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## NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

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

### **Statement of Frank R. Lautenberg to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States May 22, 2003**

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Hamilton, Fellow Commissioners,

Thank you for holding this hearing. Nearly 700 New Jersey residents were killed in the terrorist attacks on September 11th. Our State, our citizens, suffered enormously, and we continue to suffer. Many of the wounds are still raw.

This Commission has an enormous responsibility, which is to prepare a full account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11th attacks, and to provide recommendations on how our Nation might guard itself against future attacks.

### **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*

The Commission has to review some 500,000 pages of information, many of them classified, that the Congressional Joint Inquiry of the Select Committees on Intelligence compiled.

This will be a difficult task, but I know you are committed to doing a thorough job. That will take care and time.

I would point out, however, that thousands of the families most directly affected by September 11th are growing anxious and impatient. As Patty Casazza of Colts Neck put it, "I am concerned that we are 20 months past Sept. 11, and the commission has been running for about five months, but we are just getting into the investigation phase of their work." Patty lost her husband John in the attack.

There is a woman who works for me in Newark, Jennifer Jacobs, who lost her husband Jason. She volunteered solely to serve as a liaison between the families and my office.

She can tell you that the families have suffered greatly, they are having problems with the Compensation Fund, and they feel a growing frustration that the Federal Government is moving too slowly on many different fronts.

This Commission cannot replace the loved ones lost on that horrific day, but it does have the ability to help assuage some of the grief. Americans want and need to know how their government may have failed them, and Americans want and need to know that their government is doing everything possible to prevent another 9-11.

I hope that you will keep your "nose to the grindstone" so that the Commission not only does a thorough job, but does it as quickly as possible, too. It's about accountability.

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

#### **Commission Staff**

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Philip D. Zelikow  
*Executive Director*

Chris Kojm  
*Deputy Executive Director*

Daniel Marcus  
*General Counsel*

I think one thing this Commission can do that would be helpful is to review the color-coded alert system. I'll be quite candid: I don't think this system is doing anything other than making people afraid. Perhaps you can make it more meaningful and helpful to people.

There is an old expression: "You can run but you can't hide." We need to face up to the fact that we are dealing with terrorists who are willing - eager, even - to kill themselves to accomplish their missions.

Of course we should take prudent precautions but we can never be completely safe, especially if we want to retain some semblance of liberty. To pretend otherwise is a disservice to the American people.

#### New Jersey Impacts/Concerns

As I mentioned, New Jersey suffered a terrible human toll on September 11th, losing nearly 700 residents.

The economic toll was equally significant. Forty-five percent of the people who commute into Manhattan every day come from New Jersey. When the Twin Towers collapsed, they took with them 10 million square feet of office space. Damage to surrounding buildings claimed another 10 million square feet. Over 1,200 businesses employing 50,000 people were displaced.

Many of the major financial, insurance, and real estate ("FIRE") firms affected have branch facilities in New Jersey, which they have expanded, at least in the interim.

One might think that having displaced firms relocate from Manhattan to New Jersey would be a boon. But the economies of the three States - New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut - are so intertwined that when any part of the

metropolitan area suffers, we all suffer. Our region has lost 350,000 private sector jobs in the last two years.

New Jersey is a particularly vulnerable target to future attacks, which is cause for so much anxiety.

Our State is the most densely-populated State in the Nation, with 8.5 million people. We lie between New York City and Philadelphia, with several large cities of our own, including Newark and Camden.

New Jersey is interlaced with highway, transit, and freight and passenger rail systems that serve as major thoroughfares for the State, the region, and the Nation.

We have one of the Nation's biggest and busiest airports and we have pipelines, chemical manufacturers, and nuclear power plants. We have 127 miles of coastline and major ports.

Three million containers move through Port Authority of New York and New Jersey facilities each year. Just a fraction of them get inspected.

According to the Coast Guard, the Port Authority needs more than 7 billion dollars to bring security and emergency response capabilities up to snuff.

In short, we have the people, facilities, and infrastructure that terrorists are likely to target.

And yet, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials think that it's more important to allocate scarce resources across the country, regardless of the threat level. Earlier this year, when DHS distributed the first round of emergency responder grants, New York and New Jersey - the two States that suffered the most - received per capita allocations well below the national average.

To Secretary Ridge's credit, he has acknowledged problems with the allocation formula and he has pledged to fix them.

I think one of the most important things this Commission can do to enhance our Nation's preparedness is to determine, without prejudice, which parts of our country are most at risk.

We need to bolster our security everywhere, but the fact remains that some parts of the country are truly more at risk than others, and the usual practice of sprinkling money everywhere to placate Congress won't enhance our security; it will diminish it.

Simply put, we need to get the resources to where they are most needed and will do the most good.

#### FRL Recommendations

I have a few specific recommendations for topics that the Commission may want to consider:

1. We have made progress bolstering aviation security, especially by federalizing the baggage screeners. But now the President wants to jeopardize that progress by privatizing air traffic control. I have introduced a bill to prevent that from happening and I would be interested in the Commission's views on the President's proposal.
2. On a related note, do we need to consider re-routing air traffic away from our bigger cities? Given the location of our major airports and the limited air space over them, that would be difficult, to say the least. But perhaps we need to consider it.
3. The Twin Towers didn't collapse because of the impact of the jets crashing into them. The intense heat of the burning jet

fuel snuffed out the buildings' fire control systems before they could do any good, and then the structural steel melted. We need new Federal standards for building materials and design.

4. Many first responders serve in the National Guard or the Reserves. Because of Afghanistan and Iraq, these men and women have been called up for longer and longer tours of duty. It is jeopardizing our emergency preparedness at home.
5. I have introduced a bill, S. 921, to reimburse State and local governments who lose first responders to active duty call ups for six or more consecutive months. I would appreciate the Commission's views on my bill.

### Conclusion

I have heard it said that 9-11 didn't alter the American character; it merely revealed it. We will continue to recover from the attacks and we will be stronger, in part because of the important work this Commission will do in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to testify at this important hearing. I pledge to you my full support for your efforts.

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