

An exchange of letters on government suppression of evidence in 9/11 lawsuits

30 August 2002

We reprint below a letter received on the August 2 WSWWS article “Bush administration moves to stifle discovery in 9/11 lawsuits” followed by a reply by the article’s author, Walter Gilberti.

I must first say that I am impressed by your comprehensive and never-ending search for the truth. Your web site I have recommended to others, who have also been impressed.

However, my comments and questions today have to do with your article by Walter Gilberti, dated August 2, 2002, regarding the pending lawsuit by the 9/11 families of the victims seeking vindication via litigation against the US government.

I then see the media articles today, stating that this group lawsuit is only against the Saudi’s etc.... No mention of a lawsuit against the US government. Is this blatant misinformation? It certainly lets the American public become totally aware of the ongoing influence the US government has over the media.

I have never seen such a blatant boldfaced turnaround of information.

Keep up the good work,
KW

16 August 2002

Dear KW,

Thank you for your letter of inquiry. Although you seem to answer your own question, it is important to reexamine what has transpired with regard to post-9/11 lawsuits. It is the case, as you infer, that there are different lawsuits involved. The media has been very quiet about those tort lawsuits that might reveal in discovery what the Bush administration wants to keep hidden from the American people.

Last January, four lawsuits were filed on behalf of six families of victims who perished on the hijacked aircraft. The suits were filed against United and American Airlines, and the security firms of Huntleigh

USA and Argenbright Security Inc. The suits were filed under the “Air Transportation Safety and Systems Stabilization Act.”

While not directed against the federal government per se, any subsequent discovery would immediately involve the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Federal Aeronautics Administration (FAA), both federal agencies. It is through the TSA that the Bush administration has sought to vet evidence, and has invented a new category for such information—sensitive security information (SSI).

The suits were filed by the law firm of Baum, Hedlund, Aristei, Guilford and Schiavo. Mary Schiavo, who was quoted in the August 2 article, was a former inspector general of the US Department of Transportation. A press release dated January 11, 2002 makes clear the intent of the families filing suit: “The families believe it extremely important to take action to reveal the facts and seek answers and accountability for what occurred. The suits do not include Osama bin Laden or Al Qaeda because it is the US government’s responsibility to criminally prosecute these terrorists and to get them off the world’s streets. The families feel obligated to pursue those who failed to protect the public from criminals, murderers and terrorists which have been a known and frequent risk on US airlines since at least 1995...

“By pursuing a private remedy against the negligent, instead of going to the Victim’s Compensation Fund, a means is provided to expose years of ineffective security practices, know the truth, improve security, and accord accountability.” Further on the press release reads: “The FAA, another possible defendant, has for many years repeatedly violated public trust and failed in their duty to properly oversee and enforce airport and airline security.”

The statement then quotes Mary Schiavo, who

implies that the response by the Bush administration to the litigation was one of hostility against the victim's families: "It is indeed a sad day in America when families of victims must exercise their Constitutional rights using only their initials to avoid being again victimized."

Shortly after these suits were filed a much-publicized campaign to direct lawsuits against Saudi Arabia began. As early as February 18, right-wing *New York Post* columnist Daniel Pipes penned an article entitled, "Sue the Saudis." The article begins: "You have been engaged in an unfortunate spat with the U.S. government over the money you deserve for your losses on 9/11, prompting anger all around. Here's a solution: Forget Washington and focus on Riyadh." Pipes's claim that the suits are simply about money is a libel against the families of the victims who are dissatisfied with the lack of any substantive investigation into September 11.

Meanwhile, the government, with a pliant media in tow, is continuing to suppress information in the legitimate fight by victims' families to uncover the truth behind the September 11 attacks. Again, thanks for your response.

Yours truly,

Walter Gilberti, for the WSWS



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