

9/11: Let's Get Empirical

Most of us get our information from the mainstream media. Despite all the inconsistencies in the official story, it's no wonder that many of us believe the official story – because the mainstream media continually trumpet the official story as fact. Empirical evidence to the contrary is widely available on the Internet and in the alternative media – offered to us by respected citizen-researchers like David Ray Griffin.

BY DAVID RAY GRIFFIN

Some years back there was a popular song entitled *Let's Get Physical*. Because of my philosophical interests, a friend gave me a button saying "Let's Get Metaphysical." Now, having been involved with the 9/11 Truth movement for several years, I have a new plea: *Let's get empirical*.

The reason I make this plea is explained at the outset of my book, *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*. I begin by saying: "The evidence that 9/11 was an inside job is overwhelming. Most people who examine this evidence with an open mind find it convincing."¹ The only real problem is to get journalists and other people to examine this evidence. Many of them believe they need not do so because they already 'know' the claim – that 9/11 was an inside job – to be false. As a result, many journalists, whether writing for *The New York Times* or *The Guardian* or *The Progressive* or *The Nation*, have pontificated about 9/11 while revealing that they know virtually nothing about the relevant facts. The question about what happened on 9/11 can be answered responsibly only on the basis of knowledge of these facts, and yet these journalists, like many other people, have used various means to avoid getting empirical about 9/11.

Using the 'Conspiracy Theory' Label to Avoid Getting Empirical

One way to avoid getting empirical relies on an ambiguity involved in the term 'conspiracy theory.' There are two main theories as to what happened on 9/11. According to the government's theory, the attacks were planned and carried out solely by Arab-Muslim members of al Qaeda under the direction of Osama bin Laden. According to the 9/11 Truth movement's theory, the attacks were orchestrated, or at least assisted, by individuals and agencies within our own government.

Many people, including many journalists, assume that the 9/11 Truth movement's theory can be dismissed *a priori* [see text box above] because it is a 'conspiracy theory.' But a conspiracy, says my dictionary, is "an agreement to perform together an illegal, treacherous, or evil act."² To hold a conspiracy theory about some event is, therefore, simply to believe that this event arose out of such an agreement. This is, we can say, the generic meaning of 'conspiracy theory.'

Given this generic meaning of the term, we are conspiracy theorists if we believe that individuals have conspired to rob banks, that oil companies have conspired with scientists-for-hire to conceal the reality of human-caused global warming, or that US presidents have conspired with members of their administrations to present false pretexts for going to war. In other words, once we get empirical about the term 'conspiracy theory,' we realize that we are all conspiracy theorists. Announcing that one rejects conspiracy theories has become almost a reflex action, but we

would be more honest if we, with Michael Moore, would say: "Now, I'm not into conspiracy theories, except the ones that are true."³

In spite of the obviousness of this point, many

journalists follow propagandists in using the term 'conspiracy theories' as an accusation. We can call this the *propagandistic* meaning of term. Those who use the term in this propagandistic way ignore its generic meaning, thereby equating conspiracy theories as such with one particular type of conspiracy theories – those that are irrational, unscientific, or, as the British say, 'loopy.' There are certainly plenty of conspiracy theories in this sense. But our newspapers and TV news programs contain reports of new conspiracies almost every day, so it is dishonest – it is pure propaganda – to imply that all conspiracy theories are unworthy of belief. Those who use the term in this propagandistic way against the 9/11 Truth movement fail to point out that the government's theory, which they endorse, is equally a conspiracy theory – that the only difference between the two theories concerns the identity of the conspirators.

For example, Jim Dwyer of *The New York Times* wrote a story entitled "2 US Reports Seek to Counter Conspiracy Theories About 9/11."⁴ A more accurate title would have been: "2 US Reports Say Government's Conspiracy Theory Is Better Than Alternative Conspiracy Theory." But the *Times*, like other mainstream publications, does not use 'conspiracy theory' in this evenhanded way.

In an essay entitled, "Enough of the 9/11 Conspiracy Theories, Already,"⁵ Matthew Rothschild of *The Progressive* said:

Here's what the conspiracists believe: 9/11 was an inside job. Members of the Bush administration ordered it, not Osama bin Laden. Arab hijackers may not have done the deed. ... [T]he Twin Towers

Definition of: 'A Priori' – characterized by, or derived by, reasoning from self-evident propositions; without critical investigation; presumptively; with insufficient evidence.

– From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary



The Bush administration's 'conspiracy theory' of who planned and carried out 9/11 is: Osama bin Laden and 19 Arab-Muslim members of al Qaeda



The 9/11 Truth movement's alternative 'conspiracy theory' of who orchestrated the attacks (or assisted them) is: individuals and agencies within our own government

fell not because of the impact of the airplanes and the ensuing fires but because [of] explosives. ... I'm amazed at how many people give credence to these theories.

Rothschild did *not* have a paragraph saying:

Here's what the government's conspiracists believe: 19 hijackers with knives and box-cutters defeated the most sophisticated defense system in history. Hani Hanjour, who could barely fly a Piper Cub, flew an astounding trajectory to crash Flight 77 into the Pentagon, the most well-protected building on the planet. Other hijacker pilots, by flying planes into two buildings of the World Trade Center, caused three of them to collapse straight down, totally, and at virtually free-fall speed. ... I'm amazed at how many people give credence to these theories.

It did not occur to Rothschild to say this because he uses 'conspiracy theory' as a term of abuse, for theories he does not like.

A senior editor for *In These Times*, writing about his experience in 2005 of seeing my C-SPAN lecture, "9/11 and American Empire," wrote: "[Having always thought highly of Griffin,] it was shocking to see him pushing a radical conspiracy theory about 9/11 on C-SPAN. ... What could have transformed this sober, reflective scholar into a conspiracy theorist?"⁶ The truth, of course, was that I had been a conspiracy theorist about 9/11 all along. But I did not become a conspiracy theorist in this editor's eyes until I had rejected the government's conspiracy theory in favor of the alternative conspiracy theory.

Moreover, if these writers could not use the term 'conspiracy theory' for the government's theory, all the more could they not have dared to think – or at least to write – that I had switched to the alternative theory because I had finally gotten empirical: I had gone from knowing virtually nothing about the relevant facts about 9/11 to learning quite a few of these facts.

Nevertheless, once it is realized that both of the major theories about 9/11 are conspiracy theories, the alternative theory cannot reasonably be dismissed on the grounds that it is a conspiracy theory. We must evaluate the two theories in

terms of how well they take account of the relevant facts. We must get empirical.

Three 'A Priori' Beliefs To Avoid Getting Empirical

But, it still might be thought, we need not spend our time studying all those facts – all those tiresome details about standard procedures, timelines, the maximum temperature of office-building fires, the melting point of steel, the testimonies of people at the World Trade Center, and so on – because we can know *a priori* that the alternative theory, according to which 9/11 was orchestrated or at least assisted by the Bush administration, is false. Here's what [they say]: **"The Bush Administration Would Not Have Killed Its Own Citizens"** – We can know this, it is widely held, because we know that the Bush administration would not deliberately kill over 2,000 of its own citizens. However, if we get empirical about this *a priori* assumption, we can see that it is falsified by some publicly available facts about this administration.

One such fact is that the Bush-Cheney administration lied us into the war in Iraq. This was shown beyond doubt by the Downing Street memo that reported, on the basis of a meeting with CIA Director George Tenet, that "the intelligence and facts [about **weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq**] were being fixed around the policy [of going to war]."⁷ The Americans who have died in Iraq because of the administration's lies now outnumber those who died on 9/11 itself.

