

9/11 widows call for new investigation after revelations of White House, commission ties

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

Global Research, February 05, 2008

[The Raw Story](#) 5 February 2008

The widows whose political activism was largely responsible for the establishment of a commission to investigate the September 11 attacks say a new book revealing the backstory of the 9/11 Commission proves that their initial concerns about its executive director were correct and demonstrate the need for another investigation.

Philip Shenon, who covered the proceedings for the *New York Times*, has written a new book, *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation*, which was released Tuesday. The book reveals the [close ties](#) between commission executive director Philip Zelikow and White House advisers Karl Rove and Condoleezza Rice.

The Commission also reveals that aside from one staff member, no one on the 9/11 investigative panel reviewed what was perhaps the most robust treasure trove of pre-9/11 intelligence on al Qaeda — records from the National Security Agency, which conducts electronic surveillance and codebreaking for the US Intelligence Community.

“General Michael Hayden, who headed the NSA at the time, was eager to cooperate and share what his organization had with the 9/11 Commission, but Executive Director Zelikow was not interested,” 9/11 widows Patty Casazza, Monica Gabrielle, Mindy Kleinberg and Lorie Van Auken [said in a statement reacting to the book](#) [see below].

“Why didnt Phil Zelikow make reviewing these vital NSA documents a Commission priority?” they ask. “It seems clear that not every fact and lead was followed in this investigation compromising the validity of the Commission’s final report and its findings.”

The 9/11 widows called for Zelikow to resign or be fired from the Commission back in 2004, when his ties with Rice and Rove were first revealed. Shenon’s book, they say, proves their concerns were right all along.

“It is abundantly clear that Philip Zelikow should have immediately been replaced when the first rumblings of his impropriety and conflicts of interest surfaced,” they said. “When all of this information became clear, the Commissioners and the press should have called for Zelikows resignation. We did. Shamefully, most were silent.”

As [washingtonpost.com columnist Dan Froomkin notes](#), “This isn’t the first time it’s turned out that the 9/11 Commission wasn’t getting the full picture. It’s not even the second.”

Bob Woodward revealed in his book *State of Denial*, that 9/11 Commission members were not told of a July 10, 2001, meeting in which then-CIA Director George Tenet tried to warn

Rice and Bush about the need to focus on al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, while the president and his confidant were distracted by their pursuit of a missile defense system.

In another Bush administration exposé, investigative reporter Ron Suskind revealed the president's brush-off of the ominous memo warning "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S.":

"All right," Bush told the panicked CIA briefer who interrupted the president's vacation to deliver the warning in person. "You've covered your ass, now."

The 9/11 widows also fault the Commission for relying too much on information gained from "second and third hand knowledge of interrogations of tortured individuals, detainees that were being held in secret locations."

They say Shenon's book reveals information that "only scratches the surface" of what happened within the government before the 9/11 attacks.

"The bottom line is that the most deadly attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor remains dangerously unexamined," they write. "This can only be remedied with an investigation guided by the facts and conducted outside the reach of those with a vested interest in suppressing the truth."

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