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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

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First public hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States

Statement of Mary Fetchet to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States March 31, 2003

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. My name is Mary Fetchet. I tragically lost my son Brad in the most devastating attack on our country, the attacks on the World Trade Center. I am Co-Chair of Voices of September 11th and a member of the Family Steering Committee for the 9/11 Independent Commission. I am honored to be here today and want to thank Governor Kean, Mr. Hamilton and all the commissioners for allowing me the opportunity to discuss my expectations for the 9/11 Independent Commission. I want to express to all of you my very deep concern about the slow progress of the commission and stress the sense of urgency we feel as precious time is wasted. I also want

Current News

The Commission has released its final report. [\[more\]](#)

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Commission Members

Thomas H. Kean
Chair

Lee H. Hamilton
Vice Chair

to impress on you the importance of the commission's investigation in answering our mounting questions. Your investigation will help identify the systemic problems within and amongst government agencies, as well as, failed procedures which contributed to the loss of life and the success of the terrorists in this horrific attack on our country. It will also set a framework for the necessary changes to ensure national security. The responsibility of the success of this investigation rests on your shoulders. We have waited far too long for this commission to get up and running.

As a mother who lost her child I feel it is my moral obligation to speak on behalf of my son and all those that died on September 11th. They deserve answers to how and why they were senselessly murdered in their own country - nearly 3,000 innocent citizens at work and traveling in American aircrafts. I also speak on behalf of my family and the other families who are searching for answers to how and why their loved ones died on September 11th. We deserve answers to the long list of questions we have. Most importantly I am also here as a citizen, like you and the rest of the nation, who continues to feel unprotected at these volatile times. For the sake of our children we feel a great sense of urgency. WHAT WERE THE FAILURES? WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

PERSONAL LOSS OF A SON

As I speak about my son Brad, I would like to share with you a picture that I took from his 15 year old brothers bedroom this morning. Brad was 24 years old and the oldest of our 3 sons. He worked at Keefe, Bruyette and Woods as an equity trader on the 89th floor of Tower 2. Brad was an understated, athletic, handsome young man with a keen sense of humor, a sparkle in his eyes and a wonderful smile. Much like the 3,000 other innocent victims Brad was hardworking and dedicated to his family and friends. Brad was planning to become engaged

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to his girlfriend of 3 years, Brooke. When Brad died, my husband and I lost a son and our dreams for his future—a wedding, a daughter-in-law and grandchildren. His younger brothers have lost a friend, a coach, a mentor, a confidant, and a companion. Brad was an important part of our family. We have been notified of Brad's limited remains on three occasions and have had a memorial service and burial. We will wait until the notification process ends before we have a final burial. It may continue for years. It is incomprehensible that the devastation on September 11th was so great that our families are being notified of only minute body parts such as a finger, a portion of a jaw or a vertebrae, or worse - nothing at all.

On September 11th Brad called my husband at work shortly after the first plane hit tower one. Like other times when there was an emergency in the building, he wanted to reassure us that he was ok. He was shaken, because he had seen someone "drop from the 91st floor...ALL THE WAY DOWN." He knew a plane hit tower one, but wasn't aware it was a commercial jet. The Port Authority directed my son's company to stay put in their office, "that the building is safe and secure." My husband asked Brad to call me at home. Here is the recording of the message Brad left me around 9:00 a.m. (15 minutes after the first plane hit tower one, 3 minutes before the 2nd plane hit tower two)

Message: "Hi Mom, it's Brad. Just wanted to call and let you know. I'm sure that you heard there was.....or maybe you haven't heard that a plane crashed into World Trade Center One. We're fine. We're in World Trade Center 2. I'm obviously alive and well over here. But obviously...a pretty scary experience. I saw a guy fall out of probably the 91st story....ah.. all the way downso(long pause, cleared throat) You're welcome to give a call here. I think we'll be here all day. I'm not sure if the firm is going to shut down for the day or what. But ahgive me a call back later. I

called Dad to let him know. Love You...."

