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## NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

[About the Commission](#) | [Report](#) | [Hearings](#) | [Staff Statements](#) | [Press](#) | [Archive](#) | [For Families](#)

### **Second public hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States**

### **Statement of Bob Graham to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States May 22, 2003**

Mr. Chairman and members of the commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you in my dual role as former chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and as co-chairman of the House-Senate Joint Inquiry into the events of September 11th, 2001.

I want to begin by commending each of you for accepting the challenge of serving on this important commission. I supported the creation of this commission because I believe that the American people deserve answers about what our government knew about al Qaeda and the potential for terrorist attacks on our homeland

### **Current News**

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

The Chair and Vice Chair have released a statement regarding the Commission's closing. [\[more\]](#)

The Commission closed August 21, 2004. [\[more\]](#)

### **Commission Members**

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Thomas H. Kean  
*Chair*

Lee H. Hamilton  
*Vice Chair*

before 9-11, and how we responded to that information. But more importantly, we need to know what we should be doing to detect, deter and disrupt future terrorist attacks.

The Joint Inquiry focused on those issues and agencies that fall under the oversight of the intelligence committees. September 11th raised many questions about government activities outside that scope, ranging from aviation security to the handling of visa applications at overseas State Department missions.

The Joint Inquiry's final report gives you a solid foundation on which to build your investigation. As you may know, the Joint Inquiry was a first: Never before had two committees from the two chambers of the Congress come together for a single purpose. We were truly bipartisan and bicameral.

I am extremely proud of the hard work that was done by the 37 members of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees in the 107th Congress who served on the Joint Inquiry, including former Representative Tim Roemer, who is now one of your members.

I also am proud of the dedication and skill of the special team of investigators who were hired for the Joint Inquiry, led by the very capable Ms. Eleanor Hill, who is with us today.

The staff reviewed nearly half a million pages of documents and interviewed 300 people. The committees held 22 hearings, nine open to the public and 13 closed. Our final report is more than 800 pages.

The final report was adopted by each committee on December 10, 2002, and was filed with the House and Senate on December 20th.

That final report remains classified to this day, 153 days after it was filed. All of us are

Richard Ben-Veniste  
Fred F. Fielding  
Jamie S. Gorelick  
Slade Gorton  
Bob Kerrey  
John F. Lehman  
Timothy J. Roemer  
James R. Thompson

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#### **Commission Staff**

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Philip D. Zelikow  
*Executive Director*

Chris Kojm  
*Deputy Executive Director*

Daniel Marcus  
*General Counsel*

extremely frustrated that the de-classification process is taking so long. But we are hopeful that we will be able to soon provide the American people with all of our report but for those portions that determined to address genuine national security concerns.

The release of our report will accomplish several important objectives, including:

- Providing to the American people a better understanding of the Intelligence Community's role prior to 9-11.
- Detailing for the American public what was known about al Qaeda and threats of domestic terrorism prior to 9-11, and what initiatives in response to that knowledge might have given the American people greater security.
- Providing first responders including state and local law enforcement agencies, fire departments and emergency medical providers B additional information that they can use to evaluate ways in which they can bolster homeland security plans.
- Allowing all Americans to hold accountable the agencies, and in some cases the individuals, for their actions or lack of actions prior to 9-11.

In the meantime, we have released summary findings and recommendations, a number of which this panel will speak to.

Several of the Joint Inquiry's recommendations focused on activities within the Intelligence Community that were ongoing at the time we completed our report. One of the tasks that your commission should assume is keeping track of those recommendations so that the American people are assured that our government is following through on necessary reforms.

There are three recommendations that I would call particular attention to:

First, Recommendation Number 6, and I quote:

Given the FBI's history of repeated shortcomings within its current responsibility for domestic intelligence, and in the face of grave and immediate threats to our homeland, the FBI should strengthen and improve its domestic capability as fully and expeditiously as possible.

We then offered 10 specific steps, including, clearly designating national counterterrorism priorities and enforcing field office adherence to those priorities.

I wish that I could tell you that the FBI has adopted our recommendations. Congressman Goss and I wrote to Director Robert Mueller on January 29, 2003, and again on April 2, 2003, and asked him to tell us what steps the bureau has taken, and whether legislative action is required to fully implement our recommendations. We are still waiting for a final response.

The second recommendation is Number 15, quote:

The President should review and consider amendments to Executive Orders, policies and procedures that govern the national security classification of intelligence information, in order to expand access to relevant information for federal agencies outside the Intelligence Community, for state and local authorities, which are critical to the fight against terrorism, and for the American public. ....

Congress should also review the statutes, policies and procedures that govern the national security classification of intelligence information and its protection from unauthorized disclosure. ...

