

Significant Pattern to 9/11 Report's Omissions & Distortions

This is a transcript of testimony delivered by theologian David Ray Griffin to the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference on September 23, 2005.

Testimony at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference 2005 (September 21-24, Washington Convention Center, Washington, DC) for the session, 'The 9/11 Omission: What the Commission Got Wrong,' September 23, 2005, sponsored by Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (D-GA).

By **Dr. David Ray Griffin** - September 27, 2005

Introduction

There have been two main theories about 9/11, each of which is a conspiracy theory. The official conspiracy theory says that the attacks were planned and carried out entirely by al-Qaeda. The alternative theory says that the attacks could not have succeeded without the involvement of forces within our own government.



In examining *The 9/11 Commission Report*, I have focused on how it dealt with evidence supportive of the alternative theory. I have found that it did so by distorting or simply ignoring this evidence. This is no surprise, because the man running the Commission, Philip Zelikow, was essentially a member of the Bush-Cheney administration. But it is a fact that needs to be brought to light.

Because there are so many omissions and distortions—in my [book](#) I identified at least 115—I can point to a significant percentage of them only by moving through my representative list quite quickly.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Flights 11 and 175](#)
- [The Collapse of the Twin Towers](#)
- [Building 7](#)
- [Flight 77](#)
- [The Strike on the Pentagon](#)
- [Flight 93](#)
- [The Behavior of the Secret Service with the President](#)

Flights 11 and 175

I will begin with the question of how hijacked airliners could have struck the Twin Towers.

The Commission's answer was the third answer we have been given to that question. The first answer, given by military leaders the first few days after 9/11, was that no fighter jets were sent up until after the Pentagon was struck. The second answer was contained in a timeline put out by NORAD on September 18, one week after 9/11, in which it stated the times at which it had been notified by the FAA about each flight and then the times at which it had fighters scrambled. The Commission failed to mention this change of story.

With regard to Flight 11, the Commission claimed that the military received notification about its hijacking 9 minutes before it struck the north tower. The military was unable to intercept it, however, because Colonel Marr, the head of NEADS—NORAD's Northeast Sector—had to telephone a superior in Florida to get permission, and this call took 8 minutes. The Commission, besides failing to ask how such a call could take so long, also failed to point out that, according to Department of Defense procedures, the call was unnecessary.

With regard to Flight 175, the Commission claimed that the military received no notification about it until after it had struck the south tower (22-23). But NORAD, in its September 18 timeline, had said that notification had been received at 8:43, a full 20 minutes before the south tower was struck. So if the Commission's new story is true, then NORAD officials were either lying or their memories were so bad that they got confused one week after the events. The Commission, however, failed to press this question.

THE
9/11
COMMISSION REPORT



Omissions and Distortions

by **DAVID RAY GRIFFIN**
author of The New Pearl Harbor

Whenever there is a crisis, the FAA sets up a teleconference with the military. Information about Flight 175's hijacking, it would seem, should have come to the military by means of this teleconference. The Commission, however, claimed that the FAA did not set up this teleconference until 9:20, 17 minutes after Flight 175 had crashed into the south tower (36). In making this claim, however, the Commission failed to mention a memo from the FAA's Laura Brown, which said that the teleconference was established 'within a few minutes' after the first tower was struck, which would have been about 8:50. The memo also said that the FAA conveyed information about all 'flights of interest,' which would have included Flight 175. Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste read this memo into the Commission's record during a hearing in 2003. But the Commission's final report pretends that this memo did not exist.

The Commission's claim about the military's ignorance of Flight 175 also ignores a story involving Captain Michael Jellinek, a Canadian who on 9/11 was overseeing NORAD headquarters. According to this story, Jellinek was on the phone with NEADS as he watched Flight 175 crash into the south tower and asked, 'Was that the hijacked aircraft you were dealing with?'—to which NEADS said yes.

