

The 9/11 Commission: A Play on Nothing in Three Acts

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A wag once famously said that Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* was a play where nothing happened . . . twice. The two former co-chairmen of the 9-11 commission report, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, have released a new book, "Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9-11 Commission." This book goes Beckett one better – it is the third act of veneer over substance, self-aggrandizement over serious analysis, and cliché over perspicacity.

It is another calculated attempt by the former commissioners to place themselves in the media spotlight, and to overcome the humiliation of their widely criticized and mostly debunked report. It is a vapid and substanceless attempt to claim moral high ground and present the co-chairmen as heroes of honesty. It would be a farce, except that it has no story line, save the aggrandizement of the authors. At least they are consistent in doing nothing and proclaiming that to be a sign of their devotion to the country and the government. Beckett once said that "habit is the ballast that chains the dog to its vomit," and by this measure the chain restraining Kean and Hamilton is a short one indeed.

As you recall, Act One, "The Dirty Ten Digging on 9/11," consisted of extraordinary performances by every single member of the commission to convince us, the audience — the gullible public — of commission independence, and its intent to provide our nation with the truth, nothing but the whole truth; their pledge to hold the 'culprits' accountable, no matter how high or low on the ladder of the bureaucracy; their commitment to provide "meaningful fixes and remedies," regardless of any resistance they may have to face.

During Act Two, the commissioners, led by their stars, Kean and Hamilton, put on the performance of their lives. They delivered a document that promised to be more than the mere sum of mortal intelligence; they promised a report that drew on the nation's soul and would lay bare the necessity and nature of change.

Initially, this play, scripted by the very powers the commission was to investigate, was to have only two acts. However, due to gradually increasing critiques by some in the media, even some of those who originally attended the serenade chorus, and fairly loud boos from some of the previously cheering audience, the producers have now decided to add additional act(s). Act Three, the Finger-Pointing and Blame Game, stars Kean and Hamilton

as two comrades holding hands during the act and directing blame at the other eight commission members, who are now cast as traitors and deceivers. The audience is led to assume that the other eight members were responsible for the now untenable report; decided to pursue practical failure but achieve popular success; traded the public welfare for personal gain.

The Commission was created and put in place due to the relentless pressure and outcry by the 9/11 family members and their public supporters who had three objectives in mind: 1) Getting all the facts; 2) Establishing Accountability for those who failed us due to their intentional or unintentional acts; 3) Provide recommendation for real fixes and meaningful remedies.

The Commission fulfilled none of those three objectives. In their responsibility to report all the facts: They either refused to interview all relevant experts and witnesses, or, they censored the reports provided to them by those with direct and first-hand information. Both these acts were selective and intentional. Contrary to their pledge to establish accountability: They refused to hold anyone accountable and lamely justified it by saying, "We don't want to point a finger at anyone." All those responsible individuals remained in their positions or were even promoted. And as far as meaningful remedies and reforms are concerned, the commission threw in senseless, and in some cases, detrimental cosmetic and bureaucratic "solutions" that ended up making our government even more cumbersome and unable to respond to threats to national security. In the name of solutions and reforms, they forced down our throats exactly what led to the failure to protect our nation on 9/11: A highly bureaucratic, complicated, inefficient mammoth of a malfunctioning machine.

On the Fifth anniversary of the September Eleven Terror Attacks, we, the National Security Whistleblowers, want to go on record one more time to reiterate the significant issues and cases that were duly reported to the 9/11 commission by those of us from the Intelligence, Aviation, and Law Enforcement communities, but ended up being censored and omitted. The failure to address such serious and relevant issues, witnesses, and information renders the report flawed and the commissioners parties to a fraud on the nation.

The following Veteran National Security experts were turned away, ignored, or censored by the 9/11 Commission, even though they had direct and relevant information related to the Commission's investigation (for the PDF version [Click Here](#)):

John M. Cole, Former Veteran Intelligence Operations Specialist; FBI - Mr. Cole worked for 18 years in the FBI's Counterintelligence Division as an Intelligence Operations specialist, and was in charge of FBI's foreign intelligence investigations covering India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mr. Cole had knowledge of certain activities that directly related to the terror attacks on September 11, 2001. He notified the 9/11 Commission during its investigation, but never received a response. His name and contact information was provided to the Commission as a key witness by other witnesses, but he was never contacted or interviewed.