The report [from the Director of National

Intelligence] should include proposals to protect against the use of the classification process as a shield to protect agency self-interest.

And the third recommendation that I would call to your attention is Number 19, which offers fertile ground for additional investigation. It reads as follows:

The Intelligence Community, and particularly the FBI and the CIA, should aggressively address the possibility that foreign governments are providing support to or are involved in terrorist activity targeting the United States and U.S. interests. State-sponsored terrorism substantially increases the likelihood of successful and more lethal attacks within the United States. This issue must be addressed from a national standpoint and should not be limited in focus by the geographical and factual boundaries of individual cases. The FBI and CIA should aggressively and thoroughly pursue related matters developed through this Joint Inquiry that have been referred to them for further investigation by these Committees.

The Intelligence Community should fully inform the House and Senate Intelligence Committee of significant developments in these efforts, through regular reports and additional communications as necessary, and the Committees should, in turn, exercise vigorous and continuing oversight of the Community's work in this critically important area.

Mr. Chairman, because of classification, I cannot discuss in this public hearing the specifics of the Joint Inquiry's findings in this area, even to identify any individual foreign governments.

However, there have been several developments since September 11th B and even since the completion of the Joint Inquiry's report that give me cause for grave concern.

Clearly, al Qaeda is reconstituting itself, as we have seen by the bombings in places like Yemen, Indonesia and most recently, Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, it is disturbingly apparent that some governments are supporting or, at the very least, providing sanctuary for terrorist networks.

As one example, I would like to submit for the record three recent news articles that raise questions about the government of Saudi Arabia's apparent tolerance of individuals and groups with terrorist ties.

First is a report from the Washington Post of Monday, May 19, that munitions from the Saudi National Guard may have been used by suspected al Qaeda operatives in last week's bombings that killed nearly three dozen innocent people in Riyadh, including nine Americans.

Second is a May 10 story from the Los Angeles Times, which reports that a Saudi consular official was denied re-entry to the United States because of his suspected links to terrorists. He had been employed at the Saudi consulate in California from 1996 until earlier this year.

The third is an article from the May 5 issue of Newsweek, which says that a top-ranking Saudi diplomat in Berlin is suspected of providing embassy funds to followers of Osama bin Laden.

I want to emphasize again that these articles deal with events subsequent to the filing of the Joint Inquiry's final report.

But I believe they raise issues that are especially appropriate for this commission's review.

This commission should vigorously pursue the

links between foreign governments and the 9-11 hijackers. I am troubled by the lack of attention that the current administration has given to this critical aspect of the 9-11 investigation. Ignoring facts simply because they make some people uncomfortable will prevent Americans from learning the full truth about 9-11 and thereby deterring future terrorist attacks.

Only a full and honest accounting will help us provide a safer and more security world for our children and grandchildren.

Let me turn now to the second part of your request B recommendations for improving congressional oversight of the Intelligence Community. I would like to make five recommendations:

1. Make membership of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees permanent.

Both committees have term limits; in the Senate, a member can serve no more than eight years without a waiver from his or her caucus and the Senate leadership.

There is of course an argument that members of the oversight committees could become captives of the intelligence community. But the counter-argument is that it takes so long to understand the complexities of today's sophisticated programs, that when a member has learned the ins and outs and is able to thoughtfully monitor agency programs, they have to rotate off the committee.

2. Create within the congressional appropriations process a separate subcommittee for intelligence, much has been created for the new Department of Homeland Security. If that means

declassifying the top-line number for the intelligence budget, so be it. George Tenet has told me personally that he would support this approach.

3. Establish a closer linkage between the financial reporting of the intelligence agencies and the oversight committees. During my tenure on the committee, I found it very frustrating to be repeatedly told that the agencies were virtually non-auditable because of the state of their basic accounting systems. But for 9-11 and the Joint Inquiry, the state of the agencies financial accounting would have been a priority during my chairmanship.
4. Adopt what has come to be known as the Eleanor Hill approach to oversight, which means that B much as we did during the Joint Inquiry hearings staff should be given more authority to conduct detailed reviews under the direction of the chairman and vice chairman of the committee.

Then, at the start of a hearing, the staff would present its findings to help frame the issues and outline the points of contention. Witnesses would then speak to those findings. I found this to be a highly efficient and productive use of the committees' time.

5. And finally, make it a practice to seek testimony from witnesses outside the administration. There are a range of experts from the academic community, think tanks and other sources whose views can provide an alternative to the official administration perspective.

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by again thanking each member of this commission for your service and your

dedication. It is fair to say that each of you has enlisted as a soldier in the War on Terrorism.

I stand ready to answer your questions today, and to assist you in any way that you might wish in the weeks and month to come.

Thank you.

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