level intelligence officer in Iran in charge of intelligence from Afghanistan. Through his contacts in Afghanistan he received information that: (1) Osama bin Laden was planning a major terrorist attack in the United States targeting 4–5 major cities, (2) the attack was going to involve airplanes, (3) some of the individuals in charge of carrying out this attack were already in place in the United States, (4) the attack was going to be carried out soon, in a few months. The agents who received this information reported it to their superior, Special Agent in Charge of Counterterrorism, Thomas Frields, at the FBI Washington Field Office, by filing “302” forms, and the translator translated and documented this information. No action was taken by the Special Agent in Charge, and after 9-11 the agents and the translators were told to “keep quiet” regarding this issue.

This last evidence directly contradicts the Commission’s claim that no specific forewarning of the 9-11 attacks had been uncovered by terrorism investigators, and it also would seem to lend support to the claims made after 9-11 by David Schippers discussed above.

We should emphasize that Edmonds is not speculating. Her charges were reviewed by Justice Department Inspector General, who concluded that “none ... are disproved” (*New York Times*, 7/29/04).

Her tenure at the FBI left Edmonds to conclude that “the translation of our intelligence is being entrusted to individuals with loyalties to our

enemies” (*Letter to Commissioner Kean, August 1, 2004*). The Commission, it seems, was not interested in bringing these allegations to the attention of the public, nor was it interested in forcing the individuals named by Edmonds to account for her charges. This decision fits the Commission’s larger pattern of burying information that casts the FBI and other agencies in a harsh light – agencies, of course, that several staffers and Commissioners had close ties with.

A recent story in *Vanity Fair* has added a new dimension to Edmonds’ saga. Over the last three years, Edmonds had intimated on more than one occasion that high-level US officials were connected to international money laundering, drug smuggling and terrorism. But according to Edmonds, investigations by the FBI into these matters are routinely obstructed by the State Department for “diplomatic reasons”:

there are certain instances where the Bureau is being asked by the State Department not to pursue certain investigations or certain people or certain targets of an investigation And what happens is, instead of targeting those people who are directly related to these illegal terrorist activities, they just let them walk free (*Interview with Jim Hogue, WGDR radio, 4/30/04*)

In the September 2005 issue of *Vanity Fair*, details of what Edmonds may have been referring to were included in a profile of her, written by David Rose:

... in December 2001, Joel Robertz, an FBI special agent in Chicago, contacted Sibel and asked her to review some wiretaps. Some were several years old, others more recent; all had been generated by a counter-intelligence that had its start in 1997 Its subject was explosive; what sounded like attempts to bribe elected members of Congress, both Democrat and Republican. “There was pressure within the bureau for a special prosecutor to be appointed and take the case on,” the official says. Instead, his colleagues were told to alter the thrust of their investigation – away from elected politicians and toward appointed officials. “This is the reason why Ashcroft reacted to Sibel in such an extreme fashion,” he says “It was to keep this from coming out.” (*Rose, 2005*)

According to a source present for Edmonds’ testimony to one of the several government bodies to whom she testified about such activities:

Edmonds disclosed ... she managed to listen to more than 40 of the ... recordings supplied by Robertz. Many involved an FBI target at the city’s large Turkish Consulate, as well as members of the American–Turkish Consulate, as well as members of the American–Turkish Council and the Assembly of Turkish American Associates.

Some of the calls reportedly contained what sounded like references to large-scale drug shipments and other crimes. To a person who knew nothing about their context, the details were confusing and it was not always clear what might be significant. One name, however, apparently stood out – a man the Turkish callers often referred to by the

nickname “Denny boy.” It was the Republican congressman from Illinois and Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert. According to some of the wiretaps, the FBI’s targets had arranged for tens of thousands of dollars to be paid to Hastert’s campaign funds in small checks. Under Federal Election Commission rules, donations of less than \$200 are not required to be itemized in public filings.

Hastert himself was never heard in the recordings ... and it is possible that the claims of covert payments were hollow boasts. Nevertheless, an examination of Hastert’s federal filings shows that the level of un-itemized payments his campaigns received over many years were relatively high. Between April 1996 and December 2002, un-itemized personal donations to the Hastert for Congress Committee amounted to \$483,000. In contrast, un-itemized contributions in the same period to the committee run on behalf of the House majority leader, Tom Delay, Republican of Texas, were only \$99,000. An analysis of the filings of four other senior Republicans shows that only one, Clay Shaw of Florida, declared a higher total in un-itemized donations than Hastert over the same period: \$552,000

Edmonds reportedly added that the recordings also contained repeated references to Hastert’s flip-flop, in the fall of 2000, over an issue, which remains of intense concern to the Turkish government – the continuing campaign to have Congress designate the killings of Armenians in Turkey between 1915 and 1923 a genocide. For many years, attempts had been made to get the house to pass a genocide resolution, but they never got anywhere until August 2000, when Hastert, as Speaker, announced that he would give it his backing and see that it received a full house vote. He had a clear political reason, as analysts noted at the time: a California Republican incumbent, locked in a tight congressional race, was looking to win over his district’s large Armenian community. Thanks to Hastert, the resolution, vehemently opposed by the Turks, passed the International Relations Committee by a large majority. Then, on October 19, minutes before the full House vote, Hastert withdrew it

Hastert’s spokesman says the congressman withdrew the genocide resolution only because (President Clinton had written him a letter asking that he withdraw it), “and to insinuate anything else just does not make any sense.” He adds that Hastert has no affiliation with the A.T.C. or other groups reportedly mentioned in the wiretaps: “He does not know these organizations.” Hastert is “unaware of Turkish interests making donations,” the spokesman says, and his staff has “not seen any pattern of donors with foreign names.” (Rose, 2005)

Given Edmonds’ credibility, her claims about the “deep politics” of the American-Turkish Consulate’s interfacing with government officials deserves a full investigation. But apparently the 9-11 Commission did not agree, nor did the Commissioners think the charges even dignified a response. It will be remembered that Hastert, who met with both Kean and Hamilton to discuss the “future of the Commission” in March 2003, strongly resisted the extension eventually granted the Commission through mid-July, 2004, before reversing his opposition just before the extension was granted (*San Francisco Chronicle, February 27, 2004*).

3.4. *The 9-11 Commission's False Claim that NORAD did not Recognize a 9-11-Type Attack Threat Prior to September 11*

The crux of the Commission's "unpreparedness" narrative regarding the performance of the US military is its acceptance of NORAD's contention that despite the great weakening of the Soviet threat at the beginning of the 1990s, 10 years later US defenses were still "looking outward." Internal threats of the kind posed by a co-ordinated set of domestic hijackings, in fact, were "not recognized" prior to 9-11. The Report tells us:

Prior to 9-11, it was understood that an order to shoot down a commercial aircraft would have to be issued by the National Command Authority (a phrase used to describe the president and secretary of defense). Exercise planners also assumed that the aircraft would originate from outside the United States, allowing time to identify the target and scramble interceptors. *The threat of terrorists hijacking commercial airlines within the United States – and using them as guided missiles – was not recognized by NORAD before 9-11.* (Commission, p. 17; emphasis mine)

The citation accompanying the italicized claim (footnote 98, Chapter 1), attributes it to General Ralph Eberhart on March 1, 2004, supplied during a private interview. Eberhart was the Commander of NORAD during the September 11 attacks.

There are several things to say about this paragraph. First, whether or not the president or Secretary of Defense would have to issue shoot down orders for a commercial airliner is not clear from pre-9-11 interagency protocols (Kane, 2004). If the second sentence is meant to refer to all planned NORAD exercises, it is demonstrably false. The third sentence is *certainly* false without qualification. There are at least two documented cases of exercise planning for just this sort of attack which contradict this claim:

1. In July of 2001, NORAD planned an exercise posing hijacked airliners originating in the United States as weapons to crash into targets – including the Pentagon (*USA TODAY*, 4/18/04). The planned drills included simulations that "involved planes from airports in Utah and Washington state that were 'hijacked.' Those planes were escorted by US and Canadian aircraft to airfields in British Columbia and Alaska" (*USA TODAY*, 4/18/04).

In the same article, we find this passage: "We have planned and executed numerous scenarios over the years to include aircraft originating from foreign airports penetrating our sovereign airspace," Gen. Ralph Eberhart, NORAD commander, told *USA TODAY*. "Regrettably, the tragic events of 9-11 were never anticipated or exercised."

But they *were* anticipated, and there *were* regional exercises conducted which involved planes taking off from domestic airports, then being

“hijacked” for use as weapons. This was confirmed “in a written statement” from NORAD, according to *USA TODAY*. If the Commission wanted further proof that this possibility had indeed been anticipated, it could have referenced the “Phoenix Memo,” or even page 275 of its own Report, for instance, where an FBI supervisor in Minneapolis is quoted as telling FBI headquarters that he was “trying to keep someone from taking a plane and crashing it into the World Trade Center.”

The *USA TODAY* story noted that the exercise posing an airline as a threat to the Pentagon was not conducted, because it was “too unrealistic.” But it was not too unrealistic, apparently, for the prior administration to run a desktop exercise simulating a hijacked airliner’s attempt to crash into the Pentagon:

2. On October 24–26, 2000, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, a “Pentagon Mass Casualty Exercise” was carried out envisioning just such a scenario. (*MDW News Service*, 2000).

How can it be, then, that nearly three years after the attacks the Commander of NORAD on that day is still not aware that NORAD *had in fact* planned drills for the *very scenarios* his claims were “never anticipated?” One had every right to expect, then, that when Eberhart returned to the Commission for the final public hearing in June 2004 he would be challenged on his prior statement (now recently shown to be false) in March 2004. But he was not. The Commission reports his statements of March 1 as authoritative, and there is nothing in Eberhart’s statement from that last day of hearings to suggest he had disavowed the earlier claim.

By what principle of democracy does a supposedly independent commission, with a “sweeping” mandate and broad subpoena powers, defer to the unsubstantiated claims of military officials who did not protect US skies *whatsoever* on September 11, 2001? What can possibly justify this attitude of deference to Eberhart and General Richard Myers who, those in the audience learned the morning of the twelfth and final public hearing, would have to leave the proceedings early because of a previous engagement? What could be so important that General Myers could not stay to face all relevant questions (not that they would have been asked)? Was the Commission not even concerned with the *appearance* of propriety?

This appears as yet another instance of the “honorable men” assumption at work. In questioning top military officials, the Commissioners were at their most obsequious and deferential (save for the insufferable spectacle of their sycophantic fawning over former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani).

The Commissioners evidently did not even care about offering the appearance of a serious investigation, and apparently felt confident that they

would not be harshly portrayed in the press for such grandstanding. Except for a few reports that mentioned the anger of the victims' family members over their fawning, the Commissioners had little reason to worry.

3.5. *Burying Norman Mineta's Testimony: Covering up a Stand-Down Order?*

One of the gravest omissions from the Commission Report concerns the sworn testimony of Department of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta on May 23, 2003. Mineta's testimony throws crucial elements of the Commission's narrative into doubt.

Here are the key passages from Mineta's testimony regarding his memories of the actions of Vice President Dick Cheney in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) bunker on the morning of September 11, 2001:

Mineta: during the time that the airplane coming into the Pentagon. There was a young man who had come in and said to the vice president, "The plane is 50 miles out. The plane is 30 miles out." And when it got down to, "The plane is 10 miles out," the young man also said to the vice president, "Do the orders still stand?" And the vice president turned and whipped his neck around and said, "Of course the orders still stand. Have you heard anything to the contrary?"

Commissioner Hamilton: The flight you're referring to is the –

Mineta: The flight that came into the Pentagon.

Hamilton: The Pentagon, yeah.

Mineta: And so I was not aware that that discussion had already taken place. But in listening to the conversation between the young man and the vice president, then at the time I didn't really recognize the significance of that ...

Hamilton: Let me see if I understand. The plane that was headed toward the Pentagon and was some miles away, there was an order to shoot that plane down.

Mineta: Well, I don't know that specifically, but I do know that the airplanes were scrambled from Langley or from Norfolk, the Norfolk area. But I did not know about the orders specifically other than listening to that other conversation. (http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing2/9-11Commission_Hearing_2003-05-23.htm)

Though Mineta makes clear that he *did not* hear a shoot-down order given that morning, and therefore could not confirm that the conversation between Cheney and the young aide regarded such an order, Commissioner Hamilton nevertheless assumes that the "order" discussed by Cheney and the young aide was in fact a shoot-down order:

Hamilton: But there very clearly was an order to shoot commercial aircraft down.

Mineta: Subsequently I found that out.

“Subsequently,” of course, means that Mineta did not witness the order being given, and that Cheney and the young aide should have been asked directly about the order by a thorough Commission. We do not know if Cheney was asked, as he and President Bush jointly gave unsworn, unrecorded testimony for a single hour before a group of Commissioners in closed session.

Mineta testified that the conversation he overheard occurred “five or six minutes,” after he arrived at the bunker, or approximately 9:26. This time squares with the eventual impact at the Pentagon at approximately 9:38 am.

If it is inferred that the order Mineta heard being discussed was in fact a shoot-down order, there are several questions that need answering. First, why was Flight 77 not in fact shot down? Second, why does the Commission Report claim the window of time the shoot down order was given to be between 10:00 am and 10:15 am? Third, how can the Commission conclude that Cheney did not even arrive at the PEOC bunker until 9:58, a startling 38 minutes after Mineta claims he arrived and saw Cheney with his staff? Mineta’s testimony is supported by other accounts of the timing of Cheney’s departure for the PEOC bunker. The *New York Times* reported that this occurred at 9:06 am, or just after the second strike on the World Trade Center. White House photographer David Bohrer claims that the Vice President was taken “just after 9:00 am” (first reported by the *New York Times* on September 16, 2001). Counterterrorism head Richard Clarke’s account, suggests Cheney went to the bunker about five minutes after the *New York Times* reports he did (Clarke, 2004, p. 2). *ABC News* reported that Cheney was present in the PEOC bunker before 9:27. Given the Commission’s complete avoidance of Mineta’s testimony and accounts that support it, and given that its own account is based not on eyewitness testimony but on “alarm data” that is “no longer retrievable,” we should be concerned that the Commission’s account is motivated by something other than concern for the truth.

A fourth question arising from Mineta’s testimony suggests a possible – and harrowing – explanation for the Commission’s behavior. As David Ray Griffin has argued, Mineta’s account of Cheney’s discussion with the young aide does not best support the conclusion that the order being discussed was in fact a shoot down order (Griffin, 2005, pp. 219–221). More likely the order was *not to shoot down the incoming plane*. Support for this conclusion includes the fact that the plane was not shot down, despite the Pentagon’s

rumored battery of surface-to-air missiles, and also that according to the Commission Report, no fighter planes were in position to shoot down Flight 77 at any time. Why, then, would the young aide need updated confirmation that a shoot down order still stood? If, however, the order was *not* to shoot down the plane, then one can easily understand why the aide would repeatedly check to see that he had in fact correctly understood what would be a highly unusual order.

Further evidence of an orchestrated cover-up of this information comes from the fact that videotape of Mineta's testimony has been excised from the Commission's video archive.

3.6. Funding the 9-11 Plot: Absolving the Pakistanis and Saudis by Omission

One of the most egregious areas of the Commission's whitewash of the available evidence concerns its conclusion that "... the US government has not been able to determine the origin of the money used for the 9-11 attacks. Ultimately the question is of little practical significance." (Commission Report, p. 172).

It is understandable why the Commission would wish its reader accept this ludicrous claim, considering that one of the likely funders of the plot, Pakistani ISI Director Mahmud Ahmed, was visiting US National Security advisors the week prior to September 11, 2001, and actually having breakfast in Washington DC the morning of 9-11 with Senator Bob Graham and Rep. Porter Goss. These two congressmen would go on chair the Congressional Joint Inquiry into the 9-11 attacks. Goss, of course, also became Director of the CIA in 2004.

On October 6, 2001, *CNN* reported that US authorities believed Saeed Shiekh, a notorious Pakistani-born terrorist, had been the paymaster who sent multiple payments to the alleged hijackers, including one of \$100,000 in the days prior to the attack. Shockingly, the next day stories began coming out of India and Pakistan that ISI director Mahmud Ahmed had authorized the payment Sheikh made to the alleged hijackers (*Ahmed, 2006*).

On October 8, Ahmed was forced out of his post on the pretext of a reshuffling of General Pervez Musharraf's cabinet, yet Ahmed remains unindicted to this day.

Saeed Shiekh continued to live openly in Pakistan until early 2002, when, amazingly, he was charged with the murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. In most mainstream news accounts of the Pearl murder case,

Shiekh's connection to the funding of the 9-11 plot was not mentioned. Further, Sheikh's name underwent an extraordinary evolution in press accounts, which made it very difficult for the uninformed readers to conclude on their own that he was in fact the same person who had been identified by Indian intelligence as the paymaster for the 9-11 plot (Thompson, 2003).

The silence of the US press on this story is one of the most damning elements of its failure to present a complete picture of the attacks to US readers. It cannot be reasonably concluded, however, that none of the Commissioners knew of this story, since Senator Graham and Representative Goss unquestionably knew the fate of their breakfast guest on 9-11, as did, undoubtedly, other National Security officials. The Commission's staffers would easily have come across such reports in the course of conducting their investigation. The Commission's contention that "we have seen no evidence that any foreign government – or foreign government official – supplied any funding" for the 9-11 plot is powerful evidence that the Commission was willfully blind to this sort of evidence.

Others, however, were not. The information connecting Sheikh and Ahmad to Atta has been confirmed, for instance, by respected Pakistani journalist Amir Mir (*Asia Times*, 1/27/05). What an Indian strategic analyst called an "astonishing measure of American forbearance" toward the Pakistani government has aroused suspicions that perhaps "September 11 had been organized by Islamabad with the help of al-Qaeda at US behest after the neo-conservatives ruling the US needed a pretext for fulfilling their imperialist agenda" (*Asia Times*, 1/27/05).

There is much evidence as well that the Commission made a political decision – one not in keeping with its supposed interest in providing the "fullest possible account" of the 9-11 attacks – to purposely leave out sensitive information suggesting financial support for Osama bin Laden emanating from within the Saudi government (Griffin, 2005, pp. 65–70). These omissions quite clearly put the lie to the Commission's stated aim of providing a thorough report, independent of political influences.

3.7. Able Danger: Zelikow and Snell Bury Evidence US had Early Information on Alleged Hijackers

A new story of evidence suppression involving 9-11 Commission Executive Director Zelikow and Commission staffer Dietrich Snell made headlines in the summer of 2005, when a top-secret US Army intelligence operation codenamed "Able Danger" broke into news coverage. The operation, begun

in 1999 and employing 11 staffers, used specially designed data-mining software to collect open-source information on al-Qaeda cells, and then compare that information to existing government records in hopes of turning up previously unseen connections.¹³

According to several news accounts, the operation identified Mohamed Atta and three other of the alleged hijackers as members of an al-Qaeda cell operating in the US by February 2000 (see, for instance, *New York Times*, 8/9/05). Apparently, Able Danger was so effective that it was able to track the minute movements of several members of al-Qaeda in the US during 2000, even detecting, for instance, when meetings between suspected cell members had taken place in and around New York City.

Had local or federal law enforcement been notified in 2000, the 9/11 plot may have been derailed, but according to Able Danger staffer Col. Anthony Shaffer, military lawyers apparently cancelled meetings where information garnered from Able Danger was scheduled to be shared with the FBI. Shaffer had been tasked with setting up the meetings in or around September 2000, and only learned of their cancellation when FBI personnel failed to show up (*Government Security News*, 9/05).

Shortly after the Bush Administration assumed office, likely before March 2001, Able Danger was terminated.

Of interest here is the fact that, according to Shaffer, he and two other individuals met with Zelikow and two other Commission staffers at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan on October 21, 2003. Shaffer further claims that he told Zelikow and the staffers that Able Danger had identified “two or three” al-Qaeda cells that went on to carry out the 9-11 attacks, and that Mohamed Atta was one of the al-Qaeda identified (*Government Security News*, 9/05). Shaffer said that Zelikow thought the information was “important” and told Shaffer he would continue the dialog with him upon his return to the US.

Subsequently upon returning, Zelikow requested information on Able Danger from the Defense Department, but did not contact Shaffer. Shaffer then attempted to call Zelikow in January 2004. But in reply Shaffer was told by another staffer that “Dr. Zelikow ... does not see the need for you to come in. We have all the information on Able Danger” (*Government Security News*, 9/05). Yet when Commissioners Kean and Hamilton issued a statement on the matter in August 2005 (see http://www.9-11pdp.org/press/2005-08-12_pr.pdf) they claim that the Commission did not receive the requested Able Danger information from the Defense Department until February 2004. The statement says further that nothing in the requesting information on Able Danger indicated that Mohamed Atta or any other 9/11 plotters had

been identified by the Defense Department before 9-11. It also claims that none “of the three Commission staffers who participated in the interview [at Bagram Air Base with Shaffer], or the executive branch lawyer, recall hearing any such allegation.” The Commission Report claims that Atta first entered the US in June 3, 2000 (Commission Report, pp. 223–224).

Yet in July 2004, just ten days before the Commission Report was to be released, Dietrich Snell, another unnamed staffer and a Pentagon employee acting as “minder” (*New York Times*, 8/11/05) met with Captain Scott Phillipott of the US Navy. Phillipott, who had also worked with Able Danger, corroborated Shaffer’s account of Able Danger, claiming specifically that he saw a document in 2000 which connected Mohamed Atta with a Brooklyn al-Qaeda cell (*New York Times*, 8/22/05).

Phillipott also confirmed that he was the person who met with Snell, and that the information about Atta was deleted soon after he saw it due to concerns from Defense Department lawyers (*New York Times*, 8/22/05).¹⁴

Shaffer, who has been forbidden from testifying before Congress about what he knows regarding Able Danger, has stood by his account, and Phillipott’s account seems to corroborate it. Shortly after Phillipott’s testimony became public, several other individuals came forward to corroborate his and Shaffer’s accounts. With no reason to doubt Shaffer or Phillipott or the others with direct knowledge of Able Danger, we must conclude that Zelikow and his staffers tried to cover for the Defense Department and the White House (which cancelled Able Danger). With only the word of Zelikow and his staffers to go on, who will believe that Shaffer did not mention Atta by name to them at the Bagram Air Force base meeting?

4. THE 9-11 COMMISSION AND THE EXTENSION OF IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY

Daniel Hellinger (2003) uses the term “hegemony” to refer to “the ability of a ruling class to induce mass acceptance of prevailing social, cultural and moral values.” I would extend the term to include the way powerful institutions and groups are able to successfully advance narratives of explanation within society, raising them to the level of “common sense.” By failing to conduct a full, independent, thorough and impartial investigation, and opting to recover the established official narrative in most cases of evidentiary ambiguity, the 9-11 Commission functioned as an instrument of cultural hegemony.

One hegemonic strategy entails the denial of conspiracies within the political sphere of the US, even though the political record unequivocally supports their existence. This sleight of hand usually involves the denial of “conspiracism” as a legitimate mode of explanation. Critics on the left, center and right all participate in this sleight of hand. When 9-11 skeptics, for instance, raise the possibility that an operational conspiracy could be responsible for government misconduct, “respectable” critics on the left blast the skeptics as “conspiracy *theorists*” who reject social scientific institutional analysis, which many prominent leftists (e.g. Michael Albert, Stephen Shalom, Noam Chomsky, Chip Berlet) prefer a priori as a means of explaining all political phenomena (see, for instance, [Albert & Shalom, 2002](#)).

What arguments like Albert’s and Shalom’s fail to adequately account for, of course, is that the most cogent 9-11 skeptics are not necessarily arguing for conspiracism as an explanatory scheme, but only for the *possibility* of conspiracies in this case (e.g. [Ahmed, 2002](#); [Griffin 2004, 2005](#)).

An a priori determination to avoid considering the possibility of conspiracies handicaps any analyst. How can the Iran-Contra affair, for instance be explained without showing that high-level government officials, *conspired* to sell weapons to a supposed enemy (Iran), divert the proceeds from that sale to aid a foreign military group (the Contras), and lie to Congress about the entire affair? All three acts were clear violations of official US policy. Institutional checks and balances were not sufficient constrain them; the conspirators conspired *in order to subvert* institutional constraints. This was a classic “operational conspiracy,” a term Hellinger, drawing on the work of Daniel Pipes (a strong critic of domestic conspiracy theories), defines as follows:

Operational conspiracies seek to prevent or encourage a political outcome promoting or discouraging a significant shift in power among political actors – individuals groups or states. They involve a secret combination of political operatives or officials pursuing their goals through illegal or covert means (usually both). They seek to hide such outcomes and the means to achieve them from public view for fear of widespread reproach ... or political sanction. ([Hellinger, 2003, p. 210](#))

As Hellinger notes, critics like Pipes too often treat claims of the existence of operation conspiracies as if they are claims of the existence of “world conspiracies.” Hellinger directly quotes [Pipes’ \(1997, pp. 21–22\)](#) on world conspiracies:

(World conspiracy theories describe a) powerful, evil and clandestine group that aspires to global hegemony; dupes and agents who extend the group’s influence around the world so that it is on the verge of succeeding; and a valiant but embattled group that urgently needs to stave off catastrophe.

