



The Triumph of the Official Narrative: How the TV Networks Hid the Twin Towers' Explosive Demolition on 9/11

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Editor's Note: At the end of this article are two appendices containing 169 separate video clips of news coverage from the day of 9/11. An immense debt of gratitude is owed to AE911Truth Operations Manager Andy Steele for the time and care that went into preparing these video clips.

This article is the second installment of a two-part research project we began in July 2020 with the article “How 36 Reporters Brought Us the Twin Towers’ Explosive Demolition on 9/11.”

In that article, our goal was to determine the prevalence, among television reporters on 9/11, of the hypothesis that explosions had brought down the Twin Towers. Through careful review of approximately 70 hours of news coverage on 11 different channels, we found that the explosion hypothesis was not only common among reporters but was, in fact, the dominant hypothesis.

Our second question, which we set aside for the present article, was to determine how, despite its prevalence, the explosion hypothesis was supplanted by the hypothesis of fire-induced collapse.

In this article, we shall concentrate not on reporters in the field, as in Part 1, but on the news anchors and their guests who were tasked with discovering and making sense of what was happening. As we trace the supplanting of the explosion hypothesis with the fire-induced collapse hypothesis, we witness the great shift toward what quickly became the Official Narrative.

We do not see our task as trying to discover whether the Official Narrative of 9/11 is true or false. In the 21 years since the attacks took place, it has been proven beyond all reasonable doubt, we believe, that the Official Narrative is false.

While we support and participate in the further accumulation of evidence for this position, as well as the presentation of this evidence to the public, we believe it is also important to look into *how* the triumph of the Official Narrative was accomplished. If we are able to discover this, we will greatly advance our understanding of the psychological operation conducted on September 11, 2001 — and, thus, our understanding of how other psychological operations are perpetrated on the public.

Our Argument

Our argument is that two strategies were employed to accomplish the triumph of the Official Narrative:

(a) Where news anchors were sincerely dedicated to discovering the facts of the situation, Strategy One was employed. This strategy involved directly confronting the news anchor of the relevant network with an “expert” who would explain that the destruction of the Twin Towers was caused by structural failure induced by the airplane impact and the ensuing fires. This would allay concerns about reports of explosions in the towers and would domesticate the news anchor so that he or she would stop raising problematic questions. Of course, as we can see clearly today, these experts could not possibly have known what they so confidently proclaimed. In fact, we can now see that their explanations were simply wrong. But their interviews seem to have accomplished their goals on 9/11. To illustrate this strategy, we shall choose as our chief examples CNBC and CNN, whose anchors showed the most interest in the explosion hypothesis, and we will also look at CBS and NBC.

(b) Strategy Two was used on all networks, regardless of the stance of the news anchors. This strategy involved developing two related narratives — two engaging, emotionally charged stories — that appeared to explain the day’s horrors and offered viewers a set of active responses. They were not scientific hypotheses and were not directly related to the destruction of the Twin Towers, but indirectly they appeared to favor the fire-induced collapse hypothesis more than the explosion hypothesis. By the end of the day, they had silenced the explosion hypothesis.

The first of these two stories is what we shall call the War on Terror narrative. This grand narrative, resonant with older storied events, explained how the righteous, the civilized, the United States had been subjected to an act of war from the evil, the uncivilized, the terrorists supported by nations in the Middle East and Central Asia; and how American leaders must respond to this aggression with an initiative that was warlike on many levels. This narrative was articulated early (before noon on 9/11) and was repeated throughout the day. It established the foundations of the Global War on Terror.

The second story is the Bin Laden narrative, which nested within the wider War on Terror narrative and was used to transform myth into plausible history. According to this narrative, an evil Saudi national based in Afghanistan had masterminded the attacks.

It is extremely important to grasp the relationship between these two narratives and what may seem as detailed — even esoteric — facts about the

destruction of the Twin Towers. If the buildings were destroyed by pre-planted explosives — as we believe has been demonstrated through years of research — the two narratives, however rational and moral they appeared to be to many television viewers, are profoundly misleading in their political analysis and profoundly immoral in their prescriptions.

Numerical Analysis of Statements by News Anchors and Experts Articulating the Explosion Hypothesis

To understand how the explosion hypothesis was supplanted by the fire-induced collapse hypothesis, it is first important to establish whether, and to what degree, the explosion hypothesis was considered by news anchors, their guests, and others at the television networks.

As we showed in [Part 1](#), the great majority of reporters who witnessed the destruction of the Twin Towers either perceived an explosion or perceived the towers as exploding. This hypothesis of how the Twin Towers were destroyed then continued to be prevalent among reporters on the ground, who essentially viewed the destruction of the towers as an explosion-based attack subsequent to the airplane strikes.

Given what the reporters were communicating to the rest of the world, how did their colleagues in the studios absorb this information and make sense of what had happened for the viewing public?

As in Part 1, to answer this question, we reviewed approximately 70 hours of continuous news coverage from 11 different networks, cable news channels, and local network affiliates.

Table 1 below shows the news coverage we compiled and reviewed. (For further description of our data collection, see [Part 1](#) of the series.) Table 2 lists the mentions of the explosion hypothesis by network. Table 3 lists the mentions of the explosion hypothesis by the time they occurred.

Videos and transcripts of every mention of the explosion hypothesis are shown in Appendix A.

Table 1: Television Coverage Compiled

Networks	
ABC	8:50 AM to 6:07 PM
CBS	8:52 AM to 12:00 PM + one excerpt at ~12:15 PM
NBC	8:51 AM to 6:30 PM
Cable News Channels	
CNN	8:32 AM to 12:00 AM (midnight)
Fox News	8:51 AM to 5:00 PM
MSNBC	8:52 AM to 1:42 PM
CNBC	8:50 AM to ~4:16 PM
Local Channels	
WABC	8:50 AM to 10:50 AM + nine excerpts from various times
WCBS	8:50 AM to 11:33 PM, 11:40 AM to 12:04 PM + six excerpts from various times
WNBC	8:50 AM to 10:30 AM (switches permanently to NBC network at 10:30 AM)
NY1	8:50 AM to 11:20 AM

Table 2: Explosion Hypothesis Mentions by Network

Network	Explosion Hypothesis Mentions	Ambiguous Explosion Hypothesis Mentions
ABC	2	0
CBS	3	0
NBC	3	1
CNN	16	0
Fox News	3	0
MSNBC	4	0
CNBC	10	0
WABC	2	0
WCBS	12	0
WNBC	5	0
NY1	2	7
TOTAL	62	8

Table 3: Explosion Hypothesis Mentions by Time

Time	Explosion Hypothesis Mentions
9:59 AM to 10:30 AM	42
10:30 AM to 11:00 AM	7
11:00 AM to 11:30 AM	7
11:30 AM to 12:00 PM	1
12:00 PM to 12:30 PM	1
12:30 PM to 1:00 PM	5
1:00 PM to 1:30 PM	1
1:30 PM to 2:00 PM	2
2:00 PM to 2:30 PM	1
2:30 PM to 3:00 PM	1
3:00 PM to 3:30 PM	0
3:30 PM to 4:00 PM	0
4:00 PM to 4:30 PM	0
4:30 PM to 5:00 PM	2
TOTAL	70

In total, when we include seven *ambiguous mentions* of the explosion hypothesis — which we defined as an anchor describing the occurrence of an explosion in *conjunction* with the collapse of either tower but not implying that the explosion *necessarily* caused the collapse — we found that the explosion hypothesis was mentioned 70 times across all 11 channels.

To our great interest, we found that news anchors or guest experts on *every* channel, with the exception of Fox News, at some point in the day believed, considered, or at least articulated the possibility that explosions had caused the Twin Towers’ destruction. In addition, several channels, including Fox News, displayed banners or captions or crawls in their lower thirds stating that explosions had caused the Twin Towers’ destruction.

The explosion hypothesis was first mentioned by several anchors on several different channels within minutes of the South Tower’s destruction at 9:59 AM and — within our pool of television coverage — was mentioned for the final time by NBC’s Tom Brokaw at 4:48 PM. It is noteworthy that more than half of the mentions of the explosion hypothesis occurred in the first 31

minutes after the South Tower's destruction. As we shall discuss below, on some channels the explosion hypothesis was eventually explicitly discarded while on other channels it simply stopped being mentioned.

In some cases, discussion of the explosion hypothesis was driven by the anchors' own observation and intuition while in other cases it was driven by information provided by reporters on the ground (and, in some cases, both). In a few cases, especially in the lower third captions, mention of the explosion hypothesis appears to have been driven by information circulated on the newswire.

Altogether, the data reflect that the explosion hypothesis was broadly, though in most cases fleetingly, considered by news anchors, their guests, and others at the networks.

The one notable exception was on Fox News, where the anchor, Jon Scott, assertively pushed the fire-induced collapse hypothesis while fabricating the War on Terror and Bin Laden narratives before our eyes. All the while, he seemed uniquely unsurprised and unbothered by the events, as compared to other anchors who exhibited varying degrees of shock, disbelief, and horror. Although Fox News reporters on the ground, like those of other networks, were describing explosions, Scott went out of his way to correct their impressions of what they had witnessed and make the fire-induced collapse hypothesis seem credible to viewers. Because of Scott, no experts were needed to establish the Official Narrative on Fox News. There was only one hypothesis in the foreground, and this hypothesis was so quickly solidified that by noon on 9/11, all of the major elements of the coming Global War on Terror had been set forth.

However, for the anchors who were sincerely dedicated to discovering the facts, Strategy One was employed.

Strategy One for Accomplishing the Triumph of the Official Narrative: An "Expert" Visits a News Anchor

In discussing Strategy One we shall use CNBC and CNN as our chief examples and also look briefly at CBS and NBC.

CNBC

CNBC saw, perhaps, the most notable rise and fall of the explosion hypothesis.

CNBC's consideration of the explosion hypothesis started at 10:01 AM with news anchor Mark Haines hearing from witnesses on the street that a third airplane had crashed into the South Tower. He surmised that this third airplane impact was responsible for the South Tower's total destruction.

In a discussion with CNBC reporter Maria Bartiromo, who was on the ground at the New York Stock Exchange, Haines' suspicion of a third airplane causing the South Tower's destruction was reinforced by Bartiromo's repeated reference to "the explosion," which Bartiromo deduced was "just the actual collapse of the building" but that Haines suggested was a third airplane impact.

After about 15 minutes, Haines was informed that the Associated Press was reporting only two airplane strikes. As Haines began to accept that there was no third airplane strike, he and another anchor (we were unable to determine this person's name) agreed that some sort of explosion must have caused the South Tower's destruction. At around 10:21 AM, [Haines looked closely at footage of the South Tower's destruction and began to analyze it with an accuracy and clarity that was unique among news anchors:](#)

"But here you see an enormous explosion about midway up in the South Tower, and the entire structure collapses. It just disappears. . . . Now that's interesting from a forensic point of view. The explosion that leveled the South Tower came, it seemed, roughly halfway up. And yet it took the entire tower out."