Another example: After 9/11, the air at the site of the World Trade Center was extremely toxic, containing many times the safe levels of asbestos and other particles known to cause cancer and various lung diseases. Although this was known, the White House ordered the EPA (the Environmental Protection Agency) to lie – to tell people **"the air is safe to breathe."**⁸ The EPA followed this order. As a result, many of the 40,000 rescue and clean-up workers wore no protective gear.⁹ Many thousands of these workers already have debilitating illnesses. About a hundred have already died from cancer, and cancer is normally slow to develop. Some experts predict that more people will die over the next 15 years from breathing this toxic air than died on 9/11 itself. We have no *a priori* grounds, therefore, to believe that the Bush administration was too morally sensitive to have arranged 9/11.



The Bush administration lied about WMDs in Iraq. More than 4,000 Americans have since died. They lied about the air being safe to breathe causing over 100 deaths of Ground Zero 1st Responders



Executive Director of 9/11 Commission was closely related to the White House



Both pro-government publications by PM are linked to the CIA and the White House

“Someone Would Have Talked” – A second common *a priori* reason often given for dismissing the possibility that 9/11 might have been an inside job is the claim that so many people would have been involved that someone would have talked by now. The general assumption here is that big government operations cannot be kept secret. However, the Manhattan Project to build an atomic bomb involved over 100,000 workers, and yet it was kept so secret that even Vice President Harry Truman did not learn about it until he became president. Another example: In 1957, the United States provoked and participated in a civil war in Indonesia that resulted in some 40,000 deaths. This illegal war was kept secret from the American people until a book about it appeared in 1995.¹⁰ Secrets can be kept, especially when those who know the secrets are likely to lose their jobs or even go to jail. And if those prospects are not sufficient to keep them quiet, there are many other well-known ways to keep people from talking, such as threatening their lives or those of their loved ones. Furthermore, people involved in criminal conspiracies generally talk only in the context of an investigation, when telling the truth is the only way to save their own skins. So, given the fact that there has been no real investigation of 9/11, let alone any *criminal* investigation, the fact that no one has talked cannot be used to justify ignoring the evidence.

Using Faith in Official Reports To Avoid Getting Empirical

There is, however, still another reason why many journalists believe they need not examine the facts about 9/11 for themselves. They think they should rely on the official reports about 9/11 that have been put out by the 9/11 Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, along with some semi-official accounts, such as the book, *Debunking 9/11 Myths*, put out by *Popular Mechanics* [PM]. The assumption behind this belief is that these are neutral organizations, providing strictly scientific evaluations of the evidence. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

The 9/11 Commission was run by Philip Zelickow, who was virtually a member of the Bush administration. Indeed, he was even brought in by his close friend and former co-author Condoleezza Rice to write the 2002 version of *The*

National Security Strategy of the United States, an extremely bellicose, neocon document that used 9/11 as a basis for adopting a new doctrine of preemptive-preventive war. Was a Zelickow-run commission likely to reveal evidence that 9/11 was an inside job?¹¹

The National Institute of Standards and Technology, generally known as NIST, is an agency of the Commerce Department. It therefore was, at the time it issued its reports on the three World Trade Center buildings that collapsed, an agency of the Bush administration – an administration that became notorious for distorting science to support its policies. Indeed, over 12,000 scientists, including 52 Nobel Prize winners, endorsed a statement accusing the Bush administration of engaging in “distortion of scientific knowledge for partisan political ends.”¹² Can we assume *a priori* that scientists working for this administration would not distort facts while writing their report on the destruction of the World Trade Center?

The semi-official status of the *Popular Mechanics* book is demonstrated by the fact that it was endorsed by Condoleezza Rice’s State Department as providing “excellent ... material debunking 9/11 conspiracy theories.”¹³ *Popular Mechanics* says of itself that it was “ideally equipped to research the evidence [about 9/11]” because of its “more than 100 years of expertise in science and technology.”¹⁴

However, just before the magazine began working on 9/11, the president of Hearst Magazines, Cathleen Black – whose husband was previously an employee of the CIA and the Defense Department – replaced much of the staff, including the long-time creative director and the editor-in-chief. Moreover, one of the new members of the staff – who described himself as the ‘senior researcher’ for the magazine’s 2005 article about 9/11, on which its book was based – was Benjamin Chertoff, a cousin of the head of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff. When Benjamin’s mother was asked whether he was related to Michael Chertoff, she said, “Yes, of course, he’s his cousin.”¹⁵ And yet the magazine’s new editor-in-chief, James Meigs, tried to cast doubt on this connection. He wrote of “the odd coincidence” that the two men have the same last name; and he allowed only that “it’s possible that Ben and Michael Chertoff are distantly related.”¹⁶

This is one of the unintentionally hilarious moments in the book: Although Meigs claimed that he and his crack staff were able, in a few months, to discover all the central truths about 9/11 – why the hijacked airliners were not intercepted, why the World Trade Center buildings came down, what really hit the Pentagon, and what really happened to United Airlines Flight 93 – they could *not* discover whether a member of their own team was related to the director of Homeland Security!

The moral of this discussion, in any case, is that none of these official or semi-official reports can be assumed to be the unvarnished truth about 9/11 or anything close to it. However, many journalists, treating these reports as if they were authoritative, have been led to absurd conclusions. For example, Alexander Cockburn accepts the 9/11 Commission's claim that the airliners were not intercepted because of incompetence. He then, on this basis, refers to members of the 9/11 Truth movement as "9/11 conspiracy nuts."¹⁷ Members of this movement, Cockburn charges, know "no military history," have no grasp of "the real world," "no conception of evidence," and they represent "the ascendancy of magic over ... reason."¹⁸ This charge might seem plausible, as long as one knows nothing about the 9/11 movement except that one of its spokespersons is a theologian – Cockburn calls me the "guru of the 9/11 conspiracy movement," as if it were a faith-based movement. If, however, one gets empirical about the 9/11 Truth movement, one can quickly see that Cockburn's characterization cannot even qualify as a caricature.

People who reject the government's account include Colonel Robert Bowman, the head of the 'Star Wars' program during the Ford and Carter administrations;¹⁹ Andreas von Buelow, former State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Defense;²⁰ General Leonid Ivashov, former chief of staff of the Russian armed forces;²¹ Colonel Ronald D. Ray, a highly decorated Vietnam veteran who became Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense during the Reagan administration;²² and many other former military officers, such as Lt. Col Guy Razer, an Air Force fighter pilot, who says: "After 4-plus years of research since retirement in 2002, I am 100% convinced that the attacks of September 11, 2001 were planned, organized, and committed by treasonous perpetrators that have infiltrated the highest levels of our government."²³

The movement also includes organizations called Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth, Firefighters for 9/11 Truth, Lawyers for 9/11 Truth, Medical Professionals for 9/11 Truth, Pilots for 9/11 Truth, Political Leaders for 9/11 Truth, Religious Leaders for 9/11 Truth, Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice, S.P.I.N.E.: The Scientific Panel Investigating Nine-Eleven, and Veterans for 9/11 Truth, which contains former military officers.²⁴

The movement also includes several former intelligence officers, including former CIA analysts Bill Christison and Ray McGovern. The movement was also endorsed, shortly before his death in 2006, by William Sloane Coffin, who had been a Russian specialist for the CIA before he became a well-known preacher and civil rights and anti-war activist.²⁵

As this list makes clear, the 9/11 Truth movement, if examined empirically, cannot be dismissed as a bunch of conspiracy nuts with no grasp of the real world, including military matters, or as people who, having no conception of evidence, engage in magical thinking. Cockburn's unempirical approach to the 9/11 movement, combined with his uncritical acceptance of official reports, has led him to make charges that are patently absurd.