As should be obvious, the existence of operational conspiracies, of which there can be no doubt, does not entail a belief in world conspiracies. Yet the denial of “world conspiracies” in large part functions to marginalize explanations that builds a *prima facie* case for the existence of operational conspiracies within the US government. This pattern of denial operates in ideologically hegemonic fashion. The “respectable” left plays a critical role in this, in that much of the animus against *even considering* the existence of operational conspiracies of domestic origin which target US citizens or interests comes from the political left. This is essentially the approach taken, for instance, by Chip Berlet, a senior analyst at the left-leaning Political Research Associates (which operates the web site www.publiceye.org), toward David Ray Griffin’s book, *The New Pearl Harbor*.¹⁵ No wonder, then, that when even those disposed to be critical of power dismiss a potent strain of criticism the Commission felt no need to “dignify” conspiratorial claims.

The mistake of supposing that “instrumental” or “conspiratorial” analyses – ones that take seriously the individual wrongdoing of those within the centers of power – are somehow naturally opposed to “institutional” or “structural” ones is made not only by Berlet, but many other critics on the left seeking to distance themselves from the black mark of conspiracism. But this misapplication of principle (or perhaps fear for their reputations) has unfortunately caused them to flee from a tool that could open up avenues of explanation currently closed to them. *If in fact* what Norman Mineta overheard Dick Cheney conveying to an aide was a “stand-down” order, Cheney’s crime is not diminished somehow by the fact that the structural features of an unjust society would persist beyond his removal from office. Cheney’s crime would still be monumental, and critically important to uncover. Nor does it follow that anyone who believes this also believes that by removing Cheney and his co-conspirators, all will be made right in government. From the standpoint of fomenting social change, it is arguably more important to point out and prosecute the high crimes of individuals because the simplicity of the story (a treasonously craven vice president allowing the murder of his own people to further a militaristic agenda, or a speaker of the house who may be taking bribes from a foreign government) has greater counterhegemonic value than even the most supple and brilliant institutional analyses of the kind produced by Noam Chomsky, for instance. The two strands of analysis are not incompatible, and the structuralist worry that instrumental analysis will usurp or degrade the force of structural critiques does not justify the marginalization of instrumental ones.

The point is made succinctly by Peter Dale Scott (1993), author of many books in US covert operations and their deep connection to international

drug trafficking and money laundering. Scott argues for a hybrid paradigm of political analysis he calls *deep politics*, one, which draws on structural analysis but aims at broadening its purview:

The deep-politics paradigm ... is essentially an extension of conventional political investigative methods to consideration of a much larger field of evidence, including, but not restricted to, the unacknowledged processes and events which conventional decorum excludes from our current "political science" textbooks. (Scott, 1993, p. 16)

Part of what is excluded is the linkages between "overt" politics and deep politics, and Scott maintains that both the Warren Commission and the House Committee investigation of 1977–1978 into the assassination of JFK excluded such information. Scott sees patterns, for instance, in the Kennedy assassination cover-ups having to do with the systematic effort by congressional officials "to conceal the extent of Jack Ruby's involvement with both drug traffickers and law enforcement" (Scott, 1993, p. 18). Once we extend our consideration to this larger field of evidence, different conclusions are possible. Scott's synoptic overview of the deep political landscape deserves further exploration:

I have always believed, and argued, that a true understanding of the Kennedy assassination will lead, not to "a few bad people" but to the institutional and parapolitical arrangements which constitute the way we are systematically governed. The conspiracies I see as operative, in other words, are part of our political structure, not exceptions to it. (Scott, 1993, p. 11)

Thus when we learn that the CIA denied the 9-11 Commissioners "any direct access either to the detainees or to the interrogators and their interpreters" (May, 2005), allowing only that some questions be put to them sent by the Commission, we see an example of how the "way we are systematically governed" is *perfectly enabling* of operational conspiracies—in this case, an accepted structural constraint could easily enable a conspiracy among individuals within the CIA to shield investigators from embarrassing, disturbing or even treasonous information about the true nature of US covert actions. The 9-11 Commissioners were left to take the CIA's word for it. To his credit, May (2005) admits that the Commission "never had full confidence in the interrogation as historical sources." Yet the Commissioners, themselves drawn from the halls of power, were inclined to accept other government reports and much unsubstantiated testimony from high officials at face value, as has been shown. If the *Commission* "never had full confidence" in these reports, how little confidence would a truly independent body have had?

5. THE 9-11 COMMISSION MAKES HISTORY

The Commission, not surprisingly, was virtually silent on questions concerning US covert actions. May (2005) says that “the commissioners believed that American foreign policy was too controversial to be discussed except in recommendations written in the future tense. Here we compromised our commitment to set forth the full story.” But the Commission has done more than this. By failing to analyze a constitutive element of the US military/intelligence complex, the Commission became a willing agent in the construction of a distorted, and very likely falsified, narrative history of the 9-11. The Commission, for instance, revised the established timeline of the military and FAA’s response to the four hijacked planes on the morning of 9-11 without adequate justification (Commission Report, pp. 31–33). It simply *changed* received history up until that point. Not surprisingly, its revised history favors further exoneration of the US military (see Griffin, 2005, part two). A lack of willingness to address “foreign” policy also meant that the Commission foreclosed on the possibility of eroding the myth of American exceptionalism.

It must be declared that it is *not* paranoid or somehow beyond the realm of possibility to simply ask whether, on utilitarian grounds, elements within a vast, multibillion-dollar-a-year military/intelligence complex—where tens of thousands of people work, many of whom traffic in secrecy and spend entire careers working on invisible covert operations, with little to no political accountability, with virtually unlimited resources and often completely abstracted from the ordinary life of those they are sworn to protect—could offer “implicit welcome,” “help along” or even orchestrate attacks against American civilians. Institutions orchestrate “hostile takeovers” of other institutions. Families keep terrible secrets. People kill themselves. Sons kill fathers. Powerful people sometimes kill those they are entrusted to protect. More often, they betray in some lesser way those they are entrusted to protect.

Furthermore, when harm can be done indirectly, it becomes *easier*, not more difficult, to justify, as Stanley Milgram’s body of experiments on obedience demonstrated (Milgram, 1974). There is simply no rational basis for ruling out so-called “false-flag” covert action a priori. Explanations for the attempts to strike them from consideration are certainly plentiful: professional pressures endemic to the field of mainstream journalism, psychological tendencies favoring denial, proclivities toward pleasing authority, public apathy feelings of powerlessness and more. But attempts to rule out such possibilities by simply asserting that they are “beyond the pale” should *themselves* be regarded with suspicion.

In an age where the public arguably has less unmediated access to power and fewer assurances of the actual functioning of democratic processes than at any other time in American history, suspicions concerning undue government secrecy are clearly warranted. Recall that the Commission sealed the records of its private hearings until early January 2009. Of course, at that time the President could issue an executive order further extending the period of time the documents remain sealed. It bears repeating that George W. Bush would be president at that time if his term is not concluded earlier for some reason.

The sheer brazenness of these decisions – both to seal the records and to allow the President on whose watch the event occurred to ultimately determine the release of these documents – should be placed in historical context. As Max Holland (2005) has written:

Comparable investigations have made available at least some portion of the raw information upon which the respective reports were erected, even at the risk of challenging the very conclusions a particular report might have drawn. The Warren Commission, for example, decided it was far better to present the entirety of the evidence in all its rich complexity than be charged with hiding information. Other, comparable panels have weighed the evidentiary part of their responsibility differently, but in no instance was a final report released without publication of some portion of the primary documents accumulated during the investigation. This is the only method by which the public can assess the accumulated evidence and judge the soundness of the investigation itself.

The failure of the media to adequately investigate 9-11 and the failure of the Commission to produce an independent, impartial and thorough report has more to do with the internal dynamics of the two institutions and their relationships to power than it does with the strength of the evidence for the official story. The unwillingness of either to seriously *consider* US government complicity in attacks against its own does not result from close inspection of the evidence and a justifiable dismissal of it – rather, it is the effect of inappropriately regulated, highly dysfunctional relationships between reporters, editors and the power centers within media and government. These relationships, which grant access to reporters, also insure that much information on high-level performance remains off-limits or at least highly filtered. This appears to be an unavoidable consequence of a media system operating on naked market principles. It is not by accident, either, but by the institutional logic of this system internal to it that the dominant media companies within that system are loath to present other options than the current model which rewards them so handsomely. Yet the same institutional model can also support conspiracies to present willfully distorted information to the public, as the case of Jeff Gannon and Talon News, or

more disturbingly, as has been widely reported, the Bush administration's use of "the prepackaged, ready-to-serve news report that major corporations have long distributed to TV stations to pitch everything from headache remedies to auto insurance":

In all, at least 20 federal agencies, including the Defense Department and the Census Bureau, have made and distributed hundreds of television news segments in the past four years, records and interviews show. Many were subsequently broadcast on local stations across the country without any acknowledgment of the government's role in their production. (*New York Times*, 3/15/05)

Public *acceptance* of this arrangement where government inadequately regulates itself and the corporate media inadequately reports on that failure is both attributable to, and results in, extreme feelings of powerlessness to change the status quo of cultural hegemony. Only a concerted showing of public and political will can change this.

NOTES

1. In his memoir, "When Government Writes History: A Memoir of the 9/11 Commission," May writes that as the fourth member of the Commission "front office" headed by Philip Zelikow, "My job was to produce the historical narrative ... (t)ypically, government reports focus on "findings" and array the evidence accordingly. None, to our knowledge, had ever attempted simply to produce professional-quality narrative history None had aspired to deal not only with the immediate past but also with the long background that would be needed if ... the report was to remain the reference volume on September 11 sitting on the shelves of high school and college teachers a generation hence." May further says that "Kean saw the opportunity exactly as (May and Zelikow) did."

2. This is not to say that government investigations in the past that sought to produce findings were also not compromised. But May and Zelikow, as accomplished academics, surely had to understand that the level of authorial independence of a report fashioned by several people, each with his or her unique, strong ties to many individuals and agencies subject to the investigation, would be far less than that of the standard professional historical narrative authored by one or two people.

3. For a study of the encroachment of market forces on the field of television journalism, see Pierre Bourdieu (1998).

4. Projects like "The Complete 9-11 Timeline" at www.cooperativeresearch.org have great appeal in part due to the fact that they find information within systems that functions hegemonically as a whole (the corporate media, for instance), yet contain within them a great deal of information that can be put to use for counterhegemonic purposes. The "timeline" approach to history thus spotlights the critical importance of context, emphasis, placement, persistence and durability of information in extending hegemony. It is not that counterhegemonic information will not be found in hegemonic systems, it is just that it is not contextualized in the way information consistent with official narratives will be.

5. For a complete list of the 115 omissions in the 9-11 Commission Report claimed by David Ray Griffin, see <http://www.911truth.org/article.php?story=20050523112738404>; for the list of more than 400 questions posed to the Commission by the 9-11 Victims' Family Steering Committee, most of which went unanswered, see <http://www.911independentcommission.org/questions.html>.

6. For a list of conflicts, and the sources for these claims, see Thompson, 2004, pp. 521–523.

7. Zelikow's presence at Bush Administration meetings on terrorism during the transition period led to the bizarre circumstance in which, during the Commission's hearings on the pre-9-11 terror threat, he recused himself from the Commission in order to testify before the very Commission he directed.

8. For a video of Zelikow's presentation, see http://muskrat.middlebury.edu:8080/ramgen/smedia/distribution/archives_witt/PhilipZelikow111204.rm.

9. *ibid.*, *time stamp* 1:22:00–1:26:40.

10. It does not appear that the revised drafts from the "front office" were then reviewed by low-level staffers. Here is May's exact wording:

The actual drafting of the report was collective. I produced some first-draft material. (Douglas) MacEachin, (Dietrich) Snell, (Michael) Hurley, and members of their teams and other teams also produced first drafts. Each draft went to every staff member with the requisite clearances. The front office produced revised drafts, sometimes as a result of sitting together and looking at text projected on a screen ...

Thus it appears Zelikow and his 'front office' had final say on the content of the Report.

11. Far from pushing for greater access, Zelikow praised the White House for its generosity in providing the Commission the access it did in a Washington Post story: "Neither we nor the White House are aware of any precedent for this in the history of the republic. That is true not only for our access to these items, but for many of the other kinds of access to highly sensitive materials that we have been granted."

12. Frasca's denial is contained in the Joint Inquiry transcript cited in footnote 88, Chapter 8, Commission report, p. 540.

13. For an excellent resource on 'Able Danger', see <http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/entity.jsp?id=1521846767-744>.

14. For more context on the meeting with Phillpott, see <http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/context.jsp?item=a071204phillpottmeeting>.

15. See both Berlet's book review at http://publiceye.org/conspire/Post911/dubious_claims.html, as well as Griffin's reply to Berlet at <http://publiceye.org/conspire/Post911/Griffin1.html>.

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ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE “WAR ON TERROR”: THE CONTINUING PRETEXT FOR U.S. IMPERIAL CONQUEST

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ABSTRACT

The “war on terror” has nothing to do with protecting the U.S. and world’s people from “terrorists”, and everything to do with securing the American empire abroad and muzzling democracy and human rights at home. The 9-11 attacks were the pretext which sold the myth of evil Muslim terrorists imminently threatening Americans. That tale allowed the Cheney-led members of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) to implement their 1990 DPG plan for world control. The “war on terror” is modelled on Islamophobic stereotypes, policies, and political structures developed by the Israeli Likkud and Bush Sr. in 1979. It is designed to inspire popular support for U.S. wars of world conquest. To defeat this plan, we must overcome our Islamophobic fear of “terrorists” and stand in solidarity with Muslims.

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 261–298
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23008-6

1. WHY A 9-11 PRETEXT?

... the War against Terror is not really about terror ... It's about a superpower's self destructive impulse toward supremacy, stranglehold, global hegemony. (Arundathi Roy, 2004, p. 34)

Researchers are uncovering extensive, credible evidence that the official account of the 9-11 attacks is untenable. Although al-Qaeda may have had the resources to get hijackers onto planes with box cutters, it did not have the power to shut down FBI investigations of the suspected hijackers, to set up distracting war games on 9-11-2001, to issue stand-down orders preventing effective military response, or to cause two WTC towers plus Building 7 to collapse using demolition explosives (Griffin, 2004, 2005; Hufschmid, 2002). Western intelligence knew about the 9-11 attack plans as early as 1995, and may have facilitated and exploited them for their own ends. Some suggest that the U.S. may even have directly planned and carried them out.¹ Regardless of whether it simply facilitated the attacks or carried them out themselves, there is little doubt that the U.S. was involved (Ahmed, 2002, pp. 82–83).

If this is true, we need to ask, why would U.S. leaders risk such a colossal crime against the American people? What was the motive? What is the real agenda behind the “war on terror?” Is the security of Western (non-Muslim) people really threatened by Muslim fundamentalists, or have Muslims just replaced “communists” in the role of “enemy”?

This chapter explores the real motives and the Islamophobic cover story which underly the U.S. “war on terror.” It focuses on the intertwined histories of Dick Cheney’s plan for world control and Benjamin Netanyahu’s campaign for a “war on terror” against those critical of Israel and the United States. The “war on terror” distorts the concepts of “terrorism” and “security” in order to frighten Americans into sacrificing their actual security and into colluding in an unprecedented imperial campaign for world control. It poses a false dichotomy between “radical” and “moderate” Muslims, demonizing them when it is convenient for Western powers, and rewarding them as “moderates” when they serve Western interests, regardless of their actual ideologies or practices. Both for Muslims worldwide and those living in Western countries, the consequences have been catastrophic.

1.1. How did our Oil get under their Sand?²

Bush’s “war on terror” evolved in the context of U.S. ambitions for Middle Eastern oil and geostrategic power after World War II. The U.S. emerged

from World War II as the dominant power on the planet. Beneath the rhetoric of a democratic, "reluctant superpower" (Bacevich, 2002, p. 7), it quickly established economic and military neo-colonial dominance over "the free world" in cooperation with its junior imperial partners, Britain, Canada, western and central Europe, and Japan. The United States effectively claimed "the exclusive right of managing the whole globe in accordance with what it defined as its national interests" (Amin, 2004, p. 4).

Like the British and French imperial powers it supplanted, the United States has consistently maneuvered to control the Middle East and Central Asia, because of the military and trade advantages of their location and for their natural resources, particularly oil. Together the two regions hold the world's largest remaining sources of oil and natural gas, resources upon which modern capitalism is increasingly dependent (Bacher, 2000; Khalidi, 2005, pp. 78–117; McQuaig, 2005; Ruppert, 2004, pp. 22–41).

Although anti-Soviet rhetoric justified U.S. engagement in the Middle East and Central Asia, the Soviet Union was never actually a credible threat to America. As William Blum (2000) points out:

[T]here was never any such animal as the International Communist Conspiracy. There were, as there still are, people living in misery, rising up in protest against their condition, against an oppressive government, a government likely supported by the United States. To Washington, this was proof that the Soviet Union ... was again acting as the proverbial "outside agitator." ... What kind of ... monolithic, evil international conspiracy bent on world domination would allow its empire to completely fall apart ... without bringing any military force to bear upon its satellites to prevent their escaping? And without an invasion from abroad holding a knife to the empire's throat? (p. 14)

Rather, it is U.S. control over oil, which has motivated virtually all its post-World War II interventions in the Middle East and Central Asia. These have included many terrorist acts (Ahmed, 2004, p. 24; Khalidi, 2005, p. 74). For example, in 1951, when Dr. Muhammad Mussadeq, the elected leader of Iran, planned to nationalize its oil, the British blockaded the export and sale of Iranian oil, devastating Iran's economy (Kamrava, 2005, p. 143). On August 19, 1953, CIA and British M16 engineered a coup which toppled him and installed the pro-Western Mohammad Reza Pahlevi as Shah (Ahmed, 2003, p. 34; Kamrava, 2005, p. 144; Ritter, 2002, p. 17). He ruled brutally with U.S.–British approval until the Irani revolution of 1979.

In 1958, with broad popular support, General Abdul Karim Qasim toppled the (pro-British) Iraqi monarchy and launched policies of self-determination and equality. The U.S. tolerated this until Qasim announced plans to nationalize Iraqi oil and organized ties with other petroleum-exporting

countries (OPEC) (Everest, 2004, pp. 63–64). On February 6, 1963, the CIA orchestrated a military coup, which deposed Qasim and installed the Ba'athist party. The CIA supplied Saddam Hussein, then head of Security, with “lists of [thousands of] people to be eliminated once power was secured” (Ahmed, 2003, pp. 61–62). In 1968, the CIA engineered another bloody coup bringing Saddam Hussein to power (Ahmed, 2003, p. 63). When Hussein nationalized Iraq’s oil in 1972, the U.S. government then withdrew its support, placing Iraq “on a list of countries that allegedly supported terrorism” (Clark, 2002, p. 7). But after Iran’s revolution, when the U.S. needed Iraq’s strategic support and its oil, it again executed an about-face, removing Iraq from the terrorism list, selling it weapons, becoming its principal trading partner, and doing “anything and everything” to help Iraq prevail against Iran (Clark, 2002, p. 7).

In 1980, Jimmy Carter strengthened the U.S. claim to control Middle Eastern oil. His Carter Doctrine warned that: “Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force” (Carter, 1980). Carter’s National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski “publicly encouraged Iraq to attack Iran” (Pitt, 2002, pp. 21–22). To weaken both sides, the ensuing Reagan administration funded both parties in the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988). The war killed 310,000 people and devastated the economies of both countries (Kamrava, 2005, pp. 172–183).

One day after the Iran–Iraq war ended (August 8, 1988), the U.S. began luring Iraq into attacking Kuwait, to give it a pretext to launch the first Gulf War. At the behest of the U.S., Kuwait waged what amounted to economic warfare against Iraq. It dramatically increased its oil production, causing OPEC crude oil prices to plummet, and costing Iraq \$14 billion. In June 1989, Kuwait doubled its oil production, costing Iraq further billions. It then demanded that Iraq pay back the \$30 billion it owed, which war-ravaged Iraq could not manage. By 1990, Iraq’s economy was collapsing. Kuwait (at the urging of the CIA) rebuffed all of Saddam Hussein’s diplomatic efforts at a resolution.³ When Hussein consulted Washington about plans to invade Kuwait (based on it historically having belonged to Iraq), U.S. spokespeople repeatedly told him that the U.S. would stay neutral and not interfere. Iraq finally invaded Kuwait in August 1990, handing Bush Sr. the carefully orchestrated pretext for the U.S. to launch the first Gulf War on January 16, 1991 (Ahmed, 2003, pp. 68–82; Blum, 2000, p. 169; Clark, 2002, pp. 12–24; Kamrava, 2005, pp. 184–190). In contrast to the U.S.’s pious rationales of “protecting Kuwait,” its real motive was to emphasize

that “oil pricing and the rate of production in the Gulf is to be decided by the lone superpower and cannot be tampered with by any regional leader, least of all by Saddam Hussein” (Aruri, 2000, p. 24).

On another front, between 1979 and 1989, the U.S. maneuvered to undermine Soviet control of Central Asian oil and national gas. It set up a trap to “bleed” the USSR (Khalilzad & Byman, 2000, p. 66). As Brzezinski later revealed,

... it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the President in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention. ... What was most important to the history of the world? Some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War? (Brzezinski, 1998)

The CIA poured \$3.3 billion (matched by Saudi Arabia) into recruiting, funding, training, and advising the Islamist mujahideen (including bin Laden). As U.S.-backed “freedom fighters,” the mujahideen deposed the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan, forcing the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan and fight a disastrous war which ultimately destroyed the U.S.S.R (Bodansky, 2001; Brisard & Dasquié, 2002; Coll, 2004; Rashid, 2001).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the U.S.-led Empire has moved to consolidate its control over the world, and particularly over its oil, gas, water, and mineral resources (Klare, 2001). Both the first Gulf War and W. Bush’s assaults on Afghanistan and Iraq represent initial steps toward achieving this goal (Donnelly, 2004). There are strong indications that the U.S. next plans to attack Iran and Syria (Paul, 2005), and ultimately to conquer South Asia and China by 2025 (Donnelly, 2000; Caldicott, 2002, pp. 178–179).

1.2. Cheney’s “Plan” for World Control: The Real Motive for the “War on Terror”

Between 1990 and 2000, Dick Cheney and his neo-conservative colleagues developed increasingly sophisticated plans for world domination, which formed the framework for Bush’s “war on terror.” But they realized that the American people and U.S. allies would never support an unprecedented power grab by a small cadre of military and oil imperialists, especially if it involved expensive, pre-emptive wars and fundamental assaults on democracy, human rights, and international law.

In 1990, Dick Cheney (then Bush Sr.'s Secretary of Defense) organized the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) group, including Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, and Eric Edelman, all hawks.⁴ Their task was to develop a secret, strategic plan to position the U.S. as a permanent, unilateral super-power poised to seize control of Eurasia, and thereby the entire world (Ahmed, 2003, pp. 16–17, 304–305; Armstrong, 2002; Lemann, 2002). Their goal was to set themselves up as rulers of this global U.S. Empire.

The DPG (1992a, b) produced a 46-page classified document which "argued that the core priority guiding U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century should be the need to establish permanent U.S. dominance over virtually all of Eurasia" (Steinberg, 2002, p. 3). It recommended "detering potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role and taking pre-emptive action against states suspected of developing weapons of mass destruction" (Steinberg, 2002, p. 4). It laid out strategies for controlling Western Europe, East Asia, the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia. Foreshadowing the post-9/11 U.S. assaults on Iraq and Afghanistan, it argued: "In the Middle East and Southwest Asia, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve U.S. and Western access to the region's oil" (Special to *The New York Times*, 1992, Part 1, p. 14).

When *The New York Times* got a leaked copy and blew open the story, it caused such a scandal that the document was "toned down beyond recognition" (Steinberg, 2002, p. 4). This was Cheney's first indication that American people would not condone such a plan.