[Minutes later, Haines reacted in horror as he watched the destruction of the North Tower in real time, exclaiming:](#)

"We have an enormous explosion in the remaining World Trade Tower Center!"

Haines then went on to analyze the destruction as he had done before with the following series of comments:

“It happened the same way. The explosion started high in the building and worked its way down.”

“There you see — I don’t understand, and I would be very anxious to hear in the future some, the forensics of this situation.”

“This is — there you see the building imploding. It, it — do you see what’s happening? Now, what would cause that I don’t know.”

In response to Haines’ comments, his co-anchor, Bill Griffeth, acknowledged the possibility of what Haines was suggesting, stating:

“Certainly, the structure had been weakened by the impact. But you’d have to wonder if there was something else there. But we just don’t know at this point.”

Haines responded with his opinion that the destruction of both towers could not have been accidental:

“I don’t think . . . I think we’re safe — here I think I’m on safe ground, Bill. I don’t think — This was clearly, the way the structure is collapsing, this was the result of something that was planned. This is not — it’s not accidental that the first tower just happened to collapse and then the second tower just happened to collapse in exactly the same way. How they accomplished this, we don’t know. But clearly this is what they wanted to accomplish.”

[A few minutes later, at around 10:34 AM, Haines left the studio, apparently in shock, and did not return for the day.](#) We can only wonder how aggressively Haines might have continued to pursue the explosion hypothesis had he remained in the newsroom. (Sadly, Haines died of congestive heart failure in 2011.)

[At 11:07 AM, co-anchor Griffeth brought structural engineer Eric Gass into the studio for an interview,](#) asking him “whether it would be necessary for a further attack upon the buildings before they would collapse.” Gass happened to be working on the construction of a nearby building for CNBC at the time.

Over the course of his interview, Gass extinguished any remaining suspicion Griffeth and others may have had, making a number of unfounded assertions about the inability of the buildings to withstand the airplane impacts and fires.

Bill Griffeth: “Which is something I wanna get into here, Sue, because there’s been all kinds of speculation about how that would happen, whether it would be necessary for a further attack upon the buildings before they would collapse. And as it happens we have with us in studio here is a structural engineer, Eric Gass, who happens to be in the process of building a building that we’re putting together here at CNBC down the road. And you would have some sense since you’ve been a part of the construction of buildings of this magnitude, Eric, to give us some insight of what would happen with the kind of damage that was done with the jet attacks on the buildings and whether that’s enough to bring those buildings down by themselves.”

Eric Gass: “Well, I think you’ve a got a couple of issues that are going on here. One is, these are concrete reinforced structures. And concrete is a compressive material. So as you can see, especially from the second attack, as it comes in, it appears to shear into the side of the building.”

Herrera: “The plane.”

Griffeth: “Right.”

Gass: “Absolutely. So you have a couple of issues. One, it probably has taken all the concrete away from the steel.”

Herrera: “And now you’re seeing that second plane.”

Gass: “Absolutely. So this structure, and I think as you see as it will collapse later on, it begins to tilt to that side. It has taken all of the concrete and put it into tensile property.”

Herrera: “And these are large planes.”

Gass: “Absolutely. If we’re dealing with a Boeing 767, you’re not just dealing with a large plane, you’re dealing with a large plane that’s coming in at over 500 mph. So you have all of the impact going in to

those members. There is no building that I'm aware of that can take this kind of impact."

Griffeth: "So as we watch the first of the towers collapsing there, it was enough from the initial attack by the jet to bring the tower down eventually. Is that your understanding?"

Gass: "I would say so. Especially the second thing you would have going on, of course, is the airplane's going to have a great deal of fuel, and the fire is going to be working against that structural steel, which of course is why the fire codes are so stringent in this country. So then you're going to have a problem with once the fire takes place it's going to work against the structural strength of that steel and begin to collapse."

...

Griffeth: "So you're not surprised that these would go down just based on the jet crashing into the buildings here, Eric?"

Gass: "No. As a matter of fact, as we were seeing the explosion the first time, that was the first thing that occurred to us, is that there would be an immediate weakening on that side of the building. I think if you look at the second tower that collapsed, you will see that it begins to collapse straight down, which as it appears from what happened in the impact, it impacted much more into the center of the building. Again, you would have gotten rid of all of the ability for fire protection to have gotten rid of some of the fire and the flames, which apparently is why it took longer. The other point too is that you have 15 floors of extremely heavy material bearing down on this situation. It would be impossible to see why it would be able to hold up."

...

Griffeth: "The terrorist bombing of some years ago against the World Trade Center, which occurred essentially in the parking structure below the building, why didn't that bring that down at the time?"

Gass: "Well, I think you're dealing with a different issue. One, you're dealing with a static explosion, where someone pulls a small truck

underneath so you have all of the concrete not only keeping both of the floors above and below. But you're dealing with the biggest structural strength of that building is sitting underground. Of course, New York is pure bedrock. So that would have been the worst place to attack it. Clearly it did not do that much damage, enough structurally to make major structural problems with the design, as I understand it. Here, you have a much larger vehicle, with much more speed, and literally shearing any of its structural capacity in those particular areas."

[Hours later, at around 2:25 PM, Griffeth repeated Gass's unfounded assertions.](#)

Griffeth: "We were witness to this horrifying spectacle of the Twin Towers just disintegrating to the ground. And we had heard from this structural engineer that we interviewed earlier that once these towers had been struck by these jets — I mean, these are structures that are built mainly, of course with steel, but with concrete. The concrete essentially was liquefied. Not to that degree, but it just was very suspect in the structure. And according to him it was only a matter of time before it came down. And course that is exactly what happened after the crashes."

To summarize, engineer Eric Gass, the "expert," was able to put a stop to the legitimate questioning of Mark Haines and Bill Griffeth. Although we know now that Gass's hypothesis is false, it would have seemed plausible at the time both to news anchors and the viewing public.

CNN

Shortly after 9:59 AM, news anchor Aaron Brown was standing on a roof in New York City about 30 blocks from the World Trade Center. He was looking directly at the South Tower as it was destroyed. He was, therefore, not just a journalist and not just a news anchor: He was an eyewitness.

[He immediately interrupted a journalist who was reporting live on the Pentagon:](#)

"Wow! Jamie. Jamie, I need you to stop for a second. There has just been a huge explosion...we can see a billowing smoke rising...and I can't...I'll tell you that I can't see that second Tower. But there was a cascade of

sparks and fire and now this...it looks almost like a mushroom cloud, explosion, this huge, billowing smoke in the second Tower..."

Having reported honestly what he saw with his own eyes, Brown next did exactly what he should have done as a responsible news anchor. He let his audience know that, while he did not know what had happened, it was clear that there were two hypotheses in play, the explosion hypothesis and the fire-induced collapse hypothesis. And then he went to his reporters on the scene, as well as to authorities, to try and sort out which hypothesis was correct.

Here are examples of his setting forth — after the first building was destroyed and again after the second was destroyed — the rival hypotheses:

[At 10:03 AM](#): "...and then just in the last several minutes there has been a second explosion or, at least, perhaps not an explosion, perhaps part of the building simply collapsed. And that's what we saw and that's what we're looking at."

[At 10:04 AM](#): "This is just a few minutes ago...we don't know if...something happened, another explosion, or if the building was so weakened...it just collapsed."

[At 10:29 AM](#): "[W]e believe now that we can say that both, that portions of both towers of the World Trade Center, have collapsed. Whether there were second explosions, that is to say, explosions other than the planes hitting them, that caused this to happen we cannot tell you."

[At 11:17 AM](#): "Our reporters in the area say they heard loud noises when that happened. It is unclear to them and to us whether those were explosions going on in the building or if that was simply the sound of the collapse of the buildings as they collapsed, making these huge noises as they came down."

Brown's honest reporting of his perceptions was balanced repeatedly by his caution. Here is an example:

[At 10:53 AM](#): "...it almost looks...it almost looks like one of those implosions of buildings that you see, except there is nothing controlled about this...this is devastation."

His next move, having set forth the two hypotheses, was to ask his reporters on the scene, who were choking on pulverized debris and witnessing gruesome scenes, what they perceived.

Reporter Brian Palmer said honestly that he was not in a position to resolve the issue.

[Brown at 10:41 AM](#): “Was there...Brian, did it sound like there was an explosion before the second collapse, or was the noise the collapse itself?”

Palmer: “Well, from our distance...I was not able to distinguish between an explosion and the collapse. We were several hundred yards away. But we clearly saw the building come down. I heard your report of a fourth explosion: I can’t confirm that. But we heard some ‘boom’ and then the building fold in on itself.”

Two other reporters were more definite about what they perceived.

Brown at 10:29 AM: “Rose, whadya got?”

Rose Arce: “I’m about a block away. And there were several people that were hanging out the windows right below where the plane crashed, when suddenly you saw the top of the building start to shake, and people began leaping from the windows in the north side of the building. You saw two people at first plummet and then a third one, and then the entire top of the building just blew up...”

...

Brown at 10:57 AM: “Who do we have on the phone, guys? Just help me out here. Patty, are you there?”

Patty Sabga: “Yes, I am here.”

Brown: “Whaddya got?”

Sabga: “About an hour ago I was on the corner of Broadway and Park Place — that’s about a thousand yards from the World Trade Center — when the first tower collapsed. It was a massive explosion. At the time the police were trying desperately to evacuate people from the area. When that explosion occurred, it was like a scene out of a horror film.”

Clearly, the explosion hypothesis was flourishing on CNN. In what is striking to read today, even the news caption at the bottom of the screen at 10:03 AM, shortly after the destruction of the South Tower, was dramatically articulating the explosion hypothesis:

“THIRD EXPLOSION SHATTERS WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK”

After checking with his reporters, Brown continued to explore his two hypotheses, this time by consulting authorities.

[First Brown consulted a political authority. He got the mayor of New York City on the line.](#)

Brown at 12:31 PM: “Sir, do you believe that...was there another set of explosions that caused the buildings to collapse, or was it the structural damage caused by the planes?”

Giuliani: “I don’t, I don’t know, I, uh, I, uh...I, I saw the first collapse and heard the second ‘cause I was in a building when the second took place. I think it was structural but I cannot be sure.”

Later in the afternoon, Giuliani had more confidence in his script. At a press conference that aired on nearly every channel, he ruled out the explosion hypothesis when a reporter asked him, “Do you know anything about the cause of the explosions that brought down the two buildings yet?”

[Finally, at 4:20 PM, Brown was visited by an engineer, Jim DeStefano](#), who we were told was with the National Council of Structural Engineers (the actual name of DeStefano’s organization is the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations). His brief comments put an end to Brown’s explosion hypothesis and rendered CNN’s news coverage safe for public consumption.

Brown: “Jim DeStefano is a structural engineer. He knows about big buildings and what happens in these sorts of catastrophic moments. He joins us from Deerfield, Connecticut on the phone. Jim, the plane hits...what...and I hope this isn’t a terribly oversimplified question, but what happens to the building itself?”

