

## **The Ultimate 9/11 'Truth' Showdown**

David Ray Griffin vs. Matt Taibbi

October 7, 2008

Alternet

<http://www.alternet.org/story/100688> and 101703 and 101704

(copying/formatting by Dick Atlee)

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Introductory note: I believe the following comment from a website

<http://willyloman.wordpress.com/2008/10/07/the-ultimate-911-truth-showdown-david-ray-griffin-vs-matt-taibbi/>

which offered the first of the articles noted in the header, fairly characterizes not only the two participants in this extended debate-by-email, but also the nature of many discussions/arguments on this topic that I have myself experienced. I think this comment will help you to understand the nature of the "conversation" you are about to read:

Taibbi is listed here as one of the leading skeptics of the 9/11 Truth movement, but I don't really think that holds up. In fact, the second part of this [the second of the three articles] is Taibbi's attempt at rebuttal to Prof. Griffin, and in fact, he starts that off by saying he was so unbalanced by Griffin's work here, that he eventually had to come to the decision that he would ignore the facts that Griffin presents. Let me repeat that: Matt Taibbi comes to the conclusion that he has to ignore the facts in order to keep his belief system intact. Then he proceeds to use smear tactics and name calling to go after David Ray Griffin. This "debate" is as one sided as it gets, people.

***"Then it hit me, and probably far too late: the correct play here is to ignore you and your arguments entirely."*** Matt Taibbi

Understanding what happened on 9/11 is not an easy task. It takes time and a certain measure of courage, because as you can see, many people will ridicule you based on absolutely nothing by way of facts, and those people will, in the end, still be regarded as "journalists" by the accepted "liberal" or "conservative" media sources. No matter how contrived and illogical their argument becomes. But I would like you to take the time to read this. Get a cup of coffee and plop down and just read. ... I want you to look at the logic and evidence presented by Griffin and the rhetoric presented by Taibbi and I want you to tell me who is really the fanatic and who is level headed.

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## PART ONE

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[Ed. AlterNet's CMS has a maximum number of characters allowed per article -- this is why the piece has been divided in three parts.]

A poll of 17 countries that came out September of this year revealed that majorities in only nine of them "believe that al Qaeda was behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States." A Zogby poll from 2006 found that in America, 42% of respondents believed the US government and 9/11 Commission "covered up" the events of 9/11. It's safe to say that at least tens of millions of Americans don't believe anything close to the official account offered by the 9/11 Commission, and that much of the outside world remains skeptical.

Over the years, AlterNet has run dozens of stories, mostly critical, of the 9/11 Truth Movement. Matt Taibbi has taken on the 9/11 Truth Movement head on in a series of articles, and most recently in his new book, *The Great Derangement*.

In April, I asked Taibbi if he would be interested in interviewing David Ray Griffin, a leading member of Scholars for 9/11 Truth & Justice, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Theology at Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Graduate University and author of seven of books on 9/11, about his recent book, *9/11 Contradictions*. After months of back and forths between them and some editorial delays, I'm pleased to share their written exchange -- all 24,000 words of it. What we have here are the preeminent writers on both sides of the 9/11 Truth argument; a one-of-a-kind debate. Because the questions and responses are quite long, I've woven them together in order. Enjoy. -- Jan Frel, AlterNet Senior Editor.

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**1. Matt Taibbi (May 16, 2008):** In your first chapter, you seem to imply -- well, you not only imply, you come out and say it -- that you think the real reason George W. Bush didn't hurry to finish his reading of *My Pet Goat* might have been that "the Secret Service had no real fear of an attack." In other words, they knew the plan in advance, and the plan didn't involve an attempt on Bush's life, hence "no real fear." My question is this: if they knew about this whole thing in advance, why didn't they plan to make Bush look a little less like a paralyzed yutz at the moment of truth? If the purpose of the entire exercise was propaganda, wasn't it counterproductive to have the intrepid leader sitting there frozen with panicked indecision, a kid's book about goats in his hands, at the critical moment of his presidency? What possible benefit could that have served the conspirators?

**David Ray Griffin responds (June 12, 2008):** Matt, I appreciate this opportunity provided by you and AlterNet to respond to questions about my writings on 9/11, especially my most recent book, *9/11 Contradictions*, which is addressed specifically to journalists (as well as Congress).

Before responding to your first question, however, I need to address a theme that is implicit throughout your questions. I refer to your claim, which you have spelled out in previous writings, that those who believe 9/11 was an inside job must, to make this claim credible, present a complete theory as to how this operation was carried out.

You made this claim in the article in which you referred to "9/11 conspiracy theorists" as "idiots." They must be idiots, you said, because "9/11 conspiracy is so shamefully stupid." Saying that you could not give all your reasons for this claim, you wrote: "I'll have to be content with just one point: 9/11 Truth is the lowest form of conspiracy theory, because it doesn't offer an affirmative theory of the crime." By "an affirmative theory," you meant a "concrete theory of what happened, who ordered what and when they ordered it, and why." In the absence of such a theory, you went on to claim, "all the rest," including the "alleged scientific impossibilities," is "bosh and bunkum."

Recognizing that members of the 9/11 truth movement will argue that you are "ignoring the mountains of scientific evidence proving that the Towers could not have collapsed as a result of the plane crashes alone," you replied: "[Y]ou're right. I am ignoring it. You idiots. Even if it were not the rank steaming bullshit my few scientist friends assure me that it is, none of that stuff would prove anything."

Your argument here has two problems (aside from your self-contradictory statement that scientifically disproving the official account of how the Towers fell would prove nothing). First, like most people who defend the official account of 9/11, you use the term "conspiracy theorist" in a one-sided way, applying it only to people who reject the official account of 9/11. But that account is itself a conspiracy theory -- indeed, the original 9/11 conspiracy theory.

A conspiracy is simply an agreement between two or more people to commit a crime. One holds a conspiracy theory about some event (such as a bank robbery or a corporation defrauding its stockholders) if one believes that it resulted from such an agreement. A conspiracy theorist is simply someone who accepts such a theory.

According to the Bush-Cheney administration, the 9/11 attacks resulted from a conspiracy between Osama bin Laden and various members of al-Qaeda, including the 19 men accused of hijacking the airliners. This official account is, therefore, a conspiracy theory. (This is not a new point: I made it in my first book on 9/11, *The New Pearl Harbor*. I even made it in the title of my 2007 book, *Debunking 9/11 Debunking: An Answer to Popular Mechanics and Other Defenders of the Official Conspiracy Theory*.) Accordingly, insofar as you accept this official account, you are a 9/11 conspiracy theorist. And yet you evidently do not consider yourself an idiot. Rather, you save that description, along with the term "conspiracy theorist," for those who reject the official conspiracy theory.

Looking aside from your selective name-calling, your one-sided use of the term would not be so bad except that it leads you to be one-sided in the demands you make: While demanding that rejecters of the official theory must provide an account of what happened that is both self-consistent and based on hard evidence, you do not seem concerned whether the official theory exemplifies those virtues. (I will illustrate this point in my responses to some of your other questions.)

In addition to this one-sidedness, there is a second problem with your claim that anyone challenging a theory must have a complete alternative theory: It is false. There are several ways

to challenge a theory. You can cast doubt on it by showing that its alleged evidence does not stand up to scrutiny. You can show that a theory is probably false by pointing to evidence that apparently contradicts it. You can positively disprove a theory by providing evidence showing that it cannot possibly be true. The 9/11 truth movement has done all three with regard to the official account.

To make clearer why your claim is unreasonable, I'll use a method that you like to employ: I'll make up a story.

You and your best friend entered a contest and, on the basis of something you considered unfair, he won the rather sizable cash prize. A week later, he is found dead, killed by an arrow. Although you are heartbroken, you are arrested and charged with his murder.

The police claim that, being angry because you felt he had cheated you out of money and glory, you used a crossbow to shoot him from the roof of a nearby building. You hire an attorney to defend you, even though you are confident that, since the charge is false, the police could not possibly have any evidence against you.

At the trial, however, the prosecutor plays a recording on which your voice is heard threatening to kill your friend. He plays a video clip showing you going into the building carrying a case big enough to hold a disassembled crossbow. He presents a water bottle with your finger prints on it that was found on the roof.

In defending you, your attorney, having pointed out that the water bottle could have been planted, then argues that, since you did not make that call and never went into that building, the police must have fabricated evidence by using digital (voice and video) morphing technology. When the prosecutor rolls his eyes, your attorney cites William Arkin's 1999 Washington Post article, "When Seeing and Hearing Isn't Believing," which points out that voice morphing, like photo and video manipulation, is now good enough to fool anyone. With regard to why the police would have tried to frame you, your attorney suggests that the FBI may have asked the local police to put you away because of critical things you had written about the White House.

The prosecutor, smiling knowingly to the judge, says: "Oh my, a conspiracy theory." He then adds that, even if your attorney's speculations were true, which he doubted, it wouldn't matter: Your attorney could prove your innocence only by providing a complete and plausible account of the alleged conspiracy: Who ordered the frame-up and when, who carried it out, and how and where they did this. Your attorney replies that this is preposterous: You would not possibly have the resources and connections to do this.

In any case, your attorney says, he has scientific proof that the police's theory is false: A forensic lab has shown that the arrow that killed your friend could not possibly have flown the distance from the building's roof to the location where your friend was killed. He then asks the judge to dismiss all charges.

The judge, however, says that he's inclined to agree with the prosecution, especially if you are charging the government with engaging in a conspiracy: You need to provide a complete account

of this alleged conspiracy. Not only that, the judge says, wickedly quoting a passage from one of your own writings: "In the real world you have to have positive proof of involvement to have a believable conspiracy theory." You must, he says, provide positive proof that the FBI and police conspired to frame you.

Your attorney protests, saying that, in spite of the fact that his client had articulated this requirement, it is absurd. The defense has done all it needs to do. Besides showing how all the evidence against the defendant could have been manufactured, it has shown that the government's theory is scientifically impossible.

The prosecutor objects, saying that the impossibility is merely alleged: He has some scientist friends who believe that the arrow could easily have traveled the distance in question.

The judge convicts you of murder.

Having shown you, I hope, that your demand for a complete theory, with positive proof, is unreasonable, I turn to your first question: "[If the Secret Service] knew about this whole thing in advance, why didn't they plan to make Bush look a little less like a paralyzed yutz at the moment of truth?" That's a good question, one that I myself asked near the end of *The New Pearl Harbor*, in a section entitled "Possible Problems for a Complicity Theory." Perhaps anticipating that you would come along, I pointed out that critics of the revisionist theory of 9/11 may well make the following claim:

[T]hese revisionists must do more than show that the official account is implausible. They must also present an alternative account of what happened that incorporates all the relevant facts now available in a plausible way. Furthermore, these counter-critics could continue, insofar as an alternative account is already contained, at least implicitly, in the writings of the revisionists, it could be subjected to a great number of rhetorical questions, to which easy answers do not appear to be at hand.

I then offered a series of such rhetorical questions, one of which was: Why would the president, after officially knowing that a modern-day Pearl Harbor was unfolding, continue to do "the reading thing"? And why would the president remain in his publicly known location, thereby appearing to demonstrate that he and his staff knew that no suicide missions were coming their way? Would not the conspirators have orchestrated a scene that made the Secret Service appear genuinely concerned and the president genuinely presidential?

I then pointed out that this and the other questions suggest that to accept the complicity theory would be to attribute a degree of incompetence to the conspirators that is beyond belief. But the truth may be that they really were terribly incompetent. With regard to the occupation of Iraq, the incompetence of the Bush administration's plans -- for everything except winning the initial military victory and securing the oil fields and ministries--has been becoming increasingly obvious. [This was written in late 2003.] Perhaps their formulation of the plan for 9/11, with its cover story, involved comparable incompetence. Perhaps this fact is not yet widely recognized only because the news media have failed to inform the American public about the many tensions between the official account and the relevant facts.

Moreover, I argued, whatever difficulty these rhetorical questions pose for a complicity theory, the problems in the official theory are far greater. After illustrating this point, I concluded:

Seen in this light, the fact that a complicity theory may not at this time be able to answer all the questions it might evoke is a relatively trivial problem . Furthermore, the fact that the revisionists cannot yet answer all questions would be important only if they were claiming to have presented a fully conclusive case. But they are not.

In my later writings, I emphasized this point -- that I am not attempting to provide a complete theory, partly because to do so would require groundless speculation, partly because there is no need. I did, however, state what I found the evidence to show on various matters, such as the fact that the World Trade Center buildings could have come down only through the use of explosives. I also clearly stated, after the first book, that I believed that 9/11 was an inside job, that the Air Force had been ordered to stand down, and that Dick Cheney was at the center of this operation. But this is very different from trying to offer a complete theory.

In the preface of the book about which you are asking questions, moreover, I pointed out that it contains not theory but simply an exposition of 25 contradictions within the official story.

One of these contradictions involves the story about Bush at the school. On the first anniversary of 9/11, the White House started telling a new story about what happened, saying that right after Andy Card told the president that a second WTC building had been hit, meaning that America was under attack, the president waited only a couple of seconds before getting up and leaving the room. The White House even got the teacher who was in the classroom to write two stories that repeated this lie.

Obviously the White House had come to believe that Bush's having remained in the classroom was a liability, not a benefit. (Some reporters had asked why the Secret Service had not hustled Bush away, thereby implicitly suggesting that perhaps the attacks were no surprise.)

Why the Secret Service had allowed Bush to stay, I wouldn't know. Perhaps it was thought essential that Bush make his scheduled address to the nation at 9:30. Or perhaps the planners were simply not very bright.

After the video surfaced on the Internet in 2003, in any case, the White House confirmed, when asked by a Wall Street Journal reporter, that Bush had in fact stayed for several minutes, explaining that his "instinct was not to frighten the children by rushing out of the room." The reporter evidently did not ask the White House why it had tried to get away with a lie.

The 9/11 Commission did not report that the White House had put out a false account in 2002. It did, however, ask the Secret Service why it permitted Bush to remain in the classroom. The Secret Service replied that "they were anxious to move the President to a safer location, but did not think it imperative for him to run out the door." The Commission evidently accepted that as a satisfactory answer.