In 1992, Bush Sr. was defeated after one term. Celebrating the end of the Cold War, people were clamoring for a peace dividend from reduced military expenditures and they elected Bill Clinton. Cheney and his colleagues watched in outrage as Clinton's National Defense Panel shrank the U.S. defense budget from \$339 billion in 1992 to \$277 billion in 1996 (Donnelly, 2000, p. 69). For nine long years, the DPG fine-tuned their "Plan" for world conquest and maneuvered to get back into power to implement it.⁵

In 1995, Zalmay Khalilzad⁶ prepared a "grand strategy for the United States in the post-Cold War era" (1995, p. iii). In *From Containment to Global Leadership* he called for the United States to launch pre-emptive wars to "maintain its position of global leadership and preclude the rise of another global rival for the indefinite future" (Khalilzad, 1995, p. 41). He argued that "the United States should be willing to use force if necessary" to protect its control over Persian Gulf oil (Khalilzad, 1995, p. ix). "For the foreseeable future," he concluded, "this means having the capability for fighting two major regional contingencies nearly simultaneously (e.g. Korea

and the Gulf)” (Khalilzad, 1995, p. x). These policies are echoed in Bush’s “war on terror.”

However, Khalilzad foresaw problems in getting the American public to back such an agenda. “Public opinion polls indicate that the American people are focused on domestic concerns. Such a perception discouraged a serious debate on national security issues in the last presidential election” (Khalilzad, 1995, p. 36).

In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a highly influential U.S. strategist under both Reagan and Carter, published *The Grand Chessboard* (1997).⁷ Arguing that whoever controls Eurasia – the Middle East and Central Asia – controls Europe, Asia, and Africa, this Machiavellian book spelled out “an integrated, comprehensive, and long-term geostrategy... to help ensure that ... the global community [i.e. transnational corporations] has unhindered financial and economic access to” the world’s resources (Brzezinski, 1997, pp. 148–194). He recommended that the U.S. establish military control over Central Asia and the Middle East, and crush the Islamic fundamentalist movement in Afghanistan and Pakistan, to protect “several pro-Western Middle Eastern governments and ... American regional interests especially in the Persian Gulf” (Brzezinski, 1997, pp. 53–54, 124, 133–135). Nowhere in the book does Brzezinski raise any concerns about terrorist threats to Americans.

Like Khalilzad, however, Brzezinski struggled with the problem of selling the scheme to the American public. “The pursuit of power and especially the economic costs and human sacrifice that the exercise of such power often requires,” he mused, “are not generally congenial to democratic instincts. Democratization is inimical to imperial mobilization” (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 210). To solve this problem, Brzezinski repeatedly hinted that the U.S. could mobilize public support if it created a pretext incident like the 9-11 attacks:

The attitude of the American public toward the external projection of American power has been much more ambivalent. The public supported America’s engagement in World War II largely because of the *shock effect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor*. (pp. 24–25)

America is too democratic at home to be autocratic abroad. This limits the use of America’s power, especially its capacity for military intimidation. Never before has a populist democracy attained international supremacy. But the pursuit of power is not a goal that commands popular passion, *except in conditions of a sudden threat or challenge to the public’s sense of domestic well-being*. (pp. 35–36)

Moreover, as America becomes an increasingly multi-cultural society, it may find it more difficult to fashion a consensus on foreign policy issues, except in the circumstances of a

truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat. (Emphasis added) (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 211)

That same year (1997), the DPG re-surfaced, now dubbing itself “The Project for the New American Century” (PNAC). It included Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby, and Zalmay Khalilzad. Twenty-one other ultra-conservatives joined the project – well-placed academics, Pentagon advisors, media, politicians and lobbyists, Christian fundamentalists, and Likudniks (Zionist hawks for Israeli interests). Many of them are now senior officials in or associates of the Bush Jr. administration. The PNAC’s Statement of Principles reaffirmed the DPG goal of world conquest. To accomplish this goal, the PNAC set out four main policy directions, each of which now figures prominently in Bush’s “war on terror”:

- to increase defense spending significantly,
- to strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values,
- to promote the cause of political and economic freedom [that is, neo-liberalism] abroad, and
- to preserve and extend “an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles” (PNAC, 1997).

In 1999, Rand, an influential think tank, published an assessment of NATO plans to attack the Caspian region (Sokolsky & Chalick–Paley, 1999). It too emphasized the “need” to control existing and potential oil and gas routes from the Caspian Basin, but argued against a major military operation in the region at that time. The fact that the Air Force commissioned this study, however, reflects the seriousness with which it was exploring the option of invading Afghanistan three years before the 9-11 pretext. At the same time, military interests were also actively lobbying for the U.S. to topple Saddam Hussein’s government (Klare, 2001, p. 58).

In September 2000, a year before the 9-11 attacks and a month before George W. Bush was “elected,” the PNAC published *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* (RAD) (Donnelly, 2000). It built on and expanded the DPG. “... Although the experience of the past eight years has modified our understanding of particular military requirements for carrying out such a strategy, the basic tenets of the DPG, in our judgment, remain sound” (Donnelly, 2000, p. ii).

Significantly, RAD only mentions the word “terrorists” once in passing in the entire document (and does not mention “terrorist” or “terrorism” at all).

America’s global leadership, and its role as the guarantor of the current great-power peace, relies upon the safety of the American homeland; the preservation of a favorable balance of power in Europe, the Middle East and surrounding energy-producing region, and East Asia; and the general stability of the international system of nation-states relative to *terrorists*, organized crime, and other “non-state actors.” (Emphasis added) (Donnelly, 2000, p. 5)

In other words, the consistent, overwhelming motive for all these massively expensive plans was not Islamic terrorism, but global American military/corporate control.

Fleshing out the earlier strategic plans for “America’s global leadership” (Donnelly, 2000, p. 5), RAD recommended many of the elements of Bush’s post-9-11 “war on terror.”

- Pre-emptive simultaneous wars (p. 5)
- Homeland Defense (p. 6)
- Missile Defense (pp. v, 12)
- Cyber-war (p. 57)
- Increasing Defense spending to 3.8 percent of GDP (p. v)
- Long-term occupation of conquered states (p. 6)
- Expanding nuclear weapon testing and development (pp. v, 8)
- Repositioning “American forces in critical regions around the world [as] the visible expression of the extent of America’s status as a superpower” (pp. 14, 17–19)
- Expanding and modernizing combat troops (pp. 22–49)
- Usurping the power of the UN (p. 11)
- Securing global hegemony (p. 5)
- Targeting Iran, Iraq, and North Korea (pp. 4, 75)
- Regime change (pp. 10, 61)
- Biological and chemical weapons development (p. 60).

Like Khalilzad and Brzezinski, RAD noted that selling its recommendations would be difficult without a pretext incident: “... the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor” (Donnelly, 2000, p. 51).

To summarize, since the fall of the Soviet Union, Dick Cheney and his colleagues have evolved strategies to consolidate U.S. military dominance over the world and its oil. They gradually recognized that they needed a pretext incident (a tactic successfully used many times by previous U.S. governments) to sell this odious package to the American public and the world (Solomon, 2005; Saunders, 2003).⁸ In 2000, they maneuvered Bush Jr.

into the Presidency by election fraud, for example by illegally removing eight to twelve thousand Florida Black voters from the rolls, using confusing ballots, double-counting military absentee ballots, and having the Supreme Court stop the recount by declaring Bush the winner (Palast, 2002; Wilson, 2001). Nine months later, they set their plan in motion on September 11, 2001.

1.3. How Serious a Threat is Terrorism?

The 9-11 attacks were intended to shock, frighten, and outrage Americans into accepting the myth that “Muslim terrorists” pose such a serious threat to their security that they should cede virtually unlimited power and money to Bush to carry out a “war on terror.” However, terrorism has never posed a serious threat to American people. The chance of dying of a terrorist attack in the United States has always been virtually zero, even in 2001. (Moore, 2003, pp. 96–97).

Even if the 9-11 attacks had been perpetrated without U.S. collusion (which is highly unlikely), they did not qualify as a threat significant enough to turn the U.S. and its allies into security states, trampling international law and Constitutional protections, much less as a justification for launching unprovoked military conquests of Afghanistan and Iraq. For the victims, their families, and their communities, the 9-11 events were a horrific tragedy. But as shocking as they were, many 9-11 family members felt strongly that they did not justify vengeful, military assault:

Peaceful Tomorrows members have asked that violent responses to the September 11 tragedies, such as the US bombing campaign in Afghanistan, not be done in their names and the names of their loved ones. Members say they were concerned about the lack of discussion about options to respond to the events of September 11. ... Our single-minded rush to war has been made without thoughtful consideration of long-term consequences for our safety, security, and freedom. We will use our voices to promote a discussion about better solutions, ones based on justice, not vengeance. (September 11 families for peaceful tomorrows, 2002)

Without in any way trivializing the 9-11 attacks, it is worth remembering that they lasted less than 2 hours, and posed no threat to the U.S. economy, infrastructure, or government. In spite of numerous false alarms, no other terrorist act has occurred in the U.S. since 9-11.

By contrast, many CIA-instigated terrorist initiatives, such as the Contra campaign against the Sandinistas, lasted for years and had disastrous, long-term consequences for entire nations (Chomsky, 1991, p. 4). John Stockwell,

a former high-ranking CIA agent testified in 1987 about CIA terrorist interventions:

... What we’re talking about is going in [to foreign countries] and deliberately creating conditions ... where government administration and programs grind to a complete halt, where the hospitals are treating wounded people instead of sick people, where international capital is scared away and the country goes bankrupt. (Stockwell, 1987)

About 2,600 people died in the 9-11 attacks. As of February 22, 2006, 3,146 U.S. troops and “coalition” members have been killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. At least 225,412 Afghani and Iraqi people, including 186,825 civilians have been directly killed as of November 20, 2005 (Unknown News, 2005).⁹ That does not include the many more civilians who are dying from lack of food, water, electricity, medicine, and shelter.

Even if 9-11 had been a real terrorist incident (as opposed to a made-in-the-U.S. fraud), normal criminal justice, international law, or diplomatic options for redress were rejected.

There was no move to consider international law, to give the Taliban any avenue of retreating with some honour and dignity, no intention or sign of giving a measured and reflective response to the threat of al-Qaeda, nor any introspection as to the reasons behind why these attacks occurred. (Geaves & Gabriel, 2004, p. 7)

In its rush to war, Washington briskly dismissed Taliban offers to turn over bin Laden to a neutral country and Iraqi assurances that it was fully complying with U.N. sanctions and that it had no weapons of mass destruction. Leaping to a military response (especially threatening global war) is an unprecedented response to a terrorist attack like this (Pillar, 2001, pp. 29, 50–56).

Prior to 11 September 2001, ... the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did not regard transnational Islamic terrorism as a strategic threat. ... In fact, in the past states have generally chosen to downplay or minimize military response to terrorist campaigns. (Stevenson, 2004, pp. 7–8)

In his “war on terror” speech, Bush (2001) promised to fight “until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated” (p. 4). The phrase “of global reach” is the key here, since the U.S. actually continues to condone active terrorist groups on its soil. Anti-abortion groups like the Army of God have been responsible for at least 6 murders and 15 attempted murders, and 200 bombings and arsons (Clarkson, 2005). White supremacist, paramilitary, and neo-fascist groups such as the Northern Michigan Regional Militia (of which Timothy McVeigh was a member) terrorize non-whites and Jews. And right-wing Cuban-American groups like Alpha 66 and the Commanders of United Revolutionary Organizations

(CORU) have carried out more than 50 bombings and blown up a Cubana passenger plane in 1976, killing all 73 people aboard (Franklin, 2001).

All three types of U.S. terrorist groups have financial and political ties to Bush. So the United States certainly “harbors” terrorist groups, and Bush, himself, has financial ties to anti-Castro Cuban terrorist groups (as well as to bin Laden) (Franklin, 2001). To be consistent with his “war on terror” policies, Bush should have bombed Michigan and Florida, and turned himself in to be detained and possibly tortured as an “enemy combatant.”¹⁰

As well, the United States has often directly financed, trained, and facilitated terrorists. The Bay of Pigs fiasco against Cuba, the Contra campaign against Nicaragua, the violent overthrow of the Allende government in Chile, and the short-lived coup against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela are well-known examples of U.S.-backed terrorism. But there are many more.

We're talking about 10 to 20 thousand covert actions [the CIA has performed since 1961]. ... [Regarding t]he Indonesian covert action of 1965 ... [n]ot only did it eliminate the effective communist party (Indonesian communist party), it also eliminated ... the ethnic Chinese, Indonesian Chinese. And the CIA's report put the number of dead at 800,000 killed. And that was one covert action. We're talking about 1 to 3 million people killed in these things. (Stockwell, 1987)

In addition to directly fomenting terrorism, the U.S. has often installed leaders, only to hunt them down later as “terrorists.” Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, and bin Laden are all recent examples. The U.S. supported the Taliban as “freedom fighters,” and only labeled them “terrorists” after it realized they could not provide political stability for the natural gas pipeline Unocal wanted to build across Afghanistan (Monbiot, 2001; Power, 1999; Ruppert, 2004, pp. 94–100).

In other words, the Bush administration’s approach to “terrorism” is expedient, related almost exclusively to protecting oil and military interests, rather than the security of ordinary Americans. In fact, far from making Americans safer, the “war on terror” has increased the risk of violent retaliation against outrages perpetrated by Americans and their allies (Anonymous, 2004). More importantly, it has undermined the infrastructure on which people’s actual security rests: health, education, housing, social services, environmental protection, democratic accountability, due process, human rights, the U.N. and international law. The failure of prevention and rescue operations in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 dramatically exposed the human costs of this war that was supposed to protect Americans (Sheer, 2005).

The \$204.4 billion appropriated thus far for the war in Iraq could have purchased any of the following desperately needed services in our country: 46,458,805 uninsured people receiving health care or 3,545,016 elementary school teachers or 27,093,473 Head Start places for children or 1,841,833 affordable housing units or 24,072 new elementary schools or 39,665,748 scholarships for university students or 3,204,265 port container inspectors. (Bennis & Leaver, 2005, p. 6)

For Muslims worldwide, and especially for Afghani and Iraqi people, the “war on terror” has not only failed to protect their security, but actively destroyed it. The billions Bush has poured into unprovoked assaults on Afghani and Iraqi people, money siphoned from fulfilling basic human needs, threatens to plunge U.S. and world economies into a disastrous depression (Fram, Feb. 14, 2005). The “war on terror” threatens everyone on the planet with military assaults through the Missile “Defense” system, which also has the potential to end life on the planet by creating nuclear winter (Behrens, 2004; Caldicott, 2002, pp. 10–11).

2. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE “WAR ON TERROR”

The concept of a “war on terror” pre-dates 9-11 by 22 years. Its seeds were first planted in 1979 at the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism (JCIT) organized by Benjamin Netanyahu (future Israeli Prime Minister). JCIT kicked off a campaign for a “war on terror” against “international terrorism” (Netanyahu, 1981). It featured: pre-emptive attacks on states that are alleged to support “terrorists;” an elaborate intelligence system apparatus; slashed civil liberties, particularly for Palestinians targeted as potential terrorists, including detention without charge, and torture; and propaganda to dehumanize “terrorists” in the eyes of the public (Ahle, 1990; Asa, 1985; Netanyahu, 1995, pp. 43–44; Peres, 1981, p. 10).

George H.W. Bush Sr. and George Schultz, Reagan’s Secretary of State enthusiastically endorsed this concept. Bush Sr. gave a speech at JCIT advocating precisely the type of “war on terror” that his son implemented in 2001. But he acknowledged that such a policy would be highly unpopular:

... I must urge drastic surgery as the only reasonable course – and by that I mean determined action, firmness under the duress of blackmail, and swift and effective retribution. ... The problem for the open society is how to have, build up and preserve this essential tool of defence – which in the long run is indispensable for the protection of ordinary people – and not so outrage the liberal conscience that the legitimate exercise of state power is frustrated. (George H.W. Bush, 1981, pp. 333, 337)

2.1. *Israel's "War on Terror"*¹¹

Following the 1979 JCIT, Israel independently implemented these policies. It planned a massive invasion of Lebanon, called "Peace for Galilee" to secure its hold over the Occupied Territories. The pretext incident and the 1982 invasion itself hauntingly foreshadowed the 9-11 "attacks" and the Bush "war on terror." In both cases, a "terrorist" pretext justified pre-emptive military conquest and long-term occupation.

In July 1981, Israeli planes bombed Palestinian targets in southern Lebanon, killing hundreds of civilians. In 1982, it initiated over 2,600 violations of Lebanese airspace and waters, attempting unsuccessfully to spark a reaction by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) reaction that could serve as a pretext for an Israeli invasion. On June 3, 1982, Abu Nidal's terrorist group (which since has been exposed as a Mossad-infiltrated front, and which had been battling the PLO for years) tried to assassinate Israeli Ambassador Shlomo Argov in London. Israel "retaliated" by heavily bombing Lebanon, even though the Abu Nidal group did not operate there. The PLO responded by shelling West Bank settlements, finally giving Israel its excuse to launch a full-scale invasion of Lebanon (Chomsky, 1999, pp. 196–197). In West Bank cities, Israel also dissolved the elected city councils, dismissed mayors, arrested city employees, and attempted to impose puppet governments. Israeli troops continued to occupy southern Lebanon for 22 years, until May 24, 2000 (Chomsky, 1999, pp. 204–205; Bard, 2005).

The parallels to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq are clear. Despite all evidence to the contrary, the Bush administration insisted Iraq posed an immanent threat to the West based on false claims that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and links to al-Qaeda. Despite massive worldwide protests and the U.N. Security Council refusing to approve an invasion, the U.S. went ahead with a pre-emptive, brutal invasion, overthrowing the Hussein government it had originally installed, and replacing it with puppets. Labeling those who resist U.S. occupation "terrorist insurgents," it has announced plans (already laid out in RAD) for a semi-permanent occupation (Rampton & Stauber, 2003).

2.2. *The Reagan Doctrine: The U.S. Adopts "International Terrorism"*

Members of Reagan's administration, particularly George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, and George Bush Sr., supported Israel's invasion of Lebanon (Bard, 2005; Netanyahu, 1995, p. 68). But Defense Secretary Casper

Weinberger, the Democratic Congress and public opinion did not. Netanyahu recognized that:

... the key to the elimination of international terror was having the United States lead the battle, and ... this American leadership would harness the countries of the free world into line, much as a powerful locomotive pulls the cars of a train. But it was no simple matter to change the minds of American opinion makers on this subject. (Netanyahu, 1995, p. 66)

From his perspective, the problem was that Americans foolishly believed “that terrorism was the result of political and social oppression, the inescapable conclusion was that terror could not be eliminated without first bringing these conditions to an end” (Netanyahu, 1995, p. 66).

Netanyahu and Moshe Arens, the Israeli Ambassador lobbied hard both to win U.S. support both for the Lebanon invasion and for the broader war against “international terrorism.”

... We believed that the American position ... could be changed by a vigorous effort to present the truth to the American public. The United States was hostile to this operation, and the Reagan administration applied various pressures to rein in the assault [on Lebanon], including suspending delivery of fighter planes to the Israeli Air force. Arens did much to reverse the American position, especially through the special relationship he was able to establish with Secretary of State George Shultz and President Ronald Reagan. (Netanyahu, 1995, pp. 66–67)

The campaign succeeded. The second JCIT conference was held in Washington in 1984. George Shultz “was determined to effect a change in American anti-terror policy from one of passive defense to a more active one, taking the battle against the terrorists to their bases abroad and to the countries supporting them” (Netanyahu, 1995, p. 68). Shultz advocated “defense through appropriate preventive or pre-emptive actions against terrorist groups *before* they strike” (Netanyahu, 1995, p. 69).

The result was the Reagan Doctrine, in which the U.S. “took the lead in mounting an unprecedented war against international terrorism” including sanctions against Libya, Syria, and Iran and bombing Libya (Netanyahu, 1995, pp. 69–70). Overtly, the Reagan Doctrine mandated attacks on liberation resistance groups like the Sandinistas and the PLO as “international terrorists.” But covertly, the Doctrine called for the U.S. itself to finance and organize “terrorist” attacks. As Noam Chomsky (1991) dryly notes:

There are many terrorist states in the world, but the United States is unusual in that it is *officially* committed to international terrorism, and on a scale that puts its rivals to shame. ... under the Reagan Doctrine, the U.S. had forged new paths in international terrorism ... not only constructing a semi-private international terrorist network but also

an array of client and mercenary *states* – Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and others – to finance and implement its terrorist operations. (1991, p. 4)

Reagan was glad to collaborate with Islamic radicals to further his interests. In 1979, the same year as the JCIT, the CIA lured the Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan, by funding and equipping Islamic mujahideen to overthrow the pro-Soviet Afghani government (Coll, 2004, pp. 42–43; Khalilzad & Byman, 2000, p. 66). Also in 1979, to damage Carter’s re-election campaign, Reagan’s campaign manager, William Casey (later head of the CIA), secretly got Khomeini to hold off releasing the Irani Embassy hostages until after the U.S. presidential elections in 1980. In return, Reagan would approve Israel’s sale of American military equipment to Iran for use in its (U.S. and Israeli supported) war against Iraq. Reagan won by a landslide, in large part because of the scandal of the hostage crisis. The hostages were released “about twenty minutes after Reagan took the oath of office” (Kamrava, 2005, p. 160).

In 1995, Netanyahu proposed a series of policies against “international terrorism” many of which have been incorporated into the foreign policy of the U.S. and its allies, particularly since 9-11. These included: diplomatic, military, and economic sanctions on “terrorist” states; pre-emptive attacks on “terrorist enclaves ... precisely as [Israel] does in south Lebanon”; freezing financial assets of “terrorist” organizations; sharing intelligence with other countries; passing laws to allow increasing surveillance of and action against “groups which are actively *planning* terrorist actions”; pursuing “terrorists” with special anti-terrorism forces; and detaining “terrorists” indefinitely (Netanyahu, 1995, pp. 132–147). Israel’s unilateral assault on the West Bank and Southern Lebanon in the name of fighting “international terrorism” became the model for Bush’s “war on terror.”

What happened on Sept. 11 is that the Likud doctrine, previously used only against Palestinians, was picked up by the most powerful nation on Earth and applied on a global scale. Call it the Likudization of the world, the real legacy of Sept. 11. ... It was the guiding philosophy in Afghanistan and Iraq, and may well extend to Iran and Syria. (Klein, 2004)

2.3. *The “War on Terror”’: Creating the Islamophobic Myth*

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, the “communist menace” could no longer justify military intervention. The U.S. needed to invent a new “enemy.” President Clinton tried out several options:

... in place of the International Communist Conspiracy, Washington now tells us, on one day or another, it’s fighting a War Against Drugs, or military or industrial spying, or

the proliferation of "weapons of mass destruction," or organized crime, or on behalf of human rights, or, most particularly, against terrorism. And they dearly want the American public to believe this. (Blum, 2000, p. 16)

"Muslim terrorists" are an ideal "enemy," because they provide an excuse for imperial conquest of the Middle East and Central Asia. As Margaret Thatcher crowed shortly after 9-11, "Islamism is the new bolshevism" (Thatcher, 2002).

To initiate a war, there first must be a perceived enemy. That one grand enemy was now claimed to be Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network. ... There are a number of people inside the US intelligence agencies who know this is a false picture. (Marrs, 2004, pp. 14-15)

To lend credibility to the "Muslim terrorist threat," the CIA and FBI worked with al-Qaeda to carry out the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (Ahmed, 2005, pp. 32-39).

The leaders of the radical Islamic network responsible for the [February 26, 1993] bombing ... were given financial aid and training by the CIA. Furthermore, at several critical junctures where the conspiracy could have been exposed and its leaders arrested, federal law enforcement either ignored that network or actually provided crucial help to it. (Grigg, 2005)

The CIA and FBI also failed to prevent the bombing, in part, because the Egyptian agent to whom they had paid \$2 million would have revealed that they were deeply implicated in funding terrorist campaigns in Bosnia through Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman's al-Qaeda cell, which had planned the WTC bombing (Ahmed, 2005, pp. 35-39).

The CIA was also deeply implicated in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (Hoffman, 1998; Jones, 2001). Washington and the media initially blamed Muslim terrorists, resulting in a wave of hate crimes against Muslims in the U.S. (Council of American-Islamic Relations, 1995). Although the FBI rejected this theory and charged Timothy McVeigh and John Nichols, the White House actively promoted the story that Saddam Hussein was behind both the 1993 and the 1995 bombings. It based this allegation on Laurie Mylroie's book, *Study of Revenge: Saddam Hussein's Unfinished War Against America*, published in 2000 by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a neoconservative think tank.

Mylroie believes that Saddam was not only behind the '93 Trade Center attack, but also every anti-American terrorist incident of the past decade ... She is, in short, a crackpot ... But her neocon friends who went on to run the war in Iraq believed her theories, bringing her on as a consultant at the Pentagon, and they seem to continue to entertain her eccentric belief that Saddam is the fount of the entire shadow war against America. (Bergen, 2003)

Lewis Libby and Paul Wolfowitz not only endorsed her book, but actively fed her false information (Bergen, 2003).

In the lead-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, mainstream media again trotted out Mylroie's allegations of Iraqi terrorist threats.¹² Both the 1993 and 1995 bombings were, at least in part, designed to lend verisimilitude to the myth that Islamic terrorists threaten Americans.