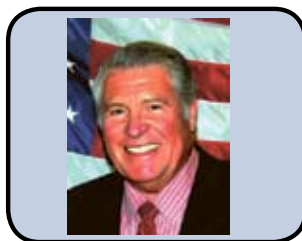
The moral of this discussion is that there is no *a priori* way to make a responsible judgment as to which of the two conspiracy theories about 9/11 is correct. We must look at the facts, then ask which theory better fits those facts. We must get *empirical*.

Did the Authors of the Official Reports Get Empirical?

At this point, defenders of the official story could say: Exactly, and this is what we have done. Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, the chair and vice-chair of the *9/11 Commission*, put out a new book in 2006 entitled *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission*.²⁶ They write: "The starting point for [*The 9/11 Commission Report*] was that it would focus on the facts."²⁷ Indeed, Kean and Hamilton say, "the term 'go to the facts' became something of a joke within the commission."²⁸ The real joke, however, is their claim that this is the method they actually used. The *Popular Mechanics* book is subtitled: *Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts*. The authors, in explaining their approach, say: "We simply checked the facts."²⁹



Members of the 9/11 Truth movement include: Ray McGovern, former CIA analyst



Col. Bob Bowman, former head of 'Star Wars' program and presidential candidate



Andreas von Buelow, former State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defense



General Leonid Ivashov, former chief of Staff for Russian Armed Forces

Not everyone who cries ‘Lord, Lord,’ Jesus of Nazareth reportedly pointed out, really lives in accord with the will of God.³⁰ Not everyone who cries ‘facts, facts’ really follows the empirical method, letting their theories be determined by the facts rather than the other way around. Neither *Popular Mechanics*, not NIST, nor the 9/11 Commission takes an empirical, scientific approach. They all begin with the official theory, then construe the facts to fit that theory, even though this requires distorting many facts and eliminating many others. It is, instead, the 9/11 Truth movement that has gotten empirical about 9/11. I will give some examples.

The Responsibility of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda

The whole basis for the Bush administration’s attack on Afghanistan and its more general “war on terror” was the claim that the attacks of 9/11 were carried out by Arab-Muslim members of al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. This claim, however, was never proven. Shortly after 9/11, Secretary of State Colin Powell promised to provide a white paper showing that the attacks had been planned by bin Laden, but this paper was never produced.³¹ The Taliban said that it would gladly hand bin Laden over if the United States would simply present evidence of his involvement in 9/11, but the Bush administration refused, leading a Taliban spokesman to say: “We have asked for proof of Osama’s involvement, but they have refused. Why?”³² The 9/11 Commission, in spite of Kean and Hamilton’s stated commitment to “go to the facts,” made no mention of any of these facts.

In claiming that they started with the facts, Kean and Hamilton said that their Commission was “not setting out to advocate one theory or interpretation of 9/11 versus another.”³³ And yet, they told us, “When we set up our staff teams, we [told one team] to tell the story of al Qaeda’s most successful operation – the 9/11 attacks.”³⁴ If that was not an example of starting with a theory, what would be?

The 9/11 Truth movement, by contrast, has gotten empirical about this matter. With regard to the alleged hijackers, there was, according to the government, much evidence that implicates them, such as video frames of them at airports, passports found at crash sites, and Mohamed Atta’s luggage filled with incriminating evidence. The 9/11

Truth movement, however, has pointed out that none of this reputed evidence can withstand scrutiny. Some of claims are absurd, such as the claim that a passport from the first plane to strike the World Trade Center flew out of the plane and, unsinged by the fireball, floated to the ground; the claim that a passport and a red bandana (allegedly worn by the hijackers) flew out of United 93 before it, after traveling downward at 580 miles per hour, buried itself so deeply in the soil of Pennsylvania that not even the tail section was visible; and the claim that among the incriminating evidence found in Mohamed Atta’s luggage, which failed to get loaded onto AA Flight 11, was Atta’s will (if you planned to take a suitcase on a flight you were going to crash into a large building, creating a fiery inferno, would you include your will?)³⁵

Moreover, the 9/11 Commission, defending the official conspiracy theory, portrayed Atta and the others as devout Muslims, ready to meet their Maker.³⁶ But real truth-seekers, getting empirical, have pointed out that Atta and several other alleged hijackers loved gambling, cocaine, alcohol, pork, and lap dances. These facts were even reported in the *Wall Street Journal*. And yet the 9/11 Commission, in spite of its professed love for facts, said it had no idea why these men often went to Las Vegas.³⁷

Another stunning discovery occurred when one member of the 9/11 Truth movement decided to get empirical about an especially puzzling matter: the fact that the FBI’s web page on “Osama bin Laden” as a Most Wanted Terrorist does not mention the 9/11 attacks as one of the crimes for which he is wanted. Ed Haas, the author of the Muckraker Report, contacted Rex Tomb, Chief of Investigative Publicity for the FBI, and asked why not. Tomb replied: “The reason why 9/11 is not mentioned on Osama bin Laden’s Most Wanted page is because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11.”³⁸

The 9/11 Commission could have made this discovery. Many months before *The 9/11 Commission Report* appeared, the Family Steering Committee for the 9/11 Commission, comprised of the relatives of 9/11 victims, asked the Commission to explain why “[bin Laden’s] profile on the Commission to explain why “[bin Laden’s] profile on the FBI’s *Ten Most Wanted Fugitives* poster does not include the 9/11 attacks.”³⁹ However, the fact-loving 9/11 Commission,



Colin Powell promised to produce the evidence in a white paper and never did



Mohamed Atta was supposedly a devout Muslim but loved lap dances and snorting coke



Osama bin Laden is still wanted by the FBI – but not for 9/11. The reason? ...



FBI spokesman Rex Tomb said there’s “no hard evidence” to link him to 9/11



Todd Beamer allegedly made the 'Let's Roll' phone call from United 93



Kee Dewdney proved cell phone calls are "flat out impossible" over 8,000 feet



TV Journalist Evan Solomon asked Lee Hamilton how was that cell phone call possible



Vice-chair of 9/11 Commission Lee Hamilton said; "I just don't know."

besides not answering this question, did not even reveal this fact to the American people when it published its report.

Phone Calls from the Planes

Another essential element in the official conspiracy theory is that several passengers on the airliners made phone calls to loved ones that morning, reporting that their plane had been hijacked by foreigners. Some of these calls were reportedly made from the seat-back phones, and such calls were clearly possible. But cellphones were reportedly used for many of the calls, especially from United Flight 93, from which about 10 cell phone calls were reportedly made. These calls were publicized by movies about this flight.