In sum, I too would like to know why the planners did such a stupid thing. But I would think, Matt, that you should be concerned about why, if the attacks were a surprise, the Secret Service left Bush at the school, why the White House tried to change the story a year later (giving us two mutually inconsistent reports), and then why the press has not forced the White House to explain either of these events.

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**2. Matt Taibbi:** If I'm following the implications of your early-chapter questions correctly, the Secret Service perhaps knew about the attack in advance (this is the implication of your chapter 1 question), while the Air Force needed to be explicitly ordered to stand down on the day of the attack (chapters 3 and 5). However, in later chapters (chapter 21, to be exact) you also mention the fact that the Secret Service was "very concerned, pointing up at the jet in the sky" when the mysterious "white jet" was flying over Washington -- the "white jet," incidentally, being an Air Force jet.

So according to your early chapters, the Secret Service knew that Bush wasn't going to be attacked, but the Air Force needed to be ordered to stand down; in the later chapter, the apparently-in-on-it Air Force sent a mysterious white jet up in the air over Washington for some unknown reason, while Secret Service agents, in the dark about the jet's purpose, point up at it with concern. Do you actually have a theory about which services may or may not have been in on this job, or do these kinds of inconsistencies just not bother you?

**David Ray Griffin Responds:** I'm pleased to see that you believe that a conspiracy theory, like any theory whatsoever, is not credible if it contains inconsistencies. I would think, therefore, that the 25 inconsistencies I have pointed out in the official conspiracy theory would lead you to consider it unworthy of credence. I have, however, seen no sign that you are troubled by these inconsistencies.

In any case, with regard to the apparent inconsistency you've pointed out in my own position, it is merely apparent. You elsewhere point out that it is a mistake to think of America's ruling class as monolithic. The same is true of the Air Force and the Secret Service. Only the top members of those organizations would have known about the plans for the attacks.

This difference was illustrated at the Sarasota school. As I reported, when the Secret Service agent who carried the president's phone saw the second WTC strike on television, he said to the sheriff: "We're out of here. Can you get everybody ready." But he was obviously overruled by the lead Secret Service agent, because the presidential party did not leave for another 30 minutes. The Secret Service agents at the White House disturbed by the white jet would have been equally in the dark.

The same division would have been true in the Air Force. Although General Richard Myers and some other top officers knew what was going on, the lower officers in charge of the interceptor pilots had to be ordered to stand down. So there is no inconsistency.

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**3. Matt Taibbi:** If you were running this kind of conspiracy, why in God's name would you let the Mayor of New York -- a man who couldn't even keep his extramarital affairs a secret from

the tabloids, a man whose own children bad-mouth him to the media every chance they get -- in on the secret? More to the point, if Rudy Giuliani did indeed, for some completely insane reason, have a part in this conspiracy, and in the absolutely impossible and implausible event that what you're implying took place and he did have foreknowledge of the towers coming down, on what planet would it make any kind of sense for this key conspirator to go blabbing his big criminal secret to Peter Jennings on television on the day of the big wedding? Can you explain why in the world he would ever do that?

There are two possibilities here: one is that Giuliani either misspoke or innocently communicated someone's fanciful guess about the towers coming down, and the other is that he inadvertently confessed to being part of the largest premeditated murder conspiracy in the history of the free world on live television. Why is the latter possibility more likely?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** You are referring to the fact that on 9/11, Rudy Giuliani told Peter Jennings of ABC News: "[W]e set up headquarters at 75 Barclay Street, and we were operating out of there when we were told that the World Trade Center was gonna collapse. And it did collapse before we could actually get out of the building."

Why did Giuliani say this on national television? I don't know, but it might have something to do with the fact that he's not generally considered the brightest, most discreet, person in the world.

In any case, I was surprised by your statement that it was "absolutely impossible that . . . he did have foreknowledge of the towers coming down." Philosophers generally talk about three kinds of impossibilities: logical impossibilities (such as making a round square), metaphysical impossibilities (such as traveling back to the past [where you might kill your grandfather before he had children]), and physical impossibilities (which are ruled out by the laws of physics in our particular universe, such as the law of the conservation of momentum). None of those kinds of impossibility apply here. Giuliani could have known the Twin Towers were going to come down if he knew that explosives had been set and were about to be detonated. Nothing "absolutely impossible" about that.

You argue that it is highly unlikely that Giuliani "inadvertently confessed." However, a confession would be a statement that most people would immediately recognize as such. Giuliani's statement that he was told the WTC was going to come down has been seen to imply foreknowledge only by those few individuals who know two things: that there would have been no reason to expect the buildings to come down unless they were known to be rigged with explosives, and that it was Giuliani's own people (in the Office of Emergency Management) who said the buildings were going to come down. So yes, he was careless, but he hardly "blabbed." He merely said something that was recognized to imply foreknowledge by the few people who knew the relevant facts.

That clarified, let's look at what you call the other possibility, although your statement actually articulates two possibilities: "that Giuliani either misspoke or innocently communicated someone's fanciful guess about the towers coming down." To begin with the first one: What would it mean to say that he "misspoke"? That would be no more plausible than Hillary Clinton's claim that she merely "misspoke" when she claimed she had come under sniper fire in Bosnia.

What about the other possibility -- that Giuliani simply repeated someone's "fanciful guess"? High-rise steel-frame buildings had never before come down on this planet because of any combination of external damage and fire. Such collapses had occurred for only one reason: their steel columns had been sliced with explosives. Surely someone's prediction that the WTC was going to collapse, made just a few minutes before the South Tower did and about 30 minutes before the North Tower did, could not plausibly be regarded as simply a "fanciful guess."

That Giuliani was aware that he should not have said that was made clear by the fact that, when confronted about his statement by a 9/11 activist group in 2007, he tried to deny it, saying: "I didn't know the towers were going to collapse." After a member of the group quoted exactly what he had told Jennings, Giuliani claimed that he had meant that "over a long period of time," meaning from 7 to 10 hours, the towers could collapse, "the way other buildings collapsed." However, no steel-frame high-rise buildings had ever collapsed after burning for 10, or even 18, hours. Moreover, Giuliani's statement to Jennings -- "we were told that the World Trade Center was gonna collapse. And it did collapse before we could actually get out of the building" -- was clearly referring to an imminent collapse, not one that might occur 7 or 10 hours later.

So yes, I believe that the most likely possibility is that Giuliani inadvertently revealed, to those people familiar with the relevant facts, that he and his people knew that the Towers were going to come down. This conclusion becomes even more evident when one is aware of the massive evidence, which I discussed in *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*, that the Twin Towers (along with WTC 7) did indeed come down because they were brought down with explosives.

One final point: You suggest that, if Giuliani did have a part in the conspiracy, it would have been for "some completely insane reason." But there may have been some perfectly rational (if evil) reasons. New York City avoided having to pay billions of dollars to have the asbestos removed from the buildings. Also, Giuliani may have believed that, by appearing to act heroically on 9/11, becoming "America's mayor," he might also be able to become America's president. And if this was a motive, it almost worked: He was regarded as the front-runner when the race for the Republican race began.

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**4. Matt Taibbi:** What is more likely -- that an up-till-then poor pilot like Hani Hanjour got lucky and pulled off a highly-skilled maneuver, or that the plane was actually piloted by some other suicidal terrorist ordered by some secret bund of Pentagon conspirators to give up his life in order to attack his own? Or maybe you like the third option -- that thousands of witnesses who saw a plane hit the Pentagon were wrong, that the people who died on flight 77 didn't actually die then and there but at some other place and time, and it was actually a missile that hit the Pentagon?

Exactly what do you believe is the significance of Hani Hanjour's record of poor piloting? Do you believe someone else was flying the plane? Do you believe it wasn't a plane at all? Why don't you just come out and say what you think? Because we know this much: somebody piloted a jet liner into the Pentagon, and that somebody did a pretty good job of it. What does it matter if the ostensible pilot had a poor flying record? Who cares? Because unless you've got hard evidence that something else happened that day, that it wasn't Muslim hijackers but some other

fanatical suicidal terrorist (for whoever it was was a fanatical suicidal terrorist) the detail is irrelevant. But you don't even have a theory about that day. Or do you? (Note: I fully expect you to respond by saying, "It's not our job to reveal what happened, it's only our job to raise questions." Which is a very convenient way of saying one of two things: either your evidence doesn't add up to any kind of coherent story, or you don't have the nerve to say in public what you really think the evidence suggests. Please, please disappoint me!).

**David Ray Griffin responds:** To begin with your final statement: I am puzzled why you would suggest that I, having written six books that suggest -- some of them very clearly -- that leading members of the Bush administration, including top Pentagon officials, orchestrated the 9/11 attacks for primarily imperialistic motives, might not "have the nerve to say in public" what I think.

Let me, in any case, examine the three possibilities you offer as to what happened at the Pentagon. Having read my chapter on Hanjour, you are presumably aware that aviation sources, immediately after 9/11 -- before Hanjour had been identified as the pilot -- said that "the unidentified pilot executed a pivot so tight that it reminded observers of a fighter jet maneuver," and that another story said, "Investigators are particularly impressed with the pilot who, just before [slamming into the Pentagon], performed a tightly banked 270-degree turn at low altitude with almost military precision." You are also presumably aware that Hanjour was said to have been a terrible pilot by several instructors, one of whom said, "he could not fly at all," and that another instructor, in the summer of 2001, refused to go up with Hanjour a second time.

And yet you believe that one of the likely possibilities is that "Hani Hanjour got lucky and pulled off a highly-skilled maneuver." Let's see what some men with more expertise say. Former Navy and Pan-American Airlines pilot Ted Muga said: "I just can't imagine an amateur even being able to come close to performing a maneuver of that nature." Former fighter and airline pilot Russ Wittenberg called it "totally impossible." Former 757 pilot Ralph Omholt said: "The idea that an unskilled pilot could have flown this trajectory is simply too ridiculous to consider."

The other possibility you endorse is that "some other [Muslim] suicidal terrorist" flew Flight 77 into the Pentagon. The government has told us that there were five members of al-Qaeda on the plane. If Hanjour was not the pilot, it had to be one of the other four. Do you have a theory as to which one was up to the task? Muga, Wittenberg, and Omholt all doubt that anyone, including themselves, could have flown the reported trajectory in a 757. They are certain that no amateur could have done it, and any of the other men would have been amateurs with regard to 757s or any other "big birds" (as pilots call them).

What of the other possibility you offer -- "that thousands of witnesses who saw a plane hit the Pentagon were wrong." I wonder where you got that number. Even Popular Mechanics, which I had always considered the gold standard for reckless statements in support of the official theory, claims only that "hundreds of witnesses saw a Boeing 757 hit the building." The most extensive list of alleged witnesses of which I am aware contains only 152 people, and only some of them claim to have seen an airliner hit the Pentagon. A study of these, moreover, found that only 31 of them provided "explicit, realistic and detailed claims," that 24 of these 31 alleged witnesses "worked for either the Federal Government or the mainstream media," and that 21 of these

testimonies contained "substantial errors or contradictions." Witness testimony, therefore, cannot establish the claim that Flight 77 or any airliner struck the Pentagon.

This is especially the case when we add the testimony of witnesses from inside the Pentagon. Captain Dennis Gilroy, the acting commander of the Fort Myer fire department, "wondered why he saw no aircraft parts." Captain John Durrer thought, "Well where's the airplane, you know, where's the parts to it? You would think there'd be something." Army officer April Gallop, who escaped from the building after being injured, said: "I don't recall at any time seeing any plane debris. I walked through that place to try to get out before everything collapsed on us . [S]urely we should have seen something?" ABC's John McWethy reported: "I got in very close . I could not, however, see any plane wreckage."

You say: "[W]e know this much: somebody piloted a jet liner into the Pentagon." I'm puzzled as to how you think you know this. The word "knowledge" means "justified true belief," so you cannot know something unless (1) it is true and (2) your belief that it is true is based on sufficient evidence. You ask what "hard evidence" I have for the view that the official story is not true. I provided a lot of this in Chapter 3 of *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*. Assuming that you place the same demands on the official conspiracy theory as you do on the alternative theory, what hard evidence is there for the claim that Flight 77 hit the Pentagon?

The authorities could have provided such evidence by showing reporters the various airplane parts that have unique serial numbers, including the flight data recorder, but they did not. They could have shown some of the 85 videos from cameras trained on the Pentagon, which the Justice Department admits having, but they have refused. One of the pieces of evidence offered by Rumsfeld in the first week was that the nose of Flight 77 was sticking out of the hole made in the Pentagon's C ring. But this claim, being ridiculous (the fragile nose could not have survived the impact with the reinforced outer wall), has been quietly dropped. In light of all this, plus the reported absence of airliner debris, I'm puzzled as to what hard evidence you believe exists. If you cite the DNA evidence, the truth is that we have no evidence that the bodies of the passengers actually came from the Pentagon (as I explain in *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*). Even if an airliner had hit the Pentagon, moreover, it might have been controlled remotely. So you do not know that someone piloted a plane into the Pentagon.

As to what really happened, I do not know. I am quite certain, however, that the official story, according to which Hani Hanjour (or some other al-Qaeda hijacker) piloted Flight 77 into the Pentagon, is false. There is no credible evidence to support it and a lot of evidence against it. One part of this evidence is the fact that Wedge 1 would have been, for several reasons, the least likely spot for Muslim terrorists to have struck. Another part of this evidence is the fact that the primary targeted area was the first floor of the Pentagon (92 of the 125 victims were on that floor ), which would have been impossible for a 757 to have hit -- especially without even scraping the Pentagon lawn (photographs showed that it was undamaged). I do not, therefore, merely "raise questions." I state that the official story is a lie.

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**5. Matt Taibbi:** In chapter 21, you write about the "white jet," which you say may have been circling Washington when flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. "The claim that Pentagon officials were unaware of the approaching aircraft, which spiraled downward for three minutes before

crashing," you write, "becomes implausible, making even more insistent the question of why the Pentagon was not evacuated."

Now, if I follow you correctly, your implication here is that officials in the Pentagon launched a jet into the airspace over Washington prior to the crash, and therefore knew that flight 77 was going to hit the Pentagon, and yet intentionally refused to evacuate their own personnel from the Pentagon building, ultimately incurring the deaths of over 100 of their own people. Do you have a theory about why they would engage in this seemingly pointless murderous/suicidal behavior? Or do you just implicitly believe that our government is capable of any and all nefarious behavior, not matter how insensible?

