NEWSLETTER #67  
September 15, 2004  
September 11, 2001 Revisited: A Three Act Play

Get comfortable, folks, this one runs a little long ... but there's a lot of cool pictures to look at along the way, especially in Acts II and III.

ACT I

It's anniversary time once again, dear readers, and that means that it is time to take yet another stroll down memory lane and revisit the infamous day when "everything changed." We do so not because we want to, but because it is what the Republican Party, the party of our honorable leader, has asked us to do.

From my perspective, there have always been three particularly productive avenues of research into the events of September 11, 2001, each of which has yielded a compelling body of evidence that strongly suggests that the attacks that day were a production staged by the Washington establishment, and certainly not a surprise attack by Islamic 'terrorists,' nor an anticipated attack by Islamic 'terrorists,' nor a 'terrorist' plot that was co-opted by elements of our intelligence agencies, nor the work of some foreign government (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Israel, Pakistan or China), nor any other explanation that invokes incompetence, neglect, limited U.S. involvement by some 'rogue cabal,' or desperate finger pointing at others.

Those three evidence trails have led to three nearly inescapable conclusions, each of which poses serious problems for those with a vested interest in selling the official mythology of what happened that day:

1. The perfectly symmetrical and total collapse of three commercial highrise office buildings that day (WTC1, WTC2, and WTC7), the first such collapses in history, can only be explained as controlled demolitions, requiring a considerable amount of advance planning, preparation, expertise and access.
2. The nation with the world's most formidable military apparatus, and with the world's most advanced air defense system, failed in every way imaginable to respond to the attacks, and failed to follow the most basic, routine, automatic procedures for responding to emergency situations. Not only did the Air Force and civil defense systems fail to respond, despite having more than ample time to do so, but the purported commander-in-chief also failed to respond, as did his staff and security detail, and all of his underlings.
3. It is impossible to reconcile the documented damage to the Pentagon with the notion that it was struck by a 757 passenger jet. Evidence instead indicates that it was either struck by a missile (and not one launched from a cave in Afghanistan), or taken out with explosives planted within the building.

From the beginning, many of the most prominent 9-11 researchers have labored to either discredit, or ignore and direct attention away from, these three key areas of research. From the Wilderness, for example, considered by many to be the preeminent 9-11 site, avoided commenting on the Air Force stand-down for many long months; dismissed the notion of controlled demolitions in a short, unsourced post just two days after the towers had fallen; and still has not, to this day, ever reviewed or addressed the photographic evidence from the Pentagon.

Many other researchers and websites followed suit in the months following the attacks. The evidence, however, has proven to be far too compelling to easily discredit or ignore, and far too indicative of direct government planning to allow to go unchallenged. With the efforts to bury or disparage the incriminating evidence failing, a new plan of action has emerged, this one seeking to neutralize the evidence in other ways.

There are two basic strategies currently being employed to undermine the most compelling 9-11 evidence. The first involves inserting a new legend into the 9-11 literature that will, ultimately, provide a plausible, and relatively benign, explanation for evidence that had previously defied a rational, innocent explanation. Thus we see heavy emphasis now being placed on a number of alleged 'war games' that were supposedly being conducted on September 11 -- enough 'war games,' in fact, to account for the lack of an Air Force response, the bizarre responses of George Bush and his security detail, and even the reported presence of FEMA on the scene in New York the day before the attacks.

What was once a highly incriminating stand-down of the US Air Force and the White House and Pentagon anti-missile batteries, and what was once a response by Bush and his entourage that revealed foreknowledge, will now be magically transformed into simple confusion over 'war games' having been co-opted and exploited by those crafty 'terrorists.' And just like that, complicity becomes incompetence. And as everyone knows, the cure for incompetence is to divert massive amounts of money into ever more
repressive 'security' measures.

The other new, emerging line of defense involves introducing 'new,' easily discredited, and at times patently absurd, physical evidence, and then associating that 'evidence' with the legitimate physical evidence, thus hopelessly tainting the entire mix. Hence we see the sudden popularity of bizarre theories concerning the two flights - American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 - that, according to the official narrative, smashed into the World Trade Center towers.

