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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 Allison Vadhan to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States March 31, 2003

My name is AV and I lost my very young 65 yr old mother, Kristin White Gould, on UA FI 93, the plane that crashed in Shanksville, PA while passengers and crew tried to overcome the hijackers. I'd like to thank the Commission for inviting me to speak today. I've always had a strong inner faith and still believe that God doesn't give us what we can't handle. Being here today and your hearing my voice, in place of my mother's is a privelege.

My mother, a Cornell Graduate and Medical Journalist, preferred to spend her vacation time visiting ancient cities to learn about ancient civilizations. Before I knew she was flying that day, I had already witnessed the 2nd Tower explode into an orange fireball and saw with my

Current News

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Vice Chair

own eyes the great black mushroom cloud rise above the New York sky line, not far from my home.

I'm sure most Americans today remember the sinking feeling when it was obvious that not only the WTC had come under a terrorist attack, but that there were other planes in trouble-- along with possible fires or explosions--in Washington. Then there was news about a plane down in Pennsylvania. This is a new war--we all felt it before the day was over.

By the Christmas holidays, we faced the anthrax attacks, the attempted bombing of the plane from Paris to Miami, but was averted to Boston by Richard Reid, the discovery of an American, John Walker Lind, who was captured as a Taliban rebel in Afghanistan. How many other plans were there? It felt like each day could be "The" day for another attack. Most of us would turn on the t.v. 1st thing in the morning to see if the world had changed while we were asleep. Finally, it seemed crystal clear to citizens as well as governments, that the U.S. is a prized target for Al Qaeda. And this could quite possibly happen again and again and again--whether they hit or miss.

I am concerned not only about my own three children and if the U.S. will be as strong as it has been in the 20th century. But I am also concerned about what is already being taught to children in Mujahadeen schools this year, last year, five years ago.

Six days after my mother was killed, our family traveled to Shanksville, PA for memorial services for the families of flight 93. I went by myself back to my hotel room for some quiet time. When I turned on the t.v., a reporter in Pakistan was interviewing 8 and 10 year old boys at a school. Their computers' screen savers bounced pictures of Osama Bin Laden. We've discovered that there is another generation being trained and raised to become terrorists

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when they grow up.

I can tell you that "forgetting" and "trying to move on" is a survival mechanism which is part of human nature. The pain of trying to envision what my mother experienced on that plane is so great that it's only normal to try to think about something else. But trying to forget is an indulgence for any American who saw what we saw.

Al Qaeda and similar cells around the world are training their young ones. If Americans don't prepare for this next generation, we have only ourselves, in this room to hold accountable.

I'm concerned about civil liberties as an excuse for not taking action to prevent terrorism. I'm concerned about how many untold cases there are of Federal and local agencies not being able to properly investigate a potential terrorist. At the time, FBI investigators could not obtain a criminal search warrant to inspect the laptop computer of Zacharias Moussaoui because supervisors in Washington thought there was no "probable cause." Now that we know our laws for investigating are outdated and are no longer appropriate, I am concerned that we will choose not to fix them in the name of "protecting civil liberties", rather than protecting the lives of American civilians.

President Bush effectively made us aware that we are fighting a new kind of war. And if the battlefield is here at home, waged by specific groups from specific areas around the world, in the name of a specific religion, I am concerned that avoiding racial profiling will supercede preventing further terrorism. And the enemy knows this.

Terrorism is similar to the guerilla warfare we hear is going on in Iraq: militants pose themselves as ordinary citizens and immigrants here in the U.S. They appear so clean-cut they

would fit in on any golf course. And they do this to remain undetected until they carry out their terrorist goals. If we're lucky, they don't change their customary dress; they're wearing their traditional non-Western clothing.

As long as we allow groups to be protected from "racial profiling", how can we win this new war? And after seeing those little boys in the Madrass schools which are sponsored by Osama Bin Laden and the like, our children and grandchildren will with no uncertainty face a very dangerous existence. Especially if we try to "forget and get over this unprecedented tragedy."

The people who died on September 11th were the first casualties in this new war. It is our responsibility not to have let them die in vain. I hope we will learn from our mistakes and prevent our children from having to deal with problems that their parents & grandparents could and should have addressed with action and resolve.

Allison Vadhan is the daughter of Kristin White Gould, who was a passenger on United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in Shanksville, PA. Mrs. Vadhan graduated from New York University in 1982 with a Bachelor of Arts in Biochemistry. She worked as a research assistant from 1981 to 1984 at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Institute. She was employed by Estee Lauder, Inc. from 1985-86 as a Cosmetic testing. She served as a physician assistant at Long Island University/Brooklyn Hospital in 1989. She also served as a physician assistant at Methodist Hospital/Brooklyn, NY from 1990 to 1998, ProHealth Care Assoc./Lake Success, NY from 1998 to 2000 and Manhattan Orthopedics, LLP/ Lenox Hill Hospital, NY, NY 2000 to 2002.

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