DeStefano: “...It’s a tremendous impact that’s applied to the building when a collision like this occurs. And it’s clear that that impact was sufficient to do damage to the columns and the bracing system supporting the building. That coupled with the fire raging and the high temperatures softening the structural steel then precipitated a destabilization of the columns and clearly the columns buckled at the lower floors causing the building to collapse.”

DeStefano, surely, had a right to make a guess, but he had no right to claim that he knew what had happened. He did not say, “Here is one hypothesis.” He said, in effect, “This is what happened.” But there had been no photographic or video analysis of the buildings’ destruction, no analysis of the physical remains, no cataloguing of eyewitnesses, no examination of seismic or thermal evidence, and so on. He was shooting in the dark, and he was silencing a journalist who was sincerely trying to discover the truth.

As we have discovered since that day, DeStefano's confidence was misplaced and his hypothesis was wrong. But his explanation appears to have succeeded in ending Aaron Brown’s interest in the explosion hypothesis.

CBS and ABC

The deployment of Strategy One was not unique to CNBC and CNN. Dan Rather, Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw, the evening news anchors for CBS, ABC and NBC, respectively, all considered the explosion hypothesis at various points during the course of the day. Two of them, Rather and Jennings, were met with experts who apparently put an end to their curiosity.

In Rather’s case, he was visited by a government official named Jerome Hauer. On 9/11, Hauer was director of the federal Office of Public Health Preparedness and was senior advisor to the Secretary for National Security and Emergency Management. In January 2001, Hauer had been hired to run a new crisis management group at Kroll Associates, the security consulting firm

that had designed the security system for the World Trade Center complex in response to the 1993 bombing. And before that, from 1996 to 2000, he was director of the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM), where he was chiefly — and controversially — responsible for installing the OEM’s Emergency Operations Center on the 23rd floor of World Trade Center Building 7, which would also collapse later that day.

[A little after 12:00 PM on 9/11, Rather and Hauer had this exchange:](#)

Rather: “Is this massive destruction of the World Trade Center — based on what you know, and I recognize we’re dealing with so few facts — is it possible that just plane crash could have collapsed these buildings? Or would it have required the sort of prior positioning of other explosives in the building? What do you think?”

Hauer: “No, my sense is that just, one, the velocity of the plane, and the fact that you have a plane filled with fuel hitting that building that burned. The velocity of the plane certainly had an impact on the structure itself. And then the fact that it burned and you had that intense heat probably weakened the structure as well. I think it was simply the planes hitting the building and causing the collapse.”

One would expect a national security official, especially one working for a company responsible for security at the World Trade Center, to be pursuing all possibilities. Indeed, we know that officials at [the FDNY, the NYPD, and the FBI](#) suspected that explosives had brought down the towers. Hauer’s confidence that explosives had nothing to do with the towers’ destruction, less than two hours after it had happened, is at best grossly irresponsible.

In the case of Jennings, he interviewed a structural engineer by the name of Jon Magnusson, who on 9/11 was a partner at the structural engineering firm that had designed the Twin Towers. Magnusson would go on to be a member of the FEMA Building Performance Study, the first official investigation into the Twin Towers’ and Building 7’s destruction.

Earlier that morning, upon learning that the South Tower had completely collapsed, [Jennings remarked:](#)

“We have no idea what caused this. If you wish to bring — anybody who’s ever watched a building being demolished on purpose knows that if you’re going to do this you have to get at the under infrastructure of a building and bring it down.”

Twenty minutes later, apparently having trouble accepting NBC reporter Don Dahler’s interpretation that the building had simply collapsed from the airplane impact and fires, [Jennings said](#):

“I’m still desperately confused, John, about what may have caused the building to collapse.”

To our knowledge, Jennings did not articulate the explosion hypothesis after that point. Nevertheless, later in the day, Magnusson was brought on to explain to Jennings and millions of viewers why the buildings had collapsed. Magnusson’s interview on ABC was preceded by a pre-recorded piece that put forth the fire-induced collapse hypothesis, basing its claims on advice from engineers at Magnusson’s firm. [Once the piece ended, Jennings began his interview with Magnusson.](#)

Jennings: “This is the second time from Robert Krulwich and also from some architect engineers we talked with a little bit earlier that say it was the heat which caused the building to collapse, because the steel at the top of the building would maybe have only been able to sustain an hour, hour-and-a-half of intense fire, and then the steel begins — as Robert points out so clearly — collapse upon itself all the way down to the bottom.

“I think we have with us, on the phone or in person, from Seattle, Jon Magnusson, who is an engineer — Jon, are you there? — Jon Mangusson, who is with the company that actually built the World Trade Center towers. Jon, have you heard our two laymen explanations tonight of what it was we think collapsed the building? And do you agree or disagree?”

Magnusson: “I agree. . . . The description of the fact that steel, when it gets up to 1,500, 1600°F, that it loses its strength is accurate. The buildings actually survived the impact of both the planes. And it was really the fire that created the disaster.”

Jennings: “And the upper floor fell on the next floor down, which fell on the next floor, and the sheer accumulation of weight just forced the whole building to collapse on itself?”

Magnusson: “Right. From the videotape — and I can only go from what I’ve seen on television — but the videotape showed that several of the upper floors fell onto the next lower floor that was still intact. And once that happens, there’s going to be an instant overload situation. And then it will fail. And then that will drop down to the next floor, into another instant overload situation. And so the floors just progressively collapsed down all the way to the bottom.”

Magnusson was somewhat more cautious in his explanation than Gass, DeStefano and Hauer. At the same time, he was arguably the most equipped to recognize that the towers had possibly been destroyed with explosives, yet he advocated solely for the fire-induced collapse hypothesis. As a partner at the very firm that had designed the Twin Towers, his early endorsement of the fire-induced collapse hypothesis was essential in supplanting the explosion hypothesis.

Was it chance that led a series of “experts” to disarm these independent-minded news anchors with one false hypothesis after another? We think that is unlikely.

Consider that many building professionals and technical experts are known to have immediately suspected that explosives were responsible for the Twin Towers’ destruction. Notable examples of experts who first suspected explosives but then quickly changed their position include Van Romero, an explosives expert from New Mexico Tech, and Ronald Hamburger, a structural engineer who went on to work on the FEMA Building Performance Study and later on the NIST World Trade Center investigation. On 9/11, Romero told the [*Albuquerque Journal*](#):

“The collapse of the buildings was ‘too methodical’ to be the chance result of airplanes colliding with the structures.... ‘My opinion is, based on the videotapes, that after the airplanes hit the World Trade Center there were some explosive devices inside the buildings that caused the towers to collapse.’”

On September 19, 2001, Hamburger told the [*Wall Street Journal*](#):

“It appeared to me that charges had been placed in the building,’ ...Upon learning that no bombs had been detonated, ‘I was very surprised.’”

Much like these experts, Dr. Leroy Hulsey, a professor emeritus of civil engineering at the University of Alaska Fairbanks who conducted a four-year computer modeling of Building 7’s collapse, has said that he told his students the week after 9/11 that the Twin Towers could not have collapsed in the way they did due to the airplane impacts and ensuing fires. Similarly, Dr. Fadil Al-Kazily, a civil engineering professor from Sacramento State, once commented to this author (Ted Walter) that he was not aware of a single colleague of his who believed the fire-induced collapse hypothesis.

So, how is it that every “expert” who appeared on national television that day advocated the fire-induced collapse hypothesis when there were so many who favored the explosion hypothesis?

Although it cannot be proven, we suspect that intentionality, coordination, and deception are on display in these interviews. We shall see even more of this in the deployment of Strategy Two.

Strategy Two for Accomplishing the Triumph of the Official Narrative: The War on Terror and Bin Laden Narratives

*“We tell ourselves stories in order to live, or to justify taking lives...tell ourselves stories that save us and stories that are the quicksand in which we thrash and the well in which we drown.” — Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby**

On 9/11, the power of narrative to evoke horror, anger and a call-to-arms was drawn on by one prominent television guest after another. Genuine evidence, such as was produced early in the day by eyewitnesses, was pushed aside by the two narratives outlined below — the quasi-metaphysical War on Terror narrative and the Bin Laden narrative, which nested within the wider War on Terror narrative.

To the extent that these narratives were convincingly conveyed to viewers, no further argument against the explosion hypothesis was necessary. The foreign evildoers had crashed airplanes into the buildings and the buildings had come down, and that was all one needed to know.

The process of sowing these two narratives relied in part on a propaganda technique visible throughout the day's coverage. It may be called "normalizing the abnormal."

A good example of this technique can be seen later in the day. Both *before* and *after* World Trade Center Building 7 came down, the television audience was led to believe that such an event was normal. After all, the building was on fire, so of course it might come down! This was exemplified by the captions that began running on CNN around 4:10 PM — "BUILDING 7 AT WORLD TRADE CTR. ON FIRE, MAY COLLAPSE" — and on Fox News around 4:13 PM — "TRADE CENTER BLDG 7 ON FIRE, MAY COLLAPSE" — both more than an hour before the building came down. Of course, no such building had ever come down from fire in a way remotely similar to Building 7. Nevertheless, the television networks portrayed this event as perfectly normal, to the point of being utterly predictable.

In the case of the War on Terror and Bin Laden narratives that were imposed on the attacks as a whole, viewers received a large dose of "normalizing the abnormal." This massive, complex operation was almost immediately blamed on a relatively small and poorly funded non-state organization based far away in one of the poorest countries of the world. It would have been far more "normal" for the operation to have been carried out by a well-funded military-intelligence apparatus. To exclude this more normal scenario in favor of a much more abnormal scenario required *quickly* setting forth the non-state terrorism hypothesis, almost *immediately* offering Osama bin Laden as the prime suspect, and choreographing the *repetition* of these ideas by various authorities.

As documented below, many claims were made about Osama bin Laden by the prominent television guests. On 9/11, these would have been seen by many as plausible, much like the statements by the building professionals brought on as experts. Many of us expected at the time that the claims made by these guests would soon be supported by actual, usable evidence. But this did not happen.

As this author (MacQueen) wrote in *The 2001 Anthrax Deception* (p. 31) of the period when the U.S. was making preparations for the invasion of Afghanistan:

“Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that the U.S. would soon be preparing, for the edification of the world, a document detailing evidence of Bin Laden’s guilt. When no such document was produced, the government of the United Kingdom stepped forward. The British document of October 4 [2001] was, however, astonishingly weak. The preamble noted that, ‘this document does not purport to provide a prosecutable case against Osama Bin Laden in the court of law’ even as it was purporting to provide something of much greater import: a *casus belli*. Indeed, the document consisted mainly of unverifiable claims from intelligence agencies, the evidence seldom rising to the level of circumstantial. Anthony Scrivener, Q.C., noted in *The Times* that, ‘it is a sobering thought that better evidence is required to prosecute a shoplifter than is needed to commence a world war [the War on Terror].’”

When the 9/11 Commission later produced its report in 2004, it was unable to support its central narrative with solid evidence and resorted repeatedly to using statements obtained under torture.