Brad always tried to be strong, so I would not worry. Although he was not aware his life was in danger I can hear the fear in his voice. I never had the opportunity to return his call - to say goodbye and tell him I love him. After Brad called home he made 2 calls to his girlfriend. (the last call was made at 9:20 a.m., 17 minutes after the 2nd plane hit his building Tower 2, approximately 45 minutes before the tower collapsed) The message was brief. Sirens were sounding in the background and he was frantically trying to escape the building. Other families received similar calls from their loved ones who knew they were going to die, who were trapped above the fire, asphyxiated or injured and unable to escape. **THEY DIED A HORRENDOUS DEATH.** So I ask you, if the house next door to your home were hit by a plane or on fire, would you direct your family to remain in your home? How is it that people were directed to remain in a 110-story building supposedly "safe and secure" when its twin tower is billowing in smoke and people choosing to jump to their death in order to avoid a high-rise fire? How is it that Brad was unaware of the dangerous situation he was in 15 minutes after the 1st plane hit tower one? Precious time was wasted.

Unlike Brad's situation, Rick Rescorla, Director of Security for Morgan Stanley directed his employees to leave the building -- to disregard the Port Authorities commands to evacuees to "return UP to their offices."

How is it that they were receiving such conflicting information, which ultimately, senselessly cost my sons life and the life of 600 others in building two? What were the lessons learned after the 1993 bombing? Were there evacuation policies in place? Were they followed? **NO ONE IN BUILDING TWO SHOULD BE DEAD TODAY. WHAT WERE THE FAILURES AND AGAIN WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?**

SYSTEMIC FAILURES

Furthermore, what communications existed to warn city authorities and the Port Authority that hi-jacked commercial aircraft appeared headed for their targets? More specifically, what was New York City and the Port Authority told about the findings of the Joint FBI and NYPD Terrorist Task Force? What were the breakdowns in communication between the control towers, the FAA, NORAD, and other government agencies? On a larger scale, what were the CIA, the FBI, the INS and the military doing to protect our country? What were the systemic failures? Who should be held accountable? September 11th has repeatedly been referred to as a "wake-up call." Our President said on September 27, 2001, "We have awakened to a new danger, but our resolve is great..." (Remarks to Airline Employees at O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois) As late as May 16, 2002 Condoleeza Rice stated that "I don't think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center, take another one and slam it into the Pentagon; that they would try to use an airplane as a missile, a hijacked airplane as a missile." (Press Briefing, May 16, 2002).

CONTINUED THREATS AND PREVIOUS COMMISSIONS

But September 11th should not have been the "wake up call." Nor was it a "new danger." September 11th should have been predictable and could have been prevented. The loss of life in the 1993 bombing and the continued threats specifically on the World Trade Center and on other New York City landmarks should have been THE wake up call. Given the continued threats, evacuation protocols should have been in place.

In fact, Eleanor Hill from the Joint Intelligence

Committee concludes; "there was considerable historical evidence that international terrorists had planned and were, in fact, capable of conducting major terrorist strikes within the United States." Despite increased "chatter" and CIA Director George Tenet issuing a declaration of war on Al Queda on Dec. 4, 1998 the FBI and CIA failed to communicate or coordinate their efforts in providing national security. How could this be? That the two intelligence agencies responsible for our safety were not coordinating their efforts to protect our citizens? HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN AND WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

The Hart-Rudman Commission released in February 2001 also predicted a terrorist attack of great magnitude and loss of life on our own soil. This report both identified the increasing threat of terrorism and was also a blueprint for the development of Homeland Security which if implemented could have prevented the attacks on September 11th. However their recommendations to address these threats were never implemented. The report sat on a shelf. It is also important to note that two earlier Presidential Commissions on airline safety, security and anti-terrorism were established following airline disasters - the Pan Am Flight 103 (1988) and the TWA Flight 800 (1996). However, these commissions were bogged down by lobbying from the aviation industry, time tables were delayed and financial expenditures were given priority over the safety of human lives. During this time, what steps did the aviation community take amidst this growing threat - one which centered on using aircraft as bombs and American cities on aircraft as bombs and American cities as targets? IF AN EFFECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM WAS IN PLACE HOW DID BOXCUTTERS GET THROUGH SECURITY? WHAT WERE THE FAILURES AND WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

WHAT WE WANT FROM THE COMMISSION

Thankfully we live in a country with freedom of

speech. Yet our elected officials with oversight have neglected to implement prior commissions important recommendations to improve airline and national security. We have strong military support, yet they were not able to protect us within our own borders. We have sophisticated intelligence agencies that, for reasons unknown to the public, chose to be territorial rather than share important information. They have been proven to be ineffective, at least as far as protecting American lives. Our nation is technologically advanced, yet the technology is not protecting the skyways of America.