John Vincent, Retired Special Agent, Counterterrorism; FBI - Mr. Vincent worked for the FBI for 27 1/2 years before retiring in 2002. He worked his last 8 years in

counterterrorism in the FBI's Chicago Field Office. Mr. Vincent, along with Robert Wright, exposed inefficiencies within the FBI in working counterterrorism cases, and certain warnings they had tried to pursue prior to the 9/11 attack that were directly related to Al-Qaeda's financial network and money laundering activities. Although he was granted an interview, the commissioners' investigators refused to let him provide them with information related to his case and the 9/11 terrorists network; they insisted on limiting the interview to only administrative and irrelevant questions and issues.

Robert Wright, Veteran Special Agent, Counterterrorism; FBI - Mr. Wright is a veteran special agent in the FBI Chicago Field Office Counterterrorism Unit. He had been investigating a suspected terrorist cell for three years, when he was informed in January 2001 that the case was being closed. Agent Wright, along with Mr. Vincent, exposed inefficiencies within the FBI in working counterterrorism cases and certain warnings they'd tried to pursue prior to the 9/11 attack that were directly related to Al-Qaeda's financial network and money laundering activities. Three months before September 11, Wright wrote a stinging internal memo charging that the FBI was not interested in thwarting a terrorist attack, but rather "was merely gathering intelligence so they would know who to arrest when a terrorist attack occurred." The FBI refused to allow Wright to testify before the 9/11 Commission, however, the Commission did not insist or attempt to subpoena Wright; despite the fact that it had subpoena power.

Sibel Edmonds, Former Language Specialist; FBI - Ms. Edmonds worked for the FBI's Washington Field Office as a language specialist with Top Secret Clearance performing translations for counterterrorism and counterintelligence operations dealing with Turkey, Iran, and Turkic speaking Central Asian countries. She contacted the 9/11 Commission in May 2003 and requested a meeting to provide them with information directly related to the terrorist attack. The Commission investigators refused to meet with Edmonds and informed her that due to their limited resources and time they were not going to interview all witnesses. She was able to provide the commission with information and documents only after certain 9/11 family members intervened directly. Ms. Edmonds' testimony was completely censored by the Commission.

Behrooz Sarshar, Former Language Specialist; FBI - Mr. Sarshar worked for the FBI's Washington Field Office as a language specialist with Top Secret Clearance performing Farsi translations for counterterrorism and counterintelligence operations dealing with Iran and Afghanistan. He had first-hand information of prior specific warning obtained from a reliable informant in April 2001 on the terrorist attacks of September 11. Mr. Sarshar contacted the Commission directly but was refused. He was given an interview with the Commission investigators only after 9/11 family members intervened directly. Mr. Sarshar's documented testimony was completely omitted from the commission's final report, despite his case being publicly confirmed by Director Mueller's Office.

Mike German, Special Agent, Counterterrorism; FBI - Mr. German served sixteen years as an FBI Special Agent and is one of the rare agents credited with actually having prevented acts of terrorism before it became the FBI's number one priority. He contacted the Commission in the spring of 2004, but did not receive a response. In 2002 he reported gross mismanagement in a post 9/11-counterterrorism investigation, which included serious violations of FBI policy and federal law. Mr. German contacted the 9/11 Commission during its investigation and requested that he be given an interview session in order to provide them with certain domestic counterterrorism investigations that he'd pursued. According to Mr. German there were links between certain domestic and international counterterrorism

related to the September 11 attacks. The 9/11 Commissioners refused to acknowledge his request and never interviewed him.

Gilbert Graham, Retired Special Agent, Counterintelligence; FBI - Mr. Graham worked for the FBI's Washington Field Office Counterintelligence Division until 2002. In February 2004 his name and contact information were provided to the Commission as a key witness with information pertinent to the Commission's investigation. The 9/11 Commission refused to follow up and never contacted Mr. Graham.

Coleen Rowley, Retired Division Counsel; FBI - In May 2002, Coleen Rowley, as the Division Counsel at the FBI Minneapolis Office, blew the whistle on the FBI's failure to pursue Zacarias Moussaoui's case prior to 9/11, despite all attempts made by the Minneapolis division counterterrorism agents. She reported that FBI HQ personnel in Washington, D.C., had mishandled and neglected to take action on information provided by her division. Despite her high-profile case the commission chose not to interview Ms. Rowley. According to Ms. Rowley, no one from the FBI Minneapolis Office (several Agents had direct information) was ever asked to provide testimony, information, to the 9/11 Commission.