There is, however, extremely strong evidence that these calls would not have been possible in 2001. Given the technology at that time, a cellphone had to get a signal from a cellsite, and these signals went out horizontally, not vertically. There was, to be sure, some leakage upward, so a cellphone on a low-flying small plane could get a good signal. But as the plane got higher, success became increasingly unlikely. Most anecdotal evidence indicated that calls from small planes were impossible over 8,000 feet and that calls from airliners, with their much greater mass, were generally impossible above 2000 feet.⁴⁰

This anecdotal evidence was in strong tension with the official story, according to which calls were made from airliners flying at 25,000 to 40,000 feet. Seeing this tension, Canadian computer scientist and mathematician Kee Dewdney, who had long written a column for *Scientific American*, decided to get empirical. Going up in a twin-engine airplane, he found that the success rate for attempted cell phone calls decayed to zero by the time he reached 7,000 feet. Successful cellphone calls from airliners flying at 30,000 feet, he concluded, would have been "flat out impossible."⁴¹

Dewdney's conclusion was reinforced by the fact that in 2004, QUALCOMM Inc. announced with great fanfare that it had developed a new kind of technology, in which a cellular base station on the plane, called a 'pico cell,' uses a satellite to transmit its calls.⁴² "Passengers on the test flight," QUALCOMM announced, "were able to place and receive calls as if they were on the ground." American Airlines,

which conducted the test flight, said that this new technology would become operative in 2006.⁴³

The truth of Dewdney's conclusion was also supported by a story in the *Travel Technologist*, published one week after 9/11, which said:

[W]ireless communications networks weren't designed for ground-to-air communication. Cellular experts privately admit that they're surprised the calls were able to be placed from the hijacked planes. ... They speculate that the only reason that the calls went through in the first place is that the aircraft were flying so close to the ground.⁴⁴

The aircraft, however, were *not* flying close to the ground. According to the 9/11 Commission itself, United 93 was at 34,300 feet when the passengers began making calls, then climbed to 40,700 feet, while calls were still being made.⁴⁵

How do defenders of the official story handle this problem?

During an interview in 2006, a well-informed Canadian journalist, Evan Solomon, posed the following question to Lee Hamilton, the vice-chair of the 9/11 Commission: If Flight 93 was flying "well over 10,000 feet – 30,000, 40,000 feet," and yet "cell phones don't work above 10,000 feet, ... how could people get on their cell phone on a plane and phone their relatives?" Hamilton replied:

I'm no expert on that. I've been told cell phones work – sometimes – above 10,000 feet, and as high as 30,000 feet. So it may have been that some of the calls went through and some didn't, I just don't know.⁴⁶

One problem with Hamilton's answer is that he had been asked about 40,000 feet, not merely 30,000 feet. But the more serious problem is that although Hamilton was one of the leaders of the 9/11 Commission, which defended the official story, he said, when challenged about one of the foundational pillars of that story, "I just don't know." Moreover, his statement – that he had 'been told' that cellphones sometimes work as high as 30,000 feet – suggests that his 9/11 Commission had performed no tests and had not even discussed this issue, although it had long been raised by critics of the official story.



Solicitor General Ted Olson said he got detailed phone calls from his wife



Barbara Olson supposedly called him from Flight 77 using either an Airfone or cell phone



But, American Airlines 757s didn't have onboard phones on 9/11 and ...



The FBI said the only call attributed to Olson lasted 0 secs

This same lack of empirical curiosity permeated *Popular Mechanics*' treatment of the issue. Although its authors mentioned Dewdney's experiments, they tried to debunk his conclusions by simply quoting recent interviews with two industry spokesmen, who reportedly said that it was possible to make a call, or at least get a signal, at 35,000 feet. They cited no written evidence from 2001 to support this claim. And even though *Popular Mechanics* would have had the resources to carry out extensive experiments to try to disprove Dewdney's conclusions, they carried out none – or, if they did, they did not report the results. This kind of unempirical approach characterized their whole book, in spite of its subtitle: "Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts."

Here is another interesting fact about the alleged cell phone calls. In the spring of 2006, at the same time moviegoers were watching *United 93*, the FBI, during the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, reduced the claim about cell phone calls from this flight down to two – these being two calls allegedly made when the plane was low enough that the claim that they went through might at least seem plausible.⁴⁷ So while *Popular Mechanics* was defending the government's claim that all the alleged cell phone calls from Flight 93 went through, the government was quietly withdrawing that claim.

What about the most well-known of the alleged phone calls – the one from Barbara Olson on American Flight 77 to her husband, Ted Olson, who as the US Solicitor General had been a key figure in the Bush-Cheney administration? From the first, his testimony about this call involved inconsistencies, one of which involved what kind of phone she used. He first said it must have been an airplane phone but then, in another interview, said that it was a cell phone. He later reverted to his original answer, saying that, 'calling collect,' she "was using the phone in the passengers' seats."⁴⁸ She was calling collect, he surmised, because "she didn't have her purse" and hence had neither her credit card nor her cell phone. That claim made no sense, however, because a seat-back phone can only be activated by a credit card, and if she had a credit card, there would have been no reason for her to call collect. If we ignore that problem, however, we can agree that by settling on the claim that she used a

seat-back phone, his claim was no longer threatened by the evidence that a cellphone call would have been impossible.

But was even a call from a seat-back phone possible? In 2004, Ian Henshall and Rowland Morgan, getting empirical, discovered that the Boeing 757s that were made for American Airlines, unlike those made for United Airlines, were not equipped with onboard phones. An American Airlines representative told them, in fact, that "AA 757s do not have any onboard phones, either for passenger or crew use. Crew have other means of communication available."⁴⁹

In May 2007, when I delivered the lecture on which this article is based, we were uncertain if this was merely a statement about AA 757s in 2004, when the statement was made, or whether the meaning was that AA 757s had not had onboard phones back in 2001. I pointed out, nevertheless, that even if Flight 77 did have onboard phones, this fact would do little to overcome the implausibility of Ted Olson's report about his wife's calls. One problem is that she was the only person who allegedly used an onboard phone to make a call from that flight. And yet she reportedly said that all the passengers and crew members had been herded to the back of the plane. Were we supposed to believe that none of the other people, seeing Barbara Olson make two phone calls, would have grabbed seat-back phones to make their own calls? Another problem is that the alleged hijackers were all small men, the tallest being 5 feet 7 inches tall, and although Barbara Olson reportedly said they were armed, she mentioned only knives and boxcutters. Were we to believe that the three or four hijackers in the cabin (one or two of the five alleged hijackers would have been in the cockpit) would not have been easily overpowered by the 60-some passengers and crew members? The pilot was Charles 'Chic' Burlingame, a tall, athletic man, about whom his brother said, "they would have had to incapacitate him or kill him because he would have done anything to prevent the kind of tragedy that befell that airplane."⁵⁰

Moreover, as Rowland Morgan wrote: "Ted Olson could ... shut his critics up by simply producing the Department of Justice's telephone accounts, showing a couple of hefty reverse-charges entries charged from Flight 77's Airfone number at around about 9:20 a.m. on 11th September, 2001." But such accounts have never been produced.⁵¹

Later, two additional facts, which completely undermined Ted Olson's story, were discovered. First, another 9/11 researcher, noticing AA's website statement that its 757s do not have passenger-seat phones, wrote in 2006 to ask if this had been true on September 11, 2001. An AA customer service representative replied: "That is correct; we do not have phones on our Boeing 757. The passengers on Flight 77 used their own personal cellular phones to make out calls during the terrorist attack."⁵² Defenders of the official story might argue that Ted Olson was right when he said that his wife had used her cell phone. However, besides being rendered unlikely by the cell phone technology of 2001, this possibility was ruled out by our second discovery.

This discovery was that the FBI in 2006, in presenting evidence at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (the so-called 20th hijacker), submitted a report on phone calls from all four 9/11 flights. In its report on American Flight 77, the FBI attributed only one call to Barbara Olson, and it was an 'unconnected call,' which (of course) lasted '0 seconds.'⁵³ According to the FBI, therefore, Ted Olson did not receive a single call from his wife using either a cell phone or an onboard phone.