Because think about it: if the Pentagon was in on this job, why did they wait until the very last second to send that "white jet" into the air? Really, why would you wait until the last second, unless the whole situation was an unforeseen emergency, a surprise? And if they were really reacting to a surprise development, are you really ready to demand that congress investigate their failure to evacuate the world's largest office building within three crazed minutes? Remember, we have the luxury of knowing that the plane ultimately crashed into the Pentagon. But that couldn't have been at all clear to those on the ground until the very last moments. So exactly what is there to be indignant about here? Are you upset that they failed to save the lives of those people who died at the Pentagon? Or are you implying that you believe they knew the ultimate destination of the attack all along and failed to act on purpose? Which is it? There is a very wide gap between those two propositions, but you leave your readers the option of choosing either. Why?

**David Ray Griffin Responds:** To fill in a few details for readers unfamiliar with the issue: The "white jet" in question was an E-4B, the Air Force's most sophisticated command and communications aircraft (often called a "flying Pentagon"). I did not say merely that "it may have been circling Washington" when the Pentagon was attacked; I presented evidence that this was indeed the case. The failure to evacuate cost 125 lives. The fact that the recent revelation of the E-4B's presence is embarrassing to the Pentagon is shown by the fact that, incredibly, its officials have denied that the plane over the White House was a military plane, even though there can be no doubt about this.

In your wording of the question, you say that the implication of my position is that the presence of this white jet meant that Pentagon officials "knew that flight 77 was going to hit the Pentagon." As my response to your third question shows, I do not believe that. My point is instead that, if the official story were true, they would have known this -- or at least that some airliner was approaching.

You say that an attack by the Pentagon on itself would have been "seemingly pointless murderous/suicidal behavior." In the first place, it certainly was not suicidal on the part of Rumsfeld and the top brass: Wedge 1, which was struck, was about as far as possible from their offices as possible (which is one of the reasons it would have been an unlikely target for Muslim terrorists angry about US foreign policy). None of the casualties, moreover, were connected to the US Air Force; all the victims were either in, or worked for, the Army or the Navy. Air Force officials did not kill any of "their own personnel."

Although the attack certainly was "murderous," I doubt very strongly that it was "pointless." I myself don't offer theories about what the point was, but this does not mean that a plausible theory cannot be provided. One suggested answer puts together two facts: first, the day before 9/11, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld stated at a press conference that the Pentagon was missing \$2.3 trillion dollars; second, one of the most damaged areas was the Army's financial management/audit area. This combination of facts has led one 9/11 researcher, citing evidence that the "attack" began with explosives going off inside that area, to ask: "Were the auditors who could 'follow the money,' and the computers whose data could help them do it, intentionally targeted?"

You also ask: "if the Pentagon was in on this job, why did they wait until the very last second to send that 'white jet' into the air?" We don't know when the plane went up (we know only the time of the first reported sighting). The Pentagon clearly won't tell us, since it won't even acknowledge that the plane belonged to it. So we have no way of inferring that the military officials were reacting to a surprise event.

In any case, yes, even if Pentagon officials had had only three minutes notice, I would want Congress to ask why the evacuation alarms were not set off. There is no evidence that these were "three crazed minutes," and evacuations had been regularly rehearsed. What you call the "world's largest office building," moreover, had only five stories, so it would have been nothing like trying to evacuate the 110-story Twin Towers. In three minutes, therefore, a good percentage of the Pentagon employees could have gotten out of the building -- surely all 92 of those people who were killed on the first floor.

Accordingly, whether the victims were deliberately targeted by Rumsfeld and other Pentagon (especially Air Force) officials, or they were merely allowed to die because of a failure to set off the alarms, we should be outraged (not merely "indignant").

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**6. Matt Taibbi:** Do you really think that people like Ted Olsen and Lisa Beamer are lying about receiving phone calls from their spouses in those last moments? Do you think someone would lose their spouse in a terrorist attack, and then moments later clear-headedly act a part in some devious conspiracy for the benefit of the press and the public? What exactly are you implying here? I mean, Jesus Christ -- they guy's wife died! Why would he lie about getting that call? Did someone call him and say, "Hey, Ted -- tough break about your wife. Can you do us a favor and pretend you got a call from her, pinning the attack on hijackers with box cutters?" Exactly how do you think that worked? Can you speculate, please, on what the instructions to Olsen with regard to his phony phone call might have sounded like?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** I don't want to be unkind, Matt, but these two questions make me wonder how well informed you are about 9/11. The name of the US Solicitor General was Ted Olson (not Olsen). More important, Lisa Beamer never claimed to receive a call from her husband, Todd Beamer. According to the official account, he called another woman named Lisa -- an Airfone employee named Lisa Jefferson -- and talked to her for the final 13 minutes of his life. He allegedly did this rather than accepting her offer to put him through to his wife, even though he reportedly assumed he was going to die. If you had asked whether I believe that this

call occurred, I would have said no. Jefferson's report of this call was very important, however, because it was the source of Bush's "Let's Roll" slogan for the so-called war on terror.

With regard to Ted Olson, your argument is based on the assumption that his wife, Barbara Olson, really died, and that he truly loved her. Both of those things may well be true. But I certainly do not know that they are, and I suspect that you do not, either.

What we do know is that, although Ted claimed that he received two calls from his wife (during which she told him that Flight 77 had been hijacked by men with knives and box-cutters), the FBI has said otherwise. In a report on phone calls from the four airliners presented in 2006 at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (the so-called 20th hijacker), the FBI indicated that no such calls from Barbara Olson occurred. It did say that she attempted a call to the Justice Department. But the call, it said, was "unconnected" so that it lasted "0 seconds." This was the main point of Chapter 8 ("Did Ted Olson Receive Phone Calls from His Wife?") of 9/11 Contradictions, the book under discussion here.

In any case, if you accept the FBI's report, then there are two options: Either Ted Olson lied or else he, like many other people that day, was fooled by fake calls based on voice morphing technology. Either way, the belief that Barbara Olson called her husband from Flight 77 was based on deception. (This point, incidentally, is relevant to the question of whether Flight 77 could have struck the Pentagon, because this alleged call was the only evidence that it was still aloft after it disappeared from the FAA radar shortly before 9:00 AM.)

You may, incidentally, doubt the feasibility of voice morphing, in spite of my earlier reference to William Arkin's 1999 article (in which he reported that he heard the voices of Colin Powell and another general perfectly rendered). So let's look at the alleged cell phone calls from United Flight 93. According to news reports at the time, of the 37 reported phone calls from this plane, over a dozen were made on cell phones. A leading British paper, for example, said: "The phone calls began, 23 from airphones, others by mobile." Four of those mobile or cell phone calls were reportedly made by Tom Burnett to his wife, Deena Burnett. She knew he had called from his cell phone -- she reported to journalists, in a book, and on national TV -- because her Caller ID showed his cell phone number.

When the FBI presented its phone report to the Moussaoui trial, however, it said that of the 37 calls made from this flight, only two of them -- both of which occurred at 9:58, after the plane had descended to 5,000 feet -- were made from cell phones. (Members of the 9/11 truth movement had argued that successful cell phone calls from high-altitude airliners would have been impossible in 2001 [prior to the invention and installation of pico-cell technology].) All of Tom Burnett's calls were said to have been made on passenger-seat phones. Assuming that you accept the FBI's report, Matt, do you have a theory as to why Deena Burnett reported recognizing the number from her husband's cell phone? Believing that we surely cannot accuse her of either lying or misremembering, I myself have suggested a theory -- that the calls were faked by means of a device, at least one of which can be purchased on the Internet, that allows callers to fake other people's phone numbers as well as their voices.

If Deena Burnett was tricked, then it's possible that Ted Olson was, too. My own hunch, however, is that he simply invented the story. For one thing, he was very much an insider in the Bush-Cheney administration, being the attorney who successfully argued before the Supreme Court that the Florida recount in 2000 should be stopped (thereby making Bush president) and that Cheney did not have to reveal the participants at his secret energy-policy meeting in 2001. Also, if the calls really came to the Department of Justice, Olson could have provided evidence of this fact when the veracity of his story was challenged, but he never did.

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**7. Matt Taibbi:** In chapter 19, you quote the Commission about Hanjour's piloting: The instructor thought Hanjour may have had training from a military pilot because he used a terrain recognition system for navigation. To which you comment: "How could this instructor have had such a radically different view of Hanjour's abilities than all the others, right up through August of 2001?"

You do realize that the Commission's statement is not implying that the instructor was making a qualitative assessment of Hanjour's piloting skills, don't you? He was merely saying that Hanjour's ability to use a certain device implied a certain kind of experience/training. Similarly, the notion that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed described Hanjour as the "most experienced" pilot is also not a qualitative assessment of Hanjour's abilities. Todd Collins is "more experienced" than Ben Roethlisberger, too. Objectively speaking, even without taking into consideration Hanjour's skill level, he was the "most experienced." Do you really not grasp this distinction?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** Given the fact that early reports described the aircraft that hit the Pentagon as having been flown with "military precision," the claim that one (apparently unidentifiable) instructor believed that Hanjour may have been trained by a military pilot was not insignificant. Also, my statement was based not simply on the sentence from The 9/11 Commission Report that you quoted but also the previous one, which claimed that Hanjour had "successfully conducted a challenging certification flight supervised by [this] instructor." With regard to whether "more experienced" implies a qualitative assessment, one of the main factors in judging whether pilots are qualified to take tests for various certificates and ratings is the number of hours they have logged in the air.

I am puzzled, moreover, by your assertion that, "[o]bjectively speaking, [Hanjour] was the 'most experienced.'" I am aware of no objective basis for that assertion. Furthermore, investigative reporter Daniel Hopsicker interviewed Amanda Keller, a woman with whom Mohamed Atta (i.e., the man going by that name) had lived for a few months while he was attending flight school in Venice, Florida. She reported that Atta was already an experienced pilot when he entered the country and that he was allowed to fly other students, as if he were an instructor. Of all the alleged pilots, furthermore, Hanjour seemed to be the only one who failed to complete a single course of training.

I wonder, finally, why you included this point. If you had successfully argued that even the two apparently favorable statements about Hanjour in The 9/11 Commission Report do not really suggest that he might have been a fairly decent pilot after all, how would this help your defense of the official account?

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**8. Matt Taibbi:** In chapter 10, you write about the apparent discrepancy between the military's position that its jets were 71 miles away from Manhattan at the time of the flight 175 crash, and the time those jets should have been there. "For example," you write:

the F-15s were reportedly airborne at 8:52 and one of the pilots, Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Duffy, was quoted as saying that he 'was in full-blower all the way.' That would probably mean that the fighters were going about 1300 mph and hence about 22 miles a minute. At that speed, they would have covered the 180 miles from Otis to Manhattan in ten minutes (allowing two minutes to get up to speed and to slow down). Rather than being 71 miles away at 9:03 a.m., therefore, they should have already been there for a minute.

Now, what's more likely -- that a suburban Californian professor of Theology has his scrawled-on-a-napkin fighter-jet timeline math wrong, or that some dark conspiracy of White House confederates issued an unprecedented stand-down order in the missing minutes, an order that, despite being a de facto admission of responsibility for the greatest crime against American citizens ever committed by an American government, would subsequently be faithfully kept secret by all the ordinary rank-and-file military personnel who, up till that moment, had been kept in the dark? Can you explain to me why the latter scenario is more likely?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** Mathematics is the same for people of every occupation in every part of the world. The calculations are either right or wrong, no matter who does them. So rather than suggesting that my calculation might be wrong, why don't you pull out a napkin and see if you get a different result?

I based my calculation, incidentally, on a conservative estimate of the speed of the fighters. As I pointed out in a note: "Although the F-15 can fly at 1800 mph, this is only at very high altitudes, where the air is thin. For my calculation, I assumed that the fighters would have been traveling about half way between sea level, at which they can fly 915 mph, and 36,000 feet, at which they can fly 1650 mph." In the meantime, however, I have talked to pilots who say that the F-15s would have more likely gone up "to altitude." If they went full speed at 36,000 feet, they would have been going 1650 mph, hence 29 miles per minute, allowing them to cover the 180 miles in slightly over 6 minutes. Even if we generously allow a total of 5 minutes for ascent and descent, they would have arrived in Manhattan with at least two minutes to spare.

If your napkin gives the same result, I wonder if you have a theory as to why, according to the military, the F-15s were still 71 miles away. Your question, incidentally, is dealing with a position that the military defended only from September 2001 until the 9/11 Commission put out its report in July 2004. As I explained in the next section of Chapter 10, the Commission's new story claimed that the FAA, instead of notifying the military about Flight 175's difficulties at 8:43, failed to notify it until the airliner was hitting the South Tower at 9:03. This new story absolves the military of all possible blame for its failure to intercept Flight 175. Why did the 9/11 Commission change the story? I believe it did so precisely because it saw that the 9/11 truth movement had the math right -- that if the military had been notified about Flight 175's hijacking at 8:43, the F-15s could have easily intercepted it. (The Commission explicitly admitted this with regard to Flight 77, as I point out below.)

I am pleased, in any case, that you agree that if 9/11 was an inside job, it was "the greatest crime against American citizens ever committed by an American government." Given this view, I am puzzled why you seem less interested in the enormous body of evidence suggesting that it was indeed an inside job than in trying to pick away at a few pieces of this evidence.

Surely you cannot believe the Bush-Cheney administration incapable of such a crime. Surely you know, for example, that an order from the White House condemned thousands of Ground Zero workers to miserable lives and early deaths. As I reported in the introduction to *Debunking 9/11*, the EPA was going to issue a warning that the air was unsafe to breathe (asbestos levels of four times the safe level had already been reported). The White House, however, ordered the EPA to declare that the air did not contain "excessive levels of asbestos" and was otherwise "safe to breathe." Over 50,000 of the workers have respiratory problems, over 350 have died, 600 more have cancer, and there are predictions that the deaths will far exceed those that occurred on 9/11 itself. Likewise, more Americans have already died in the Iraq war, which was based on lies, than on 9/11. No a priori argument can be given, therefore, that the administration would have been too moral to orchestrate 9/11.