This myth was also strengthened by Pentagon-backed, Islamophobic Hollywood films, television, video games, and relentless media reports about Islamic "terrorists." Especially since 1990, the Pentagon has financially bribed, pressured, and censored movie makers to adapt story lines to support its propaganda (Fleischer, 2004; Millar, 2002; Robb, 2004). Reviewing over 1,000 Hollywood movies, Jack Shaheen found that:

Today's imagemakers regularly link the Islamic faith with male supremacy, holy war, and acts of terror, depicting Arab Muslims as hostile alien intruders, and as lecherous, oily sheikhs, intent on using nuclear weapons. When mosques are displayed onscreen, the camera inevitably cuts to Arabs praying, and then gunning down civilians. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 7)

Especially since the first Gulf War, journalists have been heavily pressured to use only official U.S. sources, to be "embedded" with the U.S. military, and to self-censor their work. Because "few American correspondents have extensive knowledge of the Arab world ... and few Americans get on-the-scene information from the Arab world," they tend to uncritically quote official sources (Pippert, 2003, p. 76).

2.4. The Instant War

By 2001, the Bush administration and the media had learned to play the 9-11 events as an Islamophobic catastrophic movie. The public, well conditioned to identify the Hollywood good guy vs. villain storyline, swallowed it hook, line, and sinker.

Bush's "war on terror" rests on the story that Islamic extremists, directed by Osama bin Laden, hijacked planes to fly into the WTC and the Pentagon, that "America is under attack" by al-Qaeda, and that fanatical Muslims continue to constitute the major threat to the security of both Americans and the "civilized" world.

The Bush Cabinet began promoting this official story even before the first plane hit the North tower. "Before the planes hit the World Trade Center, CIA Director George Tenet warned [Senator David Boren] ... that he was worried about a possible attack by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network"

(Thompson, 2005). Almost immediately after the first plane hit the WTC, Dick Cheney told counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, “It’s an al-Qaeda attack and they like simultaneous attacks. This may not be over” (Thompson, 2005). By 9:30 a.m. President Bush delivered a polished speech, surrounded by photogenic, multi-racial school children, announcing “an apparent terrorist attack” and promising to chase down the perpetrators. By 3:30 that afternoon, the CIA claimed to have identified the al-Qaeda operatives. And by prime time that evening, Bush gave a speech announcing punitive retaliatory military strikes against “the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them” and committing “the United States to a broad, vigorous and potentially long war against terrorism” (Balz & Woodward, 2002, p. A01; Woodward, 2002, p. 71).

The next day, Bush’s cabinet argued over how to make the most opportunistic use of the 9-11 pretext (rather than about actually protecting Americans):

Rumsfeld worried that a coalition built around the goal of taking out al-Qaeda would fall apart once they succeeded in that mission, making it more difficult to continue the war on terrorism elsewhere. ... [He] raised the question of Iraq. Why shouldn’t we go against Iraq, not just al-Qaeda? ... His deputy, Paul D. Wolfowitz, was committed to a policy that would make Iraq a principal target of the first round in the war on terrorism. ... [Colin] Powell, who opposed striking Iraq at this point, countered that they were focusing on al-Qaeda because the American people were focused on al-Qaeda. “Any action needs public support. It’s not just what the international coalition supports; it’s what the American people want to support.” (Woodward, 2002, pp. 48–49)

Nine days later, in an address to a joint session of Congress, Bush presented his “war on terror” speech outlining the new Bush Doctrine. It launched a global war on “nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism” as well as on “every terrorist group of global reach” (Bush, 2001, pp. 3–5). Telling the world’s nations, “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists,” he threatened to treat any country which failed to support this war as “a hostile regime” (Bush, 2001, p. 5). This “war on terror,” he promised, would be “a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen.”

The “war on terror” also would turn the United States and its allies into “security states.” Bush announced “the creation of ... the Office of Homeland Security” which would coordinate “defensive measures against terrorism” (Bush, 2001, p. 5). Three days after September 11, 2001, Attorney General Ashcroft “proposed the laws that became the USA Patriot Act,” an unprecedented attack on civil liberties, privacy, and due process, which was shoved through Congress without any debate and signed into law on October 26, 2001 (Cassel, 2004, pp. 11–17). Within the year, the Britain,

Canada, and Australia had implemented similar laws (Weeding, 2004). In early 2002, Bush laid out a detailed National Security Strategy which threatened war against Iraq as well as Afghanistan and implemented “the largest government reorganization since the Truman Administration” (Bush, 2002, p. 5).

From the speed with which the Bush administration fingered al-Qaeda and launched a complex array of innovations (identical to those proposed by in RAD published a year earlier), we can infer that the Bush Doctrine had been planned well in advance of 9-11. An unusually large military buildup surrounding Afghanistan in the week before 9-11 also suggests years of planning for the Afghan war. Operation Swift Sword sent 25,000 British troops to Aman, in the largest armada since the Falklands war. Two U.S. aircraft carriers arrived in the Gulf of Arabia off the coast of Pakistan. In early October 2001, CentCom hosted Operation Bright Star involving 60,000 troops in Egypt (Ruppert, 2002).

2.5. Islamophobia in Bush’s “War on Terror” Speech

None of this could have garnered public support without the 9-11 pretext and years of careful Islamophobic preparation. Bush’s “war on terror” speech is liberally sprinkled with Islamophobic myths. An Islamophobic hate crime, reminiscent of Hitler’s speeches, the “war on terror” speech was designed to whip up fear and vengeance against Muslims. It is full of lies, distortions, and projections:

- “*Who attacked our country? ... al-Qaeda*”: There has been no definitive proof that bin Laden had anything to do with the 9-11 attacks. The U.S. never produced Colin Powell’s promised White Paper of evidence, and Tony Blair’s White Paper “proof” was widely dismissed as a weak exercise in public relations (Blair, 2001). As Francis Boyle points out:

[T]here was no real case against al-Qaeda, bin Laden, and the Taliban government of Afghanistan. Such was the conclusion of senior diplomats from friendly nations who attended the so-called briefing [the U.S. gave to NATO members]. (Boyle, 2001)

In fact, as Richard Saunders points out: “Every time the U.S. has gone to war, pretext incidents have been used as triggers to justify military action. ... During the Cold War, dozens of covert and overt wars were promoted using specific pretext episodes” (Saunders, 2003, p. 1). As early as 1962, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff had developed Operation Northwoods to create a “legitimate provocation as the basis for U.S. military

intervention in Cuba" (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1962). The plan proposed to create an incident, which would demonstrate convincingly that a Cuban aircraft had attacked and shot down a chartered civil airliner (Justification for U.S. Military Intervention in Cuba, 1962).

In the ensuing months and years, the White House vehemently resisted all attempts to investigate the 9-11 attacks. Under enormous pressure, Bush finally appointed a highly partisan 9/11 Commission in 2003, with an extremely limited mandate and blocked access to documents or to interviewing key witnesses. The resulting Report is an obvious cover-up. As David Ray Griffin quipped, "some people may wonder ... is there anything in the *9/11 Commission Report* that is untrue? But ... the big question is, can I find a true sentence in the Report?" (Griffin, 2005, p. 45).

- "*Enemies of freedom*," "*freedom itself is under attack*," "*they hate our freedoms*": Some groups the U.S. labels as "terrorists" actually are freedom fighters, struggling for the liberation of their peoples or countries, for example, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Hamas, and the Irish Republican Army. Others are heavily infiltrated or even financed by the CIA, such as the Abu Naidal Organization and the Abu Sayaff Group (Ahmed, 2005; *Country Reports on Terrorism*, 2004, 2005). Even if bin Laden were the architect of 9-11, his stated grievances with the U.S. are not with its "freedoms," but with its leading role in violating the freedoms (and lives) of others (Bodansky, 2001).
- "*al-Qaeda ... is ... imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere*." It is the U.S., which has imposed its policies on people everywhere, and particularly in the Middle East as part of its relentless defense of "vital U.S. interests in the region" (Klare, 2001, p. 62). Many Islamist movements have grown up in reaction against more than 80 years of colonial exploitation and brutal political, military, and economic manipulation by first the British, and since World War II, the U.S. (Ahmed, 2003; Bodansky, 2001; Everest, 2004; Kamrava, 2005). "Rather than a clash of civilizations, there is a tawdry pursuit of oil-based profits at the expense of fundamental human rights" (Bacher, 2000, p. 60).
- "*There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror*." It is true that Islamist movements, many of which reject violence, have spread throughout the world. However, Bush conveniently fails to acknowledge the U.S.'s role in creating, funding, transporting, training, and arming the Arab-Afghani mujahideen, or CIA's continuing connections with al-Qaeda (see Ahmed, Chapter 3).

- “*They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries ...*” Again, it is far more evident that the U.S. not only seeks to, but has actually overthrown many existing governments. As William Blum notes:

From 1945 to the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 popular-nationalist movements struggling against intolerable regimes. In the process, the U.S. caused the end of life for several million people, and condemned many more to a life of agony and despair (Blum, 2000, p. 2).

- “*They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.*” These allegations are designed to outrage both Christian and Jewish Americans. A wide range of Islamist and Arab liberation groups hope to take back control of their countries from imperial-imposed puppets, and eventually to establish a democratic Arab Economic Union similar to the E.U. (Al-Alim, 2005; Third Cairo Conference, 2005).¹³ Most Islamist groups – and many Jewish and Christian groups, as well as the United Nations – support the cause of Palestinian people, and oppose the imperialist role Israel continues to play both in the Occupied Territories and worldwide as a U.S. “strategic asset” (Kosky, 2002, p. 25).

In short, Bush’s justifications for launching the “war on terror” are based on groundless lies and appeals to Islamophobic prejudice.

3. THE BUSH DOCTRINE IS ISLAMOPHOBIC

The Bush Doctrine resembles earlier witch-hunts like the Spanish Inquisition, the Third Reich, and the McCarthy era. In all three, a category of people is labeled as an evil, dangerous enemy in order to mobilize popular support for the elite’s ambitions to power. Institutions are created to isolate, scapegoat, and eliminate the target group. Those institutions also transform the entire society to become more doctrinaire, rigid, and authoritarian. Those who challenge the status quo are punished or killed. Free thought is outlawed. Inequality rises. Arbitrary decree replaces systems of justice.

Islamophobia is usually considered as an attitudinal prejudice, similar to racism or anti-Semitism, as in this definition of Islamophobia:

Islamophobia refers to the fear and/or hatred of Islam, Muslims or Islamic culture. Islamophobia can be characterized by the belief that all or most Muslims are religious fanatics, have violent tendencies toward non-Muslims, and reject ... equality, tolerance,

and democracy. It is viewed as a new form of racism whereby Muslims ... are ... constructed as a race. A set of negative assumptions are made of the entire group to the detriment of members of that group.¹⁴

However, Bush’s Islamophobia systematically institutionalizes and actively promotes discriminatory assaults on Muslims and Muslim countries (By contrast, racism and anti-Semitism are at least formally illegal and generally condemned in the media, courts, and schools). The “war on terror” incorporates structures – laws, prisons, intelligence agencies, surveillance infrastructure, military and corporate contracts, bombs, etc. – which target Muslims and Arabs in particular.

Islamophobia is as central to the Bush Doctrine as anti-Semitism was to the Spanish Inquisition or the Third Reich. Both oppressions function to whip-up fear, contempt, and genocidal rage against a whole people. Without this bogeyman, Bush’s “war on terror” would be exposed for what it is – a brutal, greedy grab for world conquest. As Norman Solomon, executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, recently pointed out, “There’s a lot of anti-Muslim bigotry. Some of it is based on religious chauvinism from Christians and Jews. Some of it is racist ... [But] ... Ultimately ... public hostility toward Islam in the United States [and its allies] today is mostly a matter of geopolitics and U.S. nationalism” (Deen, 2005).

U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were justified by Islamophobic assertions that their leaders are Muslim fanatics who threaten American security. Portrayed as primitive, anti-feminist, terrorists, people labeled “Taliban” are hunted down like vermin. Those who are not bombed or shot are detained in horrendous conditions. In November 2001, for example, CIA and U.S. Special Forces watched approvingly as 4,500 Afghani men were stuffed into truck containers where they either suffocated or were shot (Herman, 2004). Afghani and Iraqi people who presume to resist U.S. occupation (or simply to drive too quickly toward U.S. check points) are presumed to be “terrorists” and are summarily killed. The Afghan and Iraqi wars have left both countries devastated. Their people subsist under semi-permanent, military occupation, without basic infrastructure or humanitarian aid, while oil rigs and natural gas pipelines are protected.

Dick Cheney defends torture as a legitimate interrogation tool (Priest & Wright, 2005), including specific attacks on Muslims, such as wiping prisoners with menstrual blood, forcing them to eat pork, threatening them with dogs (viewed as unclean by Muslims), and flushing Qurans down toilets (Human Rights Watch, 2005). To bypass Geneva Conventions against mistreating and torturing prisoners, the U.S. calls non-citizen Muslim detainees “enemy combatants” or more recently “unprivileged belligerents.” And

under the neologism of “extraordinary rendition,” Muslim citizens are sent off to countries like Egypt, Syria, and Jordan with which have been contracted to torture them (Johnston, 2005).

Almost 80,000 Muslim men worldwide are being detained without charges “in secretive American-run jails and interrogation centres similar to the notorious Abu Ghraib Prison” under conditions that violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners, and U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Buncombe & Sengupta, 2004; Siddiqui, 2004, p. A23).

Muslims and Arabs living in the West have also been targeted for official discriminatory treatment. After the U.S. Department of Justice passed a regulation allowing indefinite detention on September 20, 2001, nearly 1,200 Arabs and Muslims were secretly arrested and detained without charges (Coke, 2003, p. 95; Martin, 2003, p. 75). The U.S. National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) “call-in” program required male visitors from 24 Arab and Muslim countries and North Korea to register with INS offices. Even though no “terrorists” were found, over 13,000 of the 80,000 men who registered were threatened with deportation, and many were “detained in harsh conditions” (Zogby, 2005, p. 4). Overwhelmingly, the airline “no fly” lists are composed of Muslims.

3.1. *What is a Terrorist?*

What is a “terrorist”? Surprisingly this question rarely gets asked by mainstream pundits. The definition of “terrorism” is so subjective that even the “UN Member States still have no agreed-upon definition” (Thackrah, 2003, p. 75; UN Office of Drugs and Crime, 2005). Most agree, however, that terrorism involves: “violence threatened or employed; against civilian targets; for political objectives” (Barker, 2003, p. 23). This definition encompasses both grassroots and state terrorism.

However, the U.S. definition of “terrorism” *excludes* anything done by the U.S. or its allies, but *includes* any resistance to U.S. assaults (Blum, 2000; Herman, 1982, p. 25). For example, the CIA’s definition of “terrorism” explicitly excludes state actors: “The term ‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by *subnational* groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (CIA, 2005, emphasis added). As Chomsky points out: “The message is clear: no one has the right of self-defense against US terrorist attack. The US is a terrorist state *by right*. That is unchallengeable doctrine” (Chomsky, 1991, p. 5).

The U.S. labels as “terrorist” liberation struggles which legitimately fall under Article 51 of the UN Charter: “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations” (Charter of the United Nations, 1945). Thus Palestinian, Iraqi, and Afghani people resisting Israeli and U.S. invasion are hunted down and killed or detained as “terrorists” (Coates, 2004).

The Bush Doctrine also widens the net of “terrorists” to include any individual or state, which, knowingly or not, is suspected of funding, aiding, or harboring “terrorists.” In the absence of due process and public evidence, this could include virtually any Muslim. Many Muslim men have been detained indefinitely and often tortured without ever being charged, simply for fitting a demographic profile, for having known others labeled as “terrorists,” for refusing to spy for an intelligence agency, for being named by another suspect under torture, or at the whim of an occupying army.

Since 9-11, hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims have dramatically increased, as have the negative impacts of “anti-terror” state actions on Muslims and people of Arab descent (e.g. Brown, 2003; Cassel, 2004; Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 2004; Hagopian, 2004; The Runnymede Trust, 1997; Zogby, 2005). Like German Jews in the early 1930s, Muslims justifiably fear the rising tide of state-sponsored hatred and restrictions of rights. Palestinians, Afghanis, Bosnians, and Iraqis already are experiencing policies close to ethnic cleansing (Coates, 2004; Reinhart, 2002).

3.2. What is a Moderate Muslim?

The Bush administration claims to distinguish between “moderate” Muslims and “extremist” Muslims who are presumed to be “terrorists.” In Bush’s “war on terror” speech, for example, he promised “no one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith” (Bush, 2001, p. 5). The implication was that only “real” terrorists need fear reprisals, and that “moderate” Muslims, like other Americans, would simply experience minor “delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security” (Bush, 2001, p. 6). In actuality, the “inconveniences” have meant a witch hunt against Muslims and Arabs stripping them of rights, dignity, freedom, sovereignty, and often life itself.

This theme of distinguishing between “moderate” Muslims and “terrorists” dates back to Netanyahu’s original campaign against “international terrorism”:

Most of the European Muslims, like their co-religionists in the United States and Israel, are law-abiding citizens or residents who would never dream of participating in terrorist

activity or in any other illegal act. But a few of them have come under the sway of a perverse and primitive interpretation of the faith, which moves them to fanaticism and violence. And as the Muslim communities in the West continue to grow, a widening fringe of their membership *invariably becomes susceptible to infection by the message of militant Islam*. (Netanyahu, 1995, pp. 89–90, emphasis added)

Since “terrorism” is a disease, which can invariably infect any Muslim, none of them can be trusted.

The theme of distinguishing between “moderate” and “terrorist” Muslims also pervades the pronouncements of the Bush administration. For example Paul Wolfowitz said in 2002 at the Brookings Institutions Forum, that:

... we must do what we can to encourage the moderate Muslim voices. This is a debate about Muslim values that must take place among Muslims. But, it makes a difference when we recognize and encourage those who are defending universal values. And, when we give them moral support against the opposition they encounter, we are indeed helping to strengthen the foundations of peace. (cited in Haddad, 2004a, p. 108)

It turns out that “encouraging the modern Muslim voice” means backing (and creating) pro-American/Israel front organizations like the American Islamic Forum for Democracy and the Free Muslim Coalition Against Terrorism (Pipes, 2004).

A few individuals have stepped up and volunteered to “lead the Muslims into moderation.” Several have been supported and funded by various agencies of the USA government. Their mission is to provide new reflections and interpretations of Islam. They have opened offices and are in the process of leading others into ‘right thinking.’ To date, they appear to have few followers since they are perceived as agents of the effort to undermine Islam. (Haddad, 2004a, p. 107)

Many Western Muslim and Arab groups, eager to distance themselves from the “terrorist” label, have gone to great lengths to prove that they fit the “moderate” category, assuring their governments that they are law-abiding, patriotic voters, even as they protest the rising tide of Islamophobic mistreatment (Zogby, 2005). A board member of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Canada, for example, recently wrote:

The Muslim community must ... exercise vigilance against hateful rhetoric that masquerades as religion. ... The Muslim community should not be seen as part of the problem, but as partners in the fight against a common enemy – extremism. (Kahn, 2005)

However, under Bush’s regime, even their assertions of loyalty are suspect. Daniel Pipes, a pro-Israel Bush appointee to the U.S. Institute of Peace (a Congressionally funded group), asserts:

There are lots of fake-moderates parading about, and they can be difficult to identify, even for someone like me ... The Council on American-Islamic Relations still wins

mainstream support and the Islamic Society of North America still sometimes hoodwinks the U.S. government. (Pipes, 2004)

To solve this “problem,” he has called for “for what could be considered a new Inquisition reminiscent of what obtained in Spain during the 15th century,” proposing that all Muslim individuals and groups should have their records scrutinized and that they be required to answer a long list of questions about their beliefs (Haddad, 2004; Pipes, 2003). Even those who answer correctly, he and other neo-conservatives suspect, may only be pretending not to be terrorists or may be at risk of “infection” by Islamists:

Pipes apparently also instigated Danish Islamophobic political cartoons in 2005 which provoked world-wide Muslim protests. (Sugg, 2006)

[American military chaplain Yousef] Yee, of course, told the media after 9/11 that the attacks were “un-Islamic and categorically denied by a great majority of Muslim scholars around the world.” But now he has been charged with attempting to give classified information to the Taliban and al-Qaeda prisoners at Guantanamo. (Spencer, 2003)

On broader level, the U.S. demands that Muslim countries “demonstrate their Islamic moderation by prosecuting, if not persecuting, suspected terrorists” (Haddad, 2004a, p. 108). The effect of this has been to allow U.S.-backed Asian dictatorships like Malaysia and Indonesia “to brand a spectrum of local opposition or separatist groups as terrorist or al-Qaeda-linked” (Ong, 2003, p. 4.13). The Bush administration “has made it clear that it expects moderate governments to implement other measures to assure American interests. These include curbing free speech, called ‘inflammatory’ if it is directed against American or Israeli policies” (Haddad, 2004a, p. 108).

In other words, under the Bush Doctrine, the only good Muslim is one who is willing to renounce his religion, denounce his fellow Muslims, uncritically support the U.S. – and even then he cannot be trusted. The logical conclusion is that all Muslims are targeted by the Bush Doctrine. As conservative commentator Ann Coulter declared the day after 9-11:

We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. ... Not all Muslims may be terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims. (Coulter, 2001)

4. STANDING WITH MUSLIMS AGAINST THE “WAR ON TERROR”

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that:

- The overriding motive for Bush’s “war on terror” is to secure control over the Middle East and Central Asia for U.S. oil, military, and corporate interests.

- Bush's handlers have been planning imperial conquest of the world since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989.
- From the evidence here and elsewhere, it is difficult to draw another conclusion than that Bush's associates organized the 9-11 attacks to kick start popular support for this war. They have continued to justify the "war on terror" by claiming that Muslim terrorists pose an immanent danger to Americans.
- In fact, however, terrorism actually poses minimal risk to Americans.
- The "war on terror" is a concept modeled on Israel's assaults on Palestinians to provide a cover for campaigns of territorial conquest.
- Far from being "under attack," America has pre-emptively attacked and conquered two sovereign states, and is threatening military domination of the entire world.

In other words, Bush's "war on terror" is a massive con job, perpetrated by a few oil and military elites, at the expense of Muslims particularly, but threatening the security and well-being of virtually everyone on the planet.

An immensely wealthy and powerful republic has been hijacked by a small cabal of individuals ... The American people have ... been deliberately lied to, their interests cynically misrepresented and misreported, the real aims and intentions of this private war of Bush the son and his junta concealed with complete arrogance. (Said, 2003)

Thomas Donnelly, author of the RAD blueprint for Bush's "war on terror," recently reaffirmed the neo-conservative commitment, not to protect Americans from "terrorism," but to conquer the world.

This war, properly understood, is a struggle to build a [new] ... order throughout the "greater Middle East," that giant swath of the planet that extends from West Africa to Southeast Asia. ... Operation Iraqi Freedom represented the first step in a generational commitment to Iraq, but also the commitment of many generations to transforming the greater Middle East. ... The vision of the Bush Doctrine is hugely ambitious; in embracing this great vision, the United States must obligate the resources and create the institutions necessary to realize it. (Donnelly, 2004, pp. ix, 111)

4.1. *"Either you are with us, or you are with the Terrorists"*

Fear and hate of a scapegoated "enemy" are powerful tools by which despots confuse people into believing that their oppressors are their salvation. Just as anti-Semitism served to divide and silence progressive German movements in the early Nazi era, Islamophobia is dividing and silencing us now. No one wants to associate with "terrorists," much less be labeled and persecuted as one. Many progressive Western people fear and despise

"fundamentalist" Muslims, and thereby fall into the trap of allying themselves with, or at least not opposing, Islamophobic laws and practices in the name of opposing "terrorism." They thereby collude in undercutting the fabric of rights, due process, and equality on which they too depend.

The Bush Doctrine rhetoric has succeeded in convincing most white Americans that "terrorists" pose a serious threat to their personal safety, and that the "war on terror" is necessary to protect them. Islamophobic language and values have seeped into the fiber of our daily lives. Bookstores now have "terrorism" sections, displaying some of the 5,036 mostly new books on the topic.¹⁵ Several U.S. colleges and universities now offer degrees in "homeland security." Media images of "Arab extremists" have become routine.