These theories are based on the assertion that there were strange 'pods' affixed to the undersides of one or both of the planes. In some scenarios, these 'pods' are said to be napalm bombs or missiles that were launched into the towers a mere fraction of a second before the moment of impact -- a feat that would require superhuman timing and, more importantly, serve no purpose whatsoever. Other theories contend that the 'pods' were part of a remote guidance system, although I have no idea why the system would have been mounted externally, which would, you would think, have a bit of an effect on the aircraft's aerodynamics, and on the operation of its landing gear, which I hear plays a key role in getting the plane off the ground.

The 'pod' theories either explicitly or implicitly reject the idea that the planes that hit the WTC towers were the American and United flights. Some theories claim that the attack planes had no windows. Other theories claim that the planes that hit the towers were shadowed by other, presumably military, aircraft. And some theories claim, remarkably enough, that there actually were no planes at all, and that the whole thing was essentially a high-tech hologram show!

As several researchers have lamented, these theories can only serve to damage the credibility of the 9-11 skeptics' case. To be perfectly blunt, I can't think of too many things that would be more counterproductive than trying to convince people that they didn't see what the entire world is pretty sure it saw (i.e., planes crashing into tall buildings). The effect is the same as if, in the years following the Kennedy assassination, while skeptics were presenting the case for Kennedy having been shot from the front rather than from behind, a group of researchers suddenly began arguing that he wasn't actually shot at all!

This 'emerging' evidence seems to be specifically designed to discredit, through the time-tested method of guilt by association, the evidence indicating that the Pentagon was damaged by something other than American Flight 77. Since the Pentagon evidence can't be discredited directly, it must be tainted indirectly, and the best way to do that is to introduce into the skeptics' literature dubious claims about the attacks on the towers.

[We have just seen, by the way, a classic example of how this technique is employed, in the case of CBS and Bush's National Guard records. In case anyone missed it, CBS's Dan Rather presented, probably knowingly and deliberately, forged copies of Bush's records, which were then quickly revealed to be forgeries. The effect, of course, is to discredit all the legitimate documentation of Bush's lack of service.]

There is no question that concerted efforts are being made to closely link Pentagon theories and 'pod' theories. Most 9-11 skeptics' sites fall into one of three camps: those that simultaneously promote 'pod' theories and Pentagon theories (http://www.LetsRoll911.org, for example); those that equate 'pod' theories and Pentagon theories and then denounce both (like http://www.oilempire.us/bogus.html#podpeople and http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/pffinal.html); and those that largely steer clear of commenting on either issue (like the aforementioned From the Wilderness). A new 9-11 film making the rounds, In Plane Sight, also links 'pod' theories and alternative Pentagon theories.

There is a key difference, however, between theories concerning the crash at the Pentagon and theories concerning the crashes into the Twin Towers: everyone has seen, more times than they care to remember, video footage of airplanes crashing rather spectacularly into the WTC towers; no one, on the other hand, has ever seen any footage of an airplane, or anything else, crashing into the Pentagon. Tens of millions of people feel as though they were eyewitnesses to the tragedy in Manhattan. Only a few locals witnessed the Pentagon 'crash.'

If theories involving what hit the Pentagon can be successfully tied to theories proclaiming that it was really missiles, military jets, and holograms that hit the World Trade Center towers, then the general public, which bore witness to the tower attacks, will certainly not bother to take an objective look at the evidence concerning the attack that they didn't see -- which just happens to be the one that didn't involve an airplane crash.

With the Pentagon evidence thus marginalized, and the Air Force stand-down evidence explained away, the best remaining evidence will be the controlled demolitions of the Twin Towers and WTC7. And sure enough - wouldn't you know it? - there are indications that a campaign may be underway to explain that evidence away as well. The 'theory' being developed seems to involve an acknowledgment that the towers were indeed brought down deliberately, but that acknowledgment is coupled with a cover story about the necessity of avoiding the extensive damage and mass casualties that would have resulted if the towers had toppled over.
It was, you see, a choice of the lesser of two evils, and our leaders, God bless 'em, chose to sacrifice the few for the benefit of the many. Of course - wink, wink, nudge, nudge - Washington has to officially deny it, just as they have to officially deny downing Flight 93.

The obvious problem with this not-so-clever 'theory' is that very few buildings, as far as I know, come pre-packed with explosive charges and pre-wired for an implosion. Most people, I would think, would not feel completely safe living or working in a building that might, at any time, self-destruct into a pile of rubble. I myself would, at the very least, look into getting renters' insurance before occupying such a building.

