

Letter to Thomas Kean from Sibel Edmonds

Dear Chairman Kean:

It has been almost three years since the terrorist attacks on September 11 [2001], during which time we, the people, have been placed under a constant threat of terror and asked to exercise vigilance in our daily lives. Your commission, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, was created by law to investigate "facts and circumstances related to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001" and to "provide recommendations to safeguard against future acts of terrorism", and has now issued its "9-11 Commission Report". You are now asking us to pledge our support for this report, its recommendations, and implementation of these recommendations, with our trust and backing, our tax money, our security, and our lives. Unfortunately, I find your report seriously flawed in its failure to address serious intelligence issues that I am aware of, which have been confirmed, and which as a witness to the commission, I made you aware of. Thus I must assume that other serious issues that I am not aware of were in the same manner omitted from your report. These omissions cast doubt on the validity of your report and therefore on its conclusions and recommendations. Considering what is at stake, our national security, we are entitled to demand answers to unanswered questions, and to ask for clarification of issues that were ignored and/or omitted from the report. I, Sibel Edmonds, a concerned American citizen, a former FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] translator, a whistleblower, a witness for a United States congressional investigation, a witness and a plaintiff for the Department of Justice inspector general investigation, and a witness for your own 9-11 Commission investigation, request your answers to, and your public acknowledgement of, the following questions and issues:

After the terrorist attacks of September 11 we, the translators at the FBI's largest and most important translation unit, were told to slow down, even stop, translation of critical information related to terrorist activities so that the FBI could present the United States Congress with a record of "extensive backlog of untranslated documents", and justify its request for budget and staff increases. While FBI agents from various field offices were desperately seeking leads and suspects, and completely depending on FBI HQ and its language units to provide them with needed translated information, hundreds of translators were being told by their administrative supervisors not to translate and to let the work pile up (please refer to the CBS 60 Minutes transcript dated October 2002, and provided to your investigators in January-February 2004). This issue has been confirmed by the Senate Judiciary Committee (please refer to Senator [Charles] Grassley's and Senator [Patrick] Leahy's letters during the summer of 2002, provided to your investigators in January-February 2004). This confirmed report has been reported to be substantiated by the Department of Justice Inspector General Report (please refer to DOJ-IG report Re: Sibel Edmonds and FBI Translation, provided to you prior to the completion of your report). I provided your investigators with a detailed and specific account of this issue and the names of other witnesses

willing to corroborate this (please refer to tape-recorded 3.5 hours' testimony by Sibel Edmonds, provided to your investigators on February 11, 2004).

Today, almost three years after [September 11], and more than two years since this information has been confirmed and made available to our government, the administrators in charge of language departments of the FBI remain in their positions and in charge of the information front lines of the FBI's counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence efforts. Your report has omitted any reference to this most serious issue, has forgone any accountability whatsoever, and your recommendations have refrained from addressing this issue, which when left unaddressed will have even more serious consequences. This issue is systemic and departmental. Why did your report choose to exclude this information and this serious issue despite the evidence and briefings you received? How can budget increases address and resolve this misconduct by mid-level bureaucratic management? How can the addition of a new bureaucratic layer, "intelligence czar", in its cocoon removed from the action lines, address and resolve this problem?

Melek Can Dickerson, a Turkish translator, was hired by the FBI after September 11, and was placed in charge of translating the most sensitive information related to terrorists and criminals under the bureau's investigation. Melek Can Dickerson was granted Top Secret Clearance, which can be granted only after conducting a thorough background investigation. Melek Can Dickerson used to work for a semi-legit organizations that were the FBI's targets of investigation. Melek Can Dickerson had on going relationships with two individuals who were FBI's targets of investigation. For months Melek Can Dickerson blocked all-important information related to these semi-legit organizations and the individuals she and her husband associated with. She stamped hundreds, if not thousands, of documents related to these targets as "Not Pertinent". Melek Can Dickerson attempted to prevent others from translating these documents important to the FBI's investigations and our fight against terrorism. Melek Can Dickerson, with the assistance of her direct supervisor, Mike Feghali, took hundreds of pages of top-secret sensitive intelligence documents outside the FBI to unknown recipients. Melek Can Dickerson, with the assistance of her direct supervisor, forged signatures on top-secret documents related to certain [September 11-related] detainees. After all these incidents were confirmed and reported to FBI management, Melek Can Dickerson was allowed to remain in her position, to continue the translation of sensitive intelligence received by the FBI, and to maintain her Top Secret Clearance. Apparently bureaucratic mid-level FBI management and administrators decided that it would not look good for the bureau if this security breach and espionage case was investigated and made public, especially after going through Robert Hanssen's case (FBI spy scandal). This case (Melek Can Dickerson) was confirmed by the Senate Judiciary Committee (please refer to Senator Leahy's and Grassley's letters dated June 19 and August 13, 2002, and Senator Grassley's statement on CBS 60 Minutes in October 2002, provided to your investigators in January-February 2004). This Dickerson incident received major coverage by the press (please refer to media background provided to your investigators in January-February 2004). According to [FBI] director [Robert] Mueller, the inspector