Most Americans now believe that "terrorism" is such a big problem, that they should pay with their taxes, their freedoms, their decimated public services, and their children's lives. In the summer of 2005, polls found that 79 percent of Americans believed that "the threat of terrorism against the U.S." has increased or stayed about the same (Pollingreport.com, 2005). Seventy-six percent thought "Osama bin Laden himself is currently planning a significant terrorist attack against the United States," and 64 percent supported the Patriot Act. Sixty-four percent would be "willing to give up some of [their] personal freedom in order to reduce the threat of terrorism" (Pollingreport.com, 2005). Almost half of all Americans "believe the U.S. government should restrict the civil liberties of Muslim-Americans" (Deen, 2005). In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and shocking revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib prison, however, popular support for the "war on terror" plummeted. In November 2005, 55 percent of Americans disapproved of the way Bush is "dealing with the war on terrorism" (Pollingreport.com, 2005).

4.2. Which Side are you on?

Before 9-11, the anti-globalization movement had been rapidly gaining influence and unity worldwide. Opposition to U.S.-dominated institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the G-8, NATO, and APEC, had succeeded in disrupting and exposing several of their gatherings. And in their place, the World Social Forum and other progressive people's movements were demonstrating that indeed there are excellent alternatives to globalization and corporate rule.

The 9-11 "attacks" and the "war on terror" derailed these hopeful movements and imposed crippling constraints on dissent, democracy, and

national sovereignty. Under cover of Islamophobic targeting of Muslims, the U.S. is waging war on all movements for social justice both domestically and internationally, using its new post 9-11 legislative powers and bloated military and policing budgets. Domestically, the Bush administration is attacking democracy, abortion rights, the judiciary, environmental protections, social security, public education, women's rights, union rights, and civil rights (Dohrn, 2003). Internationally, it pressures other nations to enact similar "anti-terror" laws and policies, as well as demanding that they open their economies to full U.S. corporate rule.

As Bernadette Dohrn (2003) points out: "The result is a chilling effect. That is to say, people around the targets back away, get silent, don't stand up when they see the cost of simply expressing your opinion or even making a joke, let alone publicly objecting to what's going on."

Many progressive groups oppose Islamophobia and support Muslim victims of U.S. and Israeli assaults. These include civil liberties associations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, anti-Zionist Jewish and Christian groups, unions, peace groups, and student organizations like the Canadian Federation of Students. Secular, Jewish, and Christian groups have formed alliances with Palestinians and Iraqis in opposition to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. In the U.S., the Center for Constitutional Rights works to end arbitrary detention of Muslim detainees in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere. In Canada, the Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada has mobilized broad support for Muslim detainees and their rights.

However, even these groups have not dared to challenge the Islamophobic base of the "anti-terror" legislation, for fear of being called pro-terrorist. They are thereby left arguing that the particular individuals for whom they advocate are not terrorists, while implicitly condoning the myth that "real" terrorists are lurking in the shadows. But under the Bush Doctrine, *all* Muslims are presumed to be either current or potential terrorists, and their civil liberties have been sacrificed in the name of "national security."

To defeat the Bush plot for world control, we will need to challenge Islamophobic fear of "terrorists," to assert clearly that there is little substantive terrorist threat. What terrorism there is could better be addressed through criminal justice systems and international law. More importantly, we need to insist that the U.S. desist from both overt pre-emptive wars and covert state-financed terrorism. The actual security of both Americans and all other people will be best served by ending the occupations of the West Bank, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and recognizing the right of all nations to self-determination (including oil policies). We need to stand in solidarity with all

Muslims, regardless of their religious beliefs. At this juncture, Islamophobia is the key barrier to effective mobilization against the Bush regime.

NOTES

1. Many others have drawn the same conclusion (for example, Ahmed, 2002; Griffin, 2004; Hufschmid 2002; Marrs, 2004; Ruppert, 2004; Thompson, 2005).

2. Anti-war bumper sticker slogan 2003.

3. Kuwaiti Intelligence Memorandum from Brigadier General Fahd Ahmad al-Fahd, Director-General of the State Security Department, to Sheikh Salem al-Sabah, Minister of the Interior, November 1989 (Cited in Ahmed, 2003, p. 313).

4. Wolfowitz was then Undersecretary for Policy at the Department of Defense and later became a key foreign policy advisor to George W. Bush's 2000 election campaign. He is now Deputy Secretary of Defense. Lewis Libby was Dick Cheney's chief of staff in the Defense Department, and Eric Edelman was a senior foreign-policy advisor to Cheney (Steinberg, October 3, 2002, p. 3).

5. The Defense Planning Guidance reports were referred to as "the Plan" by members of the Project for the New American Century.

6. Dr. Khalilzad, born in Afghanistan held senior-level positions in the U.S. Department of Defense and the State Department. He oversaw the mobilization of Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan, and later served as a consultant to Unocal, the company, which hoped to build a natural gas pipeline through Afghanistan. Khalilzad served as Ambassador to Afghanistan from November 2003 to June 2005, while continuing as the Special Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan. Since June 21, 2005, he has served as Ambassador to Iraq.

7. Zbigniew Brzezinski served as National Security Advisor to Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981. With David Rockefeller, he founded and then served as Director of the Trilateral Commission, an influential American, European and Japanese forum for strategic planning from 1973 to 1976. He was a member of the Policy Planning Council for the Department of State (1966–1968), of the National Security Council's Defense Department Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy (1987–1989), and of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (a Presidential Commission to oversee U.S. intelligence activities) (1987–1989) under Ronald Reagan. He has also served as an international advisor of several major US and multinational corporations and taught at Columbia University and Howard University.

8. For examples of many other U.S. pretext incidents, see Norman Solomon's *War Made Easy* (2005) and *Press for Conversion!* #50, January 2003.

9. iraqometer.com/iraq-war-cost.htm.

10. "Enemy combatant" and "unprivileged belligerent" are terms the U.S. invented to label Afghani and Iraqi Muslim men swept up and detained without charges. The terms are used to deny them rights as prisoners of war guaranteed under the Geneva Conventions.

11. It is certainly an error to conflate opposing Israeli policy (which is not anti-Semitic) with attacking Jews as individuals or as a group (which is). Similarly, it is a fallacy to equate criticism of Israeli policies with anti-Semitism, just as it is incorrect

to equate criticism of U.S. policies with anti-Americanism. Some Jews protest that we should not support Muslims because they are anti-Semitic. It is true that many Muslims (like many Christians) carry negative beliefs about Jews. (Just as many Jews carry Islamophobic beliefs.) It is understandable that some Muslims carry anti-Jewish attitudes and vice versa, given painful experience, misinformation, and the mutual isolation between Jews and Muslims.

12. <http://www.jaynadavis.com/wsj.html>.

13. At the third Cairo Conference, *With the Resistance in Palestine and Iraq: Against Globalization, Imperialism and Zionism* (March 24–27, 2005). Over 1,500 participants, almost all Arab Muslims representing a full spectrum of groups from Islamist to communist, agreed to a program of ending U.S. dominance in the Middle East, creating an Arab Union, and supporting popular struggles for democracy against both the U.S. and the “despotism of Arab regimes” (Third Cairo Conference, 2005).

14. “Islamophobia” from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamophobia>.

15. Typing “terrorism” into Amazon.com’s search engine, yielded 5,036 book titles on February 22, 2006.

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**PART IV:
DRAWING A CONNECTION:
UNDERMINING PENSIONS**

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THE UK PENSION SYSTEM: THE BETRAYAL BY NEW LABOUR IN ITS NEOLIBERAL GLOBAL CONTEXT

Jamie Morgan

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explain how the current “crisis” in the UK pension system arose. I argue that it is a result of a combination of changes in government policy and basic instabilities always inherent in the financial system. Policy changes increased the vulnerability of the pension system to those instabilities. The background to these changes and also the frame of reference in terms of which the “crisis” itself is now phrased is broadly neoliberal. Its theoretical roots are in ideas of the efficiency of free markets. Its policy roots are expressed in a series of similar neoliberal policy tendencies in other capitalist states. I further argue that neoliberal solutions to the pension crisis simply offer more of the very matters that created the problems in the first place. Moreover, the very terms of debate, based in markets, financialisation of saving and individualisation of risk, disguise a more basic debate about providing a living retirement income for all. This is a debate that New Labour is simply not prepared to constructively engage with in any concrete fashion.

The Hidden History of 9-11-2001
Research in Political Economy, Volume 23, 301–347
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ISSN: 0161-7230/doi:10.1016/S0161-7230(06)23009-8

1. INTRODUCTION

A recent UK study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies makes the startling claim that one in ten current 50-year olds will likely retire into poverty (Banks, Emerson, Oldfield, & Tetlow, 2005). Predictions for younger generations are even more dire. Talk of a pensions “crisis”, of a pensions “timebomb”, are becoming increasingly common in the British press as they are across much of the capitalist world. The tone is often dramatic, one of shock. The focus is often narrowly individual – too few saving for their retirement, and those that are saving, saving too little. Yet, the issue is not new, nor is it a matter for shock or surprise. Moreover, a narrow focus on the individual and saving will do little to account for where this “crisis” came from. In so far as it is a crisis, it is one that has been caused and for which blame can be attributed. Its causes have deep roots in the linkages between finance, politics, economy and ideology.

In the following paper, I make four arguments. First, there has been a general attack on pension provision, or the array of ways in which a retirement income is generated, among the major capitalist states and the basis of that attack is broadly neoliberal. Second, the call to shift state pension provision towards individual financialised systems of forced savings is based on dubious premises concerning demographics, costs, and the superiority of finance markets. Third, the UK experience indicates basic vulnerabilities and inequities in all forms of private pension provision which cast further doubt on a reliance on finance markets in both state sponsored and personal pension provision. Fourth, more fundamentally, the very focus of pension systems debate and analysis tends to obscure the broader issue of how to provide a pension system beyond a focus on work itself that covers the whole spectrum of society and does not simply perpetuate inequalities into old age. Again, recent UK policy discussions illustrate this. I set out the first two arguments in Section 2 by exploring the inter-relationship between the underlying ideological nature of pension debate and how it has affected pension reform, particularly in Chile, Canada and the USA. I explore the second two arguments in Sections 3–5. In Section 3 I set out the basic components of the UK pension system. In Section 4 I set out the basic problems of the UK system that have emerged as a sense of ‘crisis’ in the last 10 years, and in Section 5 I assess the inadequacies of New Labour’s current approach to a pension ‘crisis’ that their adherence to essentially neoliberal positions have helped to create.

2. PENSIONS AND PRIVATISATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Pension provision has until recently rarely been a high-profile public issue in the UK. The long-term nature of pension provision and the ease with which it can be presented as an essentially technical matter of interest mainly to statisticians and actuaries has tended to obscure its central significance for a stable and fair society. Yet, how pensions are provided and who is responsible are extremely important and deeply political. Moreover, the tendencies at work in these matters are no less a part of current global neoliberalism than are policy conflicts over the role of trade unions or the relationship between wages, welfare, unemployment and capital movements (Blackburn, 2002b; Minns, 2001). At the core of the argument are two claims from the Right common across the wealthiest capitalist nations. First, there is the claim that public pension provision is in “crisis” because of changes in demography.¹ This is based on the assertion that the imminent retirement of the West’s “baby boomer” generation, and the fall in the birth rate and rise in average life expectancy have and will continue to increase the ratio of the retired to working population. According to Blackburn:

At the close of the twentieth century there were 419 million people aged sixty-five or over in the world, comprising 6.9 per cent of the total population, rising to 12.6 per cent in North America and 14.7 per cent in Europe [...] Around the year 2000 those aged fifty or over comprised 17 per cent of the world’s population. UN demographers project that, on present trends, the fifty-plus proportion of the total will rise to 27 per cent in 2025, 34 per cent in 2050 and 38 per cent in 2075. (Blackburn, 2002b, p. 3)²

The implication drawn on the Right and uncritically accepted by many on the Left is that state transfers drawn from current tax revenue are becoming less viable as the fundamental means to provide the basic safety net as part of a guaranteed living income in retirement. Economies face a harsh fiscal constraint.

Second, pension provision has also become enmeshed in broader issues of the nature of the “post-industrial” capitalist society (defined variously by Bell, 1973; Beck, 2000; Hardt & Negri, 2000) particularly Atkinson (1988) and Atkinson and Meager (1986) concept of the flexible labour market and the subsequent focus on non-standard work (Kelleberg et al., 1997; Nolan & Wood, 2003). The increase in small business employment, in part-time, contract and temporary work, and in labour turnover in general has according to commentators such as Sennett (1998) and Thompson (2003)

produced a heightened form of uncertainty in contemporary capitalism. Part of that uncertainty is that fewer workers are now covered by long-term work-based collective private pension provision schemes. Moreover, firms are beginning to think about how pension fund commitments adversely affect their equity values and how they may also create problems in maintaining the mobility of the firm as a form of capital. This includes their attractiveness as an asset for merger or their capacity to relocate to least cost sites or to outsource. These kinds of arguments are put forward against the background of such concepts as the network society where flexibility of the firm and mobility of capital, it is asserted, are more crucial than ever because of heightened global competition.

The point is that state and collective workplace pension provision have come under attack as not only unaffordable but as also constraints or distortions on the “new” global economy. Not only is the assessment neoliberal, because it accepts and prefers a reality of marketisation within the economy at large to which one must simply conform and within which labour and its needs are simply a problem (rather than the point), but neoliberalism is also the principle proffered solution. The argument that general taxation simply cannot afford state pension provision and the argument that workers cannot and should not rely on collective workplace schemes are met by a call to fund retirement from personal savings invested in stock markets, usually as a form of tax-incentivised individual pension plan (self-reliance). Marketisation is thus translated into what has been termed the financialisation (Grahl, 2001; Grahl & Teague, 2000, pp. 164, 168, 170) of retirement funding. The justification provided is that pension savings provide a form of investment that drives capital markets and the subsequent growth in the value of equities provides a retirement income. This is a position endorsed by the World Bank and IMF (e.g. World Bank, 1994). Further aspects of the argument are that the tax burden on the state, the tax level on the individual, and the contribution and administrative burden on the employer are reduced or eliminated. Economic growth is encouraged by increased investment and by a smaller state and leaner firm. The neoliberal solution is, therefore, for the individual to rely on financial markets, which are in turn also globalised, and which are claimed to produce a virtuous circle that resolves a demographic and costing “timebomb”.

Two additional points are worth making here regarding the meaning of the tendency. First, though the neoliberal preference for marketisation in the form of financialisation encourages a policy where the individual relies for their retirement income on financial markets and this position ultimately relies upon the logic of the superiority of free markets (essentially, some

form of neo-classical formulation of Robbins' problem of the allocation of scarce resources, Nielsen & Morgan, 2005), the financial industry itself prefers to rely on the state to incentivise, pressurise or force the public to save in equity-based schemes *and* for the state to be a source of compensation should problems arise. At the same time, the financial industry prefers the power of the state to scrutinise its actions to be one whose regulations lack the ability to impose actions on its members, preferring a voluntary and hands-off approach. The neoliberal tendency for marketisation under the guise of free market arguments is, therefore, not really about the smaller state and deregulation of markets but about the weaker state whose ideological apparatus reflects capital's interests and the re-regulation of markets as a form of power shift that favours the financial operators.

The shift provides for power with limited responsibility. That power manifests itself as an influential political lobby able to generate large profits and manipulate both the state and the individual via the state (Minns, 1998, p. 1). The "free" market is, therefore, far more a matter of corporate push than pull, where the invisible hand of the market is supplemented by a surreptitious elbow. Moreover, precisely because financialisation of pension provision channels capital into the financial markets it reinforces the power of those markets within society. It is a source of hugely influential investment decisions using accumulated pension assets, which help to shape the landscape of contemporary capitalist society. As Blackburn notes (2002b, p. 6), by 1999 the global value of employee pension schemes was estimated to be \$13 trillion compared to a world GNP of ~\$28 trillion. An important point here is that, in keeping with neoliberalism more broadly, the privatisation of investment decisions contributes to the commodification of society since the basis of the investment decision is profit and the nature of investment will foster uses of space that generate profit. This simply reinforces the rationale that welfare and matters of public space and its uses are first and foremost issues of cost rather than quality of service and human well-being. Moreover, if the globalisation of financial markets contributes to the growth in short-run speculative investment as opposed to long-term productive investment, financialisation of pension provision may simply be contributing to (as well as being subject to) the volatility of markets and a heightened instability in the "real economy" against the long-term interests of labour. I return to this point in terms of the UK later.

This first aspect (power shifts and their justifications) of the meaning of the global tendency towards financialisation raises the question of whether the gains for the individual from this form of pension provision offset the loss from living in such a society, *and*, more fundamentally, whether the

financialisation of pension provision is in actuality a good solution based on a genuine problem of costs and demographics. One can start to answer this question by addressing the second aspect of the tendency. Not only is the policy articulation of the tendency in different countries varied by the historical context but also there has been considerable scepticism and resistance to any full-blown attempt to introduce complete reliance on this form of pension provision. Nevertheless, financialisation and neoliberal interpretations of arguments concerning demographics and fiscal constraints dominate the terms of debate. Global tendency then is precisely that which Marx identified as the principle form within societies (Marx, 1973, pp. 100–102; Morgan, 2004, p. 79) – an overall shift in socio-political and economic structuring but not a complete and universally homogeneous determination. This can be illustrated by briefly looking at what has occurred in a selection of states. Here, for the sake of brevity, I focus on the privatisation of public or state pension provision as part of the dismantling of capitalist welfare systems. I explore the private workplace based provision in the next section.

Like many other countries, Chile's pension system in the twentieth century had been a combination of state and workplace based provision. It combined a typical tax-remitted inter-generational pay-as-you-go transfer system, collectively administered by the state as the basis of retirement income, with a funded system where employees and employers contribute to varieties of private pension funds. In 1981, the Chilean government replaced its state provision with a privately funded and administered system of individual named pension accounts (Townson, 2001; Jacobsen, 1997; Butler, Asher, & Borden, 1996). Participants save a mandatory 10% of earnings (with no corresponding employer contribution) in their account and choose one of a number (14 rising later to 21) of competing state approved private organisations (*administradoras de fondos de pensiones*, or AFPs) to invest their fund. New entrants to the workforce (the young) were simply channelled into the system while older workers who had paid into the old system were induced to switch by the offer of government interest bearing bonds (recognition bonds) representing that investment and credited to their account. Notably, the system remained more tightly regulated than other kinds of non-state sponsored private fund along lines ostensibly designed to reduce the vulnerability of funds to investment problems – portfolios administered by AFPs have had to invest no less than 50% in government guaranteed securities with the remaining 50% or less in private-sector securities all of which must be on a government approved list, and of which only 30% of the total portfolio may be in ordinary equities and 7% of that

in a single capital stock.³ By 1992, almost 95% of employees had shifted to the AFPs.

Chile has provided a widely discussed early model for increased reliance on private plans as an alternative to collective state pension provision. Many have identified it as an example of the advantages of market provision. For example, Butler (Butler et al., 1996) of the Adam Smith Institute claims that the system produces better returns than public funds because of the market discipline of competition between AFPs on the basis that participants can choose to switch their fund from one to another. Moreover, since the participants have information on the size of their individual fund the system militates against future uncertainty based on unpredictable policy switches by politicians. Each contributor knows what money is theirs rather than paying into an anonymous fund under some vague sense that the state will continue its current commitment. The model also “reduces the role of politicians in the administration of the system, and therefore the extent to which it might divert funds from savers and into their favoured programmes” (1996, p. 7). The implicit assumption is that markets and competition based on individual consumer sovereignty produces better pension outcomes than the state i.e. the state as a form of monopoly produces adverse outcomes owing to some combination of profligacy, corruption, political instability or simple political-ideological variation. Butler also claims that the system accounts for Chile’s high savings rate and growing capital markets in the 1980s and early 1990s and that the capital it provided enabled the privatisation of nationalised industries – the implication being that privatisation was a gain and thus that nationalisation was in some sense a failure by its very nature.

A number of analysts have taken issue with a positive reading of the Chilean model and have used this to place similar proposed changes in other countries in context. Townson (2001, Chapter 3), for example, argues that a great deal of the apparently high returns of the AFPs in the early years (12% and higher) entailed a sleight of hand. By maintaining high interest rates (and thus high rates of return on government securities) and by undervaluing and privatising key industries and utilities (stock from which appears on the government approved list) the state effectively used the close regulation of private pension funds to inflate AFP growth rates at the cost of making its own debt more expensive and by a one time only transfer of public to private assets. Returns then fell to below 3% by the late 1990s – little different than simply placing the money in a bank.

Since the aim of the funds is to provide a minimum pension of ~25% of the contemporaneous average wage – the lower the level of return the greater the likelihood that a higher proportion of the individual funds will

fail to produce a sufficiently large total to cover this minimum pension. This allows us to make an important distinction lost in Butler's argument for financialisation. More information about the value of individual assets (his argument for certainty) is not the same as actual financial security for the individual. One might assume that the individual responds by saving more but this is often not realistic (mandatory saving is already 10%). Further, for the conflation (certainty/security) to occur one must assume that shifting between AFPs acts as a market signal based on consumer sovereignty and that AFPs can respond by increasing the returns on funds. Otherwise, financialisation is not an effective solution and the formal neoliberal argument for markets must fall back on the state (the surreptitious elbow rather than the dynamically competitive invisible hand).

Ultimate reliance on the state is precisely what is revealed in the Chilean model. The state guarantees to provide the 25% level of the contemporaneous wage to participants. As such, the state is effectively in a position of subsidising "underperforming" financial markets and AFPs. Moreover, since the scheme only covers workers (and indirectly, their dependents) but not the self-employed, unemployed, long-term sick, etc. (Jacobsen, 1997) then it becomes clear that the system is not only based on a tacit direct public to private transfer of wealth but that the transfer is inherently regressive. This is because, if it comes from the state budget then its source includes the tax revenues of those not covered, including the poor. It also entails an opportunity cost in terms of the alternative ways in which it could have been expended on those not covered. In a sense, this also reverses Butler's identified advantage that tax revenue earmarked for anonymous collective pension provision can no longer be diverted. The very prospect of inter-generational transfers and of inter- and intra-class redistributions of wealth through effective state policies *aimed at social equity* are eliminated, though transfers of a sort are maintained for subsistence purposes. The system is also regressive since fixed rates of commission for AFP providers means that lower wage earners effectively pay a greater proportion of fees to savings than higher wage earners and thus experience lower real rates of return on their individual accounts. Moreover, given that the introduction of the AFPs was combined with reductions in tax rates (to offset the pain of forced saving) and a reduced pressure on employers to participate in additional collective pension provision with an employer contribution, even greater pressure is placed on the performance of the individual accounts for participant workers. Simultaneously, this creates the potential for current and future budget deficits for the state due to changes in the tax system.

Ironically, the state finds itself guaranteeing a system that exacerbates inequality in the name of the unproven superiority of financial markets to provide pension provision at the time of retirement for the current workforce. More fundamentally, since the system is focussed on work and saving, it is not a comprehensive form of pension provision covering the breadth of society. Since its introduction is tied into a whole host of other neoliberal economic policies such as privatisation, reduction in direct taxation, a discourse of self-reliance and the primacy of the individual rather than concepts such as social justice, equality, and redistribution of income, that exacerbation of inequality at the time of retirement extends beyond the differentiation of the workforce to the rest of society at large who fall into other classes of welfare provision, such as low-level means tested subsistencies, by a form of state that is antithetical to transforming their conditions (merely perpetuating them into old age). Thus, even if the reliance on financial markets was to prove effective (something we return to below) the ideological framework would remain questionable.

It is with these problems in mind that Townson is highly critical of the attempt to extend the financialisation of pension provision in Canada in the mid to late 1990s. Both the federal Liberals and the Reform Party accepted that the basis of debate was that demographics placed the current retirement program in crisis. As Townson notes, however, the issue is not that demographic changes are occurring but rather what can be read into them:

That's the first thing to remember: population aging hasn't happened overnight, and it's not a surprise. Between 1950 and 1990, for instance, the number of over-65s in Canada tripled. If the projections are right, it will take another 40 years for the elderly population to triple again. Admittedly, that's a faster rate of aging than in some other countries. For instance, it took a century for the percentage of seniors in France to grow from 10% of the population to 25%. In Canada, that same process will have happened in half a century. But, after 2030, when the over 65s are expected to account for about 23% of Canada's population, demographers expect the aging process will level off and a balance will be reached between mortality and fertility. In other words, Canada will have achieved zero population growth somewhere between 2020 and 2030. And that's another key point in the debate that often gets overlooked: population aging will not go on forever. It will likely only continue for the next 30 years. (Townson, 2001, p. 3)

According to the research discussed by Townson, during those 30 years, if one does not allow for economic growth and increases in productivity, then maintaining current spending on social security as the demographic structure changes would increase social spending to 28% of GDP, but once economic growth and productivity are allowed for, the projections reduce it to a less alarming figure, around its 2000 level at 16%.