To compensate for the tiny little gap in the 'theory,' we can look forward to the incorporation of some kind of futuristic, top-secret, laser-assisted pulsed energy weapon (or something like that). As I recall, the seeds were sown long ago in the skeptics' literature.

The campaign to neutralize the most compelling evidence in the 9-11 skeptics' case is not the only disturbing trend in the '9-11 Truth Movement.' Also of concern are the concerted efforts (which I think I may have commented on previously) to co-opt the movement and rename it the 'Peak Oil Movement.' And then there is the insistence by many researchers on continuing to devote an inordinate amount of time dwelling on the issue of 'forewarnings.'

The American people have had more than enough time to draw conclusions about attack 'forewarnings,' since that is the only aspect of the skeptics' case that has received mainstream media coverage. For the most part, we have divided into four camps: those who choose to believe that the 'forewarnings' were simply lost in a sea of intelligence 'chatter'; those who believe that the 'forewarnings' weren't acted upon due to incompetence; those who believe that the 'forewarnings' weren't acted upon due to embarrassing ties between the Bush family and the Saudis; and those who believe that the 'forewarnings' were deliberately ignored.

The truth, however, is that all of those positions, sold by various avenues of the mainstream and alternative media, are incorrect, and all of them ultimately lend support to the official lie that states that the attacks of September 11 were a plot cooked up by, and carried out by, Islamic 'terrorists.' And that is precisely why the 'forewarnings' issue has received extensive media coverage, while other, far more incriminating, avenues of investigation have been entirely ignored.

The real issue is not 'forewarnings'; it is foreknowledge. They are not the same thing. Simply stated, those who are complicit in the planning and execution of an event do not generally need to be 'forewarned' that that event is on the horizon. They already know. And continuing to focus on 'forewarnings,' three full years after the fact, serves only to obscure that fact.

[For another view of what is wrong with the '9-11 Truth Movement,' go to http://mysite.verizon.net/vze25x9n/index.html, and while you’re there, be sure to read this post: http://mysite.verizon.net/vze25x9n/id24.html]

* * * * * * *

Well, folks, now that there is an excellent chance that I have already successfully pissed off the vast majority of 9-11 researchers out there, I think we are ready to begin our stroll down memory lane. The goal here will be to focus attention on the most critical evidence of direct U.S. government complicity in the attacks of September 11, and while doing so, to construct a reasonably comprehensive, semi-coherent theory of what really happened on that infamous day. Specifically, we will speculate about what went wrong, and how that lead to damning evidence being left behind.

When I just said "we," by the way, I really meant "I," since I am really doing most of the theorizing, while you are primarily just doing the eye-rolling and guffawing. Nevertheless, I use the collective "we" in case this theory, for whatever reason, turns out to be really stupid, in which case you can be pretty sure that I will try to blame the whole thing on you.

We will begin with a timeline of the key events of that fateful morning. As visual aides, we will be using graphics that were provided three years ago by the ever-helpful folks at the Washington Post and at Time magazine. Note that in both of the graphics, the departure time listed for each flight is the scheduled departure time, not the actual departure time.
The theory that will be presented here assumes that the plot initially called for the four identified passenger airplanes to be used in the attacks. It also assumes that those four flights were in fact hijacked, likely by human actors. Remote control theories, as we all know, have been circulating since shortly after the attacks took place. I've never been a big fan of them, however.

It should be clarified here that endorsing the notion that the planes were hijacked is not the same thing as endorsing the government fairy tale that says that they were hijacked by 19 positively identified Islamic ‘terrorists’ who snuck box cutters through airport security. The real hijackers were undoubtedly very well-trained teams that were allowed to board the planes armed with more than just box cutters. Their ethnicity, while largely unimportant, is anyone’s guess.

At 7:59 AM, on the morning of September 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 11, a morning commuter flight from Boston to Los Angeles, lifts off from Boston’s Logan International Airport. Curiously, and fortuitously for any potential hijackers, nearly 3/4 of the
plane's seats are empty. Fifteen minutes later, at 8:14 AM, United Airlines Flight 175, another morning commuter flight from Boston to Los Angeles, takes off from Boston's Logan International Airport. Curiously, and fortuitously for any potential hijackers, over 80% of the plane's seats are empty. The United flight is about 16 minutes late getting off the ground.