Before September 11th I assumed that we were safe and secure living in the United States - that the threat of terrorism was outside our country, that government officials and other agencies were competent, responsible individuals coordinating their efforts and acting in our best interests. I found out the hard way that I was naïve - that the threat of terrorism exists in our country, that the building that Brad worked in was unsafe and an identified target and that government agencies with the responsibility to protect us have major systemic problems communicating.

For 18 months our families have been denied the truth that a thorough investigation would reveal. As a family member I am frustrated, to have suffered the loss of a son and yet be required to spend time away from my family and fight for the establishment of a commission that should have been in place on the day of tragic event. Following the recent mining disaster and tragic Columbia aircraft explosion commissions were established immediately with substantial funding. It is now 18 months later. We are at war with heightened alert. Yet the Commission has had a slow start. A quest for the truth has to begin at the top - with the support of the administration to require all governmental agencies to provide necessary documents and act in full cooperation with the commission. Security clearance for all

commissioners and staff should be expedited. Necessary funds should be allocated for a commission of this magnitude. The findings of this commission are of utmost importance to developing an effective Homeland Security Department.

I found a journal my son began writing at age 21. On the first page he wrote a quote which best describes how he lived his life. "You can tell the character of a man by what he does for the man who can offer him nothing."

I CHALLENGE YOU, the Commissioners - the staff and all those involved in the success of this commission to approach this important inquiry with the same manner that Brad approached life. To approach it with an open mind and with integrity. Above all, with a sense of urgency and a full commitment to the time and energy that will be necessary to do a complete and thorough job. It is your MORAL and LEGAL responsibility to ensure that no stone be unturned. Most importantly each commissioner must recuse themselves in areas they have a conflict of interest. OUR NATION DESERVES FOR THIS COMMISSION TO BE DIFFERENT. We want to prevent other families from suffering the loss we're had to endure. We want answers to our questions. We want systemic failures identified and problems resolved. Despite the costs, we want recommendations that are implemented and we want individuals who make choices to overlook ongoing risks involving our citizens to be held accountable. We want to know what changes are made to protect our families. Ultimately you, the Commissioners are accountable for the success of this commission.

In closing, I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to the families of the brave soldiers who perished in Iraq- I understand their grief. May God Bless my son and all those who died as a result of September 11th and may their spirit grant you the strength and wisdom as you proceed with this important contribution for the

sake of our nation. Thank you.

Mary Fetchet is Co-Chair of Voices of September 11th, a 9/11 family advocacy group that she co-founded after her 24 year-old son, Brad, died in the attacks on the World Trade Center. Her organization provides information to families, advocated for respectful recovery efforts and solutions to the family notification process and a proper memorial at the WTC Site. She campaigned for passage of Congressional Legislation to establish a 9/11 Independent Commission. Mary is a member of the Family Steering Committee for the 9/11 Independent Commission, a board member of the Coalition of 9/11 Families, a member of the Family Advisory Board for the Lower Manhattan Development (LMDC) and a member of the Campaign for Skyscraper Safety.

A graduate of Columbia University with a MA degree, she worked as a clinical social worker at Bridges, an outpatient mental health clinic in Milford, Connecticut. As part of an interdisciplinary team, she treated a diverse adult population and specialized in treatment of anxiety and eating disorders.

After her son's death she resigned from her job and is working full-time at the Voices of September 11th headquarters in New Canaan, Connecticut. The organization continues to be a clearinghouse of information for 9/11 families and is providing community based services; support groups, lectures, forums and outreach to victims' families, survivors and all affected by the events of September 11th. A resident of New Canaan, she resides with her husband Frank and two surviving sons, Chris age 15 and Wes age 22.

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States
The Commission closed on August 21, 2004. This site is archived.