Public scepticism, work by analysts such as Townson, and opposition from many of Canada's unions (National Union Research, 1999) forestalled a full policy shift to privately invested individual retirement savings accounts. Instead, compromise alterations were made to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). The CPP (Townson, 2001, Chapters 6 and 7) was designed to provide working Canadians with a retirement income of at least 25% of contemporaneous average earned income, and is built on top of basic welfare provision that guarantees subsistence. As of 1997, benefits payable from the CPP were cut, contribution rates were increased from 5.2% to around 10%, low income exemptions frozen and thus reduced in real terms, and a CPP Investment Board set up to invest new CPP funds in a portfolio of securities to supplement taxation. In the meantime, the basis of the debate from the Right remained that this could only be an intermediary or temporary measure on the way towards an individualised program following Butler's previous argument that a state investment organisation would lack the market discipline of competitive private provision and that, despite arguments from Townson and others to the contrary, the underlying problems of demographics and costing were real and would not simply disappear. The tendency towards financialisation has remained an underlying issue, therefore, based on the dominant terms of debate. As of 1994, Townson was already highlighting the significance of representing the essentially political question of what kind of society we want as an inevitably determined technical issue of what the economy can afford:

Probably the most important distinguishing feature of any modern society is the way it treats its citizens – the old and the young, the poor, the sick and unemployed. Industrialized societies have long recognized the need for community action on behalf of different groups of citizens. What has become known as the 'Welfare State' has been seen as moderating the intensity of social conflict and enhancing social cohesion. (Townson, 1994, p. 7)

The direction of public policy in Canada is rapidly moving away from a commitment of collective responsibility to the elderly [an inter-generational social contract] in favour of a reduced role for the state, an emphasis on individual initiative in providing for retirement and caring for those who are older, and increased targeting of benefits to those in need. As in other countries, this reflects a political philosophy that espouses market based solutions. As long as this is the dominant philosophy, it will not be easy to renew our commitment to collective responsibility. (Townson, 1994, p. 34)

The same terms of debate have been reprised in the USA. Baker and Weisbrot summarise what is at stake:

We are currently in the midst of a major national debate over the future of social security, a kind of debate we have not seen since the 1930s. No one should be deceived as

to its nature and significance. It is not about shoring up the program's finances or how we can, as President Clinton put it, "save social security for the twenty-first century". It is not about preparing for the retirement of the baby boom generation, which we have already done. And it is not about making the program more equitable or fair or improving it in any way. At its best, this debate is about how to cut social security. At its worst, it is about privatization, about undermining even destroying the program that has formed the bedrock of the social safety net for more than half a century. (Baker & Weisbrot, 1999, p. 149)

In the USA, social security provides the basic component in retirement income provision, again, as in Canada in combination with workplace-based forms of collective and personal private pension schemes (Blackburn, 2002a, Chapter 6). By the late 1990s, 16% of senior citizens relied entirely upon social security, for over 66% it constituted the major portion of their income, while over 95% of senior citizens either received or were eligible for benefits aimed at providing a guaranteed minimum standard of living. It has been the country's largest and most successful antipoverty program, reducing the poverty rate among the elderly from 35% in 1959 to 10.8% in 1997 (Baker & Weisbrot, 1999, p. 12). As early as 1983, the argument had begun to be made that demographics were liable to increase the costs of the system, resulting in policy modifications such as treating some benefits as taxable income and increasing the age of eligibility for others from 65 to 67 over the following two decades. However, it was during the Clinton administration and more latterly under George W. Bush that the system has come under sustained attack. Lobbies such as Third Millennium: Advocates for the Future invoke the spectre of generation wars in which an imminently retiring baby boomer generation might become a potent voting bloc maintaining a privileged position within society on the basis of a generous welfare system paid for by the next generation at the expense of investment in their own children's future. Such lobbyists have pressed for a fundamental re-assessment of social security and a policy shift away from inter-generational transfers towards individual private pension savings accounts. In addition to benefit cuts, Bush has been keen to press ahead with this kind of policy. He has received apparent support from actuarial projections on the future solvency of social security finances. Annual reports from the Board of Trustees of the Social Security trust fund follow a 75-year projection pattern according to three scenarios (pessimistic, intermediate and optimistic) and indicate a projected deficit in the fund from 2035 based on 1999 figures (Baker & Weisbrot, 1999, Chapter 1).

Baker and Weisbrot (1999, Chapter 6) reveal a fundamental contradiction in the projection and the policy inference drawn from it. The projected

shortfall is based on the assumption of a historically low economic growth rate of 1.5% in the long term and a fixed or falling level of taxation. At the same time, the superiority of a policy of 5% forced mandated savings into individual savings funds is based on a high investment return of around 7%. A low assumed growth rate but high assumed investment returns are ultimately incompatible. On the basis that the fund is mainly invested in stocks, investment returns are made up of rises in share prices (an increase in the value of the assets held) and the dividends on shares that the investor receives. Low growth rates effectively mean low rates of growth in stock values over the long term. Therefore, unless the size of dividends as a proportion of stock values rises then investment returns must also be relatively low. As Baker and Weisbrot (1999, pp. 92–96) note, the long bull market on which investment returns have based their projections already entails historically high price/earnings ratios which it is unrealistic to assume could be maintained let alone increased. This is a point subsequently borne out by the bear market that has followed the dubious assumptions and practices that went into the era of venture capital, the dot.com boom and the illusory success of new business models of such firms as Enron (Morgan, 2003).

Lower more realistic investment returns and perhaps a higher more historically accurate level of economic growth reverse the nature of the argument put forward by those in favour of privatisation and financialisation of the US system. Baker and Weisbrot (1999, p. 149), therefore, come to the same conclusion as Townson, the debate is a deeply political one presented as a technical issue, and that consequently, “The parameters of the entire debate should be rejected”. This is more than simply the argument that the statistical techniques used in the projections are only as good as their assumptions and the way in which they are applied (Olsen & Morgan, 2005). It is about the politics of those assumptions and the way they have been disseminated around the capitalist world. A core issue is the assumption that income taxes cannot rise even though income itself is rising. Economic growth implies a growth in wealth. It should at least be a matter of public debate as to whether a wealthier society should be committed to breaking its social contract with the old who contributed to the creation of the circumstances in which that growth is possible.

That the terms of debate seek to exclude this aspect of the debate is simply another facet of the neoliberal focus on the individual – the silent residue of which is that growing inequalities of all kinds are acceptable. An ideological discourse of competitive dynamism as a necessary precursor to an unquestioned narrow focus on personal status and material success in a

consumption-led society clouds the invidious nature of the system itself. Significantly, the main bastions of European social democracy have succeeded to some degree in making the terms of debate themselves a major focus of public debate. The spectre of 'Anglo-Saxon' neoliberalism and its effects on the social contract have been major recent issues in French and German politics. Despite a general Left-leaning towards European federalism there has been considerable resistance to the ratification of the new European Union constitution on the basis that it is 'corporate friendly' since it fosters forms of labour mobility that in the context of expanded membership by poorer Eastern European nations will simply allow a 'race to the bottom' on labour and welfare standards. Similarly, meeting the Maastricht economic convergence criteria has caused considerable problems. France and Germany have repeatedly failed to meet the criteria for constrained balanced budgets and lower convergent taxes because of widespread resistance to the cuts in welfare these imply. At the same time, reformers continue to use demographic and fiscal arguments against the backdrop of heightened global competition for jobs and relatively high levels of unemployment, particularly in Germany. Ironically, the European states have negotiated the construction of conditions for integration that place their own systems under greater pressure.

What I have suggested in this brief survey of the context of the debate on pensions is that the attack on pension provision is occurring in virtually every major capitalist country. The basis of that attack is rooted in questionable assumptions about demographics, fiscal constraints and arguments about the superiority of financialisation of pension provision. Both the assumptions and the argument are rooted in neoliberalism and represent a tendential systemic and ideological transformation. The main focus so far has been on the privatisation of public pension provision as part of the dismantling of capitalist welfare systems. Pension systems, however, are usually comprised of state and work-based collective private provision. An important aspect, therefore, in analysing the effect on a complete system is to explore how work-based collective provision has also been affected because this allows us to add an additional critical dimension to the specific problems of relying on private provision set out in the introduction. Accordingly, I now move on to look at the UK pension system as a whole with a particular focus on its commercial aspects. As Paul Krugman (2005) notes in the *New York Times* the UK experience is a significant one because it has already travelled far down the path of financialisation and constitutes "a cautionary tale Americans should know about".

3. THE COMPONENTS OF THE UK PENSION SYSTEM

Table of useful Acronyms

ASB	Accounting Standards Board
BSP	Basic State Pension
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
FRS	Financial Reporting Standard
FSA	Financial Services Authority
IFA	Institute and Faculty of Actuaries
MIG	Minimum Income Guarantee
Opra	Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority
RIY	Reduction in yield
SERPs	State Earnings-Related Pension
S2P	State Second Pension
TUC	Trade Union Congress

I begin with a brief description of the major components of the UK pension system. Those familiar with this material may skip this section. The pensions system in the UK is made up of the state pension and a combination of occupational and private pensions. A personal pension is undertaken on an individual basis while an occupational scheme is sponsored by an employer. A personal pension is of a defined contribution form while an occupational scheme may be of a defined benefit or a defined contribution form. Defined benefits provide a pension that is a percentage of one's salary while defined contributions provide an accumulated fund of savings with which to buy a pension income.

3.1. The State Pension

The state pension has two basic components (The Pension Service, 2002; The Department of Work and Pensions, SERPs Forecasting Team, 2003). The BSP is calculated on the basis of National Insurance contributions over a full working life (currently 44 years for a man and 39 years for a woman) and in 2004 provided £77.45 per week for a single eligible retired person (currently a standard of 65 years old for a man, 60 years old for a woman)

and £120.70 for a couple. From 1978 until April 2002, this was supplemented by the SERPs.⁴ The National Insurance contribution is currently 9.4% (2005) and is paid on wages in excess of £89 per week. SERPs is calculated on the surplus generated by this percentage of the wage over and above that required to generate the BSP (the formula changes year to year). At the moment, the maximum supplement to the BSP provided by SERPs is £134 per week (2004). To achieve this level a person would have to be paid in the top income quartile for the majority of their working life. According to the DWP SERPs forecasting service, they currently base top SERPs levels on around £30,000 per year (2004). In April 2002, SERPs was replaced by the S2P, which differentiates the surplus National Insurance contribution into earnings bands and provides a greater weighting in the calculation for lower earnings. The government claims this will particularly boost the additional pension of those earning less than £10,800 per year. As with SERPs, it is possible to opt out of the additional S2P contribution and receive a rebate from the Inland Revenue. This rebate, including tax relief, can be 'contracted out' i.e. redirected to a personal pension.⁵

In addition to the BSP and SERPs/S2P, the state also provides a range of other payments to various eligible groups. The most important has been a means-tested safety net through income support in the form of the MIG. The MIG topped up the income of those over 60 to £98.15 per week for a single person and £149.80 for a couple.⁶ The MIG was replaced by the Pension Credit in October 2003, which retains a minimum income guarantee (£102.10 and £155.80, respectively, [DWP, 2002, p. 20](#)) but with additional payment eligibility to those with small personal pensions and low savings that might previously have been deducted from their eligibility (up to a maximum additional of £14.79 and £19.20, respectively). Eligibility for these additional sources also dictates eligibility for a variety of means-tested payment, such as the Winter Fuel Payment (maximum £200).

3.2. Defined Benefit Occupational Pension Schemes

Defined benefit schemes have traditionally based pension levels on years of service and salary level at the time of retirement (final salary). They usually accrue at either 1/60th or 1/80th of final salary per year of service. On a 1/60th accrual rate, for example, someone with a final salary of £30,000 would have to be a member of the scheme for 40 years to achieve a retirement income of £20,000 per year.⁷ Since 1989, defined benefit schemes have been capped. The final salary cap in 2004 was £97,200 – at a 1/60th

accrual rate over 40 years, this would be a retirement income of £64,800. Schemes, such as the civil service, have traditionally required no employee contribution and are index linked to inflation. Most, however, involve a combination of employee (usually around 5% of salary) and employer contributions to make up their value. Under current law, a retiring employee can take a maximum tax-free lump sum of up to one and a half of final salary in addition to their annual pension level. The schemes are administered by a board of trustees who, in accordance with advice from accountants and investment analysts are charged with ensuring that the scheme's assets cover its liabilities i.e. that it meets the rolling cost of pension provision to those who have retired and those who are contributing to the scheme who will be retiring. It has been usual for 70% of the value of a scheme to be invested in the stock market and the rest to be mainly in gilts (government-backed bonds with a fixed life-span and which pay a fixed rate of interest in addition to the original value of the gilt when it reaches maturity), corporate bonds (company versions of gilts) and property. Returns on these investments dictate the liquidity and solvency of the scheme as a whole. In principle, the higher returns are, the lower the contribution an employer needs make to maintain a solvent scheme that covers its liabilities.

The DWP is responsible for the governing legislation relevant to defined benefit occupational schemes. Following the inquiry into the Maxwell pension scandal, the Pension Act of 1995 created the Opra, which became operational as an industry watchdog in 1997 (Opra, 2002). Opra places a statutory duty on scheme auditors and actuaries to inform them of breaches of scheme regulations – notably the misappropriation of scheme assets and the failure of employers to make the necessary contributions to maintain the solvency of a scheme (Davis, 2002, pp. 10–19).⁸

3.3. Money Purchase Defined Contribution Schemes

Defined contribution schemes generate a pension fund in order to buy an annual income or “annuity” in retirement. The amount of the fund is based on contributions to the scheme and the level of returns on the investment of those contributions by the scheme (less commercial charges). Occupational schemes will include an employer contribution while a private or personal pension scheme fund will be supplemented by tax relief only – at a basic rate of income tax of 22% every 78p is made up to £1 and at 40% income tax every 60p is made up to £1. Contributions to money purchase schemes are restricted in terms of annual salary and capped at the same level as defined

benefit schemes (£97,200). Occupational scheme contributions are restricted to 15% of annual salary up to the final salary cap (a maximum contribution of £14,580 per year), while personal pension contribution restrictions vary from 17.5 to 40% of annual salary up to the final salary cap, depending on age. Up to a quarter of the accumulated pension fund can be taken as a tax-free sum and the rest is used to buy an annuity or guaranteed income. As with defined benefit schemes, it has been usual for 70% of the value of a scheme to be invested in the stock market and the rest to be mainly in gilts, corporate bonds and property. Since the contribution is not linked to an income specified by a final salary calculation, the focus shifts from a scheme's assets meeting its liabilities to the accumulated value of the individual's fund itself and the annuity it will buy. The value of the fund is highly dependent on the performance of equities, both over the lifetime of contributions and at the time, the annuity is purchased. Since the provision *by the annuity provider* (which does not have to be the provider of the original scheme – usually an insurance company) of the income purchased by the fund is partly dependent on equity performance in the future, expectations about that performance are also significant for the calculation of the annuity rate. Actuaries, however, tend to calculate the annuity rates that any particular fund size will buy more on the basis of gilt yields since these are more stable and predictable than equities. Life expectancy is the other major consideration. Average life expectancy is calculated for demographic cohorts (the decade in which one was born) and modified by particular characteristics (gender, habits such as smoking, health track record, current serious illness, etc.). Generally speaking, as life expectancy rises and as equity performance and gilt yields fall, annuity rates also fall.⁹ Though there is some variation between providers, average annuity rates are around 7% (Miles, 2002). This means that for every £100 of pension fund £7 of annuity can be purchased – a fund of £100,000 buys an annuity of around £7,000. Purchase of an annuity can be deferred up to the age of 75. During deferment, the fund can remain invested and be accessed through an income drawdown scheme. The government's actuary department (GAD) lays down an income range that can be withdrawn from the fund each year it remains invested. The maximum is currently the equivalent annuity the fund would buy while the minimum is 35% of that figure. If investment returns minus the cost of administration of the fund are less than the income withdrawn then the size of the fund is effectively contracting.

As with the defined benefit pension schemes, the DWP is responsible for the governing legislation relevant to defined contribution schemes. Under

the DWP remit, Opra regulates employer schemes and the FSA regulates personal pension schemes. The FSA covers the whole financial services market but in terms of the pension system its principle functions are to regulate the conduct of the large insurers who provide schemes and liaise on auditing standards, raise consumer awareness of the range of financial products, and provide redress for the improper selling of pensions.

3.4. Stakeholder Pensions

Introduced in April 2001, stakeholder pensions are a form of private pension promoted by the government and targeted at the low paid and small business employees. Firms with more than five employees must offer an 'introduction' to a stakeholder scheme if they do not have their own occupational scheme. The employer does not have to provide a contribution. The schemes are administered through the company but offered by insurance companies in the same way as other personal pensions. Their key selling point is that the provider cannot impose penalty charges for transferring the fund to another provider, stopping and starting contributions and that scheme charges are capped at a maximum of 1% of the value of the fund per year.¹⁰

4. ANALYSING THE PROBLEMS OF OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES IN THE UK PENSION SYSTEM

The BSP in the UK has always been only one component in pension provision. According to OECD figures, the BSP (£77.45 per week) constituted 36% of the average salary in the UK in 2003 (Bremner, 2003). According to the Department of Social Security figures the BSP has varied from a high of 39% in 1978 to a low of 27% in 1998 (DSS, 1999). While both the cost of living and the income inequality masked by an average salary have varied radically over the period of the welfare state, the significant point is that the BSP has never been nor was it intended to be a stand alone means of ensuring an adequate retirement income. The rest of the pension system is there to take up the slack. Since the rest of the pensions system is more than a luxury or an indulgent supplement to the guaranteed portion of state pension and welfare provision it is of vital consequence that the system delivers. In various ways, however, it is failing to do so. Defined benefit pension schemes

have collapsed or been closed, while defined contribution schemes do not provide a predictable and equitable alternative. As I argue below, the closure of defined benefit schemes was not inevitable but has rather been a consequence of state taxation policy, accounting techniques and corporate will. This combination exacerbated the basic vulnerability of the system to volatility in finance markets. Moreover, the closure of defined contribution schemes has removed the best form of provision that the current system had to offer and left workers reliant on forms of individualised pension provision that are even more vulnerable to volatility. This manufactured crisis has, ironically, formed the backdrop to further arguments about pension deficits that have subsequently fuelled calls for forced savings.

4.1. The Collapse of the Defined Benefit Occupational Pension Schemes

In the 1986 Finance Act, the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, imposed a 5% cap on the value of assets over liabilities in defined benefit pension schemes.¹¹ Any surplus in excess of 5% would be subject to heavy taxation. The aim was to both raise revenue and deter firms from tax avoidance by making large contributions to their tax-exempt schemes in unusually profitable years. Crucially, firms were additionally offered the choice between improving the terms of members' pensions with any surplus or taking 'holidays' from employer contributions if the scheme was already solvent and beneath the cap. This was politically canny. It could prove attractive to large public limited companies (Plcs) with huge scheme commitments – because schemes typically hold 70% of their investments in equities, a strong bull market meant that firms might not have to make any contribution to their scheme in order to stay within the cap. Moreover, it placed the *responsibility* in the hands of the employer for the distribution of the benefits of the capital, which would exceed the cap. It remained possible that employees might benefit through improved pensions. It was more likely, however, that the firm would use the capital saved by contribution holidays for larger dividend payments to shareholders and to fuel executive pay inflation. Larger dividend payments improve the attractiveness of equities and tend to enhance share prices, hardly an irrelevant consideration for a CEO who is judged in terms of dividend payments and equity values and receives much of his own bonuses in terms of share options. The strong tendency, therefore, was always likely to be towards employer contribution holidays. As such, the TUC opposed the legislation, but the possibility of benefits to employers was enough to redirect the main focus onto the level of

the cap. The CBI also opposed the level of the cap. If 70% of the value of a scheme's investment is in equities and schemes maintain just a 5% surplus of assets over liabilities it takes just a 7.2% drop in the stock market to plunge a scheme into deficit. Given the volatility of the stock market both the TUC and CBI were concerned that this would lead to an inherent instability in the solvency of schemes. The TUC suggested a cap of 10% and the CBI up to 20%. For the Chancellor, however, the trade-off was that though a strong bull market might allow contribution holidays it would also generate additional surplus on the assets already in the scheme that would be subject to the new tax. 5% therefore remained the cap.

The 1990s, with a blip around the UK's withdrawal from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), saw a sustained bull market. Share prices consistently rose across the globe. The London Stock Exchange FTSE 100 average, for example, rose from around 3,500 in 1995 to a peak of 6,930 at the end of 1999. According to Inland Revenue statistics, during this period employers took pension contribution scheme holidays up to £2.5 billion (Senior, 2003b, IR, 2003).¹² When New Labour came to power in 1997, there seemed no obvious imperative to address this situation precisely because of the bull market. Indeed, Chancellor Gordon Brown's response was to exploit the revenue possibilities of the bull market by abolishing the dividend tax credit for pension schemes. Previously, dividends on equities owned by pension schemes were exempt from tax in order to incentivise share ownership and pension savings. In theory, high price/earnings ratios and a long bull market offered the prospect that one could tax those dividends without significant reductions in incentives. Moreover, the basic New Labour reluctance to increase income tax meant they were keen to exploit a variety of forms of stealth tax that would not be immediately obvious to the general public.

The introduction of the tax meant that schemes were subject to tax twice. First, thanks to Brown, they were subject to a tax on the returns on equity investments that had previously been protected in pension schemes and second, they were subject to the Lawson tax on the total asset valuation of the scheme should it exceed the 5% cap. While the abolition of the dividend tax credit provided the Chancellor with a handy new source of revenue, it effectively increased the cost of maintaining a solvent scheme. This would be felt most by firms that had become used to taking contribution holidays during the bull market. The returns a scheme would receive from its investments would be reduced by the amount of the tax. There would either have to be faster growth in the stock market or a return to contributions by the employers, probably at a higher rate. This additional cost would simply

magnify the inherent instability that had been introduced into the schemes by Lawson. The system became more dependent on a bull market and more susceptible to market volatility. Since the stock market is by nature volatile and was in the grip of a particularly irrational series of 'bubble' expansions (dot.coms, hedge fund speculation in East Asian markets, exploitation of new financial tools and opportunities based on derivatives trading and the use of off-balance sheet revenue techniques, Morgan, 2003) this was an astoundingly short-term perspective.

Though it was an astoundingly short-term perspective, it was not an inexplicable one. Scheme solvency remained the employer's responsibility. If years of holiday contributions should come to an end, and firms had to start contributing to their schemes again, this could hardly be described as an injustice. In the meantime, the Chancellor was seeking revenue to bankroll his reconstruction of the welfare state, especially increased investment in the National Health Service.¹³ But the new tax would be more than a return to how things had been. It would be an increase in the percentage cost of schemes and an increase that would hit home most at precisely the worst time – a bear market. This would produce a conflict of interest for firms that could mean that their commitment to their schemes would not survive. During a bear market dividend payments on shares reduce, which in turn tends to reduce the attractiveness of shares that in turn tends to reduce demand (a vicious circle). If at the same time firms have to redirect a greater proportion of capital to the maintenance of a solvent scheme, their capacity to maintain dividend payments will be reduced. This is exacerbated by the new costs of Brown's dividend tax. In such circumstances, something always has to give. Schemes are voluntary – there is no legal requirement for employers to run defined benefit schemes. There is not even a legal requirement for them to honour the promise to contribute on an employee's behalf to a scheme though there is a legal requirement to divide the value of the scheme between its members (prioritising those already retired) should it be closed. In the late 1990s, therefore, the Chancellor was effectively gambling that the system could absorb its own vulnerability to stock market volatility without giving firms sufficient motive to close schemes. However, the nature of accounting practices used in the calculation of schemes assets and liabilities meant that the system was more vulnerable than might at first have seemed the case.

The assets and liabilities of pension schemes are audited by specialist firms – Watson and Wyatt are the UK's largest. Since a large proportion of a scheme's assets are in equities and the value of these fluctuate, the standard way to value pension fund assets has traditionally involved measures that flatten out these fluctuations to a long-term average growth in earnings of

the scheme's portfolio. Mathematically complex though these calculations may be there is a great deal more divination than science about them since their key component is the inherent uncertainty of future returns not past performance. Significantly, there has been no external regulation of how these calculations are used to formulate assumed levels of long-term growth in scheme assets. Most schemes tend to assume long-term earnings of 5–10%. This form of accounting is highly problematic. Firms will tend to plan their future contributions (and holidays) to schemes on the basis of these asset forecasts. But it is highly uncertain that these levels will be met – particularly if the growth assumptions are high (towards 10%). Long-term planned contribution levels may, therefore, be too low. Employers are, of course, aware of this but face the opposing tendency to continue to take contribution holidays to boost dividends. The low level of the cap at 5% has simply exacerbated this problem since its existence produces a motivation to plan to contribute towards *the lower end* of the 5% range to avoid tax if growth rates should *exceed* expectations. If actual returns are lower than expected this simply increases the chance that the scheme will become insolvent. If it requires a 7.2% fall in the stock market to push a scheme to where current assets do not cover liabilities (assuming a 70% investment in equities) where the scheme is in surplus up to the 5% cap, the further from the cap the scheme is the harder it is hit by a bear market.