At the very same time that Flight 175 is getting airborne, someone aboard Flight 11 shuts off the plane's radio and transponder, cutting off all communications to the aircraft. At this time, 8:14 AM, longstanding procedures call for air traffic controllers to notify NORAD. Established and routinely followed procedures call for NORAD to be notified of any potential trouble in America's airspace. NORAD's responsibility, upon notification, is to issue scramble orders for interceptor aircraft.

These procedures are followed to deal not just with hijackings, which are obviously quite rare, but with routine air emergencies such as when an aircraft departs from its approved route, or fails to respond to radio requests, or switches off its transponder, or experiences serious mechanical difficulties. Interceptor aircraft, on call 24/7 at military bases all across the country, deal with all of those situations and more. They are, in a very real sense, the policemen of the skies. And like their counterparts on land, they use varying levels of force depending upon the situation they are confronted with. The vast majority of errant aircraft, as with the vast majority of police calls, do not warrant a hostile response.

The initial goal is merely to reestablish communications with the errant plane, first by radio, and, failing that, by establishing visual contact, typically by flying into the other plane's field of view and rocking the interceptor's wings to see if the errant craft responds. If necessary, the pilot of the interceptor can fly up close enough to take a look in the cockpit of the other plane and attempt to assess the situation. If all attempts at contact are rebuffed, available options include attempting to force the plane to land, and firing warning volleys of tracer fire in the targeted plane's flight path. If all other options have been exhausted, and if it is deemed necessary, then downing the aircraft is an option, but one that will be undertaken only as a last resort.

Unfortunately, this needs to be rehashed here to illustrate that the argument that is frequently offered in response to criticism of the failure to dispatch interceptors on September 11 - the argument that says that the government can't just go around shooting down airplanes full of innocent people - is an entirely false argument, because the skeptics' argument has never been that the planes should have been summarily shot down; the argument has always been that standard, non-lethal procedures were not followed to deal with errant aircraft.

Imagine, if you will, that there is a hostage situation on the ground somewhere in America. Let's say that a bank robbery attempt has gone bad and a band of armed thugs are holding employees and patrons hostage. An hour or more has passed since the hostage ordeal began. The police know that the hostages are being held, and they know where they are being held. In fact, everyone with a television or a radio knows that the hostages are being held. And yet, curiously enough, police have not responded and there are no officers at the scene. When questioned, the police chief says: "Well, we can't very well just go in there and shoot up the place! They have hostages!"

The chief would be right, of course; you can't just go in guns blazing. But his response fails to address the fact that what they could have done was have officers on the scene, attempting, in every way possible, to gain control of the situation and minimize the loss of innocent life. And so it is with the policemen of the skies as well -- on every day other than September 11, 2001. Once a scramble order is issued, by the way, it takes just minutes to get aircraft off the ground. And once in the air, F-15 and F-16 interceptors can hit 1,500+ mph in just a few more minutes. Keep that in mind as we proceed. Meanwhile, back to our timeline...

At 8:20 AM, six minutes after the first sign of trouble, Flight 11 veers off course, heading not toward Manhattan, but toward upstate New York, as if possibly stalling for time (see graphics). At this time, the FAA strongly suspects that Flight 11 has been hijacked. At the very same time, American Airlines Flight 77, a morning commuter flight from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles, takes off from Dulles International Airport. Curiously, and fortuitously for any potential hijackers, over 3/4 of the plane's seats are empty. The flight lifts off approximately ten minutes after its scheduled departure time.

At 8:21 AM, a stewardess reportedly calls to report that Flight 11 has definitely been hijacked. There is now no question that this is not just a relatively routine case of an errant aircraft. Seven minutes later, at 8:28 AM, Flight 11 changes course yet again. It is now headed for New York City. Two minutes later, Flight 175 veers off course as well. Both flights are now off their approved routes and headed for New York City. One of them has been confirmed as a hijacked flight. Military interceptors are noticeably missing-in-action.