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**9. Matt Taibbi:** In the course of this entire book, did you pick up the phone once? Or is the whole thing based upon research of internet sources? I notice, for instance, that you seem not to have called Congressional Air Charters. Even your guess about the F-15 jet flying 1300 mph appears to be something you pulled from an internet source. I'm looking at your bibliography and I don't see a single original interview. Do I have that wrong?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** My work from the beginning has been devoted to summarizing and synthesizing the findings of those members of the 9/11 truth movement who have done original research of various types. In *The New Pearl Harbor*, for example, I took pains to point out that each point I made was derived from at least one of the major sources I used.

That said, I often found it necessary in my later books to contact various individuals. This was not true while I was working on *9/11 Contradictions*, since it merely documents contradictions within the official story. With regard to Congressional Air Charters, about which you asked, I saw no point in trying to contact it, because a journalist, as I reported in note 23 of the Hani Hanjour chapter, had already tried and learned nothing. However, two experienced researchers did carry out extensive (but fruitless) searches on my behalf to find the "Eddie Shalev" cited by the Commission as support for its claim that an instructor at Congressional Air Charters had supervised Hanjour's "challenging certification flight."

Some of my previous books, however, did provide occasions for contacting people. While working on *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions*, I had a lengthy telephone interview with Laura Brown of the FAA about a memo she had sent to the 9/11 Commission, clarifying the time at which the FAA had first contacted the military on the morning of 9/11. (I refer to it, in fact, in note 19 of Chapter 10 of *9/11 Contradictions*.) Although I did "pick up the phone" in that case, I generally prefer to communicate by email. If you look at the notes for Chapter 9 (dealing with Flight 11), you will see references to several email letters from Colin Scoggins, an air traffic controller at the FAA's Boston Center who was cited in *The 9/11 Commission Report*. I exchanged dozens of email letters with him while I was working on

Chapter 1 of Debunking 9/11 Debunking. At the same time, I was also corresponding extensively with Robin Hordon, who had previously worked at that same center. I have also consulted extensively with scientists and pilots while working on the flights, the Pentagon, and the World Trade Center.

I'm afraid that this was a pretty boring answer, but I didn't want to dodge your question -- although I was puzzled about the reason for it. Since I am not applying for a prize for original research, is not the only important thing the accuracy of my information, rather than the methods I employed to get it?

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**10. Matt Taibbi:** Just out of curiosity -- when you hear hoof beats, which animal comes to your mind first? Horses or zebras? Because throughout this book, you hear hoof beats and conclude that this or that juking of the timeline a few minutes in this or that direction is evidence of something extraordinarily sinister -- a something for which, of course, no concrete evidence exists. I look at the same evidence and I see the completely predictable behavior of a bunch of incompetent politicians rewriting history in order to cover their asses for their failure to protect the country on a day of crisis. Can you give me any reason why any of the discrepancies you're describing shouldn't be laid at the feet of pure political self-interest? Why is a cover-up of garden-variety incompetence less likely than a cover-up of criminal involvement?

And please don't say that a cover-up of mere incompetence is just as worth investigating as a cover-up of criminal involvement. The entire direction of your investigatory enterprise implies something far more sinister than base-level incompetence. And if you're going to make that implication, you need something a lot hotter than minor timeline discrepancies to make it stick. If you accuse someone of murder, you need real evidence, and you don't appear to have any at all. In other words, where are your zebra stripes?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** You suggest that all of the timeline discrepancies I have documented are "minor." Let's look at some of them.

As I mentioned earlier, the military had originally said that the FAA notified it about Flight 175 at 8:43, which was 20 minutes before the flight would strike the South Tower. But the 9/11 Commission claimed that this notification did not happen until 9:03, when the building was being struck. This 20-minute difference cannot be described as minor: It makes all the difference with regard to whether the military could have intercepted the flight.

Turning to the discrepancy about Flight 77: NORAD had said in 2001 that the notification from the FAA had come at 9:24. The 9/11 truth movement asked why, then, was the plane not intercepted before it struck the Pentagon at 9:38. The 9/11 Commission, agreeing that the 9:24 notification time "made it appear that the military was notified in time to respond," solved this problem by claiming that the military "never received notice that American 77 was hijacked." This claim, besides contradicting what NORAD had been saying for almost three years, also contradicted the aforementioned FAA memo sent to the Commission by the FAA -- which said that the FAA had actually notified the military long before 9:24. The Commission, besides simply ignoring this memo in its final report, also contradicted statements by the FBI and the Secret Service. The discrepancy cannot possibly be called minor.

The same is true of the discrepancy about Flight 93. The 9/11 Commission claimed that the military "first received a call about United 93 at 10:07," four minutes after it had crashed. But General Larry Arnold, the head of NORAD's Continental region, had testified that the military had been aware of the flight for over 20 minutes before it crashed. He and many other officials -- including Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz -- even said that the military was tracking Flight 93 and was in position to shoot it down. Hardly a minor discrepancy, especially given the evidence that the military did shoot the plane down.

Another discrepancy involves the time at which Cheney went down to the bunker under the White House to assume control of events. Many witnesses, including Richard Clarke and Cheney's photographer, said that it was not long after 9:00. One of these, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, testified that when he got down there at 9:20, Cheney was already there. Mineta then told the Commission about a conversation between Cheney and a young man, which occurred about 10 minutes before the Pentagon was attacked. Although Mineta did not thus interpret it, the conversation is most naturally understood as Cheney's confirmation of a stand-down order. The 9/11 Commission Report, making no mention of Mineta's testimony, claimed that Cheney did not get down to the bunker until almost 10:00. Definitely not a minor discrepancy.

Still another major discrepancy involves the time at which Cheney issued the shootdown authorization. According to the 9/11 Commission, he did so "between 10:10 and 10:15." Richard Clarke, however, reported that he received it at about 9:50 -- over 10 minutes before Flight 93 went down.

Matt, you want to claim that all of the contradictions in the official story can be regarded as cover-ups of incompetence. However, as I have emphasized in previous books, most fully in *Debunking 9/11*, the contradictions are not limited to the internal ones discussed in this book. The official story is also contradicted by much evidence, both documentary and physical, which cannot be explained away by an incompetence theory.

Incompetence cannot explain, for example, why three steel-frame high-rise buildings came down at virtually free-fall speed; why virtually all of the buildings' concrete was pulverized into tiny dust particles; why clusters of steel columns, weighing thousands of tons, were ejected out horizontally some 500 feet from the towers; why hundreds of tiny bone fragments were found on the roofs of nearby buildings; why some of the buildings' steel melted, even though the fires could not have gotten within 1,000 degrees F of the requisite temperature; why steel from the buildings had been thinned because of oxidation and sulfidation (which the *New York Times* called "perhaps the deepest mystery uncovered in the investigation"; why explosions were going off in the buildings long after all the jet fuel had burned up; why Giuliani's people knew in advance that the Twin Towers and WTC 7 were going to collapse; and why 125 people were killed in a part of the Pentagon that could not have been hit by an airliner, especially one flown by an amateur.

You asked for evidence of murder by forces within our own government. That is some of it.

Let me comment in closing, however, that your concern for evidence seems one-sided. As you know (if you looked at Chapter 18), the Bush administration, after promising to provide proof that Osama bin Laden was behind the attacks, reneged. Tony Blair provided a document but it, he admitted, did "not purport to provide a prosecutable case against Osama Bin Laden in a court of law." And recently, in spite of whatever proof you may think has been provided by videotapes allegedly showing bin Laden confessing, the FBI does not list 9/11 as one of the attacks for which he is wanted because, a spokesman admitted, "the FBI has no hard evidence connecting Bin Laden to 9/11." Moreover, all the evidence of hijackers on the planes can be seen to have been fabricated (like the cell phone calls) or planted (like the incriminating evidence in Atta's luggage and the passports that flew out of the planes and floated to the ground at the WTC site). Where is your concern that bin Laden and 19 Muslims have been charged with murder without any hard evidence? Given your moral concern, I would think you would be especially bothered by the fact that, on the basis of these unsubstantiated charges, hundreds of thousands -- by some counts, millions -- of people have already been killed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In any case, Matt, I thank you for this opportunity to discuss some issues related to "the greatest crime against American citizens ever committed by an American government." Let me suggest that you next interview physicist Steven Jones about "the alleged scientific impossibilities" in the official account of the destruction of the World Trade Center.

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## PART TWO

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[The following is Matt Taibbi's five follow-up questions to Griffin's responses, which follow in order of the questions).]

August 7, 2008 -- Professor:

As you've noticed, I struggled for quite some time with the question of how to answer your responses. Mainly this was because I was unsure of whether to treat this exercise like a comedy (because it's certainly hard to take seriously any "debate" with a person who believes that Rudy Giuliani would conspire to blow up the densest slice of taxpaying real estate in the world, the New York City financial district, in order to save his city the cost of an asbestos cleanup) or whether to aim higher and treat it like a serious political argument. I tried it both ways and neither way seemed to fit. Treating this like an absurdist comedy, I realized, I'm making it hard for readers to see how monstrous and offensive your arguments are -- but then again, when I take you seriously, spending paragraph after crazed paragraph grandstanding against you and your book, suddenly I'm the one who looks ridiculous.

Then it hit me, and probably far too late: the correct play here is to ignore you and your arguments entirely. There are many things about your work that are outrageous and offensive, but the very worst thing about you and other 9/11 conspiracists -- and, I guess, lately anyway, me -- is that you're/we're a distraction from the real problem.

After all, the thing that was always the most unrealistic aspect of 9/11 Truther theory was this notion that anyone in power in this country would need to pull off a stunt like this in order to

further its nebulous imperialist agenda. For the only conceivable motive for planning and executing a caper on this level would be to try to sway public opinion -- but public opinion has, for decades, already been more or less whatever the powers that be have wanted it to be.

Most often, in fact, public opinion was simply not wanted at all: what was most desirable was that public attention be elsewhere when industries were deregulated, bailouts distributed, OPIC loans handed out, contracts funneled to insiders. In March, for instance, the federal government quietly agreed to subsidize JP Morgan's acquisition of troubled Bear Stearns, shelling out \$29 billion in taxpayer money to prop up a hornet's nest of bad mortgage-backed securities and other investments. Forget about a public outcry over this move to bail out the irresponsible wealthy using yours and my tax money -- the public didn't even know about this deal. And even if it had known about it, it wouldn't have understood it. And even if it had understood it -- extremely unlikely -- it wouldn't have been organized enough to do anything about it. And even if it had been organized enough to do anything about it, and this is really once chance in a million, our government could have just ignored them anyway, the same way it did when it pressed ahead with its insane invasion of Iraq even as 400,000 people marched on Washington. But there weren't four people marching against the Bear Stearns deal.

This same public -- the same public that stood meekly by when its manufacturing economy was exported overseas, that cheered when our government pledged to "get tough" with China by demanding that it allow us to weaken our currency vis a vis the Yuan, that twiddled its thumbs when Wall Street played Keno with the nation's homeowner savings, that has consistently voted overwhelmingly to deprive itself of its right to litigate against powerful companies -- this is the public you think George Bush and Dick Cheney needed to blow up downtown Manhattan for, in order to get them on board with a war against Iraq, the Patriot Act, and whatever else.

The recent financial crisis shows most graphically that the financial powers that run this country have had a completely free hand to do as they pleased for decades, and certainly long before 9/11. These same people are about to bend the public over again, as whoever wins the next election will be called upon to fork over a series of gigantic bailouts to rescue the speculators who ran amok for the last dozen years or so. It's business as usual. And yet, you actually think that the same public that didn't even notice when so much of its money was pissed into the wind by Wall Street -- you think they scared the Department of Defense so much with their jealous stewarding of public treasure that the DOD actually blew up the records office of its own building to hide "evidence" of embezzlement and fraud. Like the public had EVER given a shit (at least, given a shit enough to do something about it!) about defense department waste before! Like there was anyone to hide that evidence from!

All of this 9/11 Truther stuff, it's a silly distraction. A country whose economy is about to go down the shitter, to the brink of depression, thanks to three-plus decades of routinely-ignored Wall Street deregulation just can't afford to be wasting its time arguing about thermite reactions and "morphing technology." Captivated by the comic possibilities of Truther literature, I realized this too late. As you'll see below, I even spent a lot of time pulling what's left of my hair out over your answers to questions that even I admit now go beyond inane. I admit in advance to looking silly for doing so, and hereby make a promise to God that I won't do it again, at least not as long

as we have other things to worry about. All the same, some of the stuff you came up with, Professor sheesh! And I thought I was loony! To wit:

1. Your response to the general criticism that 9/11 Truther rhetoric never attempts to make a case for what, specifically, it thinks actually took place on 9/11 is to reduce the argument to a parable -- you compare the issue to a court case. And in order to make your argument that what I was asking is illogical, you essentially cast yourself and the Truth movement in the role of a beleaguered defense attorney. And what a case you have!

In the hilarious story you invent, my best friend (seemingly) cheats at a contest to beat me for a large prize, and is brutally killed by an arrow the next day. Cue dramatic music: Dunh dunh dunh! The cops have a recording of me threatening my friend, a video of me entering a building carrying a case large enough to hold a crossbow, and a water bottle found on the roof (whence the crossbow bolt was fired!) with my fingerprints on it.

But alas, I'm not guilty! The bottle was planted, and the video and audio evidence was faked using "morphing" technology! Morphing technology? Absurd, an ordinary person would say. But fortunately for me, my attorney -- a sharp fellow whose instincts are remarkably like those of a California professor named David Ray Griffin -- is able to introduce as evidence the internet link to an authoritative article on the efficacy of said morphing technology, published in no less prestigious a publication than The Washington Post.

As for motive, it appears the government has cleverly waited for the opportune circumstance of my friend cheating to beat me out of a large cash contest to frame me, a dangerous dissident with a history of writing critically about the White House, for his murder.