In other words, on 9/11, actual evidence usable in a court of law (eyewitness evidence of explosions) was defeated by claims that, however dramatically appealing, would not be admissible in a court of law.

(a) The War on Terror Narrative

The story of the War on Terror, as publicly set forth on television on 9/11, is a story of evil and aggression, a story that extends into the future as the righteous take up the sword of justice and vengeance. This very broad narrative, of mythical dimensions, includes the following eight elements. (Not all speakers include all eight elements, but by the end of the day all eight had been articulated.)

1. Those who carried out the 9/11 operation were evil, a threat to all of civilization.

2. These “terror thugs” have carried out an act of war against the U.S., so the U.S. should recognize and accept that a state of war now exists.
3. States that support the terror thugs (for example, Afghanistan, allegedly supporting Bin Laden) are as responsible as the terrorists themselves for the evil deeds done, so the condition of war must extend to such supporting states.
4. Not only the 9/11 terrorists and their supporters but all terrorists who have expressed evil intentions against the U.S., together with their supporters — most of whom are explicitly named — are, from 9/11 onward, to be regarded as at war with the U.S.
5. This new and comprehensive war, known as the “War on Terror” or “War Against Terror,” is a metaphorical war (a vigorous striving, using all means, such as economic, political, and cultural), a spiritual war, and a literal war, waged with all military methods and technologies. The terrorists and their supporters, being evil, must be eliminated.
6. The righteous must not wait for the evil doers and their supporters to strike out but must take whatever actions are necessary to strike first.
7. All countries in the world must commit themselves to action within this global conflict framework. They must make a choice whether they will be on the side of the righteous or the side of the evil — there will be no middle ground.
8. Parties at one time enemies of the righteous (Russia, China, and “moderate” Arab states) should be permitted to join in the War on Terror.

Although Bush administration officials gave voice to these principles in various public speeches and policy statements over a period of time after 9/11, the principles were articulated publicly on television on the day of 9/11 itself and in some cases before noon.

Presented below are three examples of the development of this narrative on 9/11: one on Fox News (by Newt Gingrich, the former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives), one on BBC (by Ehud Barak, the former prime

minister of Israel), and one on CNN (by Richard Holbrooke, a former U.S. diplomat and assistant secretary of state).

Other speakers — whose words can be found in Appendix B, which contains statements setting forth the Bin Laden narrative — also articulated the elements of the War on Terror narrative.

Note: Although elsewhere in this study we have not used BBC footage, by a stroke of fortune Ehud Barak was in London on 9/11 and was able to spend time in the BBC studio. We include his remarks as useful expressions of this narrative by a very prominent political player.

Videos of the Newt Gingrich and Richard Holbrooke interviews are presented below along with their transcripts. Videos of Ehud Barak appearing on BBC can be found in the Internet Archive's ["Understanding 9/11" archive](#).

(i) Newt Gingrich, Fox News

[Fox News Anchor Jon Scott at 11:32 AM \(less than three hours after the attacks began\)](#):

"The former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, is joining us now from our Washington bureau. Newt, what's your reaction and what should be America's reaction to these developments?"

Gingrich:

"Well, first of all, I think, everyone's reaction has to be that this is a tragedy for the families that are directly involved — the families that were hijacked on those airplanes, the flight attendants, the pilots, the people who have died today in the World Trade Center and the people who have died today in the Pentagon. I think all of us have to reach out in our hearts to them. But beyond that, as a nation, this is a 21st century Pearl Harbor. This is a 21st-century kind of war. I think we need to refer to it as an act of war. This was not a random event by a random terrorist. This was a systematic, complex operation of military proportions undertaken cleverly by people who have state support and who only survive because they have the support of some states that protect them. And I hope that the American government, the President,

and the American people will react to this as an act of war. This will be more casualties, I believe, than Pearl Harbor. It is at least as horrifying as Pearl Harbor. And it deserves a complete and total American response to ensure that it never happens again.”

After remarks by Scott, Gingrich continues:

“This is a terrible event, but it will become even more terrible if it isn’t the basis of a deliberate, systematic and total American response.”

...

“We need to recognize we can only be a free society if we are prepared to relentlessly pursue and eliminate those who would engage in this kind of war against civilians and against a peaceful society.”

[Scott at 11:36 AM:](#)

“Newt Gingrich, you mentioned that there has to be a coordinated response by the United States. Obviously, it’s too early to know who is responsible. But let’s say that it turns out that Osama bin Laden is somehow behind this. So, what does America do — what kind of pressure can we bring to bear on the Taliban government that is harboring him that we haven’t brought to bear already?”

Gingrich:

“Well, let me just say that we don’t know yet who’s done this, and I don’t think we should rush to judgment, but it is fair to say that bin Laden has claimed credit for having sponsored and financed and structured earlier attacks on the embassies in Africa, for example. It is clear that three weeks ago bin Laden said he would strike the United States in the United States. And the only point I’d make today in the middle of a tragedy — I think we first have to take a deep breath and recognize how big this tragedy is for the American people. That — I don’t think we have to become paranoid, I don’t think we have to go into a bunker mentality — but for eight years we have said publicly that bin Laden is a major threat to the United States. And yet for eight years, while we have launched Tomahawk missiles, we’ve done other things, we haven’t

taken him as seriously as he has taken us. And all I'm suggesting is that if we don't have a decisive response to convince observers that you cannot kill innocent Americans in peace time without retaliation of severe proportions — that other groups and other people will decide that the most open society in the world is also the most vulnerable and they'll exploit those vulnerabilities. I think this is as decisive a moment for our future as Pearl Harbor was in a different way. As I said earlier, this is a 21st century opponent, not an obvious nation state, but in the Sudan, in Afghanistan, in a number of other places, we know where bin Laden's assets are, and we'd need to take the risk of going after them."

[Once again, at 1:29 PM, Gingrich has joined anchor Jon Scott. Gingrich says it's way too early to have sorted out responsibility for the attacks. Then he says:](#)

"I must say though that to hear members of Congress complain about the intelligence service when the budgets have been too small, when for the last 25 years we've adopted rules that were tighter and tighter and stricter and stricter that made it virtually impossible for the American intelligence agencies to penetrate these kind of groups. I think that if the Congress really wants to be helpful they need to pass some immediate action that strengthens our intelligence capability. And instead of playing a blame game they need to take some responsibility for strengthening and enhancing our intelligence. And then I think the Administration has to reach out around the world and make quite clear that we are going to go after whoever did this and that people can decide either to be with the terrorists or to be with the Americans, but there's not going to be any middle ground and there's not going to be any neutrality in the process of getting even. This will turn out to be vastly worse in human life than Pearl Harbor [Fox was at that time estimating 10,000 dead]...this is an act of war..."

...

"I don't believe this was done by a relatively small group. I don't think you could have trained and prepared for this mission; I don't think without sanctuaries, without people who are protecting them, without safe areas; without training camps. This was not prepared in a couple of mobile homes by a handful of fanatics. This is a well-financed, systematic act, and could not be sustained without the support of some

very major states. And we have to make clear that we will not tolerate any nation harboring training grounds, preparation areas, or known fugitives, and that we will exert whatever level of pressure and force is necessary to get those people released. Bin Laden has been a known opponent of the United States for eight years, and we have not exerted the kind of pressure we're capable of. This is an act of war against the American people, against freedom as the President said, and I think we have to react on behalf as we did in 1941 after Pearl Harbor. We have to react with total effort to make sure that this doesn't happen again."

(ii) Ehud Barak, BBC

Immediately after the broadcast of a statement by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, at 11:28 AM Eastern, the anchor for BBC introduces Ehud Barak:

"Joining me now here in the BBC World studio is the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak who's in London at the moment. Mr. Barak, welcome to BBC World. First, your reaction, having heard what's happened. At least four planes have been hijacked. And there may be more."

Barak:

"The world will not be the same from today on. It's an attack against our whole civilization. I don't know who's responsible; I believe we will know in 12 hours. If it is a kind of bin Laden organization, and even if it's something else, I believe that this is the time to deploy a globally concerted effort led by the United States, the UK, Europe and Russia against all sources of terror — the same kind of struggle that our forefathers launched against the piracy on the high seas."

Anchor:

"In your position as Prime Minister, Defense Minister, also formerly in the army, were you ever aware of any incident planned like this?"

Barak:

“Not in the dimensions, but different elements were there. Clearly, there was an attempt on the Twin Towers a few years ago, there was an attempt to explode the Holland Tunnel leading into Manhattan. But of this size and a simultaneous attack — I don’t think that anyone had predicted it in advance.”

Anchor:

“Is it something that security services, intelligence services could ever have got wind of?”

Barak:

“I’m not sure, but this is not the case. It really happened in front of our eyes, and the question is: What should be done in regard to it in order to avoid it in the future? It’s going to be a tough struggle, there will be many tough and painful moments along the way. But I believe that if we will coordinate diplomatic, operational, intelligence and economic activities that will not let them land at any airport and will isolate automatically any nation that is ready to host terror or support them. By doing this consistently along six or ten years, we will reduce dramatically this challenge to all our way of life.”

Anchor:

“Your words, Mr. Barak, are very similar to the words used to justify missile defense in the United States, which may have taken another 10 or 15 years. Here we’ve seen low-tech, hijacked by those with evil intent.”

Barak:

“Yeah, I believe that it’s, first of all, missile defense is also something which we’ve clearly needed as long as [Anchor interrupts: “But it doesn’t stop something like this, does it?”] rogue states...It should be done, and it should be deployed maybe not on national level but only on trans-regional level to cover exactly the threat from rogue states like Iran, Iraq, or Libya. But in this area, we will suffer. It will not be so easy to go aboard an airplane in the near future. But we have no way but to

stand firm facing terror. Otherwise, all our way of life will be threatened. And to stand firm means to isolate from the world every nation that is hosting them, and calling every terror thug with the accurate name and be ready with all the pains that come with it to act upon our observations.”

Anchor:

“What price might democracy have to pay, given what has happened in the last three hours in the United States, given what you’re experiencing now in Israel in the center of Jerusalem from your own citizens now, with the bombing over the weekend?”

Barak:

“There is no shortcuts, you know. Our civilization is already highly vulnerable. Look at the entrances to the gates of boarding airplanes. It’s a situation where it’s not easy. Every simple step crossing borders or going on a plane or on a ship will become more complicated. But, at the same time, it’s a time to identify — there are no more than five or six countries in the world which are directly or indirectly responsible for hosting terror. There are no more than ten or 15 terror thugs in the world. All the organizations are well known. The MI6 know all the information; the CIA know; the Mossad know it. And the same, the [inaudible] ... and it’s time for action. Facing such an attack, we cannot but act. And these terror thugs and rogue leaders are highly skillful in identifying the slightest cracks in the will of power, power of will, of the leaders of the Free World.”

Anchor:

“But let me press this point about democracy, and the price democracy may have to pay, because you know very well that many passengers in the United States have long expected to be able to walk into an airport, get on a domestic aircraft unhindered within about ten minutes of the plane taking off—they expect that as a free country.”