At 8:42 AM, United Airlines Flight 93 takes off from Newark International Airport bound for San Francisco, California. Curiously, and fortuitously for any potential hijackers, nearly 85% of the plane's seats are empty. The flight is 41 minutes late taking off from Newark. This poses serious problems for the plan of attack, as we shall see. By the time Flight 93 is in the air, Flight 175's transponder and radio have been shut off.
Twenty-eight minutes have now elapsed since the first sign of trouble in the air. Twenty-one minutes have elapsed since a hijacking was confirmed. Two flights are wildly off course and cut off from communications. According to the official story, NORAD is notified a minute later, at 8:43 AM (another version of the official story claims the time of notification was a bit earlier, at 8:38 AM). It is inconceivable, however, that notification would not have been made at least twenty minutes earlier, when the first hijacking was confirmed. But even if we accept this aspect of the official timeline, the events that follow are still inexplicable.

At 8:46 AM, thirty-two minutes after the first signs of trouble, Flight 11 plows into the side of the north World Trade Center tower. At that same time, Flight 77 suddenly veers north, possibly preparing to turn back toward the D.C. area. But it is, alas, already too late. By 8:50, Flight 77 is back on course as if nothing had happened, but radio contact is not reestablished.

This graphic, also published circa 9-11-01, placed much greater emphasis on Flight 77’s brief side trip than did the Washington Post or Time graphics. What caused the pilot’s change of heart? Why did the hijacked flight return to its approved route? As I first proposed in Newsletter #16 (posted on the first anniversary of the attacks, more or less), it seems entirely plausible that the original plan called for Flights 77 and 93 to strike simultaneously, or nearly so, at targets in the D.C. area — likely at the Pentagon and the White House, for maximum psychological impact and to allow the administration to claim that the nation’s defenses were crippled in the initial surprise attack, thus preventing a response.

Had Flight 93 got off the ground on time, it could have reached its target at or before the time that Flight 11 was smashing into the World Trade Center. Flight 77, scheduled to depart at 8:10, was only 23 miles from its target when it left the ground at about 8:20 AM. It merely needed to kill time until Flight 93 was in position. When Flight 93 failed to get off the ground, however, Flight 77 opted to proceed along its scheduled route — until Flight 93 finally got off the ground at 8:42 AM, at which time Flight 77 almost immediately changed course.

But, as I previously indicated, it was too late. Flight 93 was still some distance from its target, while Flight 11 had already found its target in New York City, and Flight 175 wasn’t far behind. The New York attacks were most likely supposed to coincide with, or follow shortly after, the attacks on the political and military nerve centers. Had things played out that way, there would not now be questions raised about the failure to muster a timely military response.

At approximately 8:56 AM, Flight 77, with its transponder shut off, reportedly disappeared from radar. Some reports have claimed, erroneously and likely deliberately so, that disabling a plane’s transponder will cause it to disappear from radar. That is a patently absurd claim. Shutting off the transponder will certainly make positive identification more difficult, but it hardly renders an aircraft invisible to radar. If that were the case, foreign bombers could slip past U.S. radar at any time merely by switching off their transponders.

At about the same time that Flight 77 became a phantom plane, George Bush, purported President of the United States and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, arrived at the Booker School in Sarasota, Florida for a planned, and well publicized, photo-op. At that time, one commercial airliner had already crashed into WTC1, killing and gravely injuring hundreds of innocent victims. A second airliner, wildly off course and cut off from communications, was just minutes away from a second spectacular crash. A third airliner had cut off communications, was flying erratically, and had just disappeared from radar. There was clearly a massive, coordinated, unprecedented attack upon the country underway.

It should go without saying that only those who were involved in the planning of the operation had any idea, at that time, what the full scope of the attacks would be. No non-conspirator could have known, for example, whether any bombings on the ground were planned. But one thing could certainly have been assumed: George Bush was at serious risk of being targeted, especially since he was scheduled to be in an unsecured location that had been announced in advance and that was located, amazingly enough, less than five miles from an international airport.

Upon arrival at the school, Bush reportedly told the principal that although "a commercial plane has hit the World Trade Center," they were going to "do the reading thing anyway." Bush and his entourage proceeded into the unprotected school. No one mentioned that the plane that had crashed had been hijacked, or that a second hijacked flight was screaming toward Manhattan, or that a third hijacked plane was allegedly missing-in-action.

At 9:03 AM, just as Flight 175 was plowing into the south World Trade Center tower in a telegenic pyrotechnic show, and just as Flight 93 became the fourth commercial airliner that morning to veer off its approved route, George Bush began his extended
photo-op in an elementary school classroom. Forty-nine minutes after the first danger signs, and seventeen minutes after the first crash, the skies were free of interceptor aircraft and the commander-in-chief was quietly sitting in an extremely vulnerable location reading a book about a pet goat.