Humorous aside: Even in this fictional example, the logic is hilarious: the government is willing to wantonly murder my innocent friend, but not me, the actual "threat" to the state; their method of dealing with me is instead to cook up an elaborate scheme to frame me, a scheme that would depend upon them knowing in advance that my best friend would cheat to win a contest, and would rely upon the use of dozens of confederates to plant phony evidence crafted by super-advanced technology. When, of course, they could have just skipped all that complex stuff, and hit me in the head with a brick in an alley. Strongly reminiscent of Dr. Evil of Austin Powers fame waving off of his son Seth Green's suggestion that he just shoot Austin Powers in the head ("I'll get my gun right now!"), opting instead for the "sharks with frickin' lasers on their heads" method of pointlessly-elaborate execution.

Anyway, despite all this evidence of innocence, the judge -- a grumpy sort tending toward the unfair who seems to resemble me in this story -- insists that the defendant can only be cleared if the attorney offers a clear and plausible alternative theory of the crime.

Which sucks, because the attorney has another bombshell: a lab has found that the arrow that killed the friend could not possibly have originated from the purported scene of the murder.

(Again, why would the bolt -- that's what you call the thing fired from a crossbow, by the way -- not match the location? If this is a frame-up from the beginning, why wouldn't the framers make

sure to make the purported kill-spot and the bolt matched? I realize this is a fictional story, but even these inconsistencies are hilarious).

But the judge, a real jerk, refuses to dismiss the charges still, again grumpily insisting on proof of the alternative theory of the crime. In a wonderfully witty twist, he even quotes me, Matt Taibbi, in justifying his decision! The irony is overwhelming! It hits you like a dozen freight trains! Game over -- jeu, Griffin!

Two things about this example of yours:

Firstly: the reason it's so funny that you chose this particular example -- the handcuffing of a fictional defense attorney -- is because what defense attorneys do, and what you're doing, is exactly the opposite of investigation, the opposite of a sincere quest for truth. I'm not knocking the profession at all; I believe in the system and greatly esteem defense lawyers who do their jobs well.

But defense attorneys have absolutely no responsibility to get at the truth of any court case. That's not what they do. Their job is to annihilate the prosecutor's arguments piece by piece. It doesn't matter -- never matters -- if the sum of their arguments adds up to a coherent narrative. If the prosecutor's case is based upon a witness, a confession, a hair, and a deposit slip, the defender attacks each piece using whatever weapon applies: the witness is a drunk, the confession was coerced, the hair is inconclusive, the deposit slip explained by a win at Vegas blackjack tables. He crushes those four items, he wins his case.

He doesn't have to know what happened in reality. His client may even be guilty, in fact often is. In your circles, you call this "raising questions." It's a great characteristic for a defense attorney. For an investigator, someone interested in learning the truth, it sucks ass. Even many defense attorneys (and I know this because I know a few) feel shitty about using this bomb-tossing intellectual technique to make a living. But at least they're doing it within the framework of a system designed for that activity. You're doing it as a substitute for actual inquiry, which is pretty sad.

Secondly: what the fuck? What kind of lunatic comes up with this as his "illustrative example"? Your simplifying parable is more fantastic and complicated than the actual story! At first I thought you were kidding, then I had to go back and read it to believe it -- astounding! It should tell the readers of this debate quite a bit that this is your idea of a good way to start an argument: "Say for example that your best friend is killed in broad daylight with a crossbow, and the government frames you for the crime using advanced morphing technology"

Uh, okay. I can say it, sure. It's stupid, but I can say it. Does the story end with my wife in bed with a cow in a spacesuit? I mean really. I don't mean to take a gratuitous swipe here, but your fictional example says a lot about how your mind works.

Lastly, with regard to the actual question -- why would Bush sit there like a dunce if he knew the attacks were coming -- your answer is another doozy. Apparently, George Bush is incompetent! Oh, he's competent enough, one guesses, to pull off the greatest and vastest criminal conspiracy

in the history of the human race not only without getting caught, but without any of his presumably countless accomplices faltering or leaking the truth -- but his competence level apparently doesn't extend to not looking like a paralyzed dipshit for nine whole minutes at the actual moment of crisis. I'm shocked that even you can take an answer like this seriously.

Incidentally, "The people who support the official story are conspiracy theorists too!" has got to be the most tired and boring movement truism since "It's a child, not a choice." Always amazed to see Truthers still cheering its cleverness after hearing it for the 500th or 600th time. But feel free to keep using it, I guess.

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**Griffin responds August 24, 2008:** I was surprised by the length and nature of your response. When the interview was being set up, I was told by AlterNet editor Jan Frel that, after I gave my answers to the questions, "Taibbi has indicated he might ask you a few followup questions." That did not lead me to expect, some months later, an almost 6,000-word essay. I have, in any case, replied to your new comments as briefly as possible. But because it takes longer to answer charges than to make them, my reply, unfortunately, is even longer. In your introductory comments, after calling my arguments "monstrous and offensive," you say: "the correct play here is to ignore you and your arguments entirely." But you do not ignore all of them, only some of them. How do you expect readers to avoid the suspicion that you simply ignored the ones that you knew you could not answer? In any case, the main reason you give for saying you should ignore my arguments is that my position, according to which 9/11 was an inside job, is "a distraction from the real problem."

Because you are here simply repeating a charge made by Alexander Cockburn, I will refer you to my response to him, in which I pointed out that "The Truly Distracting 9/11 Conspiracy Theory" is the government's account of 9/11, which has been used to justify the so-called war on terror, because it has distracted us from the overarching problem of our time: the threat that global climate change may bring civilization to an end. (Hopefully you do not, like Cockburn, accept the oil companies' claim that fossil fuels are causing any such threat.) Another problem with your claim that my position is a distraction is that, in making it, you seem to be presupposing, circularly, that the inside-job position is false. I say this because I suspect that if you believed this position to be true, you would consider it anything but a distraction from our real problems.

The official account of 9/11 has been used to justify a new doctrine of preemption, according to which we can attack a country without any evidence that it is ready to attack us; to launch pre-planned wars against Afghanistan and Iraq that have killed millions of people and cost hundreds of billions of dollars; to ram the (already-written) PATRIOT Act through Congress; and to justify torture, extraordinary rendition, military tribunals, spying on US citizens, an imperial presidency, and other practices that violate our Constitution. If the official account of 9/11 is false, the effort to expose this fact, in order to put an end to the policies that have been justified by this account, cannot reasonably be called a distraction from real problems. It is instead an attempt to strike at the root of most of our new problems. Your characterization of the 9/11 truth movement as a distraction, based on your assumption that the official account is not false, simply begs the question.

Insofar as you do argue against the inside-job view, you rest your case primarily on a priori arguments. The main one in your new essay is that "[no one] in power in this country would need to pull off a stunt like this in order to further its . . . imperialist agenda." No one would need to "to sway public opinion," you say, because "public opinion has, for decades, already been more or less whatever the powers that be have wanted it to be." Indeed it has been, but this is precisely because the powers that be have used various methods, including propaganda, lies, and false-flag operations, to sway public opinion. Given your view, according to which "the powers that be" have for many decades been doing what they want without worrying about public opinion, I wonder about your explanation for the fact that in 1962 the joint chiefs of staff came up with Operation Northwoods, which consisted of various "pretexts which would provide justification for US military intervention in Cuba," some of which would have involved killing Americans and then blaming Cubans. One of these was a "Remember the Maine" incident: "We could blow up a U.S. ship in Guantanamo Bay and blame Cuba."

Likewise, how do you explain the fact that when the powers that be wanted to attack North Vietnam, they engineered the Tonkin Gulf hoax? Why didn't they just tell the American people, "Look, we want to control Vietnam, so we are going to attack North Vietnam, even though this will likely cost over 50,000 American lives"? And if the Bush-Cheney administration in particular just does what it wants without bothering to marshal public opinion, why did it, before it attacked Iraq, fabricate lies about weapons of mass destruction and ties between Saddam and al-Qaeda? And why did it work to convince the public that Iraq was behind the anthrax scare when it knew otherwise? Given the fact that your a priori argument for why the government would not have orchestrated 9/11 has no historical support, your excuse for ignoring the empirical evidence for the inside-job view collapses. Having shown this, I turn now to your retorts to my responses.

Answer to follow-up question 1. I was surprised that you spent so much time arguing that my made-up story is "fantastic." Is it not obvious that it was intended to be? Its sole purpose was to demonstrate the absurdity of your claim that, to disprove a criminal charge, it would be insufficient to prove that one could not have committed the crime; one would also have to provide a "concrete theory of what happened, who ordered what and when they ordered it, and why." And, given your characterization of the judge as a "real jerk" -- because, after being given scientific proof that you could not have committed the crime, he "refuses to dismiss the charges still, again grumpily insisting on proof of the alternative theory of the crime" -- I take it that you have conceded the point. However, rather than simply conceding, you use the story's reference to attorneys to go on the attack. Pointing out that defense attorneys are typically less concerned to discover the truth than simply "to annihilate the prosecutor's arguments piece by piece," you accuse me of taking the same approach -- of engaging in "the opposite of investigation, the opposite of a sincere quest for truth."

But you provide no evidence to support this charge, even though I had published six books about 9/11 from which you surely, if your charge were true, could have found many illustrations. You ignore, moreover, the fact that this is precisely the charge that I have leveled, at great length and with multiple examples, against the 9/11 Commission and NIST (the National Institute of Standards and Technology), which put out the official report on the destruction of the Twin Towers. I believe that most people who read Chapters 2 and 3 of my *Debunking 9/11*

Debunking, in which I make and document this charge, will agree that the charge you have made applies to these bodies, not to me. Another problem with your charge -- that I am engaged in "the opposite of a sincere quest for truth" -- is that it implies that you are engaged in such a quest, rather than simply trying to annihilate the claims of the 9/11 truth community.

I find it difficult, however, to reconcile this self-evaluation with your practice. You evidently accept the government's account as stating, at least roughly, what really happened on 9/11. And you presumably agree that a theory is unacceptable if it is contradicted by some of the relevant facts. And yet you seem untroubled by all the facts I have pointed out that do contradict the government's account of 9/11. Indeed, you seem to take pride in ignoring such facts. As I pointed out in my answer to the first of your original questions, you have cheerfully agreed that you are "ignoring the mountains of scientific evidence proving that the Towers could not have collapsed as a result of the plane crashes alone," saying that even if such proffered evidence were sound, it would prove nothing.

In your new essay, you say that America "can't afford to be wasting its time arguing about thermite reactions and 'morphing technology.'" But if there is scientific evidence that "the Towers could not have collapsed as a result of the plane crashes [and ensuing fires] alone," and that they were instead brought down by explosives, then the government's story, supported by the 9/11 Commission and NIST, is false. If dust from Ground Zero shows signs of thermite reactions (which physicist Steven Jones has shown to be the case), this provides additional physical evidence -- on top of the evidence that steel melted and all the testimonial evidence of explosions going off in the buildings -- that explosives were used. And if the reported cell phone calls were faked by means of voice morphing, this means that there is no evidence of Arab-Muslim hijackers on the planes. I am puzzled how you can reconcile your contempt for all such evidence with your claim to being engaged in a "sincere quest for truth." While you continue to complain that I am "telephone-averse" (although I explained that I correspond frequently with experts by email, which is superior to telephone conversations by virtue of providing written statements), you seem to be evidence-averse.

In any case, turning next to what you call "the actual question," you summarize it as: "why would Bush sit there like a dunce if he knew the attacks were coming?" But this was not "the actual question" you had raised. It was, instead: "[If the Secret Service] knew about this whole thing in advance, why didn't they plan to make Bush look a little less like a paralyzed yutz." This is very different from saying that Bush himself knew, which we have no basis for saying.

What we can safely infer, given the failure of the Secret Service to whisk Bush from the school, is that at least the lead Secret Service agent -- who overruled a subordinate, who had planned to whisk Bush away -- knew who was responsible for the attacks and thereby knew that hijackers were not going to crash a plane into the school. Next, having changed the question to why, if Bush himself knew about the attacks in advance, he simply sat there, you say that my answer, apparently, is that Bush is incompetent. You then seek to show my position to be self-contradictory by saying, as if my position implied this: "Oh, he's competent enough, one guesses, to pull off the greatest and vastest criminal conspiracy in the history of the human race without getting caught." But neither I nor anyone else in the 9/11 truth community, to my knowledge, has suggested that Bush planned the 9/11 attacks. Dick Cheney, who was formerly the secretary of

defense, yes, but not Bush himself. Instead of changing the question so that you could attack a straw-man position, I wish you had responded to my suggestion that "you should be concerned about why, if the attacks were a surprise, the Secret Service left Bush at the school." But perhaps you are content with what seems to be your answer to all such problems: They just screwed up.

And yet, although this screw-up could have cost the president his life -- because if the planes had really been under the control of al-Qaeda pilots, one of them might have been bearing down on the school at the very moment the Secret Service should have been whisking Bush away -- no one, evidently, was fired. I would think this might give you pause. In any case, before moving on to the next question, you say, in response to my comment that people who support the official story are also conspiracy theorists, that this is a "tired and boring movement truism," which you have heard 500 times. I made the comment, however, because you were using the term as if it applied only to people who affirm the alternative conspiracy theory. You said, for example: "9/11 conspiracy is so shamefully stupid."

I would agree with that judgment, of course, if you meant the original 9/11 conspiracy theory. But you clearly meant only the alternative theory, according to which 9/11 was an inside job. So I could only assume that you had never heard anyone point out that the official theory is itself a conspiracy theory. The failure to acknowledge this point is virtually universal among critics of the alternative conspiracy theory. For example, New York Times journalist Jim Dwyer wrote an article entitled "2 U.S. Reports Seek to Counter Conspiracy Theories About 9/11." Although a more accurate title would have been, "2 U.S. Reports Say Government's Conspiracy Theory Is Better than Alternative Conspiracy Theories," you would look in vain for a story in the Times, or any other mainstream publication, with such a title. Likewise, a Popular Mechanics book defending the government's conspiracy theory is subtitled: Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts. Why is this one-sided use of the term so prevalent? Paul Krugman recently wrote:

"[M]any of the people who throw around terms like 'loopy conspiracy theories' are lazy bullies who [as one observer put it] want to 'confer instant illegitimacy on any argument with which they disagree.' Instead of facing up to hard questions, they try to suggest that anyone who asks those questions is crazy."