Barak:

“And it’s a part of the problem that we have in a world which is so turbulent that we cannot, we won’t be able to isolate our advanced way of life from what happens around. And it’s a time to launch an operational, concrete war against...em...terror, even it takes certain pains from the routine activities of our normal society.”

Anchor:

“Now, Mr. Barak, you have deep problems, greater tension in the Middle East at the moment, but you’ve used there a war against this kind of terrorism. What can be done, because the great thing that is talked about by people like you—diplomats, politicians, world leaders—is preventing conflict before it happens. When you talk about a war, how do you take a war, or a challenge, or a struggle to those who are determined, through three or four people only today, to hijack four planes—at least, as we know—hit the Pentagon, hit the World Trade Center, try and hit, we believe, somewhere else—how do you take a war to four people?”

Barak:

“I spent decades struggling terror almost, you know, with my ten fingers together with a lot of colleagues all around the world. I believe that the world intelligence community in a concerted effort can identify within few months the sources of this terror. They can identify the places where they are deployed on earth. Every such a place is within certain country. Bin Laden sits in Afghanistan. There is a source of terror...”

Anchor, interrupting:

“But who else [audio not clear] would you identify though? Because we’re not saying he’s responsible for this necessarily.”

Barak:

“No, no. We don’t say that he’s necessarily responsible. We know where other terror thugs are living. We know that [audio unclear] Central Asia is a major route for drugs but at the same time a major route for terror,

and I know that President Putin is highly committed to the struggle against terror, and I feel that he should be part of this international effort. I believe that the MI6 is highly capable—you have proven it along decades. Your own skills in standing firm politically, and acting pointedly, operation against terror. And we should cooperate...”

Anchor:

“Preemptively?”

Barak:

“Both preemptive and by diplomatic means, namely rogue states. There are five of them: Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea. These kind of states should be treated as rogue states. And the same applies to, even to leaders like Arafat. We’ve heard him just recently condemning this — I praise him for this condemnation, but he personally is responsible for many terror events that happened in the last few years. Same happened in some other capitals in the Middle East.”

The above Barak interview is later repeated in full at least twice. At 12:10 PM Eastern, the anchor tells viewers he had Barak on earlier and that Barak thought this was “an attack on civilization.” We then get a replay of the entirety of the earlier Barak interview. At 1:28 PM Eastern, the same anchor again tells us of his interview with Barak, and he then replays the entire interview again.

At 4:12 PM Eastern, a different newscaster is hosting. He says:

“Well, I’m joined here in the studio now by Ehud Barak, who until earlier this year was the Prime Minister of Israel; by James Rubin, who was President Clinton’s Assistant Secretary of State; and by Rosemary Hollis, of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

“Mr. Barak, first of all, should we see this as an act designed to draw attention to what is happening in the Middle East, or should we see it as something quite separate from that?”

Barak:

“It’s clear that the whole Western civilization is at war with world terror. It might have some kind of indirect relationship to something that happened in Afghanistan or somewhere else in the Middle East, but this is not the case. Once they are ready to hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it means that we are basically at war. And I am fully confident the American people, which is a tough and courageous people, and have tough leadership at the helm, they will know how to fight back, and I believe that leaders all around the world, here in the UK, in Europe, in Russia — the Russians will fully cooperate with this— Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel of course, and others should join hands to defeat terror, period. We cannot afford this kind of threat to our whole way of life.”

At 4:20 PM Eastern, the anchor asks Rosemary Hollis if she agrees with Barak’s position and the equally bellicose positions of others being interviewed. She says:

“Well, I think there’s a concern here, because we’re building a case during the course of this program which leans heavily on the verdict that taking it out in retaliation on Osama bin Laden will be the appropriate way to respond. Now, I imagine that means a bombing raid on Afghanistan. What about all those poor Afghans who have nothing to do with Osama bin Laden and who would not be willing supporters of the Taliban government even in Afghanistan if they had any choice? This means, in the terminology of war, collateral damage. This in itself is not resolution of a problem; it’s building more hatred and the perception that the United States wields power without compunction. That is something to be aware of.”

Barak’s response:

“I don’t see that the collateral damage is the real issue at stake now. Look at the collateral damage, so to speak, that happened in the United States. We’re dealing with a world effort, not necessarily Osama bin Laden himself. We all know the names of rogue states: Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Qaddafi to an extent, maybe one more. We all know the names of rogue leaders and the name of thugs of terror. And their names are known to the MI6, to the CIA, to the [inaudible]. And there is a need for

joint effort—diplomatic, economic, intelligence-wise and operation-wise. The same way our ancestors fought against the piracy on the high seas. No airport and no port terrorists should be allowed to land, and whoever host them, directly or indirectly support them, should be automatically isolated from the community and family of nations. This is the only way. Without this clarity of purpose there will be no world order possible, period.”

Hollis:

“Well, we’re talking about declaring war and you’re talking about doing it in protection of democracy and you’re talking about sacrificing some of that democracy in the prosecution of that war...”

Barak (interrupting):

“I’m not...weapons these days are accurate enough, it’s not a matter — I don’t want to go into the operational details. Once there is a will, a clear will of world leadership to put an end to it, it will take a lot of painful moments — ups and downs and even tough moments like this one — but we will prevail and democracy will overcome this phenomenon of terrorism in ten years.”

(iii) Richard Holbrooke, CNN

[Richard Holbrooke at 1:23 PM:](#)

“I need to underscore one point. To find the people responsible is going to take a unified international effort. No one nation, not even the United States, can do it on its own. We must have the full cooperation of the Russians, of the states in the Middle East — I think the assumption that that’s the region where this was planned —and — and I repeat this again — any nation that is seen to have harbored or abetted or sheltered any of these people must be treated as co-equally responsible. They cannot hide behind the facade we just saw in the remarks of the Taliban Foreign Minister. And Peter Bergen’s extraordinarily insightful explanation a few minutes ago on CNN, I think, is the first real glimpse into...that the viewers have had into how dangerous this is. If the Taliban shelters Osama bin Laden, as they do, and if Osama bin Laden is

responsible for this, as, I think, almost everyone is going to suspect, then the Taliban must be held equally responsible for what has happened today.”

Jeff Greenfield then asks:

“Ambassador Holbrooke, what — I’d like you to be specific — what does that mean? Are you talking about a retaliatory strike...[Greenfield continues in this vein]?”

Holbrooke:

“Jeff, let me be very frank—and I don’t want to lapse into bloody-minded verbal excesses at a moment of high emotion. But let’s be very blunt about this. If a country, or regime — the Taliban or some other regime to be determined by the intelligence community — has sheltered people who played a role in this, they cannot hide behind the attributes of ‘they didn’t know it, they had nothing to do with it.’ They must cooperate in the pursuit of the people responsible. And since the Taliban leader has been publicly proclaimed by Osama bin Laden as the present spiritual leader of the Muslim world — I’m referring to bin Laden’s declaration that Mullah Mohammed Omar is the rightful spiritual leader of the Muslim world, something he said on tape, quoted by John Burns in the *New York Times* two days ago. And if, in fact, these people are in some degree of collusion, I personally believe — and I’m only speaking for myself here — I personally believe that the Taliban should be regarded as co-equally responsible for this, and therefore, if and when we consider military action, it is fully justified and the Taliban should face the same consequences.”

[Holbrooke then appears again on CNN at 7:48 PM, about six hours later:](#)

“In the past, Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, who do not represent national governments — a distinction which is critically important — but are sheltered in various countries in the world, including Afghanistan, sometimes North Korea, Iraq, Libya, have played this shell game, where the government that shelters them and protects them says, well, we don’t know where they are. I think it is absolutely essential for the United States to lead an international effort now that

makes clear that any country [video of dust and injured people and rescue workers in Manhattan playing in background while he's talking] which shelters people is part of an act of war against the United States. The United States, Paula [Zahn], cannot make the response alone ... Unless we have international united front of the European allies, the Russians, the Chinese, and — and I want to stress this — the moderate Arab states, which must close ranks to get the extremists who are behind this, we're not going to be able to succeed.”

...

“Any government which shelters the people who did this has to be held equally responsible for it as an act of war. And we are going to have to mobilize an international coalition for that position as we prepare to take the necessary military responses. [He says he is in agreement with Henry Kissinger on this.] . . . John King and others on your excellent coverage have suggested that the administration is 90% sure it's Osama bin Laden. If some countries don't participate, let them understand that they're joining a coalition of terrorists who have declared war on the United States. . . . Osama bin Laden is not a government, but if he is indeed, as the Administration appears to believe, behind this, anyone trafficking with him should be on notice that that is tantamount to an act of war by a government.”

(b) The Bin Laden Narrative

In this narrative, the War on Terror narrative is personified in an evil individual, the Saudi and former U.S. ally Osama bin Laden. Less mythical and more political, this narrative is supported with reasoning and with what appears at first blush to be evidence.

In our view, the simple identification of the perpetrator, which happens early in the day, is key to this propaganda method. Equally simple, and equally important, is the constant repetition of the name of this designated perpetrator — a means of crowding out other possibilities.

Bin Laden's name was repeated on television so many times during the day that we have not attempted to make a list of each mention. We have, however, listed the most important mentions of Bin Laden during the day on two

networks, Fox News and CNN. Altogether, our list totals 56 mentions on Fox News between 9:03 AM and 4:32 PM and 69 mentions on CNN between 9:55 AM and 10:50 PM. These are given chronologically, in the order in which they occurred on 9/11, in Appendix B.

Journalists play an important role in keeping the designated perpetrator in front of the public, so we have listed their names below. But the weight of respectability is achieved through dignitaries and experts, so we list them first. The dignitaries and experts who appeared on television on these two networks to lend weight to the Bin Laden narrative are given with their main titles or qualifications as of September 2001.

In total, we counted 13 promoters of the Bin Laden narrative on Fox News and 18 promoters of the Bin Laden narrative on CNN. All of them made strikingly similar claims, none of which could ever be substantiated with evidence capable of being presented in a courtroom.

Fox News

Dignitaries

Alexander Haig

General, U.S. Army; U.S. Secretary of State; U.S. White House Chief of Staff

Newt Gingrich

U.S. Representative; Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives.