The official story simply cannot handle the facts about cellphones and about Barbara Olson's alleged calls. But how about the 9/11 Truth movement? How does it handle the fact that many people reported receiving cell phone calls from passengers on United 93 and other flights? Do we have to claim, implausibly, that all these people were lying? No, because although cell phone technology was not advanced enough to account for those calls, the technology of voice morphing was. It was already sufficiently perfected in 1999, as a test reported in the *Washington Post* demonstrated, to fool a person's closest friends. In the test, the voice of General Carl Steiner was heard to say: "Gentlemen: We have called you together to inform you that we are going to overthrow the United States government." Steiner never made any such statement, but those in the room who knew him would have sworn that he did.⁵⁴ There is even a device that can fake caller ID numbers.⁵⁵ The technology was available, in other words, to fool the people who received these calls – to make them think they were really hearing from their loved ones. Whether Ted Olson was a victim of this trickery, or whether

he simply lied about the call from his wife, is something we will not know until there is a real investigation into 9/11.

In any case, these are some of the things that the 9/11 movement, by getting empirical about 9/11, has discovered. And there is much more.

Why the Military Failed to Intercept the Airliners

Another issue is why, assuming the truth of the story that the planes were hijacked, the US military failed to intercept them before they could strike their targets.

The official story is that it was the FAA's fault. For the first three years, the military claimed that although the FAA did notify it about all four flights, these notifications came too late. But the 9/11 Truth movement, getting empirical, showed that, even if the FAA had been as slow as the military claimed, there was still time for the interceptions to have been made. This empirical research supported the idea that there had been a stand-down order, canceling standard procedures. However, in the summer of 2004, perhaps in response to these findings, the 9/11 Commission produced a radically different story, saying that the FAA, after notifying the military about the first flight only 9 minutes before it struck the World Trade Center, did not notify it about the other three flights at all, until after they had crashed.

This new story was popularized by Michael Bronner in a *Vanity Fair* article called "9/11 Live: The NORAD Tapes,"⁵⁶ to which I devoted the first chapter of *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*. The tapes in question were used by the 9/11 Commission to construct its new story. The military later gave these tapes to Bronner, who, as one of the producers of the film *United 93*, had demonstrated that he would faithfully parrot the official line. And Bronner surely did what the military had hoped, claiming that these tapes present the "authentic military history of 9/11." But there are many reasons to doubt this claim.

When Did the FAA Contact the Military?

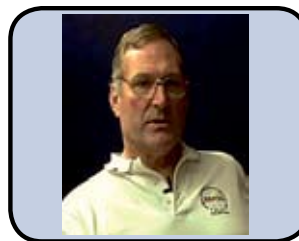
Let us take the claim that the FAA's air traffic controllers did not contact the military about American Flight 11 until 8:38 a.m., only 9 minutes before it hit the North Tower. This time, 8:38 a.m., was 24 minutes after this flight's air traffic controller had seen the first sign of trouble and 13 minutes



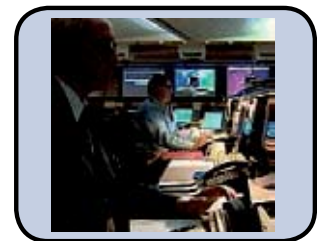
At first the FAA was blamed for not informing NORAD soon enough of the hijacked planes



Then the Commission claimed NORAD wasn't informed until after 175, 77 & 93 had crashed



Robin Hordon, former air traffic controller at FAA's Boston Center, claimed ...



Boston Center warned the Air Force 25 minutes before Flight 11 crashed into WTC 1

after they knew that it appeared to be hijacked. There are many reasons to doubt this account.

One of these involves discoveries I made while writing *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*. Generally, I have simply reported other people’s discoveries. With regard to this issue, however, I actually did a little empirical work myself. This work involved extended e-mail conversations with two air traffic controllers who had worked at the FAA’s Boston Center, which was in charge of Flight 11 when its troubles developed: Robin Hordon, who worked there until 1981, and Colin Scoggins, who was and still is the military expert at Boston Center. Because of the information provided by these two men, we now have even stronger evidence than before that the official story about American Flight 11 is false.

The information provided by Colin Scoggins showed, although he did not himself say this, that his phone call to the military – which went to NEADS, NORAD’s northeast sector – must have occurred at about 8:29 a.m., not, as the official account claims, at 8:38. This would mean that the military had 18 minutes, not merely 9 minutes, to intercept Flight 11 before it got to Manhattan. This would have been plenty of time, given the fact that interceptions generally occur within 10 minutes after the military is notified.

Robin Hordon’s information showed, furthermore, that the military must have been contacted even earlier, shortly after 8:20 a.m., when the transponder signal was lost and the plane went radically off course. Hordon’s view is supported by evidence from other sources.⁵⁷ This means that the military would have had over 25 minutes to make the interception. We have, therefore, very strong evidence that the military had been given a stand-down order, canceling standard procedures.

How Many Fighters Were Available?

Another claim made by the 9/11 Commission, then repeated by Bronner, was that there were only two bases in the northeast sector of the United States with fighter jets on alert: Otis Air National Guard Base in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and Langley Air Force Base in Langley, Virginia. Bronner, on the basis of this claim, said, referring to Colonel Robert Marr, the head of NEADS: “Incredibly, Marr has only four armed fighters at his disposal to defend about a quarter of the continental United States.”⁵⁸ Although this claim truly was

‘incredible,’ in the literal sense of the term, it was used by Bronner and the 9/11 Commission to explain why fighters were not immediately put over New York City to protect it and why fighters to protect Washington DC had to come all the way up from Langley.

However, if Bronner and the Commission, while interviewing Colin Scoggins, had asked him about this, he could have told them what he told me: that although it is technically correct that the Otis and Langley bases are the only ones in that part of the United States that are designated as alert bases, which keep fighter jets on alert 24/7, this does *not* mean that they are the only bases from which NEADS could have drawn fighters. There were ready fighters, Scoggins told me, at Atlantic City (New Jersey), Toledo (Ohio), Syracuse (New York), Burlington (Vermont), and Selfridge (Michigan), as well as Andrews Air Force Base right next to Washington DC, on which NEADS could have called.⁵⁹ Once again, if we get empirical about 9/11, the official story disintegrates.

Did the Military Keep Armed Fighters On Alert?

The *Popular Mechanics* book made an even more outlandish claim about alert fighters, alleging that, after the end of the Cold War, the United States did not keep any *armed* fighters on alert. They supported this claim with a statement by former Republican Senator Warren Rudman, who was quoted in a *Boston Globe* article as saying:

We don’t have capable fighter aircraft loaded with missiles sitting on runways in this country. We just don’t do that anymore. ... [T]o expect American fighter aircraft to intercept commercial airliners ... is totally unrealistic.⁶⁰

This quotation came at the conclusion of *Popular Mechanics*’ section on interceptions, in which it argued that the military’s failure to intercept the airlines did not mean there had been a stand-down order. This quotation was evidently intended as the knockout punch.

However, if one actually reads the *Boston Globe* article, one finds that it did not conclude with that quotation from Rudman. The writer instead followed it by saying:

Otis offers something close to that posture, however. Its 102nd Fighter Wing is equipped with ...



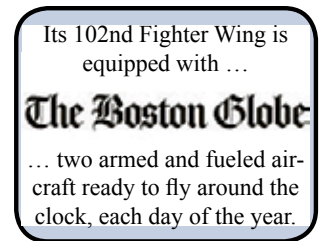
The 9/11 Commission claimed only 2 pairs of jet fighters were available



But Colin Scoggins said other fighters were available at six other bases



Popular Mechanics’ book claimed no ‘armed’ fighters were available anyway ...