The Collapse of the Twin Towers

Some more omissions and distortions involve the question of why the Twin Towers collapsed after being struck by the airliners.

The Commission failed to mention that prior to 9/11, fire had never caused steel-frame high-rise buildings to collapse, even when the fires were much bigger, hotter, and longer-lasting than the fires in the towers. It did not mention, in other words, that all previous collapses had been caused by carefully placed explosives in a process called controlled demolition.

The Commission also did not mention that the collapse of each tower had at least 10 features characteristic of controlled demolitions. For example, each collapse (1) began suddenly, (2) came straight down, (3) occurred at virtually free-fall speed, and (4) produced an enormous amount of dust, which happens when explosives pulverize concrete into tiny particles.

Each collapse was also total, with each 110-story building collapsing into a pile of rubble only a few stories high. How such a total collapse could occur—if explosives were not used—is a complete mystery, because the core of each tower consisted of 47 massive steel columns. The main explanation for the collapse is a pancake theory, according to which the floors above the hole created by the plane's impact broke loose from the columns and fell on the floor below, thereby starting a chain reaction. But if this is what happened, the core columns would have still been sticking a thousand feet into the air. The Commission handled this problem by simply denying the existence of these core columns, saying: 'The interior core of the buildings was a hollow steel shaft.' (541n1)

Another standard feature of controlled demolitions is, of course, the occurrence of explosions. The oral histories recorded by the New York Fire Department, which were finally released this past August, contain dozens of testimonies about multiple explosions in both towers, which reinforce previously available testimonies. However, although the Commission had access to the oral histories, it did not quote any of them.

That is too bad, because the authors of the Report obviously like colorful quotations, and the 9/11 oral histories contain some pretty good ones. For example, firefighter Thomas Turilli, referring to the south tower, said that 'it almost sounded like bombs going off, like boom, boom, boom, like seven or eight.' Paramedic Daniel Rivera, describing what he called a 'frigging noise,' said: 'do you ever see professional demolition where they set the charges on certain floors and then you hear 'Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop' That's exactly what . . . I thought it was.' Firefighter Edward Cachia, referring to the collapse of the south tower, 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.' Assistant Fire 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 . . . blow up a building. . . ' 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.'

The question of whether explosives had been used could have been settled by a scientific examination of the steel columns. However, even though removing evidence from a crime scene is usually a federal offense, the authorities allowed the steel to be quickly removed and sold as scrap metal. This removal was protested by the *New York Times* and *Fire Engineering* magazine. The 9/11 Commission, however, said nothing about it.

The Commission also failed to mention Mayor Giuliani's statement, made to Peter Jennings, that he had learned in advance that one of the towers was going to collapse. The Commission did not, therefore, need to ask Giuliani why anyone, prior to the collapse of the south tower, would have expected it to collapse, given the fact that there was no objective evidence or historical precedent for such a collapse.

The Commission also did not mention that the CEO of the company that was in charge of security for the World Trade Center was Wirt Walker III, the president's cousin, or that Marvin Bush, the president's brother, had been one of this company's directors.

Building 7

The Commission also omitted many vital facts about the collapse of building 7. This collapse is especially important, because the collapses of the Twin Towers are usually attributed partly to the impact of the airplanes, but building 7 was not struck by a plane and yet it collapsed in essentially the same way, showing all the signs of a controlled demolition. The Commission did not mention these facts.

It also did not mention that firefighters were removed from building 7 several hours in advance because someone spread word that it was going to collapse, even though there were, according to all available photographs, fires on only a few of this building's 47 floors. The Commission again could have included some interesting quotations from the 9/11 oral histories. For example, Decosta Wright, a medical technician, said: 'I think the fourth floor was on fire. . . . [W]e were like, are you guys going to put that fire out?' 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.'" But the Commission says nothing about this decision not to fight the fires, based on advance knowledge that the building was going to collapse.