We in the 9/11 truth community will cease pointing out that the official theory is a conspiracy theory when defenders of the official story begin treating this fact like what you rightly say it is, a truism, rather than continuing to use "conspiracy theory" in a one-sided way to exploit the negative connotations the term has accrued -- as you yourself continue to do.

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**2. Matt Taibbi:** I figured this would be your answer -- that the high-level people in both agencies could have been in on it, while the lower-level people were not. On the surface, I suppose that makes sense. Except that the complicity of scores of lower-level government employees from agencies throughout the federal apparatus would have been necessary to cover up the crime. Who was cleaning up the "non-plane" plane parts at the Pentagon? I'm assuming it wasn't Richard Myers. Who cleaned up the "phony" crash site in Pennsylvania, hid the bomb "evidence" in the rubble at the Trade Center? I'm assuming it wasn't Dick Cheney and Rudy

Giuliani. But whatever, I'm not going to dwell on this one. Your subsequent answers were much more interesting.

**David Ray Griffin responds:** Yes, many more people were certainly complicit in the cover-up than in the operation itself, as in most such operations.

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**3. Matt Taibbi:** Again, your answer here to the question of why a plotter would go blabbing his secrets on TV is basically well, er, maybe he wasn't that smart. Which is basically no answer at all. Make no mistake about it -- if Rudy Giuliani knew ahead of time that hundreds of New York firefighters were about to be murdered via bombs planted in the World Trade Center, there is no fucking way in hell he is going to start blabbing on television about the buildings coming down.

Nobody is that stupid -- and especially not a man who, whatever you might think of him as a politician or as a person, has been one of the most accomplished criminal prosecutors of his time.

But an even larger point here isn't that you believe that Rudy Giuliani is that stupid; it's that you believe he is that evil. No one in the press, and I mean no one, has been harsher critic of Rudy Giuliani than me (well, okay, Wayne Barrett of the Village Voice has. But no one else). I believe Rudy to be almost limitlessly greedy and power-hungry, a man who will say and do almost anything to get elected. But here's the thing. Regardless of what I think of his politics, I also believe that Rudy Giuliani believes that he is a patriotic, decent, law-abiding citizen.

And he's able to believe that because he does, in fact, have a record of sorts. Rudy has put away dangerous mobsters, broken extortion rings, uncovered government corruption, and wiped out an insider-trading network, taking on the likes of the Gambinos and the Boesky-Milken axis. I don't like what he's become, sure, and he certainly hasn't been shy about grandstanding over his achievements -- but he does have real, civically-valuable achievements. Bigger achievements than you or I have on our records, by far, as embarrassing as that is to admit.

And this is what makes it so crazy that you're so willing to believe that Rudy Giuliani was complicit in the murder of hundreds, if not thousands, of people, including team after team of New York city firemen. You don't have any evidence at all; you're just a telephone-averse academic in the California suburbs indicting people left and right on the basis of what? Of nothing at all. One ambiguous statement in the media. Even worse, when pressed, you come up with a real whopper -- that Rudy okayed the wanton murder of thousands of Americans in order to save the money his city would have had to pay out for asbestos removal!

Are you fucking kidding me? I'd harp on the fact that this doesn't even make sense (he murders New Yorkers in order to save them money? Not his personal money, but their -- our -- public money?), except that the obscenity of this accusation so totally outweighs its lack of sense.

And also, by the way, you might have picked up the telephone here, too. It took me five minutes to blow up that particular assertion, just by calling the New York City comptroller's office and asking the very obvious question of how much the city stood to gain financially by having its entire downtown district covered in toxic dust and incurring millions of dollars in overtime for its emergency personnel for the better part of three months.

According to that office, they spent \$365 million extra in overtime costs in FY 2002 alone. They estimated the total cleanup costs -- from the initial year or so of cleanup -- at about \$659 million. "We lost about \$2 billion in taxes in 2002 and about \$928 billion in 2003 alone," a spokesman for the comptroller's office told me when I called. When I mentioned that someone had a theory that the WTC was blown up to get New York out of an asbestos cleanup, the guy laughed. "Yeah, that makes sense," he says. "This way we had to clean it up anyway. Except it was spread all the way up to Canal Street now, on mountains of rubble and dead bodies."

If Rudy Giuliani green-lighted the 9/11 attacks in order to save the city money, he sure picked a bizarre strategy -- gutting his tax base, straining his services appropriations to the breaking point, and physically destroying some of his city's most valuable infrastructure. Doing all that to avoid a mandated asbestos cleanup makes about as much sense as hijacking a plane full of passengers, secretly disposing of them somewhere, and then faking its crash into the Pentagon while actually launching a missile, all in order to avoid an audit of the Department of Defense. I mean really, where do you get these ideas? Are you completely insane?

As for the charge that Rudy maybe did this to launch a run for president again, this would be laughable if it weren't so disgusting. You don't appear cowed at all by the act of accusing another man of murder, be it Rudy Giuliani, Richard Myers, Ted Olson, or whomever. In the real world, i.e. in the world where we can't publish things unless they're true, we don't make such accusations unless we have very compelling evidence. Not only do we not want to get sued, we actually don't want to be wrong. Because, you know, it's a little bit monstrous to call someone a murderer without proof. This is an intellectual flaw on your part, a rhetorical flaw, but more than that it's a moral flaw. And it pervades a great deal of your work.

**David Ray Griffin responds:** With regard to Rudy Giuliani, you have evidently given up your claim that it was "absolutely impossible" that he had foreknowledge. But you again state that Giuliani "blabbed" on television, although I had explained that this term is misleading because he "merely said something that was recognized to imply foreknowledge by the few people who knew the relevant facts." You believe, however, that he would not even have done this. "Nobody is that stupid -- and especially not a man who has been one of the most accomplished criminal prosecutors of his time."

I would think that a moment's reflection on the names "Elliott Spitzer" and "John Edwards" might cause you to reconsider that claim. (Edwards was not a criminal prosecutor, but a plaintiff's attorney, but I assume your point was about accomplished trial lawyers in general, that they would all be too smart to do something really stupid.) In any case, your main claim is that Giuliani would not have been complicit in the murder of thousands of people because "he is [not] that evil." Your faith in him is touching. But it is no different from the faith of Germans that their leaders could not have possibly been running death camps, or the faith of Japanese that their soldiers could not be butchering hundreds of thousands of Chinese in Manchuria on the basis of a false-flag operation (the Mukden Incident). The question must be settled on the basis of evidence, not faith. On this issue, you say to me: "You don't have any evidence at all."

Since you have evidently made this statement without reading any of the evidence I have presented (in, say, *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*), let me summarize a few points. First, the conclusion that the Twin Towers and Building 7 were brought down by explosives is now beyond reasonable doubt. Besides the fact that total collapse has never been induced in steel-frame high-rise buildings from any cause other than pre-placed explosives in the process known as controlled demolition, there are at least a dozen features of the collapses that can be explained, and only explained, on the supposition that such explosives were used (such as the fact that the buildings came straight down and at virtually free-fall speed; that there were horizontal ejections over 500 feet of steel columns weighing thousands of tons; that steel was melted and even oxidized, processes that required temperatures far greater than the fires could have been; that hundreds of witnesses, including firefighters, police officers, reporters, and WTC employees, reported massive explosions going off in the Twin Towers long after all the jet fuel would have burned up; and that several people, including two city officials who were in the building, reported explosions in WTC 7 [as I discuss in my new book, *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*]).

This conclusion is now publicly endorsed by many hundreds of professionals in the relevant disciplines, including physicists, chemists, architects, engineers, pilots, intelligence officers, and philosophers of science (see *Patriots Question 9/11*). The second point is that, if explosives had not been planted in the buildings, there would have been no basis for expecting them to collapse, and yet it was known in advance that the Twin Towers and WTC 7 were going to come down. That is relevant to the present point because in both cases the message that the buildings were coming down can be traced back to Giuliani's Office of Emergency Management -- as I document in both of the aforementioned books. Next, in seeking a *reductio ad absurdum*, you characterize me as holding that "Rudy okayed the wanton murder of thousands of Americans in order save the money his city would have had to pay out for asbestos removal!"

But this is like McCain's claim that Obama's energy program consisted of recommending that Americans inflate their tires. Obama made this recommendation when, after he had laid out what an Obama administration would do, a member of the audience asked what ordinary citizens could do. Likewise, I made the point about asbestos after you said that any reason Giuliani might have had for participating in the conspiracy would have been "some completely insane reason." I see now that, in order to avoid being McCained, I should have made a more complete statement of his possible motives. First, as I already mentioned, he could have expected that, by being ready to appear to act heroically that day, he could exploit this image to become president -- a strategy that almost worked, as he was leading in the polls when the contest for the Republican nomination began. Second, he as a Republican and a patriot likely supported the Bush-Cheney drive to use 9/11 as a pretext to gain control of the lion's share of the world's oil reserves in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Like you, I believe Giuliani sees himself as a patriot and, given our competitive world order, patriots often regard it as their duty to work for the good of their own countries, even when this means sacrificing thousands of their own citizens and also devastating other countries. The Italian statesman Camillo Cavour once said: "If we did for ourselves what we do for our country, what scoundrels we would be." Third, the dramatic footage of the Twin Towers being hit by "hijacked airliners," then exploding at the top, with dust clouds that reminded people of a nuclear explosion, then suffering total collapse, killing thousands of people, was an essential part of the

psy-war directed at the American people that day, getting them ready to give carte blanche to a war on Islamic nations packaged as a "war on terror." You claim that the first of these possible motives -- that Giuliani's perceived heroism on 9/11 might help him become president -- is "laughable."

What is really laughable, however, is your statement, "In the real world, we can't publish things unless they're true." That is so obviously false that I will not bother to elaborate. I do agree, however, with your statement that "we don't [i.e., we shouldn't] make such accusations unless we have very compelling evidence." But I do believe that the 9/11 truth community has compiled and published compelling evidence that 9/11 was an inside job and that Giuliani was one of the insiders. You have certainly done nothing to undermine this belief. I would challenge you, in fact, to provide anything close to comparable evidence for the government's conspiracy theory. Popular Mechanics tried this and, as I showed in Chapter 4 of *Debunking 9/11*, failed miserably. It would be interesting to see if you could do better. But thus far you have acted like the defense attorneys you describe, simply trying to annihilate the 9/11 truth community's arguments while ignoring all the problems in the government's theory.

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**4. Matt Taibbi:** Okay, again, this is defense-lawyer thinking at its best. In a murder case usually two eyewitnesses make for a slam-dunk, but you're dismissive of 152 witnesses for a variety of hilarious reasons. A side note: the supposition that an eyewitness is not to be trusted because he works for the mainstream media I find especially funny -- as if a TV reporter, or for instance someone like me, who saw a missile hitting the Pentagon would keep such a sensational fact secret to protect the conspiracy! This from a person ready to toss out every single account of a cell phone call from a hijacked plane on the basis of a Washington Post story about "morphing technology." In fact, exactly how much of your theories would even be left, if you took out the information you got from "mainstream news reports"? And yet mainstream news reporters can't be counted on to tell the truth about seeing an airplane fly into the Pentagon. Hilarious!

Moreover, your only counter-supposition to the hijacked-airplane story is that, well, who knows, maybe it was a remote-controlled plane that hit the Pentagon. But of course! Again the same pattern: extraordinary diligence in attacking links in the "official story" chain, similarly extraordinary indifference to the issue of what actually happened, what actually happened being irrelevant to your enterprise.

I specifically asked you to tell me what your theory was, if it wasn't Hani Hanjour piloting a plane into the Pentagon, and you specifically avoided answering the question, instead retreating once again to the same old long-winded conspiratorial oatmeal about how bad a pilot he was, how he couldn't have pulled it off, yada yada yada.

But here's the thing: if it was not Hani Hanjour flying that plane, it follows that something truly fantastic happened, a confluence of several absurdly unlikely sets of circumstances.

Now, maybe this is just me, but there is nothing at all unbelievable about a radical Sunni terrorist committing an act of suicidal terrorism with American citizens as the target.

But I need to see some actual evidence before I'll buy the U.S. Air Force a) shooting a missile or a remote-controlled drone into the Pentagon, intentionally refusing to warn other military personnel, while also b) somehow effecting the magical disappearance/execution of a whole planeload of genuinely missing civilian jet passengers and c) coaxing all the on-the-ground personnel in the Pentagon, who've just suffered a deadly attack at the conspirators' hands, to go along with the cover-up of the missile/drone wreckage, and d) cleverly arranging false witness testimony from (at minimum) 152 willing confederates, or however many non "mainstream media members" you're willing to admit. Among other silly things.

You're talking about an unbelievably complicated narrative laced up and down with spy-novel sensationalisms that would have made Ian Fleming blush: secret kidnappings of jet passengers, super-advanced remote-controlled aircraft, branches of the military attacking each other in secret, a media deception of unprecedented scope, "morphing technology" effecting astonishingly effective fake phone calls and for what, exactly? This part makes the least sense of all.

We know why al-Qaeda would want to attack the Pentagon. But why your conspirators would want to fake a plane hijacking/crash and then shoot a missile or a drone into the Pentagon -- unless they're just murderous lunatics acting in unprecedentedly harmonious psychotic concert, not folie a deux even but folie a deux cent -- this is beyond the ability of even a person such as yourself to come up with even a distantly plausible explanation.

The best thing you can come up with is this idiotic remote-controlled jet theory, and the most generous thing one can say about that is that it takes perhaps five or ten seconds longer than some of your other ideas to inspire uncontrollable laughter -- specifically, until one gets to the part where one imagines a planeload of passengers, copies of The Wall Street Journal in hand, cheerfully stepping aboard a plane with no flight personnel and smiling all the way through the vessel's eerie Dracula-ship takeoff to oblivion.

I don't know, it's just me -- but if I had doubts about it having been a plane that hit the Pentagon, I'd be re-interviewing those witnesses that said they saw one. That you haven't done this tells me an awful lot about your motives. Do you just not want to hear it, or are you more comfortable with internet links, who don't talk back?