general criticized the FBI for failing to adequately pursue this espionage report regarding Melek Can Dickerson (please refer to DOJ-IG report Re: Sibel Edmonds and FBI Translation, provided to you prior to the completion of your report). I provided your investigators with a detailed and specific account of this issue, the names of other witnesses willing to corroborate this, and additional documents (please refer to tape-recorded 3.5 hours' testimony by Sibel Edmonds, provided to your investigators on February 11, 2004).

Today, more than two years since the Dickerson incident was reported to the FBI, and more than two years since this information was confirmed by the United States Congress and reported by the press, these administrators in charge of FBI personnel security and language departments in the FBI remain in their positions and in charge of translation quality and translation departments' security. Melek Can Dickerson and several FBI targets of investigation hastily left the United States in 2002, and the case still remains uninvestigated criminally. Not only does the supervisor facilitating these criminal conducts remain in a supervisory position, he has been promoted to supervising Arabic-language units of the FBI's counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence investigations. Your report has omitted these significant incidents, has forgone any accountability whatsoever, and your recommendations have refrained from addressing this serious information security breach and highly likely espionage issue. This issue needs to be investigated and criminally prosecuted. The translation of our intelligence is being entrusted to individuals with loyalties to our enemies. Important "chit-chats" and "chatters" are being intentionally blocked. Why did your report choose to exclude this information and these serious issues despite the evidence and briefings you received? How can budget increases address and resolve this misconduct by mid-level bureaucratic management? How can the addition of a new bureaucratic layer, "intelligence czar", in its cocoon removed from the action lines, address and resolve this problem?

Over three years ago, more than four months prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks, in April 2001, a long-term FBI informant/asset who had been providing the bureau with information since 1990, provided two FBI agents and a translator with specific information regarding a terrorist attack being planned by Osama bin Laden. This asset/informant was previously a high-level intelligence officer in Iran in charge of intelligence from Afghanistan. Through his contacts in Afghanistan he received information that: 1) Osama Bin Laden was planning a major terrorist attack in the United States targeting four to five major cities, 2) the attack was going to involve airplanes, 3) some of the individuals in charge of carrying out this attack were already in place in the United States, 4) the attack was going to be carried out soon, in a few months. The agents who received this information reported it to their superior, Special Agent in Charge of Counter-terrorism Thomas Fields, at the FBI Washington Field Office, by filing "302" forms, and the translator translated and documented this information. No action was taken by the special agent in charge, and after [September 11] the agents and the translators were told to "keep quiet" regarding this issue. The translator who was present during the session with the FBI informant, Mr Behrooz Sarshar, reported this incident to director Mueller in writing, and later to the Department of Justice inspector general. The press reported this incident, and in fact the report in the Chicago Tribune

on July 21, 2004, stated that FBI officials had confirmed that this information was received in April 2001, and further, the Chicago Tribune quoted an aide to director Mueller that he (Mueller) was surprised that the commission never raised this particular issue with him during the hearing (please refer to Chicago Tribune article, dated July 21, 2004). Mr Sarshar reported this issue to your investigators on February 12, 2004, and provided them with specific dates, location, witness names, and the contact information for that particular Iranian asset and the two special agents who received the information (please refer to the tape-recorded testimony provided to your investigators during a 2.5 hours' testimony by Mr Sarshar on February 12, 2004). I provided your investigators with a detailed and specific account of this issue, the names of other witnesses, and documents I had seen (please refer to tape-recorded 3.5 hours' testimony by Sibel Edmonds, provided to your investigators on February 11, 2004). Mr Sarshar also provided the Department of Justice inspector general with specific information regarding this issue (please refer to DOJ-IG report Re: Sibel Edmonds and FBI Translation, provided to you prior to the completion of your report).