Just a few minutes into the reading, presidential adviser Andrew Card approached Bush to inform him of the second crash. My guess is that he added something along these lines: "The attacks in Washington have not taken place yet. We're not sure what went wrong. Sit tight while we figure out what to do." And that, of course, is exactly what Bush proceeds to do.

[As a brief aside, I should mention here that when Michael Moore opted to present (incomplete) footage of Bush at the Booker School in his film "Fahrenheit 911," the filmmaker felt compelled to add a narrative track that is clearly intended to shape the audience's perception of Bush's actions. According to Moore, Bush's actions revealed incompetence and dereliction of duties. In truth, however, Bush's actions were more indicative of specific foreknowledge and consciousness of guilt.]

At about 9:09 AM, with Bush still practicing his reading skills, there are reports of a plane crash in a remote area along the Ohio/Kentucky/West Virginia border. According to several published versions of its flight path, that is exactly where Flight 77 is at the time of the reports. These crash reports will later disappear down the memory hole. Flight 77 will, as if by magic, reappear on radar later, nearly a half-hour after it disappeared.

Meanwhile, at 9:16 AM, Bush leaves the Florida classroom and - after taking time out for questions and photos, as if he has nothing better to do - meets with his staff. More than an hour has now passed since the hijackings began, and there is still no sign of a military response, even though Manhattan is in flames and at least two hijacked aircraft are known to be still in the air. With the nation under attack, Bush and his Secret Service detail had been sitting for some twenty minutes in a location that could not be defended against an organized attack and that had been publicized in advance.

At 9:25 AM, 'Flight 77' appears on radar at Dulles International, but the plane is moving very fast and air traffic controllers quickly ascertain that it is not maneuvering like your run-of-the-mill commercial airliner. Two minutes later, according to reports, a passenger reports the hijacking of Flight 93. Three minutes after that, at 9:30 AM, Bush delivers an address to the nation, at a time and location scheduled, and publicized, in advance.

Seventy-six minutes have now passed since the first sign of trouble emerged, sixty-nine minutes have passed since the first hijacking was confirmed, at least forty-seven minutes have passed since NORAD was notified, forty-four minutes have passed since the first crash, and twenty-seven minutes have passed since the second crash -- and two errant, and presumably hijacked, aircraft are still at large. No interceptors have been scrambled and the commander-in-chief still sits at an unsecured location that had been advertised in advance. Following the speech, Bush and his entourage head to the airport, following a scheduled route and with no added security.

At 9:36 AM, Flight 93 turns toward Washington (see graphics). Approximately two minutes later, 'Flight 77,' cruising along unhindered, despite flying through the most closely monitored, secure airspace in the world, and doing so during the highest possible state of alert, purportedly plows into the side of a newly refurbished portion of the Pentagon.

Notice that in all the graphics, it is only the return portion of Flight 77's route that is shown as a broken line, indicating, supposedly, that the aircraft's transponder had been shut off. But as everyone knows, the transponders on all four flights were actually disabled. Why then aren't portions of all four routes depicted with a broken line? One reason for the use of the broken line is surely to create the impression that it was not possible to track that particular flight, thus hopefully defraying questions concerning how an enormous commercial airliner could freely violate the Pentagon's airspace during a national emergency. But there is another reason for the broken line as well: for most of the return route depicted by the dashed line, Flight 77 did not exist, at least on radar.

The most likely explanation is that Flight 77, having missed the window of opportunity to launch its intended attack, was shot down in some unpopulated area along the Ohio/Kentucky border. The only shred of evidence that Flight 77 ever made it any further than that is an extremely dubious report from Bush Administration insider Theodore Olsen, who claimed that he was the recipient of an unlikely, and unrecorded, phone call from his wife, Bush Administration insider Susan Olsen, who happened to be, conveniently enough, an alleged passenger on the plane, and the only passenger, coincidentally, who was able to allegedly make a phone call, even though, according to Ted Olsen, who is the only witness to the alleged call, all the passengers were encouraged by the hijackers to phone home.

Not only did Flight 77 fly without registering on radar, it crashed without leaving behind any aircraft debris (as we shall see in Act II). As I previously suggested, it is entirely possible that someone, in a misguided attempt to create a retroactive explanation for the complete lack of a military response, and to provide some political cover, made a decision to attack the Pentagon by other means
after Flight 77 was shot down.

