

Four terrorists were known to military in 2000

## September 11 victims' relatives speak out on suppressed intelligence

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The revelation earlier this week that an American military intelligence unit had identified four September 11 hijackers as Al Qaeda operatives working in the US more than a year before the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, and that this information was never passed on to the FBI, has shocked and angered relatives of some of the more than 3,000 victims.

After initial attempts to deny the accuracy of the story failed, a spokesman for the September 11 commission—the body that conducted the official inquiry into the 9/11 events—acknowledged Wednesday that members of its staff were informed by the “Able Danger” intelligence unit that as early as the summer of 2000, Mohammad Atta, the alleged lead hijacker, had been identified as a possible terrorist suspect operating in the US.

The argument that the failure to communicate the information about Atta and his associates to the FBI was simply one more instance of “intelligence failure” is absurd. It is the least likely explanation. Far more plausible, considering the body of evidence that suggests a “stand-down” by the military-intelligence apparatus in 2000-2001, is that highly placed individuals in the military and the government believed that some sort of terrorist attack was coming in the US and permitted it to take place. This was done in the hope that such an outrage would shift public opinion and make possible the implementation of policies both at home and abroad long desired by the extreme right, including military aggression against Iraq and sharp attacks on constitutionally protected rights in the US.

In response to this week's extraordinary revelations, a group of widows of victims of the terror attacks, organized in the September 11th Advocates, issued a statement that reads in part:

“Nearly four years since the attacks of 9/11, we are tired of our nation's leaders (elected and appointed officials from both political parties) not being held accountable for their actions or inactions—particularly when it comes to fighting

the ‘ongoing war against terrorism.’

“[T]he Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Agency, and the National Security Council ... are the very same agencies and individuals that are charged with keeping us safe from the terrorists today. Yet, a close inspection of the failures made by these individuals reveals that these same individuals had ample opportunity to unravel the 9/11 plot prior to the 9/11 attacks and failed to do so. In fact, a fair reading of these occurrences could lead one to believe that some of these individual actions or inactions actually contributed to the ‘catastrophic success’ of the 9/11 attacks.

“The revelation of this information [about Atta and the others] demands answers that are forthcoming, clear, and concise. The 9/11 attacks could have and should have been prevented. To date, not one individual has been held accountable for this nation's failure to prevent the 9/11 attacks. Thus, the 9/11 Commission Report is incomplete and illusory.

“As 9/11 widows who fought tirelessly for the creation of the 9/11 Commission, we are wholly disappointed to learn that the Commission's Final Report is a hollow failure.... We find this latest revelation of the Commission's failure to adequately and aggressively pursue the complete truth surrounding 9/11 absolutely shameful.”

The WSWWS spoke this week with Bob McIlvaine, a former teacher from Oreland, Pennsylvania, in suburban Philadelphia, who lost his son, Robert McIlvaine, when the World Trade Center was brought down on September 11. McIlvaine has been active among relatives of 9/11 victims, campaigning tirelessly for the full truth to be brought out. He spoke about his son and his response to the latest revelations.

McIlvaine told this reporter: “I lost my son Robert on September 11. He had graduated from Princeton and had recently been hired by Merrill Lynch. Merrill Lynch was not in the World Trade Center, but he was sent over there to

arrange a seminar. We did not know that he was going to be there, but when he didn't answer his cell phone, we got worried. We found out that he had been in one of the towers from his fiancée. We went right down there. We were able to get his body. I still to this day don't know how that happened. Among the families in our 9/11 support group in Philadelphia, we are the only family that has a body.

"I attended every meeting of the 9/11 commission. Any time a family member raised any connection between 9/11 and the government, we were accused of being conspiracy theorists. [Philip] Zelikow [executive director of the 9/11 commission] and the whole commission were an absolute joke—a 'good old boys' society. [Commissioner Richard] Ben-Veniste even said that this was not a real investigation.

"This should have been a murder investigation. So many questions left unanswered and the press will never pursue any of them. In fact, you can hardly find anything about Able Danger in the media. It's a bombshell and they'll try to bury it.

"When [commissioner and former Democratic senator from Nebraska] Bob Kerrey was on the Paula Zahn show [on CNN], he said that for all practical purposes, Bush was responsible for 9/11. But that was dropped by the media. We had so much information, way too much information not to have been able to stop 9/11. You can go back to 1993 [the first bombing of the World Trade Center], the government never did anything to warn the public. I also personally blame the media.

"[Pennsylvania Republican congressman Curt] Weldon [who has publicized the existence of the Able Danger unit and its knowledge of Atta and his cell] is a high-profile man and the revelations are astonishing, but will the media pick them up? Not in a big way.

"If you follow the trail it's easy to figure out that the government played a role. [Former Georgia Democratic congresswoman] Cynthia McKinney has been saying this and they treat her in Washington like she is some sort of conspiracy nut.

"But you have to ask: why has there never been a proper investigation?

"[Vice-chairman of the 9/11 commission and former Indiana congressman] Lee Hamilton told us that even if he knew what was in the 28 redacted pages of the commission's report, he would not tell us because of national security. Well, Hamilton was involved in Iran Contra and many of those people, including President Bush [Sr.], should have gone to jail.

"Throughout all of this the Democratic Party is completely useless.

"My wife and I just returned from Japan where we did the walk from Nagasaki to Hiroshima from July 2 to August 6.

It was a hot and brutal walk and we were there with a few 9/11 families to honor the Japanese civilians who were killed. The more I understand about what happened, the more unbelievable and depressing I find it to be. I felt like the 'Ugly American,' I was ashamed. But we received a great reception from the Japanese people, who never thought about revenge. They just want peace and to see that such a thing never happens again.

"I think there are some important similarities between the fact that the American government dropped the atomic bombs after they knew that World War II was over and how the September 11 attacks were used to push us into a war with Iraq.

"When people ask me how I can believe that the government was involved in September 11, I ask them why wouldn't *they* believe that the government is involved? You can go all the way back to the Mexican War, to see that they operate by creating provocations, allowing them to carry out secret agendas.

"I never used to follow politics. It was my son Bob who got me involved. When he was at Princeton he started a progressive paper. A week before he died we were having dinner and I asked him—because he was going to get an MBA from Harvard—how he could live in both worlds. He said, "Dad, I might be the one to change this capitalist system!" He wanted to change the world, he got me involved. At that time, he also said that the government was going to attack Afghanistan.

"Being in Japan marking the anniversary of those terrible bombings really makes you think, who's running this world, an idiot like Bush. I keep telling the peace committees [organizers of the anti-Iraq war demonstrations] that we need more than a protest with a very narrow focus. Even if we were to get rid of Bush, which would be a victory, it doesn't solve the problem. We have a one-party system and the Iran Contra people are running the country. The system is completely broken."



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