But the *Boston Globe*, quoted by *Popular Mechanics*, refuted that conclusion



9/11 Commissioner Lee Hamilton claimed fires melted the steel (1500°C)

two armed and fueled aircraft ready to fly around the clock, each day of the year.⁶¹

So much for *Popular Mechanics*' knockout punch – and its honesty.

What was true at Otis, incidentally, was true of other alert bases around the county. For example, Captain Tom 'Pickle' Herring, a pilot at Homestead Air Reserve Base near Miami, was quoted in 1999 as saying: “[W]e have weapons on our jets. We need to be postured such that no one would dare threaten us. ... If needed, we could be killing things in five minutes or less.”⁶²

As this and many other examples show, the subtitle of the *Popular Mechanics*' book needs to be expanded to read: “How Conspiracy Theories Cannot Stand Up to the Facts – If We Are Allowed to Decide What the Facts Are.”

Why Did Three Buildings at the World Trade Center Come Down?

Another question that can be answered responsibly only on the basis of an empirical investigation of the facts is why three buildings of the World Trade Center collapsed after two of them were struck by airplanes.

The Fires Melted the Steel? Early reports claimed that the fires had melted the steel. A BBC television special two days after 9/11 quoted two experts as saying this.⁶³ But some early members of the 9/11 Truth movement, getting empirical, pointed out that although steel does not begin to melt until it reaches about 1500 degrees Celsius (2800 degrees Fahrenheit), the maximum temperature that can be reached by diffuse fires based on hydrocarbons, such as jet fuel, would be about 1000 degrees Celsius (1800 degrees Fahrenheit). Accordingly, even if the fires had been as hot as building fires can possibly get, they could not have even come close to melting the steel.

In response to this debunking, *Popular Mechanics* has accused the 9/11 Truth movement of creating a straw-man argument that it could easily knock down. *Popular Mechanics* implies, in other words, that no defenders of the official theory had ever said that the buildings collapsed because their steel melted. The falsity of this claim is illustrated by the aforementioned BBC special. It has also been illustrated more recently by Lee Hamilton, the vice chair of the 9/11



Shyam Sunder who released the NIST Report claimed fires weakened the steel (1000°C)



But NIST scientists reported no evidence that steel columns were above 250°C



Next, James Meigs, editor of Popular Mechanics claimed there were no explosions

Commission, while he was being interviewed by Evan Solomon of the Canadian Broadcast Corporation. Saying that the Commission rejected the view that the buildings were brought down by explosives, Hamilton said: “What caused the collapse of the buildings ... was that the super-heated jet fuel melted the steel super-structure of these buildings.”⁶⁴ Hamilton's astounding statement suggests that the 9/11 Commission, while endorsing the government's theory that towers collapsed because of the impact of the airplanes and the resulting fires, did not even discuss such elementary facts as the melting point of steel and the maximum temperature of building fires, even if fed by jet-fuel.

The Fires Weakened the Steel? The definitive report on the destruction of the towers was supposed to be provided by NIST – the National Institute of Standards and Technology. But its report was far from definitive. Journalists have typically assumed that because the NIST report was based on the work of scientists, it was a scientific report. One of the main problems with the report, however, was that its conclusions were radically at variance with the work of its own scientists.

For example, NIST suggested that the steel columns in the core of the building buckled because they were heated up to 1000 degrees Celsius (over 1800 degrees Fahrenheit), at which point they would have lost 90% of their strength. NIST's own scientists, however, reported that 250 degrees Celsius (480 degrees Fahrenheit) was the hottest any of the recovered steel columns had reached.⁶⁵ These were, moreover, columns around the outside of the buildings. The 47 *core* columns, in the center of the buildings, would not have gotten even that hot, because of a lack of oxygen there to feed the fires. So, although NIST claimed that the towers collapsed because their core columns reached 1000 degrees Celsius (over 1800 Fahrenheit), studies by its own scientists showed that the core columns would not have been even one-fourth that hot. As this example shows, the NIST report, on which *Popular Mechanics* and much of the press has relied, was not a scientific report. It was a political document put out by an agency of the Bush administration.

No Reports of Explosions? Equally unempirical was the treatment by NIST and *Popular Mechanics* of reports of explosions before and during the collapses. Both documents wrote as if there were no explosions, even though the last time



Professor Graeme MacQueen discovered 118 FDNY members had reported explosions



John Gross of NIST denied there was any evidence of molten steel: "Just show me."



But photographs show molten metal being pulled from the rubble and ...



Leslie Robertson reported that after 21 days "molten steel was still running."

I checked Google for "testimonies of explosions in the World Trade Center," I found that there were over 69,000 items. One of those items is an essay I wrote entitled "Explosive Testimony," which quoted 41 people – including firefighters, emergency medical workers, WTC employees, and journalists – reporting that they witnessed what seemed to be explosions. For example, *Wall Street Journal* reporter John Bussey said:

I ... looked up out of [my] office window to see what seemed like perfectly synchronized explosions coming from each floor. ... One after the other, from top to bottom, ... the floors blew to pieces.

Another item on the Internet is an essay by Canadian professor Graeme MacQueen, which shows that even if we restrict our focus to members of the New York Fire Department, we have 118 testimonies suggestive of explosions in the towers.⁶⁶

NIST and *Popular Mechanics*, however, wrote as if these testimonies did not exist. Nothing better illustrates their wholly unempirical, unscientific approach.

This unempirical approach is reflected, moreover, in journalistic accounts that rely on these official and semi-official reports. For example, Alexander Cockburn, in assuring his readers that members of the 9/11 Truth movement are nuts, said: "People inside who survived the collapse didn't hear a series of explosions."⁶⁷ Cockburn thereby revealed that he had not studied the evidence enough to be aware of one of the best-known testimonies by a person inside the towers, North Tower employee Teresa Veliz. She said that, while she was making her way downstairs:

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. ... There was another explosion. And another. I didn't know where to run.⁶⁸

As Cockburn's embarrassing essay demonstrated, journalists cannot safely rely on reports written to support the official conspiracy theory. They need to get empirical about 9/11.

No Molten Metal in the Rubble? NIST and *Popular Mechanics*, besides dealing with testimony about explosions

in an unempirical manner, did the same with regard to reports that molten metal was found under the rubble. The scientists at NIST – unlike Lee Hamilton – knew that the fire could not have melted any steel, so their preferred method of dealing with these reports was simply to ignore or even deny them: John Gross, one of the authors of the NIST report, was captured on film saying that he knew of "absolutely no ... eyewitness who has said [that] there was a pool of molten steel."⁶⁹ *Popular Mechanics* cited a professor's claim that the photographs said to show melted steel really "show materials that appear to be other than steel," such as "glass with unmelted steel rods in it." *Popular Mechanics* then quoted, triumphantly, this professor's observation that "[g]lass melts at much lower temperatures than steel."⁷⁰

However, the evidence for molten metal under the rubble was neither nonexistent nor based merely on photographs. There were many *eyewitnesses*, including Leslie Robertson, a member of the engineering firm that designed the Twin Towers, who said: "As of 21 days after the attack, the fires were still burning and molten steel was still running." There was also Dr. Alison Geyh of The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, who led a scientific team that went to the site shortly after 9/11 on behalf of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, who said: "Fires are still actively burning. ... In some pockets now being uncovered they are finding molten steel."⁷¹ Another witness was fire captain Philip Ruvolo, who said: "You'd get down below and you'd see molten steel, *molten* steel, running down the channel rails, like you're in a foundry, like lava."⁷²

Although these and many other eyewitness testimonies exist, NIST wrote as if they did not. Nevertheless, surely knowing that they do, NIST suggested, in a document put out in 2006 entitled "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions," that even if there *was* some molten metal in the rubble pile, it "was more likely due to the high temperature resulting from long exposure to combustion within the pile than to ... explosions."⁷³ *Popular Mechanics* expanded on this incredible explanation, saying:

[T]he debris pile sat cooking for weeks, with the materials at the bottom of the pile getting increasingly hot because the fires were confined and lost minimal heat to the atmosphere. As a result,

the fires could have easily reached temperatures sufficient to melt steel.⁷⁴

This is amazing. Hydrocarbon fires require oxygen. According to NIST and *Popular Mechanics*, however, the fact that the fires were not exposed to the atmosphere did not *extinguish* them; it instead allowed them to get *hotter* – indeed, over 1000 degrees Fahrenheit hotter! This is what has passed for science at *Popular Mechanics* and NIST. If these two organizations are going to suggest that this is what happened on 9/11, they need to provide an empirical basis for such a claim by setting up an experiment that would show that underground hydrocarbon fires can get hot enough to melt steel.