After almost three years since September 11, many officials still refuse to admit to having specific information regarding the terrorists' plans to attack the United States. The Phoenix Memo, received months prior to the [September 11] attacks, specifically warned FBI HQ of pilot training and their possible link to terrorist activities against the United States. Four months prior to the terrorist attacks the Iranian asset provided the FBI with specific information regarding the "use of airplanes", "major US cities as targets", and "Osama bin Laden issuing the order". Coleen Rowley likewise reported that specific information had been provided to FBI HQ. All this information went to the same place: FBI Headquarters in Washington, DC, and the FBI Washington Field Office, in Washington DC. Yet your report claims that not having a central place where all intelligence could be gathered as one of the main factors in our intelligence failure. Why did your report choose to exclude the information regarding the Iranian asset and Behrooz Sarshar from its timeline of missed opportunities? Why was this significant incident not mentioned, despite the public confirmation by the FBI, witnesses provided to your investigators, and briefings you received directly? Why did you surprise even director Mueller by refraining from asking him questions regarding this significant incident and lapse during your hearing (please remember that you ran out of questions during your hearings with director Mueller and [Attorney General] John Ashcroft, so please do not cite a "time limit" excuse)? How can budget increases address and resolve these problems and failure to follow up by mid-level bureaucratic management at FBI Headquarters? How can the addition of a new bureaucratic layer, "intelligence czar", in its cocoon removed from the action lines, address and resolve this problem?

Over two years ago, and after two "unclassified" sessions with FBI officials, the Senate Judiciary Committee sent letters to director Mueller, Attorney General Ashcroft, and Inspector General Glenn Fine regarding the existence of unqualified translators in charge of translating high level sensitive intelligence. The FBI confirmed at least one case: Kevin Taskesen, a Turkish translator, had been given a job as an FBI translator, despite the fact that he had failed all FBI language proficiency tests. In fact,

Kevin could not understand or speak even elementary-level English. He had failed English-proficiency tests and did not even score sufficiently in the target language. Still, Kevin Taskesen was hired, not due to lack of other qualified translator candidates, but because his wife worked in FBI Headquarters as a language proficiency exam administrator. Almost everybody in FBI Headquarters and the FBI Washington Field Office knew about Kevin. Yet Kevin was given the task of translating the most sensitive terrorist-related information, and he was sent to Guantanamo Bay to translate the interrogation of and information for all Turkic-language detainees (Turkish, Uzbek, Turkmen, etc). The FBI was supposed to be trying to obtain information regarding possible future attack plans from these detainees, and yet the FBI knowingly sent unqualified translators to gather and translate this information. Further, these detainees were either released or detained or prosecuted based on information received and translated by unqualified translators knowingly sent there by the FBI. Senator Grassley and Senator Leahy publicly confirmed Kevin Taskesen's case (please refer to Senate letters and documents provided to your investigators in January-February 2004). CBS 60 Minutes showed Kevin's picture and stated his name as one of the unqualified translators sent to Guantanamo Bay, and as a case confirmed by the FBI (please refer to CBS 60 Minutes transcript provided to your investigators). Department of Justice inspector general had a detailed account of these problems (please refer to DOJ-IG report Re: Sibel Edmonds and FBI Translation, provided to you prior to the completion of your report). I provided your investigators with a detailed and specific account of this issue and the names of other witnesses willing to corroborate this (please refer to tape-recorded 3.5 hours' testimony by Sibel Edmonds, provided to your investigators on February 11, 2004).

After more than two years since Kevin Taskesen's case was publicly confirmed, and after almost two years since CBS 60 Minutes broadcast Taskesen's case, Kevin Taskesen remains in his position, as a sole Turkish- and Turkic-language translator for the FBI Washington Field Office. After admitting that Kevin Taskesen was not qualified to perform the task of translating sensitive intelligence and investigation of terrorist activities, the FBI still keeps him in charge of translating highly sensitive documents and leads. Those individuals in the FBI's hiring department and those who facilitated the hiring of unqualified translators due to nepotism/cronyism are still in those departments and remain in their positions. Yet your report does not mention this case, or these chronic problems within the FBI translation departments, and within the FBI's hiring and screening departments. The issue of accountability for those responsible for these practices that endangers our national security is not brought up even once in your report. This issue, as with others, is systemic and departmental. Why did your report choose to exclude this information and these serious issues despite the evidence and briefings you received? How can budget increases address and resolve the intentional continuation of ineptitude and incompetence by mid-level bureaucratic management? How can the addition of a new bureaucratic layer, "intelligence czar", in its cocoon removed from the action lines, address and resolve this problem?