**David Ray Griffin responds:** With regard to the number of witnesses who reported seeing an airliner strike the Pentagon, I am glad you reduced your claim down from "thousands" to merely 152. But that is still much too high. The list to which I referred, which was compiled by Eric Bart, contains 152 people who were regarded as "witnesses" in some sense or another to what happened at the Pentagon. But in a statement that you simply ignored, I pointed out that "only some of them claim to have seen an airliner hit the Pentagon." Some of the other people gave quite different reports, with six of them speaking of a small or mid-sized aircraft, perhaps a commuter jet or even a missile.

Still others believed that the damage had been caused by one or more bombs. Only 66 of the 152 claimed to have seen an airliner headed toward the Pentagon, and only 31 of those claimed to have observed this airliner actually strike the Pentagon. An examination of those 31, moreover,

raises doubts about their authenticity. In pointing to the causes for such doubts, I quoted Jerry Russell's summary statement that 24 of these "worked for either the Federal Government or the mainstream media," which led you to say that eyewitnesses should not be mistrusted simply because they work for the mainstream media. That is true, because there are other criteria that must be used when deciding whether to accept testimony of such people.

One such criterion involves a principle commonly used by historians in evaluating conflicting testimonies of people who belong to some movement or institution. Let's say that two strong supporters of John McCain's bid for the presidency give different accounts of some event in his life. One account makes him seem noble and heroic, the other account reflects poorly on him. All other things being equal, we would give more credence to the critical account, because such an account from a McCain supporter would be surprising, suggesting that party spirit has been trumped by honesty. Another commonly used criterion is that we should be suspicious of testimony of a member of some organization when that testimony supports that organization's official position but is contradicted by physical evidence.

Applying these principles to the testimony of reporters for the corporate press, which has been completely supportive of the official account of 9/11, we would be suspicious of statements that support this account whenever such statements conflict with testimony from other mainstream reporters and/or the relevant physical evidence. An example of conflict with physical evidence is provided by the testimony of Steve Anderson of USA Today, who said that he watched as a plane "banked slightly to the left, drug its wing along the ground and slammed into the west wall of the Pentagon." Given the fact that photographs of the Pentagon lawn immediately after that attack showed so sign of the enormous scar that would have been caused by a wing dragging along the ground, Anderson's testimony must be considered untrustworthy. For conflict between various reporters within the mainstream media, we can take the seven reporters in Eric Bart's list who claimed to have seen an airliner hit the Pentagon. I should not, incidentally, have simply used Russell's summary statement, which refers to them as working for the "mainstream media."

I should have been more specific, to wit: five of these seven worked for Gannett (primarily USA Today), and another for the Armed Forces Information Service. In any case, what these reporters said is at odds with what other reporters have said. For example, CNN's Jamie McIntyre, having inspected the area near the strike zone shortly after the attack, said that all he saw were "very small pieces of the plane , small enough that you can pick up in your hand. There are no large tail sections, wing sections, fuselage, nothing like that anywhere around." The conflict becomes even stronger when we combine McIntyre's observation, which dealt with the area outside the building, with that of ABC's John McWethy, whom I quoted before about what he observed inside the building, namely: "I got in very close, got a look early on at the bad stuff. I could not, however, see any plane wreckage."

If an airliner really hit the Pentagon, why did these reporters find no evidence of a crashed airliner either inside or outside? As you can see, it is not simply a matter of accepting or rejecting testimony from the mainstream press. One has to choose which testimonies to accept. According to the criterion discussed above, testimonies that are in tension with the story endorsed by the corporate press have greater credibility (all other things being equal) than those that support this story. The same principle can be applied with regard to Pentagon personnel. They provided nine

of the most graphic accounts of an airliner hitting the Pentagon. But other Pentagon personnel gave testimonies suggesting that nothing of that nature occurred. Having quoted Army officer April Gallop before, I will here quote some other witnesses. Dean Eckmann, who flew an Air Force F-16 over the Pentagon after it was damaged, said he suspected that the damage had been caused by "a big fuel tanker truck because of the amount of smoke and flames coming up and . . . there was no airplane wreckage off to the side." Sgt. Reginald Powell said: "I was . . . impressed with how the building stood up, after they told me the size of the plane. And then I was in awe that I saw no plane, nothing left from the plane.

It was like it disintegrated as it went into the building." Karen Kwiatkowski, an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, spoke of "a dearth of visible debris on the lawn, where I stood only minutes after the impact." Registered Nurse Eileen Murphy said: "I expected to see the airplane, so I guess my initial impression was, 'Where's the plane? How come there's not a plane? I would have thought we would have seen something like part of, or half of the plane, or the lower part, or the back of the plane. So it was just a real surprise that the plane wasn't there." Research analyst Will Jarvis, having hoped to see the plane, said: "There was just nothing left. It was incinerated. We couldn't see a tail or a wing or anything." When you add these testimonies to those of fire captains Dennis Gilroy and John Durrer, which I quoted before, you can see that the testimony that an airliner hit the building is in strong tension with testimony from many people who were at the Pentagon. And, again, the set of testimonies that goes against the Pentagon's official story must be accorded greater credibility.

In explaining grounds for doubting the testimonies that an airliner hit the Pentagon, I also quoted Russell's point that many of these testimonies contain "substantial errors or contradictions." Since that summary statement did not impress you, I will give some examples. In addition to USA Today's Steve Anderson, quoted earlier, three other people claiming to have seen a plane hitting the Pentagon said that it hit the ground first. Mary Ann Owens, who like Anderson worked for Gannett, said "the left wing dipped and scraped the helicopter area." David Marra reportedly said that after the wing touched the helicopter pad, the plane "cartwheeled" into the Pentagon. Self-described pilot Tim Timmerman, who told CNN that the Pentagon was hit by an American Airlines Boeing 757, "no question," said that "it hit right in front of the building; most of the energy was dissipated in hitting the ground."

All of these testimonies, besides being disproved by the available photographic evidence, are contrary to the official story. Other sets of testimonies are discredited by being mutually contradictory. For example, two people said they could see in the windows of the plane, whereas others said the plane was dark, perhaps because the blinds were pulled down. Also, Major Lincoln Leibner, saying that the plane "completely entered the building," added: "The plane went into the building like a toy into a birthday cake." USA Today reporter Narayanan Vin, by contrast, said: "The hijacked jet slammed into the Pentagon at a ferocious speed. But the Pentagon's wall held up like a champ. It barely budged."

As such problems in many of the testimonies show, the question of what damaged the Pentagon cannot be responsibly settled by cherry-picking a few testimonies. We must weigh the testimony that supports the official story against that which does not. We must also evaluate this testimony in relation to physical facts, including these: (a) photographs showing the absence of a plane and

the absence of the kind of damage that would be expected from a Boeing 757 going several hundred miles per hour; (b) the failure of the alleged crash of Flight 77 into the Pentagon to create a seismic signal strong enough to register on any nearby seismograph; and (c) the failure of Pentagon officials to produce any of the physical evidence that, if Flight 77 had hit the Pentagon, would have proved this: the flight data recorder; any of the other airplane parts with unique serial numbers; and the 85 videos, admittedly possessed by the Department of Justice, from cameras trained on the Pentagon. In sum: Weighed against contrary testimony and the relevant physical evidence, the evidence provided for the airliner theory by alleged eyewitness testimonies is very weak, especially given the problems inherent in the testimonies and the affiliations of many of the witnesses.

I turn now to another of your lines of attack, in which you say that I am "ready to toss out every single account of a cell phone call from a hijacked plane on the basis of a Washington Post story about "morphing technology." However, if you would read my accounts, you would see that this is no more accurate than McCain's reduction of Obama's energy program to his recommendation to inflate our tires. Other elements in my argument are: (1) Cell phone calls from high-altitude airliners were technologically impossible in 2001, yet many people received calls that they believed to be from cell phones, either because they were told this or because they recognized their spouse's cell phone number on their Caller ID. (2) After the impossibility of such cell phones calls became widely known, the FBI simply changed the story, saying that all those reported cell phone calls -- except two that occurred when Flight 93 was down to 5,000 feet -- were really made from passenger-seat phones. (3) In some cases, the FBI's new story involved rejecting the statements made in FBI documents, such as affidavits, from 9/11 itself. (4) Some of the calls contained internal evidence of not being authentic. The possibility of voice morphing is not the reason for rejecting the calls; it is a way to explain the reported calls, given the fact that high-altitude cell phone calls could not have been made -- a fact with which the FBI evidently came to agree.

In still another line of attack, you say: "[Y]our only counter-supposition to the hijacked-airplane story is that, well, who knows, maybe it was a remote-controlled plane that hit the Pentagon." But my reference to the possibility of remote control was made after I had spent some paragraphs explaining why I did not think that the Pentagon had been hit by an airliner of any sort, whether remote-controlled or not, adding that I had laid out such evidence more fully in Debunking 9/11 Debunking. In concluding this line of thought, which was directed against your claim to know that someone had piloted a plane into the Pentagon, I added: "Even if an airliner had hit the Pentagon, moreover, it might have been controlled remotely." For you to say that this is my "only counter-supposition to the hijacked-airplane story" is no different from McCain's saying that Obama's only solution to the energy problem is to encourage people to inflate their tires. Continuing to caricature what you call my "idiotic remote-controlled jet theory," you say you were sent into uncontrollable laughter by my scenario, which involves a "planeload of passengers, copies of The Wall Street Journal in hand, cheerfully stepping aboard a plane with no flight personnel and smiling all the way through the vessel's eerie Dracula-ship takeoff to oblivion."

That would indeed be a hilarious suggestion if anyone had made it. Those who believe that the planes were remotely controlled, however, have suggested either a switch, as proposed in

Operation Northwoods, in which the plane containing crew and passengers was to be replaced with a remotely controlled drone, or else a technological override, in which the power to steer the airliner was taken out of the pilot's hands. With regard to Hani Hanjour, you continue to insist that, if I think he didn't pilot Flight 77 into the Pentagon, I must tell you what really happened. But you had seemingly accepted my point that, to disprove the government's theory, I need not provide a full-fledged alternative theory: It's sufficient to show that the government's theory cannot be true, and clearly Hani Hanjour could not have flown Flight 77 into the Pentagon. You say that "there is nothing at all unbelievable about a radical Sunni terrorist committing an act of suicidal terrorism with American citizens as the target." But that is to divert attention from the issue at hand, which is that there is something very unbelievable about a man who could not safely fly a tiny single-engine plane piloting a Boeing 757 into the Pentagon, especially given the trajectory it reportedly took in order to strike Wedge 1 at ground level.

You complain that I retreat into "long-winded conspiratorial oatmeal about how bad a pilot he was, how he couldn't have pulled it off, yada yada yada." Why call this "conspiratorial oatmeal," as if it were something the 9/11 truth community made up? It was your trusted mainstream press that pointed out Hanjour's incompetence, with the New York Times, in an article called "A Trainee Noted for Incompetence," quoting one of his instructors as saying that Hanjour "could not fly at all." And the report that shortly before 9/11, a flight instructor "declined a second request [from Hanjour for a lesson] because of what he considered Hanjour's poor piloting skills," was made by the 9/11 Commission. Why don't you, instead of continuing to use the term "conspiracy" in a one-sided way, complain about the government's "conspiratorial oatmeal" about Hanjour's flying a giant airliner like an ace? I am truly puzzled about your attitude towards impossibilities. Just as you dismiss scientific evidence that the official story of the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings is physically impossible, you dismiss evidence that the official story about Flight 77 being flown into the Pentagon by Hani Hanjour was impossible. You seem to be an extreme fideist when it comes to official story about the 9/11, saying, in effect: "So what if it's impossible? I believe it anyway."

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**5. Matt Taibbi:** I was greatly saddened when I read this answer, because it forced me to rewrite the entire first chapter of my next book, *The 10 Most Retarded Things I Have Read This Year*. The notion that Pentagon officials blew up a section of their building, and then crashed something (a missile, a drone, whatever) into that same section of the Pentagon in order to hide evidence of financial malfeasance, and kill the relevant auditors, is so mind-bogglingly stupid that it almost belies comment.

In exactly what form do you think this "evidence" was kept? Do you think it was hammered into granite slabs and mounted, hieroglyph-style, on the building's walls? Why else would it be necessary to blow the area up? It should be noted that even U.S. Senators have for decades failed in their attempts to extract meaningful financial data from the Department of Defense, which has failed to comply with the Chief Financial Officer's Act since at least 1990 and is, in the words of former Senate aide and defense budget analyst Winslow Wheeler, "unauditable."

Despite its appalling accounting practices the DOD has never come close to changing its ways, mainly because there is absolutely nothing like political momentum in congress for starting an investigation into its spending habits. In fact, in the years after Rumsfeld's "shocking"

announcement, a succession of both Republican and Democratic congresses were so horrified by the bad accounting that they increased defense spending every year by an average of \$50 billion dollars a year!

The closest thing to a "threat" to the DOD's spending habits that it has experienced in recent years was a call by Dennis Kucinich for an investigation into the unaccounted-for defense funds. A call that was, like almost everything else Dennis Kucinich has asked for, completely ignored. You really think John Murtha's Democrats are going to start demanding an investigation into Pentagon spending? Or Ted Stevens's Republicans? There will never, ever be a serious movement to pry those books open -- and there certainly wasn't even a hint of one on the horizon back in 2001. You might have noticed that Democrats have since taken over both houses of congress, and there hasn't been so much as a whiff of interest in investigating defense spending. So exactly whom were they hiding the evidence from? Exactly whose easy access to Pentagon records did they fear? Yours? Or did your thinking not even go that far?

So the notion that Don Rumsfeld would a) announce a major accounting problem and then b) blow up a section of his own building the next day, murdering over a hundred people, in order to save the bureaucratically impregnable Department of Defense from the investigative ravages of Dennis Kucinich, or someone like him -- that is high, high comedy. I defy you to call any budget analyst in Washington, lay that theory on him, and not have your ears laughed off on the telephone. Oh, I forgot, you don't make phone calls.

Beyond that, even I mean, come on! Even if you wanted to kill someone possessing dangerous information, even if you wanted to hide evidence, do you honestly think the best way to accomplish this would be to fake an elaborate terrorist attack that would focus the eyes of the entire world on the "attack site," aiming a missile or a drone or, let's say, a passenger jet liner, at the office in question? Subtle! Now there's a plan with a very high probability of success! "I know -- we'll herd a bunch of innocent civilian passengers onto a remote-controlled plane, a flight which we've cleverly appropriated from American airlines, and crash it into the very spot in the Pentagon where we'll be exploding bombs at the moment of impact! And everyone will buy it because, as it happens, we'll also be conspiring to blow up the World Trade Center and blame it on Saudi religious radicals in order to advance an imperialist agenda that involves invading the secular dictatorship of Iraq in response!"