If the attacks had gone according to plans, in other words, Flight 77 very likely would have crashed into the Pentagon. There would have been physical evidence of the crash of a commercial airliner at the scene, and we probably would have been treated to endless replays of video footage of yet another spectacular plane crash. Instead, what we have is some very incriminating photographic evidence that strongly suggests that Flight 77 never made it to the Pentagon.

At 9:55 AM, Air Force 1, with Bush and his entourage aboard, lifts off with no military escort. For an entire hour, with the country under attack, Bush has stuck to his prearranged, and publicized, schedule. No effort has been made to protect the life of the President and commander-in-chief. And at no time has the commander-in-chief made any effort to take control of the situation. Neither has Vice-President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, or anyone else in a position of authority in the Bush administration or the military establishment.

At 9:59 AM, the south World Trade Center tower inexplicably suffered a total, and perfectly symmetrical, collapse. Just minutes later, Flight 93 reportedly crashed in Pennsylvania. At 10:10 AM, the damaged portion of the Pentagon suffered a partial collapse. Eighteen minutes later, the north World Trade Center tower inexplicably suffered a total, and perfectly symmetrical, collapse. The show was officially over.

Flight 93 was almost certainly shot down. Just as at the Pentagon, there was nothing at the purported 'crash' site that indicated that it had been hit by a 100 ton aircraft. Wreckage from the aircraft, notably absent at the 'crash' site, was scattered as far as eight miles away, indicating that the plane had exploded in the air, and not on the ground. Witness statements, media reports, and even statements by Washington officials, indicated that Flight 93 was being shadowed by military aircraft just before it 'crashed.'

It is possible that Flight 93, now seared into the collective American memory as the "Let's Roll" flight, was shot down precisely because passengers had taken control of the aircraft, or were attempting to. While recently reading an online version of David Ray Griffin's new book on the attacks, I was surprised to find that that is the theory that he is floating. I was even more surprised to find that Griffin credits that theory to "9-11 Timeline" assembler Paul Thompson. Before reading that, I had foolishly believed that that theory first appeared on my own website, under the title "What Really Happened to Flight 93," posted on November 7, 2001, just eight weeks after the attacks.

Looking back now, however, three years after the fact, it occurs to me that my initial theory may have been off the mark. There is little doubt that Flight 93 was shot down, and it most likely was shot down because, like Flight 77, it had become a liability rather than an asset. But it had become a liability regardless of whether there really was a passenger revolt, so it is possible that the tale of passenger heroics was fabricated to explain the 'crash' of the aircraft -- and to provide a patriotic, feel-good story. Whether the heroics were real or scripted, one thing seems clear: Flight 93 would have been downed either way. How else were all those witnesses, and hijackers, going to be silenced?

The response to the attacks - by NORAD, by the U.S. Air Force, by the President, by his security detail, and by all his cronies and underlings - looked nothing like the response that would have greeted any real 'terrorists' brazen enough to attempt an ambitious attack on the home turf of the world's most feared military machine. It looked, instead, like a deliberate non-response. But it was a strange non-response, entirely lacking in consistency, credibility and plausibility.

Much of the cover story had a decidedly improvised feel to it. Critics of the skeptics' case have asked why, if this was an inside job, a better cover story wasn't scripted in advance. Why were there so many contradictory, and at time incriminating, statements by key players? Why did elements of the official story change over time (e.g., "there were no aircraft scrambled" changed to "they were scrambled but they arrived late.")? Why stage an obvious stand-down of the nation's air defenses? And why risk hitting the Pentagon with something other than Flight 77?

All of these questions, and many similar ones, have been posed by critics of alternative 9-11 theories. We (there's that "we" again) have suggested here that the answers to such questions may be found in the fact that the attacks of September 11 were, in reality,
a botched operation. Had things gone according to plans, there would have been no extended stand-down and no incriminating lack of evidence at the Pentagon, and all the key players would likely have followed their scripts.

According to this scenario, those scripts went out the window when Flight 93 and Flight 77 failed to successfully coordinate their initial attacks. In other words, many of the inconsistencies and obvious cover-ups that plague the official story may very well be due to the lack of improvisational skills of various key members of the Bush administration and the military and intelligence establishments.