Sandy Berger

U.S. National Security Advisor

Lawrence Korb

Captain, U.S. Navy; Assistant Secretary of Defense; Member, Council on Foreign Relations ; Co-author, "Integrated Power: A National Security Strategy for the 21st Century"

Lawrence Eagleburger

Secretary of State

Professor Barry Levin

Terrorism Expert

Robert Maginnis

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army; Fox News military analyst

Journalists

Jon Scott

Journalist and News Anchor, Fox News

Rita Cosby

Journalist, Fox News

David Shuster

Journalist, Fox News

Shepard Smith

Journalist, Fox News

John Gibson

Journalist and Co-anchor, Fox News

Tony Snow

Journalist, Fox News (later White House press secretary)

CNN

Dignitaries

Wesley Clark

General, U.S. Army (retired, 2000); Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO (1997-2000)

Orrin Hatch

U.S. Senator, Utah

Richard Holbrooke

U.S. Diplomat; Assistant Secretary of State (twice)

William Cohen
U.S. Representative; U.S. Senator; Secretary of Defense (1997-2001)

Lawrence Eagleburger
Secretary of State

John Kerry
Naval Officer; U.S. Senator

L. Paul Bremer
Foreign Service; Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorism
(appointed 1999)

James Baker
White House Chief of Staff (twice); Secretary of the Treasury; Secretary of
State

Bill Richardson
U.S. Representative; U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; Secretary of
Energy

Julie Sirrs
Military analyst, U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, specializing in bin Laden
and the Taliban

Journalists

Aaron Brown
Journalist and News Anchor, CNN

John King
Journalist, CNN (senior White House correspondent)

David Ensor
Journalist, CNN (national security correspondent)

Judy Woodruff,
Journalist and Co-anchor, CNN

Paula Zahn
Journalist and Co-anchor, CNN

Wolf Blitzer
Journalist and Co-anchor, CNN

Peter Bergen
Journalist and Terrorism Analyst, CNN

Jeff Greenfield
Journalist and Senior analyst, CNN; Former Speechwriter for Senator Robert F. Kennedy

How the Stories Worked to Favor One Hypothesis of the Destruction of the Twin Towers

As the two stories were spun on television throughout the day of 9/11, both the testimony of eyewitnesses and the explosion hypothesis based on their testimony gradually faded into the void.

The story of the evil attackers appeared to assume, even though this was seldom directly stated, that the buildings were simply knocked down by the airplanes. Precisely how these airplane impacts could have destroyed these buildings in the way witnessed was not explained, beyond the vague and erroneous statements by a few engineers. Essentially, the viewing public was encouraged to feel that it must have happened this way, and they were not encouraged to inquire deeply into the “how” of it. This process was greatly aided both by the emotions encouraged by the stories and by a well-known logical fallacy, the *post hoc* fallacy.

The *post hoc* fallacy involves the erroneous conclusion that because x comes after y, y must have caused x. In the present case, the fallacy took the form: Planes crashed into buildings and afterwards the buildings came down; therefore, the plane crashes caused the buildings to come down.

The viewing public, it was assumed, would be easily captured by the gripping stories, and in their infantile mental state would never notice the flawed reasoning or inquire into the details of the matter.

How the Stories Suited the U.S. Temperament

The stories promoted on television on 9/11 fit the American psyche like a glove. One of the most prevalent and deeply cultivated political and moral stories of the 20th century for U.S. citizens is the story of aggression. Germany was found guilty of aggression after both WWI and WWII. Japan was accused of an “unprovoked attack” in the Pearl Harbor event that was used to bring the U.S. into WWII. Since Nuremberg, “Communist aggression” became a widely used phrase and a pillar of the Cold War. The Gulf of Tonkin incident, for example, was in this way made into a pretext for massive U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.

It is not our intention to review each of these events. We believe the aggression claims in the above incidents range from fully justified through weak to fabricated. What matters here is that the U.S. national psyche was programmed to believe readily in external aggression against the U.S. and its allies, whereas aggression issuing from the U.S. or its allies was impossible to conceive, was simply outside the national narrative.

Narrative versus Evidence

Had a proper investigation been initiated on 9/11, based on the experience and reasoning presented on television that day, every one of the journalists who directly witnessed explosions at the time of the Twin Towers’ destruction would have been able to offer courtroom-worthy evidence. They would have been able to recount what they themselves had perceived with their senses.

By contrast, not one of the journalists or prominent persons on Fox News and CNN promoting the War on Terror and Bin Laden narratives would have been able to offer comparable evidence. They would have fared badly in a courtroom, having nothing to offer but speculation and hearsay.

However gripping their stories, story is not evidence.

Conclusion

We may summarize our findings on the 9/11 psychological operation by listing nine of the major propaganda elements at play that day.

First, however, let us remember a central fact lying beneath and behind the nine elements — namely, that on 9/11 television was used to evoke shock and confusion in U.S. citizens, and in citizens around the world, by transmitting the horrific images of the day. No words, no analysis, can compete with the images of the airplane strikes, the disintegrating towers, and the shocked reactions of people on the scene.

Such shock ensures that critical thinking will be at a low ebb, while old loyalties and a desire to pull together in the face of violence will be very powerful. We have not studied this aspect of the operation in this article, but all nine elements below must be understood in this context.

1. Identify the chosen perpetrator quickly. (Jon Scott on Fox News names Bin Laden approximately 42 seconds after the second airplane strike.)
2. Repeat this suspect's name very frequently, not allowing any other possibility to compete. (Fox News carried at least 56 important mentions of Bin Laden and CNN carried at least 69 in the hours of news coverage we studied.)
3. Make a variety of claims and suggestions about the perpetrator that make his/her guilt appear likely — no actual evidence necessary — and intimate that intelligence sources are, somewhere behind the curtain, building a strong case that we will eventually see.
4. Make strategic use of selected “experts.” If news anchors are toying with heretical hypotheses about the destruction of the Twin Towers, bring building professionals in to set them straight — as before, no actual evidence is necessary.
5. Normalize the abnormal. Make it seem as if it is natural that this massive and complex operation could have been carried out by Bin Laden's crew, and do not mention the state organizations far more suited to the task.
6. Do not hesitate to make use of flawed logic where it is helpful — we have given post hoc ergo propter hoc as the example that supports the fire-induced collapse hypothesis.
7. Tell gripping stories and repeat them throughout the day. Link these

specific stories to Grand Narratives fundamental to the nation, such as those of aggression and savagery.

8. Push aside actual courtroom-worthy evidence (such as eyewitness evidence) explicitly when necessary, as through the use of select “experts”; otherwise erase such evidence indirectly through dramatic story-telling that appears to support the official hypothesis being constructed.
9. Make profligate use of state authorities. Citizens reduced to a state of fear will be open to hearing from a former Secretary of Defense, even if what he has to offer is thin gruel.

To study the day’s events as they unfolded on television is to experience in a shockingly direct way how a well-oiled propaganda system — of which television is a central component — can spin grand and lethal yarns that silence the citizens who experience, who witness, who suffer, and who constitute the epistemic backbone of democracy.

The ability of this propaganda system to achieve the triumph of the Official Narrative in a matter of hours suggests to us that while good science is necessary for dispelling the Official Narrative, alone it may not be sufficient.

Oftentimes, researchers (engineers, scientists, academics, etc.) carry on their research as if they were merely studying the natural world — a world that has no interest in the researchers and does not look back at them. But in cases such as 9/11, researchers are working within an intellectual context shaped by an intelligent opponent. This opponent is neither inert nor disinterested, but looks back at the researcher. It has intentionally laid down sets of false claims and dead-end trails and can be expected to continue to do so.

This does not mean that researchers and activists should give up their focus on good science. Rather, it means that those who are dedicated to revealing the truth about 9/11 must think deeply about how to carry out good science *and* good communication within the specific context of a still-ongoing psychological operation.

Evidence could not stop the Official Narrative from triumphing on 9/11, and evidence alone will not defeat the Official Narrative now.

Appendix A: Statements by News Anchors and Guests, and Lower Third Captions

ABC

10:02 AM: Peter Jennings, anchor

Jennings [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “The southern tower, 10:00 eastern time this morning, just collapsing on itself. This is a place where thousands of people work. We have no idea what caused this. If you wish to bring — anybody who’s ever watched a building being demolished on purpose knows that if you’re going to do this you have to get at the under infrastructure of a building and bring it down.”

Don Dahler: “Peter?”

Jennings: “Yes, [Don].”

Dahler [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “What appeared to happen from my vantage point, the top part of the building was totally involved in fire, and there appeared to be no effort possible to put that fire out. It looked like the top part of the building was so weakened by the fire the weight of it collapsed the rest of the building. That’s what appeared to happen. I did not see anything happening at the base of the building. It all appeared to start at the top and then just collapse the rest of the building by the sheer weight of it. There was no explosion or anything at the base part of it. But I did see that the top part of it started to collapse. The walls started to bulge out, glass things coming out. And then it collapsed down on itself. And then it appeared to just fold down from there, from the very top.”

Jennings: “Thanks, Don, very much.”

10:22 AM: John Miller, guest, and Peter Jennings, anchor

Miller: “They are now concerned about the possibility of a second collapse.”

Jennings: “I’m still desperately confused, John, about what may have caused the building to collapse.”

Miller [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “As you watch the videotape, it appeared to buckle from the middle, from the point of impact and collapse, which, with no background in architecture — I don’t know about the structural vulnerability — but as you see, debris starts to fall. . .”

Jennings: “It just peels away.”

11:13 AM: John Miller, guest

Miller [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Consider the prospect of sifting for evidence: trying to find the black boxes, the in-flight recorders, evidence of other explosives there.”

Unknown Time in the Evening: Peter Jennings, anchor, Robert Krulwich, correspondent, and Jon Magnusson, guest (structural engineer)

Jennings: “Now, to try to examine the building, ABC's Robert Krulwich has put together a piece on the structural engineering of the World Trade Center. Perhaps [it will] help us to understand, when these two aircraft hit these two towers today, exactly what was going on. Robert?”

Krulwich [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Why did the towers collapse as quickly and as suddenly as they did? Engineers from the original firm that built the towers told ABC they can only guess at this point. But they believe that the collisions themselves — the plane hitting building number one and the plane that smashed into building number two — by themselves, they did not cause the collapse. It was the fire, they say — the intense fire and heat from the explosions that brought the buildings down.

“Temperatures inside could have built up to 1,500–1,600 degrees Fahrenheit. At that temperature, steel loses its strength. And steel beams connect every floor to the outside walls. As it got hotter, the beams got weaker. And the hot air inside began to push and press against the outside walls, until the outside walls just buckled, snapped, and released the top floor, which fell onto the floor below. And the entire building sinks in a straight vertical — the floors

going faster and faster down, until you notice that every floor in the building is gone.

“Viewed from another angle you can see the same thing. Notice the aerial stays vertical, just stays straight as it sinks into the building. There's no buckling or tipping — just straight down.

“And this happened in both buildings. The first tower, too, stayed straight as it went down, each floor falling neatly on top of the other.

“So, the reason the towers went so quickly is because all of the floors were literally hanging onto the skin. And once the skin went, the buildings went, too. Robert Krulwich, ABC News.”

Jennings: “Well, that report [comes] as we look at New York City at night, which has a still quality about it tonight. [It's] the city of light at night, as so many American cities are, but there's a still, almost calm, look of it from the sky. It's anything but that on the ground.

“But this is the second time, from Robert Krulwich and also from some architects and engineers we talked to a little earlier, that say it was the heat which caused the buildings to collapse, because the steel at the top of the building would maybe have only been able to sustain an hour, an hour and a half, of intense fire. And then the steel building, as Robert pointed out so clearly, collapsed all the way down to the bottom.