In October 2001, approximately one month after the September 11 attack, an agent from a [city name omitted] field office, re-sent a certain document to the FBI Washington Field Office, so that it could be

re-translated. This special agent, in light of the [September 11] terrorist attacks, rightfully believed that, considering his target of investigation (the suspect under surveillance), and the issues involved, the original translation might have missed certain information that could prove to be valuable in the investigation of terrorist activities. After this document was received by the FBI Washington Field Office and re-translated verbatim, the field agent's hunch appeared to be correct. The new translation revealed certain information regarding blueprints, pictures, and building material for skyscrapers being sent overseas. It also revealed certain illegal activities in obtaining visas from certain embassies in the Middle East, through network contacts and bribery. However, after the re-translation was completed and the new significant information was revealed, the unit supervisor in charge of certain Middle Eastern languages, Mike Feghali, decided not to send the re-translated information to the special agent who had requested it. Instead, this supervisor decided to send this agent a note stating that the translation was reviewed and that the original translation was accurate. This supervisor stated that sending the accurate translation would hurt the original translator and would cause problems for the FBI language department. The FBI agent requesting the re-translation never received the accurate translation of that document. I provided your investigators with a detailed and specific account of this issue, the name and date of this particular investigation, and the names of other witnesses willing to corroborate this (please refer to tape-recorded 3.5 hours' testimony by Sibel Edmonds, provided to your investigators on February 11, 2004). This information was also provided to the Department of Justice inspector general (please refer to DOJ-IG report Re: Sibel Edmonds and FBI Translation, provided to you prior to the completion of your report).

Only one month after the catastrophic events of September 11, while many agents were working around the clock to obtain leads and information, and to investigate those responsible for the attacks, those with possible connections to the attack, and those who might be planning possible future attacks, the bureaucratic administrators in the FBI's largest and most important translation unit were covering up their past failures, blocking important leads and information, and jeopardizing on going terrorist investigations. The supervisor involved in this incident, Mike Feghali, was in charge of certain important Middle Eastern languages within the FBI Washington Field Office, and had a record of previous misconducts. After this supervisor's several severe misconducts were reported to the FBI's higher-level management, after his conducts were reported to the Inspector General's Office, to the United States Congress, and to the 9-11 Commission, he was promoted to include the FBI's Arabic-language unit under his supervision. Today this supervisor, Mike Feghali, remains in the FBI Washington Field Office and is in charge of a language unit receiving those chitchats that our color-coded threat system is based upon. Yet your report contains zero information regarding these systemic problems that led us to our failure in preventing the [September 11] terrorist attacks. In your report, there are no references to individuals responsible for hindering past and current investigations, or those who are willing to compromise our security and our lives for their career advancement and security. This issue, as with others, is systemic and departmental. Why does your report choose to exclude this information and these serious issues despite all the evidence and briefings you received? Why does your report adamantly refrain from assigning any accountability to any individuals responsible for our past and current failures? How can

budget increases address and resolve these intentional acts committed by self-serving career civil servants? How can the addition of a new bureaucratic layer, "intelligence czar", in its cocoon removed from the action lines, address and resolve this problem?

The latest buzz topic regarding intelligence is the problem of sharing information/intelligence within intelligence agencies and between intelligence agencies. To this date the public has not been told of intentional blocking of intelligence, and has not been told that certain information, despite its direct links, impacts and ties to terrorist related activities, is not given to or shared with counter-terrorism units, their investigations, and countering terrorism related activities. This was the case prior to [September 11], and remains in effect after [September 11]. If counter-intelligence receives information that contains money laundering, illegal arms sale, and illegal drug activities, directly linked to terrorist activities, and if that information involves certain nations, certain semi-legit organizations, and ties to certain lucrative or political relations in this country, then that information is not shared with counter-terrorism, regardless of the possible severe consequences. In certain cases, frustrated FBI agents cited "direct pressure by the State Department", and in other cases "sensitive diplomatic relations" is cited. The Department of Justice inspector general received detailed and specific information and evidence regarding this issue (please refer to DOJ-IG report Re: Sibel Edmonds and FBI Translation, provided to you prior to the completion of your report). I provided your investigators with a detailed and specific account of this issue, the names of other witnesses willing to corroborate this, and the names of certain U.S. officials involved in these transactions and activities (please refer to tape-recorded 3.5 hours' testimony by Sibel Edmonds, provided to your investigators on February 11, 2004).