Significantly, however, the level of insolvency is effectively masked in the scheme's accounts on the basis of the (uncertain) long-term asset valuation. Though the scheme still has to meet rolling liabilities in the short term, the nature of the accounting practices still produces the possibility that firms can continue to under-contribute or take contribution holidays. This can continue even into a bear market because the asset valuation flattens out market fluctuations. According to a report by the market analyst's Dresdner, Kleinwort and Wasserstein (DKW), the average valuation assumption for pension funds in 2002 was 7.5% (Senior, 2003b). That year one in four employers made, following over a decade long pattern, no pension contributions (Senior, Miles, & Seib, 2003). Given that equity values fell on the FTSE by over 50% over the period 1999 to March 2003 from a high of 6,930 to a low of 3,277 it would be hard to describe this behaviour as anything other than reckless of the continuing viability of the schemes.

But it is a recklessness that the government did much to create and has done little to check. As this situation unfolded in the early 2000s, the government's response was to try to roll back the firms' tendency to take contribution holidays but to do so without denying themselves the potential revenue from the abolition of the dividend tax credit (around £5 billion a

year from all forms of scheme) and the 5% cap. Accordingly, the Accounting Standards Board, which independently regulates the auditing of pension schemes, has been in the process of introducing FRS 17 ([Accounting Standards Board \(ASB\), 2003](#)). Originally coming into full force in June 2001, FRS 17 requires that in addition to any other method of calculating liabilities and assets, schemes also provide a measure in terms of current market valuations. FRS 17 strips away assumed growth levels to show the basic degree of solvency of a scheme here and now. Using this measure has revealed a steadily rising estimation of a 'black-hole' in UK schemes from £70 billion ([Lister, 2003](#)) to £85 billion ([Miles & Rice, 2003](#)), to a high of £171 billion ([Senior, 2003b](#)). These deficits are exacerbated because schemes have delayed moving out of equities. This is because alternatives such as gilts tend to have fixed low rates of return and also lock the buyer in for an extended term at those low levels. Once large deficits have been accumulated shifting out of equities into investments that may have stable low returns over a long period might mean that the scheme misses out on a stock market rally meaning the employer is forced to make proportionally larger contributions in the future. Once in a bear market, therefore, there is a gamblers tendency to become trapped within it until some other factor forces one out. To a certain degree FRS 17 has started to provide that impetus because it has forced the credit-rating agencies to reassess the way firms are covering their liabilities. In February 2003, a number of firms were placed on negative credit watch by Standards & Poor's and in March they proposed bringing in a separate credit rating for firms' pension schemes ([Miles & Rice, 2003](#)). During the same period, equities have fallen to 51.3% of the total holding of pension schemes (including private pensions, [Moore, 2003](#)).

In isolation, FRS 17 is not a solution. The deficits remain and forcing firms to reveal these deficits only makes sense if their commitment to the schemes can also be secured. Once the deficits are revealed, firms must face up to increased contributions. For the firms this is a cashflow problem of their own making. In the worst case scenario, scheme deficits effectively bankrupt the firm. When this occurs there is a strong likelihood that existing employees will lose their entire pension since the under-funded scheme must first meet its liabilities to current retirees. Ironically, this does not necessarily mean the end of the firm since current legislation allows a management buyout to be structured that purchases the business of the firm but not the firm itself or its shares, meaning the new firm avoids responsibility for the deficit ([Jenkins, 2003](#)). Even where bankruptcy does not occur, by delaying contributions into a bear market employers effectively increase the size of the single year make-up contributions that are required to balance the scheme on

the basis of FRS 17. British Telecom (BT), for example, reported a deficit of £2.1 billion in a single scheme in 2003 requiring contributions of £232 million per annum over 15 years to make up the shortfall and it has other deficits totalling around another £5 billion (Sabbagh, Jameson, & Senior, 2003). Since the 5% cap and the abolition of the dividend tax credit has made the system more unstable and more expensive and the equity market has crashed, the voluntary nature of the system means that many firms have been given a greater motivation to wind up defined benefit schemes for new members and reduce their commitment to current members. In 2002, 83 large schemes closed to new members, including Marks & Spencer and British Airways (Moore, 2003). Many firms are increasing the level of employee contributions from 5 to 10% of salary, some are shifting to a 1/80th or even 1/100th accrual rate, others are using an average salary rather than final salary calculation (since average salary will be less than final salary) and are increasing the retirement age for full benefit (effectively reducing the years of payments to those who retire at the later age and the level of payment to those who retire 'early' at the previous standard age, usually 60). Some firms are even using the threat of closing their scheme as a wage bargaining tool since 'wage restraint' reduces final salaries and thus increases the 'viability' of continued defined benefit pension provision (Senior, 2003c). Most of those schemes that survive, however, are shifting over to a money purchase defined contribution basis – by 2002 over 70% of occupational pension schemes were based on defined contributions (DWP, 2002, p. 51).

Beneath all of these events and issues resides the deeper point that the basis of defined benefit schemes is essentially tied to the volatility of markets and that the state has exacerbated the problems of that volatility at the same time as firms have exploited the policies the state has imposed. The losers in this situation are workers. They did not create the situation they are simply confronted by it. For many this makes a mockery of the way in which they had been planning for their retirement. Moreover, the industry regulator, Opra, has proved itself a limited source of redress. Opra is highly reliant on the statutory duty of auditors to inform them of the misappropriation of scheme assets or of failures to maintain contributions to meet liabilities. Misappropriation is rare, and since auditors have, until FRS 17, accepted long-term growth estimates as a valid measure of assets, the basis of the duty to inform the regulator of contribution problems has been at best ambiguous. In May 2003, the cross-party Commons Public Accounts Committee criticised Opra for concentrating too much on late contribution payments by employers rather than addressing the bigger picture – particularly the tendency towards the closure of schemes.

But as Davis points out in his Quinquennial report, Opra is not really set up to deal with the major consequences of the structural problems of the schemes (Davis, 2002, pp. 27–28). Opra can appoint a further independent trustee to a scheme's board, but this does little to change the power balance within the board and does nothing to change the structural conditions confronted by either the scheme or the employer. Its powers to prevent the closure of schemes to new members (or “wind-up”) are extremely limited. Opra can delay the wind-up of a scheme by a firm that has not gone bankrupt if its scheme does not contain assets that will cover 40% of the benefits that members could anticipate. The vast majority of schemes easily meet this criterion. Opra has no power to prevent the closure of schemes to new members. It also has no direct control over the rules of accounting standards – this lies with the Accounting Standards Board. Full implementation of FRS 17 was shelved until late in 2005 in acknowledgement of the harm it was doing by motivating firms to close schemes.¹⁴ The damage of course, is already done, and, again this does not deal with the underlying issues. The collapse of defined benefit schemes has exposed the myth of work as a mutual commitment with mutual benefits that extend to the employee beyond working life. Firms, culpability aside, are now thinking of the schemes as ‘unsustainable drains’ on resources (Senior, 2003a). An important question then becomes are defined contribution schemes a good alternative form of pension provision? Below, I set out the basic uncertainties and inequities of these schemes, especially the time-dependent nature of annuity purchase linked to interest rates and equity values at the time of purchase. These uncertainties and inequities clearly indicate fundamental problems with the individualisation of risk and with the financialisation of pension provision.

4.2. The Risk Vulnerability of Defined Contribution Schemes

The potential collapse of defined benefit pension schemes is important for a number of reasons. One reason is that the alternatives do not provide the same level of benefits. Final salary schemes did not and do not cover the full workforce. They tended to be available to those who worked for the state and for workers in large long established Plcs. They were, however, the best the system had to offer. The alternatives are based on the build up of a fund used to buy an annuity and it is extremely unlikely that the level of that annuity can match a defined benefit scheme. The most consistent form of pension saving is provided by defined benefit occupational schemes (Cooper, 2002, p. 23). Putting aside the contributions controversy, the basic principle

is that they impose a savings discipline on employer and employee and those savings cannot be withdrawn (as ISAs can).¹⁵ This is also the case for defined contribution occupational schemes. The big difference, however, is that defined contribution schemes do not include any guarantee of pension levels such as the two-thirds level of most final salary schemes. This means there is no incentive for employers to make contributions to meet that salary level. According to the government's own figures the average employer contribution to defined benefit schemes is 9.9% of employee wage but only 4.3% in a defined contribution scheme (DWP, 2002, p. 52). This means that employees must make greater contributions to try to maintain their pension levels (IFA, 2003, p. 7). Francis Fernandes of the actuaries Lane, Clark, & Peacock notes that employees may have to increase their contributions to as much as 27% of their annual salary in order to have a reasonable chance of gaining the same level of benefits of an equivalent defined benefit scheme (Rice, 2003b). There is a clear pension savings gap emerging here because according to ONS figures average pension savings levels (where saving occurs) are stable at around 5% across income groups (ONS, 1999, Table 1.3). If one is relying solely on a personal pension, that gap is even greater. Not only do personal pensions remove the savings discipline of occupational schemes (according to the DWP a third of people buying personal pensions stop paying into them within three years, Pensions Service, 2003, p. 18), but also there is no employer contribution.

'Chance' is the appropriate term when thinking about the prospect that defined contribution schemes will perform at the same level as defined benefit schemes because what one's pension fund will be worth and the income it will buy are uncertain. If one is retiring during a slump in the stock market, the chances are that the overall size of the fund used to buy an annuity will be lower than during a bull market. Annuity rates also fall during market downturns – according to the market analysts Key Note, annuity values fell by 15% between 2000 and 2002 (Key Note, 2003, p. 2). Or rather they fall faster – since annuity rates are calculated more from gilt yields they are most sensitive to interest rates, interest rates have fallen progressively through the last 12 years reducing annuity rates from around 14% (1991) to around 7% today (Rice, 2003b). The principal point is that annuities introduce a new kind of risk into pension provision. Pension levels become risk sensitive in terms of being time-dependent, based on when an annuity is purchased. Annuity-based pension provision is described as a collectivised risk by the DWP (2002, p. 88), but it is a quite different variety of collectivised risk to a defined benefit scheme. Defined benefit schemes when honoured have a commitment to meet a given pension level. This is a

strong collectivisation of risk between employer and worker. Defined contribution occupational schemes weaken that collectivisation between the two, placing the greater weight on the worker, while personal pensions shift the entire risk load onto the worker. When the DWP talks of collectivised risk, they are really referring to the pooling of chance amongst the working population rather than a broader sense of an implicit contract between labour and capital that extends into retirement. The basis of this pooling of chance is essentially a roulette wheel of death encapsulated in life expectancy measures by actuaries. One contributes into a pension scheme and builds up a fund and purchases an annuity. The annuity provider calculates a rate with reference to life expectancy and this produces a degree of cross-subsidy between those who outlive the value of their fund and those who do not.

It is also important to note that, on the basis of risk, the 'chance' factor in the annuity system differentiates retirees by class and income. If one considers two individuals with equivalent length full working lives and the same standard 5% salary contribution to their pension funds (ONS, 1999, Table 1.3), where one has a salary level taxed at the basic rate and the other at the upper limit, the latter individual clearly accumulates a larger fund. 5% of the larger salary is a larger absolute figure. The larger 40p in the £1 tax break they enjoy produces a greater proportion of state contribution. At the same time, the sacrifices made during their working life to maintain that level of saving will be less than that of someone on a lower income. This is not only important because it perpetuates income differentials into retirement on the basis of the ease with which a fund can be accumulated but also because a larger fund increases the degree to which one can confront the inherent time-dependency risk of annuity purchase. Whether one can take the risk of deferring the purchase of an annuity (up to the age of 75) in the hope of a market upturn will depend on the size of one's fund. Leaving one's fund invested after retiring and relying on income drawdown (withdrawing a sum to live on) will, during a bear market, contract the overall size of the fund by the amount of the drawdown plus scheme charges plus the loss of value of the portfolio of the fund. A small fund could be whittled to nothing before any market upturn.¹⁶ According to the DWP, in 2001 43% of funds used to buy annuities were <£10,000 (DWP, 2002, p. 87).

This affluence-variable risk problem also applies to the range of specialised annuity products that the pension market offers. An investment annuity, for example, links the annuity (or some lesser value taken from it) to a unit trust. The bargain is that your fund underwrites trust losses and shares in trust gains. One chooses a growth rate (5%) then if the unit trust grows by 25% your pension grows by 20%, if it falls by 20% your pension reduces by

25%. Again, only those with a sense of pension fund surplus might consider this option (Ellis, 2003). This new differential of risk is quite different from a defined benefit scheme. The defined benefit schemes may produce differential pension outcomes based on lifetime salary but they do not produce an additional differential opportunity for achieving a pension income where the house rules favour affluent gamblers over others. This pension system is by its very nature unjust.

Nor does a defined benefit scheme further differentiate the interests of retirees (and those approaching retirement) from young new savers in the way that defined contribution schemes do. Young new savers paying into defined contribution schemes stand to gain from a bear market because each £1 potentially buys more shares than it would in a bull market. So long as the firms survive and the saver is able to defer an annuity purchase into a bull market in later life the apparent loss of fund value in the present period should not deter them from continuing to invest in the scheme. This can hardly be said to be the case for someone approaching retirement. For them, if fund charges plus portfolio depreciation exceed the tax break (from 22p to 40p in the £) then they experience a net loss on additional fund contributions that they simply may not be able to wait out in the hope of a market upturn. At the same time, they cannot easily choose to cease to make contributions to their scheme. Most scheme providers continue to apply standard charges to the value of your fund even if you cease to contribute. Standard charge levels range from 1 to 4% of the value of the fund per year. Scheme providers tend to disguise the nature of these charges by referring to them as RIY. The choice then becomes to accept this RIY or transfer the fund to another scheme. Transfer costs, however, can be as high as 20% of the value of your fund. Not only that, but the transfer value of a fund is always less than the stated value of the fund because the stated value is weighted according to a long term growth assumption of a kind similar to those used in asset valuation in defined benefit schemes. This is deducted from the current value for transfer purposes. The nearer one is to retirement and the nearer one's fund is to its final value, the larger the potential damage done by fund transfer (Seib, 2003c).¹⁷

Stakeholder pensions, introduced in 2001, avoid some of this problem by imposing a maximum 1% annual charge and limiting fund transfer costs. However, they are still designed as a means to generate a pension fund for annuity purposes. Since they are aimed at the low paid with intermittent employment records and do not stipulate an employer contribution, overall contributions are liable to be sporadic and small resulting in commensurately small funds that still maintain the basic vulnerability to market

volatility of other defined contribution schemes. Furthermore, given the small size of the funds, the fact that they are aimed at small businesses with few employees and have very low profit margins based on the 1% cap means that there is little incentive for the insurers to prioritise them because Stakeholder pensions will always be a minor revenue stream. Businesses are already complaining that they are finding it difficult to fulfil their statutory duty to find scheme providers. Since Stakeholders are administered through them, small businesses also fear a degeneration of labour relations if funds perform badly – which, given their basis as a risk product, they may (Moore and Senior, 2001). The DWP, however, are extremely upbeat about Stakeholders noting that over 1 million have invested in them by 2003 (DWP, 2002, p. 82). They neglect to note that most of these are transfers from other forms of personal pensions rather than new savers, that they are concentrated in larger small firms, and that only 1 in 100 people earning <£10,000 per year had invested in a stakeholder at the time of the assessment (Senior, 2003d).

The final way in which risk is important to the problem of defined contribution schemes is that the providers' strategies have compounded the same basic structural vulnerabilities of the system confronted by the defined benefit schemes. Defined contribution schemes, mainly under the auspices of the large insurance companies, face similar solvency tests to defined benefit schemes. Assets must cover annuity liabilities. Their investments tend to include the same proportion of exposure to equities (70%) and they employ similar long-run growth assumptions for accounting and auditing purposes. The major difference is that, unlike defined benefit schemes, employers do not carry the responsibility of varying contributions to maintain solvency – since there is no given salary liability to work from. Risk is, therefore, more concentrated and greater care is required by trustees to maintain solvency on the basis of invested funds and the ongoing process of contributions from current savers. As we have already argued, a volatile stock market, the abolition of the dividend tax credit and accounts that conceal current deficits make this a murky area of conflicting motivations. Moving out of equities is resisted because of the gambler's tendency to refuse the low returns on gilts in the hope of a market upturn. Ironically, having no other more liquid asset to call on, the large insurers are eventually forced to sell large blocks of equities to meet industry solvency measures and this simply encourages a spiral of falling share prices that not only continues to place pressure on solvency but decreases the fund values that retirees must use to buy an annuity. Britannic, for example, sold equities totalling 35% of its assets between 1999 and 2002 and still saw £320 million wiped off its share

values in early 2003 owing to fears over its solvency (Miles, 2003). This contradictory situation where the large schemes have a major impact on overall equity values and are pushed to sell large blocks of shares when they are themselves vulnerable to collapses in equity prices simply highlights another basic defect in the financialisation of pension provision. Furthermore, as a corollary of the irrationality of the structural conditions of solvency, annuity rates tend also to be forced down further because the schemes simply cannot afford better rates.

Two additional factors have exacerbated this solvency problem to contribute to recent high profile media reports. First, according to the Continuous Mortality Investigation Bureau (CMIB) and the GAD male mortality in all cohorts (defined by decades) in the UK has increased more rapidly than anticipated in annuity calculations – due to medical breakthroughs such as statins, betablockers, etc. This means that more of those born in the 1920s and 1930s are continuing to draw annuities beyond the life of their fund and more of those born in the 1940s can be expected to do so. According to Peter Quinton of the IFA annuity bureau the average pensioner uses up their annuity fund in 11–12 years but a majority are now living 20 years into that purchase (Budsworth, 2002). This places further pressure on the solvency of the insurers who had not anticipated this. In January 2003, for example, Legal and General disclosed that it had a £140 million deficit caused by this longevity problem (Merrell, 2003). What this suggests is a basic vulnerability to uncertainty in the cross-subsidy basis of the pooling of chance in life expectancy measures. This risk itself has turned out to be time-dependent. The losses life expectancy can create are obviously more easily absorbed during a bull market while the reverse is also true and this is an additional vulnerability in the system, particularly when government tax policy and standard accountancy practices have reduced the sense of urgency surrounding holdings of capital reserves required to meet such contingencies.

Guaranteed annuity rates are the second factor that has exacerbated the solvency problem. In the 1970s and 1980s, interest rates were consistently high in the UK and this motivated many schemes, as a gimmick, to offer a guaranteed annuity rate that could be a minimum of 10%, on the dubious basis that interest rates would be unlikely to fall significantly lower than this for any extended period. This is another example of a short-term perspective that is endemic to the system. Subsequently, interest rates have fallen precipitously and many recent retirees are now exercising their guarantee. Recent estimates put the cost to the life insurance companies at £12 billion (Miles, 2002). Equitable Life is the highest profile ‘victim’ of the

guarantee – or rather policyholders with Equitable Life are the highest profile victims. Beginning in 1998, the insurer began to experience solvency pressures resulting in a three-way conflict of interest.¹⁸ Those with guaranteed annuities have sought to exercise their guarantees while Equitable has tried to deny them that right. Longstanding policyholders without guarantees have seen the value of their funds plummet as the insurer's solvency came under scrutiny. Meanwhile, those without guarantees who later bought annuities with Equitable with funds from other schemes, on the basis that the FSA had not declared Equitable insolvent, face the uncertainty of Equitable's long-term viability (and, as latecomers, their place at the bottom of a long line of claimants against the insurer). Equitable has subsequently closed to new customers.

The eventual loser in all this is the retired worker. On the one hand, the money purchase basis of annuities focuses risk on the individual and does so in an asymmetric way that is time-dependent and favours the better off. On the other, the system contains inherent vulnerabilities that can undermine its capacity to deliver a pension income to all annuitants. Neither Opra, which is responsible for occupational defined contribution schemes, nor the FSA, who is responsible for the personal pension schemes, are set up to deal with these basic issues. Both have found themselves in the invidious position of standing with their metaphorical finger masking cracks in a large dam. In March 2003, Opra responded to concerns over the solvency of defined contribution occupational schemes by empowering trustees to refuse valuations to those seeking to transfer their fund out of troubled schemes. This was to prevent something akin to a run on a bank that produces a self-fulfilling insolvency. But at the same time it does nothing to address the basic causes of insolvency and denies policyholders the basic right to know how their money has been managed and what their fund is worth.¹⁹ This is scarcely the way to create confidence in a system in which few have any and again shows that Butler's thesis that somehow private pension schemes in financialised systems avoid the political issues of state provision is a dubious one. In June 2003, the DWP added the hammer blow that fund transfers could be discounted by the percentage to which the scheme is under-funded – effectively charging the policyholders for the incompetence of the management of the scheme. Again, this may deter fund transfer but it does nothing to alleviate the underlying structural causes of concern for policyholders.

The FSA, as part of its basic remit to raise market confidence and consumer awareness, is restricted by its core focus on the selling of pensions, rather than the structure of the system. With little sense of irony, given the Opra decision of March 2003, the FSA has since September 2002 been

engaged in publicising retired workers' right to shop around for an annuity (Rice, 2003a). Not surprisingly, according to Julie Stark of the Association of British Insurers only 34% of retirees do so.²⁰ The fact that the FSA has stringent powers to enforce compensation on scheme providers found guilty of inappropriate selling of pensions does not address the basic problem of solvency.²¹ That said, the FSA *is* in a position to declare an insurer insolvent and in early 2003 they did suggest that if the FTSE fell below 3,500 there was a clear danger that some schemes would become insolvent. The market did fall below this level, and as the Iraq war approached there were fears it would breach 3,000 (Peterson, Duncan, Hasell, & Seib, 2003). Realistically, however, any FSA threat is essentially hollow. To declare insolvency would simply exacerbate a confidence crisis and would be of little obvious help to fund holders. The FSA's only real room for manoeuvre is to criticise the insurers behind the scenes and to work to encourage schemes to build larger capital reserves to reduce their exposure to risk in the future. As the system stands this effectively means higher savings rates for current workers into a system in which it is difficult to have any confidence. In the meantime, in March 2003 the FSA wrote to all the major insurers to advise them on how to apply for solvency waivers. For policyholders at Equitable Life and the other major players this must appear like a truly galling endorsement of their woes.

5. AWAITING THE TURNER REPORT: NEW LABOUR'S NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS FAILURE TO ADDRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

The preceding sections have highlighted four main points. First, that there has been a general attack on pension provision amongst the major capitalist states and the basis of that attack is broadly neoliberal. Second, that the call to shift state pension provision towards individual financialised systems of forced savings is based on dubious premises concerning demographics, costs, and the superiority of finance markets. Third, that the UK experience indicates basic vulnerabilities and inequities in all forms of private pension provision which cast further doubt on a reliance on finance markets. Fourth, more fundamentally, the very focus of pension systems debate and analysis tends to obscure the broader issue of how to provide a pension system beyond a focus on work itself that covers the whole spectrum of society and does not simply perpetuate inequalities into old age.

This fourth point is further emphasised by New Labour's response to the growing media interest in a pension 'crisis'. The December 2002 Green Paper *Simplicity, Security and Choice* (DWP, 2002, p. 3) focuses squarely on the working population and attempts to defuse any sense of crisis by arguing that despite the problems of the schemes saving for retirement had increased by 40% since 1997. Though the figure was quickly shown to be false (Willets, 2003) that headlining figure was clearly intended to give the impression of a basically robust pension system despite market volatility. It thereby implicitly endorses a financialised pension system and arguments for increased private savings while militating against fundamental structural reform in favour of adjustments within the current system that foster the general tendencies set out in Section 2 and the dubious terms of debate these tendencies rely on. This places the Green Paper's further claim that 3 million are seriously under-saving and up to 10 million need to save more, in a systemically positive light (DWP, 2002, pp. 3–4). The majority of the 10 million become individuals who need to be encouraged to save more by improving confidence, access and information to currently available pension savings provision. The 3 million meanwhile, become a special group to be targeted by additional social security measures (the means tested Pension Credit) as well as the policies targeted at the 10 million (focussed around Stakeholders).

The first thing the Green Paper is notable for is what it does *not* contain and that is any acknowledgement of the role of the 5% asset surplus cap on final salary schemes, or the abolition of the dividend tax credit for pensions, in exacerbating the current woes of the pension system. New Labour clearly has no intention of denying themselves these revenue streams, despite their widely criticised effects. Accounting standard FRS 17 is referred to (DWP, 2002, p. 57), as are concerns over its effects in motivating the closure of schemes, but the need to promote and retain defined benefit schemes as the best the current pensions system has to offer is not central to the document. What the Green Paper does do is emphasise the *effects* of the structural issues we have addressed while de-emphasising the structural issues from which they derive.