The Commission also did not mention that Larry Silverstein, the building's owner, said on a PBS show that he and the 'fire department commander' decided it would be best to 'pull' the building, after which 'we watched the building collapse.'

The Commission avoided pointing out any of these things by simply not finding any room in its 571-page book to mention the fact that building 7 collapsed—even though it was supposedly the first large steel-frame building in history to collapse from fire alone.

Flight 77

There are also many omissions and distortions related to Flight 77.

According to the Commission's new timeline, the FAA did not notify the military about Flight 77 before it struck the Pentagon (34). NORAD's previous timeline, to be sure, had said that the FAA had provided this notification at 9:24. Critics had then pointed out that this notification, coming 14 minutes before the Pentagon was struck, meant that the military should have been able to prevent the strike. The Commission's new story avoids this problem by simply declaring NORAD's earlier statement 'incorrect' (34), again ignoring the question of whether NORAD officials had been lying or were simply afflicted by terrible memories.

Another problem for the Commission's claim is that there were three teleconferences going on by then. Why did the military not learn about Flight 77 from, for example, the FAA's teleconference, which even the Commission agreed began by 9:20? Because, we are told, the person at the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon who was assigned to this teleconference found it worthless and hence didn't pay attention (36). This account, however, ignores Laura Brown's memo, which reported that the FAA had connected with both the Pentagon and NORAD, with which the FAA shared 'real-time information' about 'all the flights of interest, including Flight 77.' Her memo said, in other words, that the FAA had told the military about Flight 77 long before 9:24. Commissioner Ben-Veniste commented on the significance of this statement at the hearing in which he read the memo into the record. But the Commission wrote its final report as if this memo did not exist.

The Commission also had another problem. Fighters had clearly taken off from Langley Air Force Base at 9:30 that morning. NORAD had said that they were sent up after it had received notification about Flight 77's hijacking at 9:24. The Commission

handled this problem by simply declaring NORAD'S statement 'incorrect' (34). But then the Commission had to explain why the Langley jets took off at 9:30. The Commission did this by means of a new concept, 'phantom Flight 11.' That is, the Langley fighters were really scrambled in response to a false report from the FAA that Flight 11 was still aloft and headed towards Washington (26). The proof of this claim, we are assured, is provided by an audiofile on which someone from the FAA center in Boston told someone at NEADS about this flight. No reporter can confirm this story, however, because the Commission was 'unable to identify the source of this mistaken FAA information' (26). But the Commission failed to explain why, given the sophisticated voice identification techniques now available, it could not identify the two individuals on this audiofile.

The Strike on the Pentagon

I turn now to problems in the Commission's treatment of the strike on the Pentagon.

The Commission claimed that no one knew that an aircraft was heading towards Washington until about 9:36, just a couple minutes before it struck the Pentagon (34). But Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta had reported a conversation showing that Vice President Cheney, along with others in the shelter conference room under the White House, knew at least 10 minutes earlier that an aircraft was approaching. The Commission, in claiming otherwise, simply made no mention of Mineta's report, even though it was given in open testimony to the Commission itself.

The Commission also failed to deal with many problems in the claim that the aircraft that hit the Pentagon was Flight 77 under the control of Hani Hanjour.

For example, the aircraft, in order to hit the west wing, reportedly executed a downward spiral that would have been difficult for an accomplished pilot, and yet Hanjour was known as a terrible pilot. The Commission handled this problem by admitting Hanjour's deficiencies on some pages (225-26, 242) while claiming elsewhere that he was given this assignment because he was 'the operation's most experienced pilot' (530n147).

The Commission also failed to point out that if terrorists had wanted to cause maximal death and destruction, the west wing would have been their last choice: it had been reinforced, so the damage was less severe than a strike anywhere else would have been; it was still being renovated, so relatively few people were killed; and the secretary of defense and all the top brass, whom terrorists would presumably have wanted to kill, were in the east wing, as far removed from the west wing as possible.

