

The Confirmed Fact and Its Denials

Part 1: The "FACT": There was credible evidence that Air Force One was targeted on September 11, 2001.

Remarks of Attorney General John Ashcroft Media Briefing, September 12, 2001

This is a highly coordinated effort.

...

Immediately after the first report of a plane crashing into the World Trade Towers, numerous Federal agencies, coordinating with the White House, mobilized their resources.

...

Both the President and the Vice-President presided over a number of cabinet and subcabinet meetings and video conferences. Continuity of government plans were put into effect.

...

The response of the federal government across the board has been, I believe, from the President of the United States to the rescue workers, magnificent. I'll now turn to the information that the response we have been making has developed.

I'll give you the information that we can give you. However, **we will give you only facts that we can confirm.**

You may be hearing things that we have not told you, but some people have the luxury of speculating. **We won't speculate, but will only give you confirmed facts.**

...

The four planes were hijacked by between 3 and 6 individuals per plane, using knives and box cutters and in some cases, making bomb threats.

***Our government has credible evidence that the White House and Air Force One were targets.**

A number of the suspected hijackers were trained as pilots in the United States.

The Department of Justice has undertaken perhaps the most massive and intensive investigation ever conducted in America.

...

Throughout the day and into the night last night, Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, and Assistant Attorney General Michael Chertoff, who is not with us at this moment, and I were present at the FBI's Strategic Information and Operations Center [SIOC] together, of course, with the [FBI] director, and a number of other individuals.

The Justice Department is working closely with investigators, the FAA, and the intelligence community, including the CIA, the NSA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Department.

...

These agencies have a presence at the SIOC, here in the FBI, 24 hours a day and are coordinating efforts both in the United States and worldwide around the clock.

...

The crime scene at the WTC has been secured, but is not yet a crime scene accessible to investigators.

...

***Note:** An inexact transcript of this media briefing by John Ashcroft appears on the website of the U.S. Department of State at:

http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive_Index/Ashcroft_Investigators_Reviewing_Intelligence_Have_Credible_Leads.html
The State Department's transcript omits entirely the statement underlined above. It can be heard in the audio recording at the Public Broadcasting Service's website at:
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/mueller_ashcroft_text_9-12.html

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Part 2: The DENIALS: "another phantom report;" "I was not aware of it that day, nor this day" [that there was a threat to Air Force One on September 11, 2001]; "Nor was I."

PANEL II, DAY II OF THE TWELFTH PUBLIC HEARING OF
THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

DATE: JUNE 17, 2004

SUBJECT: MILITARY AVIATION AUTHORITIES ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

WITNESSES:

GENERAL RICHARD MYERS,
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, PAST COMMANDER OF NORAD;
ADMIRAL-SELECT CHARLES JOSEPH LEIDIG,
COMMANDANT OF THE NAVAL ACADEMY, FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF
OPERATIONS, NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER;
GENERAL RALPH EBERHART,
COMMANDER OF NORAD AND THE U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND;
MAJOR GENERAL (RET.) LARRY ARNOLD,
FORMER COMMANDER OF CONTINENTAL U.S. NORAD REGION

[COMMISSIONER] MR. [Richard] BEN-VENISTE: . . . Now, I want to turn to one other area where there has been some misconception. And perhaps I can start with Admiral Leidig. In this regard, you were a participant on the Air Threat Conference Call.

ADM. LEIDIG: Yes, sir.

MR. BEN-VENISTE: And do you recall at some point -- we have it at 10:37 -- that **the vice president of the United States reported on that call that there was an anonymous threat against Air Force One, using the then-code name Angel, that it was to be the next target?** Do you recall that, sir?

ADM. LEIDIG: Sir, I think that occurred right after I was relieved on the watch by General Winfield. Right after we resolved what was going on with United 93, around that time General Winfield took over. So I'm familiar because I've looked at the transcript, but I wasn't on the conference at that time.

MR. BEN-VENISTE: **Now, let me ask General Eberhart and General Arnold whether that information was communicated to you in any real-time basis.**

GEN. EBERHART: **No, sir, not to me.**

MR. BEN-VENISTE: The information, according to the staff, that **that was another phantom report, that there was no anonymous call, there was no use of the code name Angel for Air Force One or a statement that Air Force One was to be next,** and yet that mythology was perpetuated for some weeks, if not months, thereafter. And as we know, those things, it's hard for them to go away. **So to the best of your knowledge here, do you have any information, which would suggest that there was a threat received on September 11th against Air Force One?**

GEN. EBERHART: **I was not aware of it that day, nor this day,** Mr. Commissioner.

MR. ARNOLD: **Nor was I.**