This immediately serves the logic of minimal piecemeal reform. There is an acknowledgement that occupational schemes are moving over to a defined contribution basis and that personal pensions are also becoming increasingly important (DWP, 2002, p. 52). This is simply accepted as a constraint within which new regulation must work i.e. there is a need to promote increased individual saving to ensure that retirees have generated sufficient funds to buy an annuity. Significantly, the Green Paper notes that

current market volatility ‘raises concerns’ over whether pension provision should include such a large exposure to equities but counters that since long-term growth rates in share values are good, and that this reflects the strength of a successful UK economy, we need not consider short-term problems as good reasons for alternatives (DWP, 2002, p. 78). For all the reasons discussed in the last section this argument is flawed. Its importance, however, is that it conforms to an overall policy attitude that does nothing to criticise the increasingly individualistic nature of pension risk. If anything, the rhetoric of choice, simplification, and rebranding of pension “products” that are the watchwords of the Green Paper simply compound the basic individualisation of risk. There is something basically disingenuous in the key statement that (DWP, 2002, p. 19):

Above the foundation of support by the state, individuals, where possible supported by their employers are responsible for deciding the level of income on which they wish to retire. They need to choose the appropriate combination of saving and working to achieve this, making use of the choices offered to them by the Government, employers and the financial services industry.

The use of terms like decision, choice and appropriate serve to make pension provisions appear like any other market for consumption, equivalent to consumer preferences for Mars Bars over Snickers. Some people are simply going to choose (to prefer) to be poorer in old age than others. When translated into these terms the basis of New Labour’s thinking in neoliberalism is clear. Moreover, the cited statement assumes a confluence of interests, an equivalence of commitment to equitable pension provision and an equality of power in the system. Again, as the analysis in the previous section indicates, this can scarcely be held to be so. As Cooper notes (2002, p. 34), information and choice do not easily translate into power in the pension system. Power is already asymmetric and since New Labour seems intent on pursuing an individualised system that asymmetry can only be exacerbated.

One basic issue the Green Paper tackles is demography and work. Since life expectancy is increasing the paper argues for, in confluence with voluntarily higher savings rates, measures to *empower* the population to stay in the workforce longer. Accordingly, proposed policies include: increasing the retirement age for public services (teachers, nurses, etc.) from 60 to 65, consolidating the minimum early retirement age of access to an occupational pension to 55, increasing state pension age for women to the male equivalent of 65, thereafter increasing both male and female statutory retirement age to 70 and, finally, removing compulsory retirement age stipulations from labour contracts (DWP, 2002, Chapter 6).

This is empowerment in the sense that it creates and sustains the opportunity to work longer to generate greater contributions to pension funds. But in terms of choice it entails more stick than carrot since by extending the term of a full working life, retiring before that term will now incur the penalty of lower pension levels because one did not work the full term. SERPs contributions to the BSP and the State Second Pension would thus be taken at a lower level while the benefits from employer contributions to an occupational scheme might also be reduced by 'early retirement' clauses. This raises the important issue of who would 'choose' to work longer? Clearly, those most dependent on state provision and those on lower pay unable to generate an annuity fund able to accommodate 'early retirement'. But low paid manual labour jobs are scarcely conducive to continued employment into one's 60s. Similarly, the onerous stress and poor working conditions of teachers and nurses are hardly likely to make them look fondly on the prospect of continuing employment as sexagenarians. Meanwhile, those working in Tony Blair's 'dynamic knowledge economy' with commensurately high incomes, although perhaps better able to stay in work, will be more able to take early retirement. The government, of course, is concerned by ageism and notes that one third of over 50s are out of work, even where not counted amongst the officially unemployed (DWP, 2002, pp. 17, 96). But as the IFA notes 400,000 of that 2.8 million figure are long-term caregivers taking up the slack from a woefully inadequate welfare system and only 290,000 are actively seeking employment (IFA, 2003, p. 5). By definition, these are unlikely to be those with well-remunerated skills that are in demand. Ageism, therefore, while not unimportant, is a minor issue in terms of work and pensions and should not be a major plank in reforms aimed at increasing working lives. Poverty in old age is a far more important issue and ignoring other structural constraints simply ensures that the more vulnerable members of society are trapped between lower pensions and the hardship of longer years of work, where finding employment is itself difficult and alternative claims (such as long-term care) are made on their time.

This differentiation of retirement opportunities is also a basic problem with the Green Paper's approach to annuities. Annuities are endorsed as a fundamentally sound approach to pension provision (DWP, 2002, p. 88). From this position, one of the key challenges the DWP identifies is to improve the range of annuities to meet particular problems from *within* the system. Two of the key fears people have when buying an annuity is that the rate may be low when they come to buy and that they will die without using up the capital in the fund (which cannot then be passed on to dependents). Accordingly, the Green Paper first proposes that some proportion of the

residual value of a fund can be passed on to dependents at the time of death (DWP, 2002, p. 90). This, however, upsets the only form of collective risk pooling that annuities encapsulate, that of the cross-subsidisation basis of annuities where the early death of some pays the additional costs of those who outlive the value of their fund but continue to receive their contracted annuity. The Green Paper makes no mention of how this will work but it will surely decrease annuity rates as actuaries try to balance the cost and will probably result in higher fund charges to generate compensating revenue. The second proposal is to introduce limited period annuities based on an annuity contract of 3–5 years where the rate can be renegotiated at the end of that period using any remaining capital (DWP, 2002, p. 90). This appears to address the problem of buying at a low annuity rate during a market downturn. However, the long-term trend in annuity rates over 12 years has been downward precisely because of increased longevity, as well as falling and now relatively stable low interest rates. Since over the last decade, it is only the *rate* of fall that has been affected by market volatility the whole basis of the attraction of approximating a drawdown scheme is now open to question. In any case, the attractiveness of annuities is precisely that they guarantee an annual income even if you outlive the value of the original fund. Fixed-term contracts mean that one would be periodically buying a new annuity with a smaller fund. Longevity then becomes a danger rather than a bonus, particularly if one's fund is small (and remembering that 42% of annuity funds are <£10,000). If the basis of this system is that the fund continues to be valued as an investment in your name while the annuity is drawn then a market downturn will also depreciate the total fund value in addition to any income drawn from it to pay your annuity. It will, therefore, produce exactly the same gamblers risk as a drawdown scheme with the additional disadvantage that one cannot guarantee a continuous income until death from a purchased annuity. This can hardly be said to resolve the basic risk differentials in the annuity system or the underlying issue that people are simply living longer and must be provided for.

One of the key reasons for formulating alternative annuities is to generate confidence and thus induce higher individual pension savings. Having endorsed the basic soundness of the system, it follows that one reason for lack of confidence is a poor understanding of the financial system. Accordingly, the Green Paper argues that there is a need to improve people's understanding of what money purchase schemes can offer them, facilitating choice. Specifically, a greater knowledge of financial services should be promoted through an awareness campaign and introducing financial literacy into the National Curriculum (DWP, 2002, pp. 39–40). These, of course, are

long-term policies. In and of themselves, where effective, they will simply result in a sizeable proportion of the workforce becoming well aware of its potentially impoverished and at best uncertain retirement conditions – something that research suggests the young tend to resolutely suppress (*Key Note, 2003, p. 1*). Of course, one can endorse this as a positive move since it will eventually place greater pressure on the government of the day for more fundamental reform. Within the constraints of the current system, however, its effectiveness is highly doubtful – being able to read the projections on a pension fund breakdown is not the same as being able to grasp the range of arcane practices which constitute the current proliferation of financial services, vehicles, products, etc. At the same time it does nothing to enable workers to save more, particularly when one considers the contradiction that the so-called post-industrial societies such as the US and UK rely so heavily on consumption led growth facilitated by perpetual debt creation (which workers are coming to view as a lifetime income stream rather than a short-term borrowing) and also on flexible (dual track) labour markets prone to discontinuous employment. If anything, financial education will highlight how much one does not know and as such, it is better described as enlightened ignorance.

Interestingly, this enlightened ignorance also forms the preferred policy basis of the regulation of personal pension schemes. While noting that ‘pension fund trustees often lack the resources and expertise to make informed judgements about investment matters,’ (*DWP, 2002, p. 91*) the Paper endorses a voluntary code of best practice (to be reviewed in 2 years) to encourage institutional shareholder activism as a way of moderating poor fund management. But restricting regulation to a voluntary code having already endorsed the annuity system with its large exposure to equities is illogical. The key component in whatever stability such a system can offer is the accumulation of large capital reserves to prevent market volatility sending a scheme lurching into deficit. Overseeing those reserves should be genuinely independent trustees who magically combine both a sound knowledge of finance and a lack of network connections or personal relationships within the incestuous world of inter-locking corporate boards. Overseeing those trustees should be policyholders with genuine access to the system. None of this need be left to chance. Doing so simply mirrors the impotence of the FSA in the current personal pension crisis. It tacitly acknowledges that capital reserves will not rise in the near future because the firms are already experiencing solvency problems and must use current savings to meet their liabilities, and it tacitly acknowledges that the current distribution of trustees combines basic ignorance of financial complexity with a host of

compromised connections across the whole of the financial system. Ultimately, this is a tacit acknowledgement that wholesale legislative change within the system would be disruptive yet basically impotent to effect positive change in a politically acceptable time frame i.e. the life time of a parliament – setting legislative stipulations would therefore simply associate the government more closely with failure while voluntarism at least leaves them with scapegoats.

This same logic of distancing also applies to the regulation of occupational schemes. The Paper proposes to relax the regulation of short-term solvency breaches enshrined in Opra's remit to pursue employer's for contributions that are either late or too low (DWP, 2002, pp. 56–57) by reducing the number of audits (and thus administrative costs) and allowing a greater latitude in current funding levels referred to as 'self-regulation' on the basis of 'flexible scheme-specific funding requirements'. This basically does little more than acknowledge that defined benefit schemes are in disarray. It is also proposed that firms be required to 'consult' scheme members before they rewrite the basis of any defined benefit scheme (the accrual rate etc. – see DWP, 2002, pp. 134–136) or before moving from a defined benefit to a defined contribution basis (DWP, 2002, p. 69). Again this provides for dialogue but accepts that within the constraint of the dividend tax credit and the 5% cap the chances are that the trend will continue for schemes to move to a defined contribution system and radically decrease their own contribution rates.²²

What we have, then, is a Green Paper whose bottom line is a tacit acknowledgement of its own impotence based on an underlying neoliberal position. It is married to a notion of choice and empowerment that similarly encodes a highly differential and, with the demise of the defined benefit schemes, increasingly individualised risk. Beneath its forthright language of optimism lies a basic resistance to any attempt to either address the state's own culpability in recent problems of the pension systems or to address longer-term issues of the basic coherency of the pension system as a whole. Ironically, the major compulsion considered in an approving light in the Paper is the proposal that employers be given the option of making membership of their occupational scheme a condition of employment (DWP, 2002, p. 75). The possibility of compulsory saving is merely mentioned in the Paper. Consideration of its pros and cons is deferred until after a series of reports from a crown Pension Commission (DWP, 2002, p. 31) appointed in December 2002.

The Pension Commission is chaired by Adair Turner, vice-chairman of Merrill Lynch Europe and former head of the CBI. Its initial report of

October 2004 follows similar arguments to the Green Paper. Significantly, Turner's range of solutions includes the possibility of higher taxation. However, even as the report was being published the media was reporting that the DWP were ruling this option out (Jay, 2004). This was unsurprising since pensions might (and did) become an issue in the May 2005 election. Indeed one reason that the Commission was appointed with a deadline for its final report at the end of 2005 was to delay any political capital being made out of pension reform in the run up to the election. For the same reason the initial report's discussion of compulsory saving (Turner, 2004, Chapter 7) was also downplayed by ministers at that time. After the election, however, David Blunkett the newly appointed Minister for Work and Pensions, indicated that compulsory saving into named accounts could not be discounted as a possible solution to the pension problem (Jones, 2005). At the same time the financial services sector has begun to lobby in this direction. A Mori survey commissioned by the financial services group Sesame revealed that 73% of financial advisors supported a policy of compulsory saving backed by state incentives (Osborne, 2005). Ironically, a crisis manufactured by a combination of state policy, the nature of the finance industry, accounting practices and conflicting corporate interests has fuelled calls to compel workers to push more money into the financial sector on an individual basis.

The general election also forms the backdrop to the intermediary measures that the state has put in place to address the collapse of occupational, particularly defined benefit, schemes in the last few years. At first sight, New Labour has appeared to address the problem but on closer inspection the measures are parlous at best. In May 2004, the government announced a stopgap Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) to provide a compensation fund for those that had lost their pension savings from scheme insolvency while a further intermediary scheme was being developed. As I discussed earlier insolvent schemes rather than closed schemes form only a small proportion of the problem. Even here, however, the government estimated that the fund might need to cover 65,000 claims. It was not until February 2005 that the government published the basis on which those claims would be met. To qualify to claim one must be within three years of expected retirement age, e.g. 57 if the expected age was 60. Even so, one will still only receive an FAS pension at 65. If a company becomes bankrupt and its scheme is insolvent only the older, now unemployed, workers or those already retired are covered. If one were 57 at the time one would have to wait eight years to receive a pension. That pension would be 80% of the expected occupational pension the individual had saved for but is, crucially, capped at £12,000 with no index

link. If one were 65 in 2012 actuaries estimate, one might live another 12–15 years. By 2024, £12,000 is likely to be a poverty income by even the most conservative of estimates. In April 2005, the FAS was replaced by the Pension Protection Fund (PPF). The PPF only covers schemes for firms that collapse after that date, such as MG Rover is capped at £25,000 a year with a 2 1/2% constrained index link. Given that most schemes have either become insolvent, closed to new workers, or moved over to private personal pensions prior to April 2005, few will be eligible for this scheme.

6. CONCLUSION

The most urgent question that arises from consideration of the pension system is why New Labour should be so careful in deflecting the fundamental issue of how to address the need to provide a predictable, equitable and adequate pension for all. One does not need to look far for the answer to this question since it too is contained in the Green Paper. The Government clearly states its commitment to maintaining pension provision through social security at around 5% of GDP (DWP, 2002, pp. 19, 147). The 5% level is taken as given, for example, when arguing that the state cannot afford a non means-tested minimum income pension level. The key admission is that the current situation is affordable without any radical change to overall tax and spending (DWP, 2002, p. 24). Having already orchestrated a variety of highly regressive stealth taxes for other purposes, the state is clearly reluctant to associate itself with a high profile upheaval in taxation for pension purposes. Ironically, that they fear this may be politically unpopular simply affirms that people do not think about the long-term collective good of a larger guaranteed pension level because they are focussed on short-term interest and conflicting claims on their income. That people are prone to think in this way and in lower income groups are *constrained* to think in this way, is precisely why there is a role for greater government intervention in the pension system.

This abnegation is itself a form of political short-term thinking by New Labour. This is so in three ways. First, and most obviously, it is helping to fuel a new wave of union militancy. A recent poll of the largest private sector union Amicus indicates that its members' greatest concerns are job insecurity and pension shortfalls. According to its general secretary, Derek Simpson, 'These people are Labour's core constituency and the way to encourage these vital voters to support labour in the future is to address the issues they are concerned about'. (Buckley, Peterson, & Seib, 2003). Second,

Government Actuary Department projections indicate a 40% increase in population over the state pension age by 2030 (added to a 20% increase in the last 30 years). Over the same period the working population is projected to stay relatively stable (IFA, 2003, p. 3). If the current level of social security spending remains at 5% of GDP then this increase in the retired to working population means that the proportion of state to private pension provision will likely fall. According to IFA the traditional 60% state to 40% private split will be reversed to a 40–60% split (IFA, 2003, pp. 12, 14, 16). In light of the analysis of private pension provision, we have made this would tend to indicate an increase in inequality among the retired in the next three decades. Given the demographic trend, this raises the spectre of a future militant grey vote of the kind Third Millennium fear but one whose very existence is attributable to the kind of neoliberal thinking that such lobbies advocate (Key Note, 2003, p. 3).

This brings us to a third point. Though reluctant to tackle a major change to taxation for higher pension levels, the Green Paper does include a new stealth tax that will ultimately prove extremely unpopular with the upper middle classes who may otherwise have been a less militant portion of the grey vote. At the moment, all forms of private pension have an earnings or a contribution cap. In the name of simplification, the Green Paper proposes to replace this variety with a single £1.4 million cap on pension contributions. Anything beyond this level will be subject to recovery of the State's contribution and will also be subject to 40% income tax when money is withdrawn (producing a total charge of around 60% on the surplus over the cap). According to the DWP, this will affect just the top 5,000 earners in the near future. But pensions are long-term assets and according to Aeon Consulting, based on conservative estimates of poor equity performance, up to 250,000 people could be affected over the next 10 years and, based on a market recovery, the consultancy Mercer estimates up to 600,000 over 15 years (Seib, 2003a, b). Much like the dividend tax credit, this is a tax on successful investment strategies that simply invites responses ranging from new forms of avoidance to the disincentive to save. It may not be a key issue in terms of pensions and poverty but it is potentially a political problem for the longevity of New Labour with many of its recent supporters in the middle classes.

Ultimately, New Labour's reluctance to engage with fundamental pension reform reflects the basic political dilemmas of such reform. As with most structural issues such reform could not be pursued in an isolated way. If the state were to propose an increase in progressive direct taxation in order to fund a single unified non means-tested and index-linked pension system

designed for complete coverage of the UK population it would face a number of obstacles. Since the system might also include a new form of compulsory saving in addition to National Insurance there might also be good reasons to increase the minimum wage. The new unified system would be difficult to afford without a new and enlarged compulsory employer contribution. Both would mean direct conflict with industry and the CBI at a time when business already complains of red tape and the increasing burden of various stealth taxes in the current economic climate. Rationalising these stealth taxes to produce a tax system with lower administrative costs (as direct non means-tested taxation always has, [Johnson, 1991, p. 125](#)) is a massive undertaking. Even assuming the argument was considered persuasive, government pragmatists are surely aware that wholesale change is something they do badly. The negative publicity engendered over something as potentially simple and yet operationally disastrous as replacing the computer system at the passport office would give pause for thought. Moreover, a new system would mean a fundamental restructuring of the link between pensions and the finance system. As things stand, and despite the current woes of schemes and insurers, pension funds are massive investors in the finance system. What effects a new pension structure for pension provision might have on that system would be highly dependent on how it was designed. But any effort to even contemplate such redesign will inevitably be resisted by the large insurers, the pension industry organisations, and wider interests in finance. This is precisely why all of these groups consistently, even when acknowledging the problem, argue for greater investment in personal pensions and for voluntary codes ([NAPF, 2003](#)).

Persuasiveness is, in any case, difficult. In an ideological sense, it requires one to combat the way in which investment culture has been internalised to become part of the accepted everyday experience of life in the UK ([Harmes, 2001](#); [Blackburn, 2002b](#)). Just as the poor are always with us, now the financial markets, with their characteristic volatility, are always with us, as inevitable as death and resistance to higher taxes. It is against this background that New Labour's position becomes intelligible. Partial and irrational pension provision is simply the system we are beginning to believe we can afford. This is a regressive trend in social welfare. Behind it is a return to the concept, articulated by Churchill in 1925, of the State's role in pension provision as a minimal, last and charitable resort – the 'ambulance of state aid'. Behind that is thinking much like Earl Rosebery's response to the introduction of the very first state pension for the over 70s in 1908 which was deemed 'so prodigal of expenditure as likely to undermine the whole fabric of the Empire', ([Jenkins, 1998, p. 163](#)). Such a position undermines

Gordon Brown's claim that the state is committed to 'tackling inequality and renewing public services' and that we have 'a Britain of economic strength and social justice'. (Brown, 2003).

Indeed, nowhere is New Labour's failure to provide a coherent alternative to neoliberalism while distancing itself from social democracy more apparent than in the current state of pension provision. Labour's rhetorical brand of communitarian politics based in the reconstruction of socialism as primarily an ethical project rather than a project of social transformation through economic restructuring contains basic contradictions (Driver & Martell, 1999). The concentration on equal opportunity ('a hand-up rather than a hand-out') rather than equality of outcomes, of individual responsibility and obligation in a 'one-nation stakeholding society' has proved incompatible with the collectivisation of risk that is at the heart of rational pension provision. A rational pension system must be based on both a real ethical commitment to ensuring that not only the workforce and their dependents but society collectively reach retirement age with an adequate income and an understanding that the collective rationality of society based on that ethical commitment may not be met by individual behaviour or a volatile financial system. The current fragmented and irrational state of the pension system itself indicates this.

NOTES

1. See, for example, the World Bank Report (1994).
2. As a result the UN forecasts that the number of dependents per adult will rise from 61 per 100 to 92 in 2050 (Blackburn, 2002b, p. 20).
3. The state mandated wage increases of 18% for workers to soften the initial blow of forced saving. The administration and supervision of pension savings were also at least notionally separated from the state by the creation of the Superintendency of Pension Funds Administrators.
4. SERPs was initially calculated over the best 20 years earnings (to help those with breaks in employment) but was altered to full working life in 1986.
5. Or one can simply make a lower percentage of National Insurance contribution when in an occupational pension scheme.
6. The MIG calculation discounts disability living allowance, attendance allowance, housing benefit or council tax benefit
7. $1/60$ th of £30,000 = £500 multiplied by 40 years = £20,000.
8. Opra has the power to:
 - Prohibit a person from being a trustee;
 - Suspend trustees;
 - Appoint independent trustees;

- Wind up schemes;
- Apply for an injunction from the courts to prevent misuse or misappropriation of scheme assets; and
- Apply for an injunction from the courts to delay the wind up of schemes that do not meet the minimum value of assets to liabilities.

9. Unlike the USA it is not ordinarily the case that an annuity is guaranteed for a specific duration allowing a beneficiary to continue to receive the income, should the policy-holder die. Such policies are however available.

10. Excluding charges for buying and selling fund investments and stamp duty.

11. The act itself was part of a broad set of reforms aimed at the stock exchange (Johnson, 1991, p. 197).

12. After a phone conversation with a pensions specialist at the IR headquarters in Nottingham, it arose that no direct figures are provided for holidays. They are derivable by approximating from schemes average value report to estimate amounts not contributed on the basis of current estimates of surplus. Interestingly, those estimates were large (averaging 14%) since they predate FRS17 and thus the requirement to provide a report not based on long-term growth assumptions.

13. The total government tax take in 1996/1997 was £270billion, the projected figure for 2002 was £405billion (an additional £44 per head of population).

14. The reason given was that the corresponding International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS, 19) is being reviewed and the UK standard will have to be in conformity.

15. ISAs introduced in April 1999 have a fixed maximum contribution of £7,000 per year and benefit from a 10% tax credit on dividends until 2004.

16. It is also worth noting that those who can defer annuity purchase also gain the additional advantage that their fund can be passed on to dependents (less 35% tax) if they die. Once an annuity is purchased this is not the case – if I bought an annuity today with my pension fund and died tomorrow the fund is lost (the current Green Paper is assessing this problem).

17. The problem of making the decision to transfer is compounded by the administrative procedures of the scheme providers. Getting providers to provide an accurate transfer valuation is extremely time consuming. Transfer delays can run up to 6 months from the point of the decision. If the transfer is being made in order to move to a scheme with lower charges or with the intention of immediately purchasing an annuity from a scheme that offers a better annuity rate the delay prolongs exposure to the higher charges or increases the risk that the rate at the new provider will fall (Rice, 2003a).

18. According to the accountants Burgess and Hodgson, in a report submitted to the Penrose Treasury Enquiry by the Equitable Members Action Group (EMAG) Equitable had been consistently running its scheme at a £1billion deficit, through precisely the accounting ambiguities previously described, before the with-guarantee situation created an additional £1.5billion hole in the scheme. The Penrose report is due June 2003 but, significantly its recommendations and full publication are subject to a Treasury veto – given that its findings may expose the government to compensation claims based on tax regulation of the industry, there is a clear conflict of interest here.

19. Notably, public sector workers, including civil servants and MPs, are exempt from this condition.

20. See also the new FSA online annuity tables designed to facilitate shopping around (FSA, 2003).

21. Even in terms of mis-selling, there are problems since there is no legal requirement on pension providers to follow up on a sale to ensure that the scheme remains appropriate to any changes in circumstances.

22. Where an employer chooses to wind up a scheme policy proposals differ on the basis of the firm's solvency. If an insolvent employer is forced to wind up their scheme, scheme members may no longer be the lowest category of unsecured creditor but rather have joint status with other unsecured creditors (and thus be the joint lowest, DWP, 2002, p. 64). If a solvent employer chooses (after 'consultation') to wind up a scheme the DWP is considering legislating to enforce a further payment by the employer to ensure that employee's near retirement age receives the full fund level they might have expected with which to buy an annuity. The level of that payment, however, may be tempered by the need to balance the financial burden on the firm (DWP, 2002, p. 67).

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