

Chairs of 9/11 Commission & Joint Intelligence Inquiry into 9/11: Government Minders Obstructed 9/11 Investigation

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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As I [detailed](#) previously, both the Joint Intelligence Committee and 9/11 Commission investigations into 9/11 had government “minders” intimidating witnesses into not saying anything the government didn’t like.

You may assume that the issue of “minders” is overblown, and is not really that important.

But, as the New York Times [noted](#) in 2003:

The panel [i.e. the 9/11 Commission] also said the failure of the Bush administration to allow officials to be interviewed without the presence of government colleagues could impede its investigation, with the commission’s chairman suggesting today that the situation amounted to “intimidation” of the witnesses.

[9/11 Commission co-chairs] Mr. Kean and Mr. Hamilton suggested that the Justice Department was behind a directive barring intelligence officials from being interviewed by the panel without the presence of agency colleagues.

At a news conference, Mr. Kean described the presence of “minders” at the interviews as a form of intimidation. “I think the commission feels unanimously that it’s some intimidation to have somebody sitting behind you all the time who you either work for or works for your agency,” he said. “You might get less testimony than you would.”

“We would rather interview these people without minders or without agency people there,” he said.

And as I previously [noted](#), a recently released 9/11 Commission memo complains that:

- Minders “answer[ed] questions directed at witnesses;”
- Minders acted as “monitors, reporting to their respective agencies on Commission staffs lines of inquiry and witnesses’ verbatim responses.” The staff thought this “conveys to witnesses that their superiors will review their statements and may engage in retribution;” and

- Minders “positioned themselves physically and have conducted themselves in a manner that we believe intimidates witnesses from giving full and candid responses to our questions.”

Still think this isn't an important issue?

Senator Bob Graham, former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and chair of the Joint Inquiry of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees into 9/11, [said](#) in 2005:

The [9/11] commission's findings were based on an interview with al-Bayoumi in Saudi Arabia with Saudi Arabian officials present. “He had no motivation to speak truthfully as to his role,” he said.

When government officials are present, it creates conditions where the witness “has no motivation to speak truthfully.”

Bottom Line: The co-chairs of the 9/11 Commission, Tom Keane and Lee Hamilton, and chair of the the Joint Inquiry of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees into 9/11, Bob Graham, said that minders obstructed the investigation into 9/11.

Shouldn't we believe them?

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