What Caused the Damage to Wedge 1 of the Pentagon?

According to the official conspiracy theory, the Pentagon was struck by American Airlines Flight 77 under the control of hijacker Hani Hanjour. However, Hanjour was known to be a terrible pilot, so bad that he could not safely fly even a single-engine airplane. And yet, in order to hit Wedge 1 of the Pentagon, according to the official story, he had to perform an amazing feat in his hijacked airliner: descend 8,000 feet in a 330-degree downward spiral in under four minutes, then hit the Pentagon at ground level without even scraping the lawn. Getting empirical about this claim would mean asking experienced airline pilots if this was possible. Russ Wittenberg, one of the many pilots who belong to the 9/11 Truth movement, said that he, in spite of his 35 years of experience flying commercial jetliners, could not have done it. “For an amateur who couldn’t even fly a Cessna to maneuver the jetliner in such a highly professional manner,” Wittenberg added, would have been “totally impossible.”⁷⁵ Ralph Omholt, a former 757 pilot, agreed, saying: “The idea that an *unskilled* pilot could have flown this trajectory is simply too ridiculous to consider.”⁷⁶

How did *Popular Mechanics* deal with this problem? It ignored it. Although its authors liked to tell us how many experts they consulted, they did not report asking any airline pilots if Hanjour could have flown this trajectory. Indeed, they did not even *mention* the trajectory. They referred to this part of the alleged flight of American 77 only in passing: After arguing that although Hanjour was not a great pilot and had never flown an airliner before, he was able to get

this plane back to Washington by putting it on autopilot, they added: “He steered the plane manually for only the final eight minutes of the flight.”⁷⁷ For *only the final eight minutes*, during which the impossible occurred!

Popular Mechanics claimed that it showed all the ‘key claims’ of the 9/11 Truth movement “to be mistaken.”⁷⁸ One of the movement’s central claims, however, has long been that whatever damaged the Pentagon, it could not have been Flight 77 under the control of Hani Hanjour. *Popular Mechanics* did not even *try* to refute this claim, perhaps hoping that most of its readers would not notice.

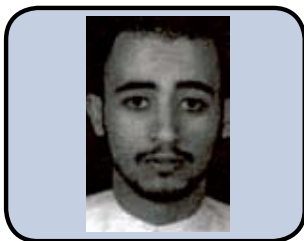
Why Wedge 1? It also failed to deal with another claim upon which there is unanimity in the 9/11 movement: that if al Qaeda terrorists had hijacked an airliner in order to crash it into the Pentagon, they would not have chosen to hit Wedge 1. This claim is based on several empirical facts about this section of the Pentagon. (1) Wedge 1 was the only section that had been renovated to make it less vulnerable to terrorist attacks. (2) Because the renovation was not quite complete, most people were not yet back in their offices; a strike on any other part of the Pentagon, therefore, would have caused far more damage and killed far more people. (3) Terrorists who hated America would presumably have wanted to kill some of the Pentagon’s top brass and the Secretary of Defense, and yet these people were safely on the opposite side of the building, as far from the strike zone as possible.

All of these facts, moreover, were well known. If these terrorists were brilliant enough to outfox the world’s most sophisticated defense system, they would not have gone out of their way to hit Wedge 1, when they could have simply crashed into the roof above the offices of Donald Rumsfeld and the senior officers. Again, however, *Popular Mechanics* was silent, not even acknowledging the problem.

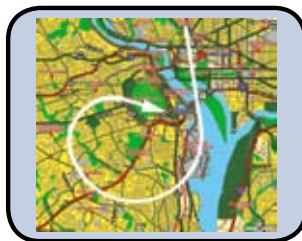
Popular Mechanics has definitely not defended the idea that the Pentagon was struck by American Flight 77 under the control of Hani Hanjour.

What Happened to United 93?

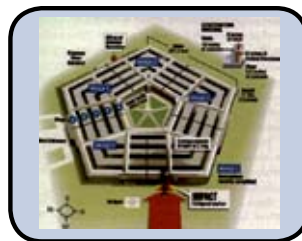
Another problem with the official conspiracy theory involves the crash of United Flight 93 in Pennsylvania. At first, the official story was that it crashed because the heroic passengers brought it down. The story was later revised to



The 9/11 Report distorts the piloting ability of Hani Hanjour



Flight 77 allegedly executes a difficult turn to strike Wedge 1



Wedge 1 was heavily reinforced and not yet fully occupied after renovations



How could Flight 77 have caused so little damage to the Pentagon?

say that the plane crashed because the hijackers, fearing that they were going to be overpowered by the heroic passengers, brought it down at 580 miles per hour. From the first, however, there was considerable evidence that the flight was shot down by a US military fighter jet.

This evidence was of many types: (1) Witnesses reported seeing debris falling from the plane; (2) debris was spread over an eight-mile area; (3) one engine, or part of it, was found far from the crash site, suggesting that it was hit by a heat-seeking missile; (4) there was no plane at the alleged crash site, leaving officials with no option but to claim that the plane had buried itself completely underground (except, of course, for a passport and red bandana of one of the hijackers); (5) several residents in the area reported seeing a small white jet plane prior to the crash and hearing sounds suggestive of a shootdown; (6) one resident said she received a call from a friend who reported, shortly after the crash, that her husband, who was in the Air Force, had called and said: "I can't talk, but we've just shot a plane down;"⁷⁹ and (7) one of the Otis pilots reported being told, after he returned to base, that an airliner had been shot down in Pennsylvania by a military F-16.⁸⁰

Popular Mechanics dealt with a few of the items in this list by distorting the evidence and with the remaining items by simply ignoring them; you can read about all of this in *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*.⁸¹ Here I will focus only on the most important element in its attempted refutation of the claim that United 93 was shot down. This is the claim, made by the 9/11 Commission, that the military could not have shot the flight down because it was not even aware that this flight had been hijacked until after it had crashed. Here is what *Popular Mechanics* said:

As to whether [a] fighter could have shot down the plane, *The 9/11 Commission Report* is clear that no shoot-down order was in place for Flight 93, due to garbled communication between the various agencies. When the flight crashed, NORAD was still unaware the plane had been hijacked.⁸²

It is true that the 9/11 Commission made this claim, but is this claim supported by the available facts? The editors of the *Popular Mechanics* book, in their introduction, said that they were going to confront the *claims* of the 9/11 Truth

movement with the *facts*. What they did here, however, was simply to confront the claim made by the 9/11 Truth movement with the claim made by the 9/11 Commission – that the military did not learn about the hijacking of Flight 93 until 10:07, several minutes after it had crashed. In citing this claim as authoritative, it simply ignored the empirical fact that many of the participants made statements that contradicted the Commission's claim. Here are some examples.