“I think we have with us, on the phone or in person, from Seattle, Jon Magnusson, who is an engineer. Jon, are you there? Jon Magnusson, who is with the company that actually built the World Trade Center. Jon, have you heard our two layman explanations tonight of what it was we think collapsed the buildings, and do you agree or disagree?”

Magnusson [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “I agree. I need to say one thing: At the time of the design of the World Trade Center, that was in the mid-1960s and I was in sixth grade — to put into perspective how much time has passed since this design was actually completed.

“But the description of the fact that steel, when it gets up to 1,500–1,600 degrees Fahrenheit, loses its strength, is accurate. The buildings actually

survived the impact of both the planes, and it was really the fire that finally created the disaster.”

Jennings: “And the upper floor fell on the next floor down, which fell on the next floor, and the sheer accumulation of weight just forced the whole building to collapse on its own.”

Magnusson: “Right. From the videotape — I can only go from what I've seen on television — but the videotape shows that several of the upper floors fell onto the next lower floor that was still intact. And once that happens, there's going to be an instant overload situation, and then it will fail. And then that will drop down to the next floor, into another instant overload situation. And so the floors just progressively collapsed down all the way to the bottom.”

Jennings: “I appreciate the fact that you were very young in the mid-1960s, when the Trade Towers were built. Though I've heard it said earlier today that they, in fact, were stronger, more sensible structures than many of the more daring-shaped buildings that are being built in parts of the world today.”

Graphic on the screen:

WORLD TRADE CENTER STRUCTURE
Groundbreaking August 5, 1966
First Tower completed 1970: 1,368 ft high—110 stories
Second Tower completed 1973: 1,362 ft high—110 stories
Cost: \$1.5 billion

Magnusson: “Right. The term that structural engineers use is redundancy. And the World Trade Center towers really set a new standard in redundancy. And that's why those airplanes were able to crash into the towers without causing the structural failure. The buildings were still standing. And then the problem was the fire and the jet fuel. And in normal buildings, all the steel is protected with fireproofing and there are sprinkler systems, but they're not designed to protect against a jet fuel fire inside of a building.”

Jennings: “Can you be a little more precise what you mean by ‘redundancy’?”

Magnusson: “‘Redundancy’ is if you have a structural element that is damaged and is no longer able to carry the load, that that load is able to be passed onto

other elements or other columns or other beams within the building. And the columns on the World Trade Center — they were spaced at 39 inches on center all the way across each face.”

Jennings: “What does that mean: ‘39 inches at center’?”

Magnusson: “Every three feet, three inches, there was a column that supported the building. So they were very closely spaced together. [On] many buildings, the columns are ten, fifteen feet apart — or more. And so having these very closely spaced columns on the outside created a lot of redundancy. That’s why there was able to be a hole in the side. If you go back and look at the tapes, there was a tremendous hole in the side of the building, and it didn’t collapse until the fire brought it down.”

Jennings: “And Trade Tower Number Seven, which was the last to go, which was a building 47 stories high, do you have any sense of why it ultimately collapsed? Was it the concussion of the other buildings collapsing which undermined it?”

Magnusson: “I’m not familiar with that building. We were not involved in [designing] that building. And I haven’t seen any of the details on that yet.”

Jennings: “So aside from your horror, which I assume you share with the rest of us today, when you look at what has happened today, have you learned something?”

Magnusson: “Well, it’s a very difficult situation, because if you take that much of a load and that much jet fuel and you put it into a building, there’s very little that you can do. And, really, I think the solution to this will be to keep the planes and keep these attacks away from the doorsteps of these buildings.”

CBS

[9:59 AM: Brian Gumble, anchor](#)

Gumble [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We understand now there has been a secondary explosion on Tower 2. With that we will leave you and turn it over to Dan Rather.”

10:28 AM: Dan Rather, anchor

Rather [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We’re going to interrupt you, David Martin, and come back here to New York, because the second tower in the World Trade Center is teetering and looks like it may be in the process of collapsing. The second World Trade Center tower just had another explosion — we can’t call it a secondary explosion — and appears to be in the process of collapsing.”

10:38 AM: Dan Rather, anchor

[Note: Several networks reported a “fourth explosion” at 10:38 AM. These are not considered mentions of the “explosion hypothesis” in our analysis. Nevertheless, we deemed these reports relevant enough to include in the appendix because they paint a picture of how people at the networks were interpreting the events.]

Dan Rather: “There’s been a fourth explosion at the World Trade Center, just reported. Claire McIntyre was an eyewitness to this collapse of the World Trade Center. Ms. McIntyre?”

Claire McIntyre: “Yes, hi.”

Rather: “What did you see? What did you feel? What did you hear?”

McIntyre: “Well, I’m on the 91st floor of Building 1. And I face the north side. And I was at my computer. And I heard the plane. And then I saw it hit right above us, the 92nd or 93rd floor probably, or even 94. And our whole floor just fell to pieces practically. And we got out though. Everybody in my company got out. . . . And when we came out we were walking up the block to get away from the building, and that’s when 2 World Trade Center blew up. And we were just in a cloud of darkness.”

11:25 AM: Dan Rather, anchor

Rather: “Then there was a fourth explosion, a fourth counted big explosion rocked the collapsed remains of the World Trade Center. That was at about 10:38 AM eastern time.”

12:13 PM (Approximately): Dan Rather, anchor, and Jerome Hauer, guest (bio-terrorism official)

Rather [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Is this massive destruction of the World Trade Center — based on what you know, and I recognize we’re dealing with so few facts — is it possible that just plane crash could have collapsed these buildings? Or would it have required the sort of prior positioning of other explosives in the building? What do you think?”

Hauer [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “No, my sense is that just, one, the velocity of the plane, and the fact that you have a plane filled with fuel hitting that building that burned. The velocity of the plane certainly had an impact on the structure itself. And then the fact that it burned and you had that intense heat probably weakened the structure as well. I think it was simply the planes hitting the building and causing the collapse.”

NBC

12:37 PM: Katie Couric, anchor

Couric [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Clearly, this was a suicide mission of enormous magnitude. And of course we heard speculation from Pat Dawson at the scene that there might have even been a secondary bomb on board the aircraft, although who knows what kind of explosion would occur if a plane actually crashes in a building that’s 110 stories high.”

1:40 PM: Tom Brokaw, anchor

Brokaw [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “This is as effective as a bomb being dropped there, or two bombs, in effect. Commercial airliners flown into those two buildings, and then they came down — we presume because of the initial explosion. There may have been secondary explosions as well that were detonated in the building by these terrorists.”

2:28 PM: Tom Brokaw, anchor

Brokaw [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS AND FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “No one could have anticipated that it would happen as swiftly

or as catastrophically as it did. It does lead one to wonder whether there was a secondary explosion of some kind within the building. Although it did take, in both instances, a terrible, terrible hit at the top. These buildings are secure. The World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. It managed to survive that. But, nonetheless, the full effect of these two airliners, both considerable size with a lot of fuel on board, brought down two of the iconic buildings in Manhattan.”

4:48 PM: Tom Brokaw, anchor

Brokaw [AMBIGUOUS]: “There’s a 40-story building that is near the Trade Center that is in danger of collapsing as well because of the shock of the explosion that was coincidental with the two towers coming down. Forty fire companies we are told are in the immediate area. Well, there were 40 fire companies in the immediate Trade Center area just before the towers collapsed. The great fear is that many of those, of New York’s finest were lost in that debris, and all that rubble, and the force of that explosion.”

CNN

9:59 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Wow! Jamie. Jamie, I need you to stop for a second. There has just been a huge explosion. We can see a billowing smoke rising. And I can’t — I’ll tell you that I can’t see that second tower. But there was a cascade of sparks and fire and now this...it looks almost like a mushroom cloud, explosion, this huge, billowing smoke in the second tower. This was the second of the two towers hit. And I, you know, I cannot see behind that smoke obviously, as you can’t either. The first tower in front has not changed. And we see this extraordinarily (sic) and frightening scene behind us of this second tower now just encased in smoke. What is behind it...I cannot tell you. But just look at that. That is about as frightening a scene as you will ever see.”

10:02 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Again, there has been a second explosion here in Manhattan at the Trade Center. We are getting reports that a part of the tower, the second tower, the one a bit further to the south of us, has collapsed. We are checking on that. . . . What we can tell you is that just in the

last several minutes here — two or three minutes — a second or third, I guess, technically, extraordinary event has happened here in lower Manhattan. You can see this extraordinary plume of smoke that is, or was at least, the second tower of the World Trade Center.”

10:03 AM: CNN Banner

Banner [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “BREAKING NEWS: THIRD EXPLOSION SHATTERS WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK”

10:03 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “and then just in the last several minutes there has been a second explosion or, at least, perhaps not an explosion, perhaps part of the building simply collapsed. And that’s what we saw and that’s what we’re looking at.”

10:04 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “This is just a few minutes ago...we don’t know if...something happened, another explosion, or if the building was so weakened...it just collapsed.”

10:06 AM: CNN Banner

Banner [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “BREAKING NEWS: THIRD EXPLOSION COLLAPSES WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK”

10:10 AM: CNN Banner

Banner [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “BREAKING NEWS: THIRD EXPLOSION COLLAPSES WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK”

10:29 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We believe now that we can say that both, that portions of both Towers of the World Trade Centre, have collapsed. Whether there were second explosions, that is to say, explosions other than the planes hitting them, that caused this to happen we cannot tell you.”

10:31 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “This is tape. And you can see now, whether that was an explosion, or exactly what happened that caused that second tower to collapse, we cannot tell you.”

10:41 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Was there... Brian, did it sound like there was an explosion before the second collapse, or was the noise the collapse itself?”

Brian Palmer: “Well, from our distance... I was not able to distinguish between an explosion and the collapse. We were several hundred yards away. But we clearly saw the building come down. I heard your report of a fourth explosion: I can’t confirm that. But we heard some “boom” and then the building fold in on itself.”

10:53 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “About a half an hour after that...the first Tower — let me correct that, the South Tower, the second Tower, the one to the left, collapsed. It collapsed in a cascade of smoke and spark, and what we cannot tell you is if there was a second explosion that caused that collapse or if it was simply. . . . [unfinished sentence] Then shortly after that, just as the smoke was starting to clear away, the second Tower. . . It almost looks like one of those implosions of buildings that you see, except there is nothing controlled about this...this is devastation.”

11:17 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown: “About half an hour after that [i.e., after the second plane crash] the first of the — that tower that is now you see in flame there in your shot collapsed. The top collapsed. And there was an enormous — uh, uh, I don’t want to say “explosion,” but there was an enormous plume of smoke, sparks, as we looked over from where we’re standing.”

[Note: We do not count this as a mention of the explosion hypothesis since Brown is saying he doesn't want to call it an explosion.]

11:17 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Our reporters in the area say they heard loud noises when that happened. It is unclear to them and to us whether those were explosions going on in the building or if that was simply the sound of the collapse of the buildings as they collapsed, making these huge noises as they came down.”