After almost three years the American people still do not know that thousands of lives can be jeopardized under the unspoken policy of "protecting certain foreign business relations". The victims' family members still do not realize that information and answers they have sought relentlessly for over two years has been blocked due to the unspoken decisions made and disguised under "safeguarding certain diplomatic relations". Your report did not even attempt to address these unspoken practices, although, unlike me, you were not placed under any gag. Your hearings did not include questions regarding these unspoken and unwritten policies and practices. Despite your full awareness and understanding of certain criminal conduct that connects to certain terrorist related activities, committed by certain US officials and high-level government employees, you have not proposed criminal investigations into this conduct, although under the laws of this country you are required to do so. How can budget increases address and resolve these problems, when some of them are caused by unspoken practices and unwritten policies? How can a new bureaucratic layer, "intelligence czar", in its cocoon removed from the action lines, override these unwritten policies and unspoken practices incompatible with our national security?

I know for a fact that problems regarding intelligence translation cannot be brushed off as minor problems among many significant problems. Translation units are the front line in gathering, translating, and disseminating intelligence. A warning in advance of the next terrorist attack may, and probably will, come in the form of a message or document in foreign language that will have to be translated. That message may be given to the translation unit headed and supervised by someone like Mike Feghali, who slows down, even stops, translations for the purpose of receiving budget increases for his department, who has participated in certain criminal activities and security breaches, and who has been engaged in covering up failures and criminal conducts within the department, so it may never be translated in time if ever. That message may go to Kevin Taskesen, or another unqualified translator; so it may never be translated correctly and be acted upon. That message may go to a sympathizer within the language department; so it may never be translated fully, if at all. That message may come to the attention of an agent of a foreign organization who works as a translator in the FBI translation department, who may choose to block it; so it may never get translated. If then an attack occurs, which could have been prevented by acting on information in that message, who will tell family members of the new terrorist attack victims that nothing more could have been done? There will be no excuse that we did not know, because we do know.

I am writing this letter in light of my direct experience within the FBI's translation unit during the most crucial times after the [September 11] terrorist attacks, in light of my first hand knowledge of certain problems and cases within the bureau's language units, and in light of what has already been established as facts. As you are fully aware, the facts, incidents, and problems cited in this letter are by no means based upon personal opinion or un-verified allegations. As you are fully aware, these issues and incidents were found confirmed by a senior Republican senator, Charles Grassley, and a senior Democrat senator, Patrick Leahy. As you know, according to officials with direct knowledge of the Department of Justice inspector general's report on my allegations, "none of my allegations were disproved". As you are fully aware, even FBI officials "confirmed all my allegations and denied none" during their unclassified meetings with the Senate Judiciary staff over two years ago. However, neither your commission's hearings, nor your commission's 567-page report, nor your recommendations include these serious issues, major incidents, and systemic problems. Your report's coverage of FBI translation problems consists of a brief microscopic footnote (Footnote 25). Yet your commission is geared to start aggressively pressuring our government to hastily implement your measures and recommendations based upon your incomplete and deficient report.

In order to cure a problem, one must have an accurate diagnosis. In order to correctly diagnose a problem, one must consider and take into account all visible symptoms. Your commission's investigations, hearings, and report have chosen not to consider many visible symptoms. I am emphasizing "visible", because these symptoms have been long recognized by experts from the intelligence community and have been written about in the press. I am emphasizing "visible" because the few specific symptoms I provided you with in this letter have been confirmed and publicly

acknowledged. During its many hearings your commission chose not to ask the questions necessary to unveil the true symptoms of our failed intelligence system. Your commission intentionally bypassed these severe symptoms, and chose not to include them in its 567-page report. Now, without a complete list of our failures pre-[September 11], without a comprehensive examination of true symptoms that exist in our intelligence system, without assigning any accountability whatsoever, and therefore, without a sound and reliable diagnosis, your commission is attempting to divert attention from the real problems, and to prescribe a cure through hasty and costly measures. It is like attempting to put a gold-lined expensive porcelain cap over a deeply decayed tooth with a rotten root, without first treating the root, and without first cleaning/shaving the infected tooth.

Respectfully

Sibel D Edmonds

CC: Senate Judiciary Committee

CC: Senate Intelligence Committee

CC: House Government Reform Committee

CC: Family Steering Committee

CC: Press