General Larry Arnold was the commanding general of NORAD within the continental United States. When asked by the 9/11 Commission what NORAD was doing at 9:24, Arnold said: "Our focus... was on United 93, which was being pointed out to us very aggressively ... by the FAA."⁸³ The time mentioned by Arnold, 9:24, was over 40 minutes *earlier* than the 9/11 Commission later claimed that the FAA first told the military about Flight 93. If Arnold told the truth, the 9/11 Commission did not.

During an interview with Peter Jennings on ABC in 2002, Brigadier General Montague Winfield, who was the Deputy Director for Operations at the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon, said: "We received the report from the FAA that Flight 93 had turned off its transponder ... and was now heading towards Washington, DC."⁸⁴ He thereby contradicted in advance the Commission's claim that the military did not know about Flight 93's troubles until after it had crashed.

Other military leaders testified that, besides knowing about United 93, the military was tracking it: Two days after 9/11, General Richard Myers said that fighters were scrambled "on the [airliner] that eventually crashed in Pennsylvania... [W]e had gotten somebody close to it."⁸⁵ Two days after 9/11, Paul Wolfowitz, who was then Deputy Secretary of Defense, said that "the Air Force was tracking the hijacked plane that crashed in Pennsylvania ... and had been in a position to bring it down if necessary."⁸⁶ In 2002, Colonel Robert Marr, the head of NEADS, told Peter Jennings that, having received shootdown authorization from Richard Clarke, he "passed that on to the pilots," adding: "United Airlines Flight 93 will not be allowed to reach Washington, DC."⁸⁷

Two pilots, moreover, independently said that they received these orders and would have shot down Flight 93 if it had not crashed on its own.⁸⁸ Like Wolfowitz, these



The 9/11 Commission claimed that NORAD didn't know that Flight 93 was hijacked



General Larry Arnold of NORAD reported NORAD knew it, 40 minutes prior to the crash



General Richard Myers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also agreed, they knew about it



Paul Wolfowitz Deputy Secretary of Defense said "Flt. 93 was being tracked."

pilots denied that the flight was actually shot down. But the question at issue is the 9/11 Commission's claim that the military did not even know that this flight had been hijacked, and their testimony, like that of Arnold, Marr, and Winfield, directly contradicted that claim.

We have extremely strong evidence, therefore, that insofar as the NORAD tapes given to the 9/11 Commission and Michael Bronner say otherwise, they have been doctored. They do *not* provide the "authentic military history of 9/11" or even anything close to it.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have given several examples of what we can learn about 9/11 if we get empirical, checking the actual facts, rather than simply, like *Popular Mechanics* and far too many journalists, defining 'the facts' as the claims made by people defending the official conspiracy theory. If reporters and news organizations will develop the courage to get empirical about 9/11, the official conspiracy theory will completely unravel.

Evidence for this claim is provided by former senior CIA analyst Bill Christison, who said in a letter to friends in August of 2006: "I spent the first four and a half years since September 11 utterly unwilling to consider seriously the conspiracy theories surrounding the attacks of that day. ... [I]n the last half year and after considerable agony, I've changed my mind."⁸⁹ In an essay entitled "Stop Belittling the Theories About September 11," Christison summarized what he considered "persuasive evidence that the events of September did not unfold as the Bush administration and the 9/11 Commission would have us believe."⁹⁰

This conclusion is of overwhelming importance, Christison argued, because the fraud of 9/11 "involves a much greater crime against the American people and people of the world than any other charges of fraud connected to the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003." Why? "It is ... more important because ... the events of 9/11 have been used by the administration to justify every single aspect of US foreign policy in the Middle East since September 11. It is ... more important also because it affects the very core of our entire political system. ... [I]t is a conspiracy, so far successful, not only against the people of the United States, but against the entire world."⁹¹

Christison's analysis made clear why getting the truth about 9/11 publicly revealed is so important. Getting it revealed, however, will be difficult. One reason was pointed out by former CIA case officer Robert Baer in an interview with Thom Hartmann, during which Baer revealed that he, too, had changed his mind about 9/11, deciding that it was an inside job. "[A] lot of people [in the United States] have profited from 9/11," said Baer. "[G]reat fortunes are being made."⁹² This is a problem for getting the truth about 9/11 revealed, because those who are making great fortunes include corporations who wield great influence over what can be reported in the mainstream media.

Nevertheless, I believe, there is still hope that the truth may come out. Other countries, such as Japan, Canada, and some European countries, may begin exposing the lies so loudly that the American press will not be able to pretend not to hear. The activist side of the 9/11 Truth movement in the United States and other countries may begin organizing mass rallies to demand that the truth finally be told. The Democrats, now in control of Congress and the White House, may develop the courage to hold hearings about 9/11. If so, the press will have little choice but to report on them. At some point, the press may realize that, to save its own reputation, it will need to get out front on this story so that it can take credit.

The 9/11 Truth movement is now far stronger than it was a couple of years ago. Thanks to the recent addition of many more scientists, architects, engineers, pilots, and former members of the military and intelligence services, it is now even more obvious than before that the 9/11 movement is based on professionally informed evaluations of the empirical evidence, and that it is the official theory that fits what most people mean when they say they reject 'conspiracy theories': theories that, being based on groundless speculation, are wildly at odds with the evidence – except for evidence that was obviously planted.⁹³

Notes:

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* * *

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Would the US Government Ever Deliberately Kill Its Own Citizens?

At least eight times in history the US government has knowingly killed, allowed to be killed, or planned to kill, American citizens to further its national or foreign policy objectives. So, regarding 9/11, isn't it possible that the President, Vice President and others within the US government could have deliberately killed 2,738 Americans that fateful day?

	Date	Description	Approx. Deaths	False Flag Example	Details on Page	President or Person in Charge	
1.	1915	The Sinking of the Lusitania	128 Americans 1070 Others	# 9	42		Woodrow Wilson
2.	1941	The 'Sneak Attack' on Pearl Harbor (See next story)	2,460	# 12	43		Franklin D. Roosevelt
3.	1962	Operation Northwoods	*	# 15	46		Lyman Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
4.	1967	The USS Liberty Incident	34	# 42	59		Lyndon Johnson
5.	1993	The First World Trade Center Bombing	6	# 19	49		Bill Clinton
6.	1995	Oklahoma City Bombing	168	# 20	50		
7.	2001	The Proclamation at Ground Zero by the EPA that "The air is safe to breathe" affected 40,000 workers	100+	N/A	88		George W. Bush
8.	2003	The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq Based on the Lies that Iraq had WMDs and Saddam was linked to al Qaeda	4257++	N/A	88		

* Operation Northwoods would have resulted in an unknown number of deaths of American citizens. It was proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to serve as a pretext for a US invasion of Cuba, but the plan was blocked by President John F. Kennedy, so there were no casualties.

+ Approximately 100 have died so far, hundreds more have respiratory illnesses and will die as a result. The number could exceed 9/11 fatalities.

++ Number of US military casualties as of March 6, 2009 (according to a CNN count – www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/forces/casualties/).



Special Issue 13
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Dedication

*“For those with eyes to see
and the need to know ... now!”*



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George H.W. Bush



Zbigniew Brzezinski



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Who's Behind the New World Order? See Pages 10-11

Prescription for a World in Crisis

4-5 Overview / Editorial ~ Seven Keys to Understanding and Resolving the Global Crisis

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