The Commission also failed to discuss several factors that have led some critics to conclude that the aircraft that hit the Pentagon was not even a Boeing 757. This controversy could be cleared up by simply showing the videos that were confiscated from the security cameras at the nearby Sheraton Hotel and the Citgo gas station across the freeway. But the Commission failed to subpoena them or even to mention their existence.

Finally, the Commission claimed that al-Qaeda hijackers did not strike a nuclear plant because they feared that their plane would be shot down by an anti-aircraft defense system (36). But the Commission failed to discuss whether the Pentagon is not protected by some such system, which would normally shoot down any aircraft without a US military transponder.

Flight 93

There are also many serious omissions and distortions in the Commission's treatment of Flight 93.

One thing omitted is considerable evidence that Flight 93 was shot down by our own military.

The Commission addressed this question only indirectly'-by constructing another new timeline, according to which the military did not learn about the hijacking of Flight 93 until after it had crashed. This claim, however, required ignoring Laura Brown's memo on more time.

The Commission also claimed that the military could not have learned about Flight 93 from the White House videoconference organized by Richard Clarke because it did not include 'the right officials from both the FAA and the Defense Department' (37). But Clarke's book, *Against All Enemies*, states that the FAA was represented by its head, Jane Garvey, and that the Defense Department was represented by Secretary Rumsfeld and General Richard Myers, who was then Acting Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These were surely the 'right people.' Clarke says, moreover, that Garvey's list of potential hijacks, which she read while Myers and Rumsfeld were listening, included 'United 93 over Pennsylvania.'

The Commission also claimed that it did 'not know who from Defense participated' in Clarke's videoconference (36). That unbelievable statement perhaps had something to do with the fact that Myers claimed that he was on Capitol Hill that morning

at just the time that Clarke's book had him in the Pentagon participating in the White House videoconference. The Commission simply endorsed Myers' claim (463n199), failing to point out its conflict with Clarke's account.

In any case, the Commission's new timeline also claimed that the shoot-down order was not issued by Cheney until after 10:10 (237-38), hence 7 or more minutes after Flight 93 had crashed, and that the order was not received by Richard Clarke until 10:25 (37). The Commission omitted the fact, however, that Clarke himself said that he received the order at about 9:50.

The Commission also failed to mention that, according to ABC News, Colonel Marr at NEADS received the shoot-down order and then instructed fighter pilots to destroy the airliner, saying: 'United Airlines Flight 93 will not be allowed to reach Washington, D.C.' The Commission also did not mention that CBS News and even Paul Wolfowitz, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, reported that military fighters were on Flight 93's tail.

Another part of the Commission's new timeline is its claim that the vice president did not arrive in the shelter conference room until 'shortly before 10:00' (40). In making this claim, however, the Commission had to ignore many previous reports, including Norman Mineta's testimony, to the Commission itself, that Cheney was already in charge down there when Mineta arrived at 9:20.

The Behavior of the Secret Service with the President

I will conclude with the Commission's treatment of the behavior of the Secret Service agents with President Bush. The president was in a classroom in Sarasota when the second plane crashed into the World Trade Center, clear evidence that terrorists were using hijacked airliners to attack high-value targets. There was no higher-value target than the president, and his location had been widely publicized. Secret Service protocol called for the agents to rush the president to a predetermined safe location. And yet they allowed him to remain at the school another half hour and even to address the nation on television, thereby letting any terrorists know he was still there. The 9/11 Commission's only comment about this remarkable incident was to report that '[t]he Secret Service told us they . . . did not think it imperative for [the President] to run out the door.' The apparent implication of the Secret Service agents' behavior—that they knew that the president was not a target—went unmentioned by the Commission, like all the other evidence pointing to official complicity in the attacks.

This is part of the evidence that has led me to the conclusion that [the 9/11 Commission Report is a 571-page lie](#).

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