It's all so simple! Why didn't I think of that?

Don't you ever wonder about the curious coincidence of criminal interests extant in your muddled thinking? Department of Defense embezzlers just happening to develop a sudden need to commit mass murder to cover up financial malfeasance at the very moment when Rudy Giuliani decides he's on board with leveling the World Trade Center, in order to save New York from having to pay for an expensive asbestos cleanup -- right at the time Dick Cheney and George Bush happened to be plotting to seize Iraq's oil reserves using a violent "false flag" attack involving the murder of untold thousands of Americans? How fortunate that these criminally needy bodies found each other at just the same moment. And I thought Strangers on a Train was unrealistic.

Come on, you can't possibly believe this bullshit! Even the phrasing of your answer -- "that does not mean that a plausible theory cannot be provided" -- betrays the near-total absence of interest on your part in getting your theories to make any kind of sense. The "theory" you provide isn't even your own, just something you scared up while digging through the steadily-expanding mega-landfill of Truther lore -- and recently, it seems to me, perhaps even in response to my questions. This is the very definition of half-assed thinking, half-assed research.

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### PART THREE

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[Ed. Taibbi is finishing his case here.]

As for the rest of these questions, I apologize to readers, but I'm just not going to bother. It's hopeless. Mr. Griffin is weaving a market niche for himself based upon a reality that every prosecutor and investigator in the world recognizes as unavoidable -- that in any reconstruction of events, there will always be discrepancies in witness statements. History is always an approximation, and in Mr. Griffin's case, he's tangling with the most unreliable of approximations; a politically-charged government report.

In a disaster as epic in scale as 9/11, officials at every level of government are going to be motivated to lie in order to cover their asses. They are going to say they were at their desks when they were not there; they're going to say they tried to make it to the scene as fast as they can when they actually sat on their thumbs and took their time. The same way that Soviet generals reported no failure of their air defenses on the day that 16 year-old Matthias Rust landed a Cessna in Red Square after limping through thousands of miles of heavily-armed Red airspace, our government is, of course, going to lie about how badly it fucked up on 9/11. This is not exactly big news.

But Mr. Griffin makes it big news. He refuses to accept government witness versions of events when it suits him, but when it suits him to accept them as gospel -- for instance, when discussing the reported takeoff times of the fighter planes departing Cape Cod on the morning of 9/11, or the pilot statements that the planes were traveling "full blower," well, in those cases he doesn't quibble.

My point about Griffin's napkin-scrawling math is that a sane person finds it much easier to reconcile the failure of fighter planes to arrive on scene a few minutes earlier -- perhaps they were only 90% of "full-blower," perhaps the planes took off a few minutes later, perhaps some witnesses are in error, perhaps every testifying member of our air defense network had bits of ass that needed covering -- than he does to assume the presence of a massive conspiracy to prevent the planes from arriving on time. So the numbers don't add up. So what? That just means the numbers are wrong, somewhere down the line, for some reason. Who cares?

That's particularly true when coupled with the damning fact that there is no actual evidence of such an order; Griffin is deducing the existence of a conspiracy based upon his idea of what happened in the gaps. In conspiracy theory, the real incontrovertible evidence is always over the bend somewhere -- hidden under the rubble, or lost in the missing minutes. This is the historical

version of bite marks in the carrot that prove the Easter Bunny was in the house last night. Personally, I'm waiting for photos of the actual rabbit.

When I called defense analysts about the speed of the fighter planes involved, including people from Jane's Defense Weekly, I was told that nobody could authoritatively say exactly how fast, to the minute, those planes should have arrived. I'm sure one could make a guess, but that's all it would be, a guess. But David Ray Griffin, a desk-bound religion professor in California, deduces a vast conspiracy based upon his exact calculations of the speed of fighter planes? Why is that not every bit as silly as an Air Force Colonel harping about some hippie professor's doctoral thesis on Norse deities?

In the end it all comes down to what you believe. If you believe that events in life tend to have simple explanations, then you're not going to be very impressed by Griffin's arguments. If on the other hand you think that the people running this country spend their days plotting to create phantom civilian jet-liner flights, disappearing whole fuselages full of passengers, and then shooting missiles into the Pentagon in broad daylight in order to cover up embezzlement schemes if you think, in other words, that our government is run by the same people who cook up second-rate French spy movies or your mind instantly produces the word "crossbow" when asked to produce A MURDER WEAPON by a Mad Libs script well, then, you're probably going to enjoy Griffin's books.

Me, I don't know. I met with a U.S. Senator a few weeks back who told me about hundreds of millions of dollars in spare parts that the Air Force already has marked for disposal -- despite the fact that they haven't even been built yet. They're on order, you're paying for them, and yet they're going to throw them away as soon as they're ready. That's happening right out in the open. No one in the Pentagon is hiding it. They're not planning to shoot a missile at those invoices. Because they don't have to.

And why? Well, if you're a David Ray Griffin fan, it's because you're worrying about this bullshit instead. So if this kind of stuff impresses you, mazel tov. I'm sure our government is happy that you have a hobby.

p.s. Professor: as long as you decided to be a pedantic jerk about my spelling of "Olson," I should point out that the Pentagon is, in fact, the world's largest office building, with 17.5 miles of corridors and three times the office space of the Empire State Building. It can have up to 30,000 employees working in it at any time. But I agree, it sure doesn't look as tall as some of those other buildings. You're right there.

**David Griffin responds:** Your fifth response illustrates most clearly your method. Although you insist that I, as an advocate of the alternative conspiracy theory, must come up with a complete theory, which can answer every conceivable question, you excuse yourself from this requirement with regard to the official conspiracy theory. With regard to the attack on the Pentagon, I have asked why al-Qaeda terrorists would have chosen to strike Wedge 1.

The reason for this question is that, given their presumed motives, this was the worst possible spot: They would have wanted to kill Rumsfeld and the top brass, but Wedge 1 was as far

removed from their offices as possible. They would have wanted to cause as much destruction as possible, but Wedge 1 was the only part of the Pentagon that had been renovated to make it less vulnerable to attack. Al-Qaeda operatives would have wanted to kill as many Pentagon employees as possible, but because the renovation was not quite complete, Wedge 1 was only sparsely occupied. And finally, given the fact that the pilots were amateurs, the planners would have had the pilot simply crash into the roof of this building, which, covering several acres, even a poor pilot might have managed; but the choice to hit Wedge 1 on the side meant that the pilot had to perform an amazing downward spiral, which expert pilots have doubted that they themselves could have performed (see statements by Ralph Kolstad, Ted Muga and Russ Wittenberg on the Patriots Question 9/11 website). Another problem with Wedge 1 was that it was the only part of the Pentagon that would have presented physical obstacles to an attacking airplane. However, you do not address any of these problems. You say: "We know why al-Qaeda would want to attack the Pentagon." The question, however, is why al-Qaeda would have attacked that particular part of the Pentagon. Rather than provide even the beginning of an answer, you divert attention away from this enormous problem in the government's conspiracy theory by going on the attack.

The theory you attack, moreover, is not even mine. Responding to your assumption that an attack by Pentagon officials on their own building would have been pointless, I said: "I myself don't offer theories about what the point was, but this does not mean that a plausible theory cannot be provided." I then, as an example, mentioned the motive that has been suggested by Barbara Honegger (among others).

In response, even though you later acknowledged that this is not my own theory, you wrote: "In exactly what form do you think this 'evidence' was kept? Do you think it was hammered into granite slabs and mounted, hieroglyph-style, on the building's walls?" However, besides treating the theory as mine, this question ignores the statement by Honegger that I had quoted, namely: "Were the auditors who could 'follow the money,' and the computers whose data could help them do it, intentionally targeted?" Not being the idiot you assume all members of the 9/11 truth movement to be, she knows the information would have been in the people and the computers, not in the walls. As to whether the desire to kill those people and destroy those computers could have provided a plausible explanation for why, if the attack was an inside job, the conspirators chose that particular part of the Pentagon, Honegger has reported that a civilian auditor for the Army, with whom she discussed this theory, did find it plausible (a fact that I report in *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*). Being aware of your tendency to treat any proffered explanation of some decision as the explanation, I hasten to add that the primary motive for attacking the Pentagon as well as the Twin Towers was surely to provide a false-flag pretext for a "war on terror" directed selectively at oil-rich Muslim countries. These buildings, as symbols of America's financial and military power, were just the places, Americans were easily convinced, that al-Qaeda terrorists would have wanted to attack. (You yourself report that you have no trouble imagining why such terrorists would have attacked the Pentagon.) But just as that rationale surely did not provide the only motive for attacking the Twin Towers, it also surely did not provide the only motive for attacking the Pentagon. It certainly could not by itself explain why the planners targeted the first two floors of Wedge 1. You deride this kind of thinking by speaking of a "curious coincidence of criminal interests," with Giuliani, Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Bush "just happening [to find] each other at just the same moment." But here again you're

attacking a straw-man position of your own creation. When a variety of interests are served by a big operation, it is not a result of coincidence but of a plan designed to serve the interests of the various parties needed to carry out the operation.

At this point, you said you are "not going to bother" responding to my other answers. By stopping there, you excused yourself from responding to some of the most difficult questions for the government's conspiracy theory: Given the FBI's report that Tom Burnett did not use a cell phone to call his wife, why did she report seeing his cell phone number on her Caller ID? Given its report that Barbara Olson did not complete any calls from Flight 77, did Ted Olson lie or was he, like Deena Burnett, deceived by someone? Why, if the Bush White House would not have been so evil as to engineer 9/11, which resulted in 3,000 deaths, did it order the EPA to lie about the safety of the air at Ground Zero -- a lie that will likely result in far more deaths than 9/11 as such? Why, after the mathematical calculations of the 9/11 truth movement showed that the military's excuse for not intercepting the airliners did not add up, did the 9/11 Commission create an entirely different story, according to which the FAA failed to notify the military about Flights 175, 77, and 93 until after they had crashed -- a story that contradicts an enormous amount of evidence? You apparently missed this last point, as you continue to discuss the military's first story about the planes being a few minutes late, which has not been the official story since the publication of The 9/11 Commission Report in 2004. Is it possible that you don't defend the official story because you don't know what it is? With regard to the idea of a stand-down order, you say "the damning fact that there is no actual evidence of such an order." But the first three chapters of my "9/11 Contradictions," to which you were purportedly responding, is devoted to this evidence: Mineta's story about Cheney in the underground bunker plus the many ways in which the 9/11 Commission tried to bury this story. In *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*, moreover, I report additional evidence. Evidently believing that all the contradictions in the official story can be explained in terms of lies to cover up mistakes, you write:

"In a disaster as epic in scale as 9/11, officials at every level of government are going to be motivated to lie in order to cover their asses. They are going to say they were at their desks when they were not there; they're going to say they tried to make it to the scene as fast as they can when they actually sat on their thumbs and took their time."

Lies of this sort are certainly to be expected. But most of the contradictions to which I have pointed cannot be thus explained. For example, Cheney, Myers, and Rumsfeld did the opposite of what you suggest: They really were where they should have been but claimed they were not. Your screw-up theory also cannot explain why Ted Olson claimed to have received phone calls from his wife, why Atta and the other alleged hijackers partied with hookers if they were devout Muslims, and why the FBI changed its story about where it found the allegedly definitive evidence incriminating al-Qaeda. Your theory also cannot explain why NIST has denied the fact that dozens of witnesses reported massive explosions in the Twin Towers, that two city officials, including Michael Hess (NYC's corporation counsel and Giuliani's good friend), reported a massive explosion in WTC 7 early in the morning, and that independent scientists discovered steel from the buildings that had been melted (which required temperatures far in excess of the temperatures reached by the fires). The lies about 9/11 go far beyond the cover-your-ass type.

You close by suggesting that the position one takes on 9/11 simply "comes down to what you believe." Although that is certainly true of some people -- those whom I call "paradigmatic" and "wishful-and-fearful" thinkers -- it certainly is not how the question should be decided. It should be settled on the basis of evidence, as I've suggested in a lecture entitled "9/11: Let's Get Empirical." You then add a postscript pointing out that the Pentagon is, "in fact, the world's largest office building," as if I had denied this by referring to "what you call the 'world's largest office building.'" The purpose of my comment, however, was merely to point out that you had erroneously used this description to suggest that the Pentagon could not have been evacuated in a few minutes. How long it takes to evacuate a building is not how many acres it covers (assuming that there are plenty of exit doors, as there were at the Pentagon), but how many stories it has. On this issue, you agree that the Pentagon "sure doesn't look as tall as some of those other buildings." But it's not simply a matter of looks: The Twin Towers actually were much taller than the Pentagon -- 105 stories taller, to be exact. The Pentagon, therefore, could have been evacuated about 20 times faster than either of the Towers. This means that of the 125 people in the building who were killed, 123 of whom were on the first two floor (while the remaining two were on the third), all, or at least virtually all, could have been evacuated within three minutes. Moreover, even if you doubt the idea that the E-4B over the White House meant that there would have been a three-minute warning, the 9/11 Commission itself suggests that the military had "one or two minutes to react to the unidentified plane approaching Washington" -- time for at least virtually everyone on the first floor to have escaped. Why, if Pentagon officials were too virtuous to have wanted any of their own personnel to die, were no alarms set off?

I close by thanking AlterNet for giving me this opportunity to present to its readers some of the evidence that the government's conspiracy theory about 9/11 is a lie -- a lie, moreover, that has had enormous consequences for American policy, all of which have been destructive. There is, in my view, nothing more important than exposing this lie so that these policies can be reversed. And I thank you, Matt, for suggesting this interview.

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Matt Taibbi is a writer for Rolling Stone. He is the author of *The Great Derangement* (Spiegel and Grau, 2008).

David Ray Griffin is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Theology, Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Graduate University (California). His 34 books include seven about 9/11, the most recent of which is *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, the Cover-Up, and the Expos*" (Northampton: Olive Branch, 2008).