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Shaffer, DIA - Colonel Shaffer provided the Commission with detailed information on intelligence and pre warning information obtained by his unit's data mining project, Able Danger. The 9/11 commission staff received not one but two briefings on Able Danger from Mr. Shaffer and his former team members, yet did not pursue the case, did not follow up on this documented report and refused to subpoena the relevant files. Mr. Shaffer's testimony, together with other witnesses who corroborated his testimony and information, were censored by the 9/11 Commissioners and never made it to its final report.

Dick Stoltz, Retired Special Agent; ATF- Mr. Stoltz, a veteran undercover agent with the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, had played an important role in *Operation Diamondback* between 1998 and 2001. The sting operation involved a group of Middle Eastern men living in New Jersey who were caught on tape in an ATF weapons sting conspiring to buy millions of dollars of weapons including components for nuclear bombs. The case came to a screeching halt with the arrest of only a handful of suspects in June of 2001 even though there was ample evidence that some of the people who were attempting to buy these weapons had connections with the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden himself. The 9/11 Commission refused to contact Agent Stoltz despite all attempts made by several witnesses from the intelligence & Law Enforcement Communities, and the 9/11 Family group, Jersey Moms.

Bogdan Dzakovic, Former Red Team Leader; FAA - Mr. Dzakovic had worked for the Security Division of the Federal Aviation Administration since 1987 as a Special Agent, as a Team Leader in the Federal Air Marshals, and from 1995 until September 11, 2001 was a Team Leader of the Red Team (terrorist team). Mr. Dzakovic had tried for several years prior to the 9-11 attacks to improve aviation security in the face of the ever-increasing terrorist threat. He provided the 9/11 Commission with his testimony and documented reports. His testimony and report to the Commission was completely omitted from the final report.

Linda Lewis, Retired Emergency Programs Specialist; USDA - Ms. Lewis worked for 13 years evaluating and coordinating federal, state and local preparedness for nuclear, radiological and chemical weapons emergencies. Prior to September 11, 2001, she had reported numerous inadequacies and dysfunctions in emergency preparedness, including a

culture of intimidation that discouraged federal evaluators from reporting inadequacies in state and local plans and preparedness. USDA officials had thwarted her efforts to bring in terrorism experts to help the agency prepare for attacks on federal buildings, including bio-weapons attacks such as the anthrax attacks of 2001. In vain, she had urged FEMA officials to develop a national emergency communications plan and require interoperability of federally funded emergency communications equipment. In the absence of these preparations, New York City firefighters and police officers were unable to communicate critical information on September 11 at the World Trade Center. Ms. Lewis contacted the Commission and offered to provide information regarding dysfunctional government preparedness, but the Commission never responded.

Mark Burton, Senior Analyst; NSA – Mr. Burton served as an all-source threat analyst in NSA's Information Assurance Directorate (IAD) for most of his 16-year career. He was the editor of IAD's premier threat document; the 300+ page ISSO Global Threat Summary, and was an adjunct faculty member at NSA's National Cryptologic School. He provided dozens of pages of relevant information to the 9/11 Commission, but was completely ignored and never asked to testify.

The above list does not include many others from the intelligence and law enforcement communities who had similarly contacted or reported to the commission but had been either turned away or censored, and of course many others' who are still working within these agencies and are fearful of making their identities known, due to the relentless pursuit of and retaliation against whistleblowers by government agencies.

About National Security Whistleblowers Coalition

National Security Whistleblowers Coalition (NSWBC), founded in August 2004, is an independent and nonpartisan alliance of whistleblowers who have come forward to address our nation's security weaknesses; to inform authorities of security vulnerabilities in our intelligence agencies, at nuclear power plants and weapon facilities, in airports, and at our nation's borders and ports; to uncover government waste, fraud, abuse, and in some cases criminal conduct.

The NSWBC is dedicated to aiding national security whistleblowers through a variety of methods, including advocacy of governmental and legal reform, educating the public concerning whistleblowing activity, provision of comfort and fellowship to national security whistleblowers suffering retaliation and other harms, and working with other public interest organizations to affect goals defined in the NSWBC mission statement. For more on NSWBC visit www.nswbc.org

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