11:46 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS AND FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “As they were trying to get out, the South Tower collapsed. It collapsed in an enormous plume of smoke and spark, and what we can't tell you is if there was a second explosion or if this collapse was simply a . . . structural collapse caused by the plane that hit it perhaps a half hour before. And then just a few minutes after that, it wasn't very long, as you will see, it happened again. The second Tower came tumbling down. And you can see that it almost looks like one of those — almost looks like one of those planned implosions, but of course there was nothing planned, and it was not an implosion as you see...”

12:31 PM: Aaron Brown, anchor, and Mayor Rudy Giuliani, guest

Brown [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Sir, do you believe that — was there another set of explosions that caused the buildings to collapse, or was it the structural damage caused by the planes?”

Giuliani [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “I don't, I don't know, I, uh, I, uh . . . I, I saw the first collapse and heard the second 'cause I was in a building when the second took place. I think it was structural but I cannot be sure.”

2:07 PM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “The smoke continues to pour out of the area where the Trade Center towers were. They are no more. They collapsed in the hour after the attack.”

2:08 PM: CNN Banner

Banner [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “BOTH TOWERS OF WORLD TRADE CENTER HAVE COLLAPSED”

2:58 PM: Joie Chen, anchor

Chen [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “You see really just almost an explosion, an implosion, as it just gave away.”

4:20 PM: Aaron Brown, anchor, and Jim DeStefano, guest (structural engineer)

Aaron Brown: “Jim DeStefano is a structural engineer. He knows about big buildings and what happens in these sort of catastrophic moments. He joins us from Deerfield, Connecticut on the phone. Jim, the plane hits. What — and I hope this isn’t a terribly oversimplified question — but what happens to the building itself, the structure?”

[CNN Caption: “VOICE OF JIM DESTEFANO NATL. COUN. STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS”]

DeStefano [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Well, it’s a tremendous impact that’s applied to the building when a collision like this occurs. And it’s clear that that impact was sufficient to do damage to the columns and the bracing system supporting the building. That coupled with the fire raging and the high temperatures softening the structural steel then precipitated a destabilization of the columns and clearly the columns buckled at the lower floors causing the building to collapse.”

Brown: “So it is a combination of — as we see again this extraordinary shot of the second plane hitting the Tower — it is a combination of the impact of the plane itself, and then the fire that ensues that causes these — I don’t know, are they called ‘beams’? — to buckle?”

Jim DeStefano: “It’s the columns, the vertical elements are columns, and those are the elements that are holding the whole building up, and those are the critical, vulnerable elements that clearly failed in a buckling mode from the high temperatures and the damage from the impact.”

Aaron Brown: “Now, I’m not asking you to assign any blame to anyone about anything here. But just give me an idea if in fact you can design these buildings in such a way so that this sort of thing does not happen even in a catastrophic event.”

Jim DeStefano: “Well, it’s very difficult when you’re designing a structure like this to imagine all the scenarios of things that might occur to the building during its construction. It’s my understanding that when this building was designed, one of the criteria that it was designed for was a direct hit from a 707. Um, clearly planes are larger today and it wasn’t considered the effects of the aftermath fires and high temperatures that would have been applied to the structure subsequent to the collision as we saw today.”

4:33 PM: Joie Chen, anchor

Chen [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “The North Tower had collapsed already. This is the South Tower [she has confused the two towers] you can see collapsing into the streets of Lower Manhattan, just falling away, as you see it there, just falling away, falling into the sky, falling into pieces all over Lower Manhattan. So you can understand the tremendous amount of ash just dumped on Lower Manhattan today.”

4:42 PM: Jeffrey Beatty, guest (counter-terrorism expert)

Beatty [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “So we’re yet to determine — we’ve heard reports of secondary explosions after the aircraft impacted — whether there wasn’t something else at the base of the towers that, in fact, were the coup de grace to bring them to the ground.”

Fox News

9:59 AM: Jon Scott, anchor, and Bill Daley, guest

Scott: “Jim, let me interrupt you. We are looking at live pictures of the World Trade Center literally starting to crumble. It is...it is...falling apart as we watch these pictures live. The World Trade Center, 110 stories, literally starting to fall. Bill Daley, let me bring you into the conversation. I know this was the goal of the terrorist strike back in 1993.”

Daley [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Jon, it was. And they thought they could do it by putting charges down in the basement and damaging the under-structure. And as much as these buildings were built to withstand a certain large hit, including some aircraft, apparently the structural integrity appears — from what we can see here — to be faltering to some degree.”

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “They were not designed, perhaps, to take a direct strike from something the size of a 737, or perhaps an Airbus, perhaps fully loaded with fuel. *Steel will melt.*”

[10:01 AM: Jon Scott, anchor \[responding to reporter David Lee Miller’s reporting of a “very loud blast, an explosion” and talk on the street of “some other attack”\]](#)

Miller: “Jon, the scene is horrific. One of the two Towers literally collapsed. I was making my way to the foot of the World Trade Center. Suddenly, while talking to an officer, who was questioning me about my press credentials, we heard a very loud blast, an explosion. We looked up, and the building literally began to collapse before us... I am now standing in a black cloud of smoke... I’m on a payphone on the street right now and I literally cannot see more than quarter-block away.... Not clear now is why this explosion took place. Was it because of the planes that, uh, two planes, dual attacks this morning, or was there some other attack which is — there has been talk of here on the street.”

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Yeah, David, we are looking at the replay of what happened that you're describing — it happened just moments ago — it sure appears that the building simply collapsed...of its own weight, that there was so much damage from the heat of the fire...as I said, steel will melt. That was the building that was hit by the second plane, the plane that we actually saw hit the building, live, during our coverage. That is the building that has just collapsed. Now, it bears noting that that plane seemed to come in at a lower altitude. It hit the building lower down and there

was that tremendous fireball, so the damage to the building came at a point where there is much more weight on top of it, and those steel girders, strong as they are, had a lot of weight to support and, apparently – I'm not a structural engineer, but I'm just guessing now – that they gave way.”

[10:09 AM: Jon Scott, anchor \[responding to reporter Rick Levanthal's reporting of a “huge explosion”\]](#)

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Rick Leventhal is not able to hear me but from his vantage point on the ground I think it's not clear to him what's fairly clear to us — our vantage point from the helicopter — that the top of Tower One, One World Trade Center, has literally crumbled.”

[10:32 AM: Jon Scott, anchor \[responding to reporter David Lee Miller's report of a “huge explosion” as the second tower went down\]](#)

Scott: “David Lee, what can you tell us?”

Miller: “Jon, just seconds ago there was a huge explosion and it appears right now the second World Trade Tower has just collapsed. . .”

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Alright, David Lee. Stay safe. We are looking now at pictures, this of the second of the two World Trade Center towers collapsing after that awful, awful event.”

[10:43 AM: Jon Scott, anchor](#)

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “You are looking at the pictures from the last half hour or so, as the first tower simply collapsed on itself. . . Now here comes the second tower. This is the one that had the TV antenna on top, simply imploding on itself.”

[10:53 AM: Jon Scott, anchor](#)

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Here is the first of those towers coming down. This is the one that was actually hit by the second plane. It was hit lower. There was more weight on those steel girders that had been damaged. And here comes the second tower, the tower with the signature television antenna on top. Both of them simply imploding in on themselves.”

11:03 AM: Jon Scott, anchor

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: "That tremendous fireball, you can imagine, triggered a fire inside the building that apparently weakened the structural elements to the point that the upper level of the building simply could not stand. It collapsed."

11:51 AM: Rick Leventhal, reporter, and Mark Walsh, Fox freelancer (known to many as "Harley Guy")

Leventhal: "We want to bring in Mark Walsh, who's a freelancer for Fox. You live just a few blocks away and witnessed..."

Walsh: "Dude, I live on the 43rd floor of a building which is five blocks from the World Trade Center itself. I witnessed the entire thing from beginning to end."

Rick Leventhal: "People talk about how it looked like a movie. I know when I came walking down here earlier this morning and saw both towers on fire, and people on every street corner, it was like a movie. But you watched the planes hit the towers?"

Mark Walsh [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: "I was watching with my roommate. It was approximately several minutes after the first plane had hit. I saw this plane come out of nowhere and just ream right into the side of the Twin Tower, exploding through the other side. And then I witnessed both towers collapse, one first and then the second, mostly due to structural failure because the fire was just too intense."

12:38 PM: Fox News Crawl Text

Crawl Text [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: "TERRORISTS BOMB BOTH TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NYC...BOTH TOWERS COLLAPSE WITHIN MINUTES OF EACH OTHER"

12:43 PM: Fox News Crawl Text

Crawl Text [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “TERRORISTS BOMB BOTH TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NYC...BOTH TOWERS COLLAPSE WITHIN MINUTES OF EACH OTHER”

12:45 PM: Fox News Banner

Banner: “1038A: 4TH EXPLOSION ROCKS REMAINS OF WORLD TRADE CTR”

[Note: This is another appearance of the 10:38 AM explosion report. We did not count this as a mention of the explosion hypothesis.]

12:58 PM: Jon Scott, anchor

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “The structural steel in those towers, steel that was thought to be strong enough to withstand this kind of attack, ultimately gave way to the heat of the burning fuel from those aircraft.”

1:18 PM: Fox News Crawl Text

Crawl Text [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “TERRORISTS BOMB BOTH TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NYC...BOTH TOWERS COLLAPSE WITHIN MINUTES OF EACH OTHER”

2:00 PM: Jon Scott, anchor

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “...that tower, the one which was hit, that tower could no longer stand the strain of the flames that weakened the structural elements, and the tower collapsed, sending concrete, glass, steel raining down almost a quarter mile onto the streets below.”

3:00 PM: Jon Scott, anchor

Scott [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “This is the collapse of the second tower that was hit. It was the first one to collapse, perhaps because the structural damage there so much more severe and so much lower down.”

3:03 PM: Fox News Crawl Text

Crawl Text [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: "TERRORISTS ATTACK BOTH TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NYC...BOTH TOWERS COLLAPSE WITHIN MINUTES OF EACH OTHER"

MSNBC

[9:59 AM: Chris Jansing, anchor, and Gregg Garrett, anchor \[speaking with reporter Ashleigh Banfield\]](#)

Jansing [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: "It does appear that there has been a third explosion in the area of the World Trade Center. There was first one plane that hit one of the Twin Towers. A second plane, each about one hour ago. And now a third explosion. Ashleigh Banfield is in Manhattan. Ashleigh, did you see or hear anything just moments ago?"

Banfield: "God. Oh my god, Chris, this is incredible. I'm looking right at it."

Jansing: "What are you seeing, Ashleigh?"

Banfield: "Well, I saw the explosion, for one."

Jansing: "Could you feel it?"

Banfield: "*I can smell it.* Everyone around screamed at the time it happened. It's just unbelievable. I can't see that it's another building. It looks almost in the same position as the second bomb, or second explosion. It's unbelievable."

Jansing: "What's the scene around you? What are people doing?"

Banfield: "Most people, as I said earlier, are absolutely aghast."

Jansing: "Are they running?"

Banfield: "No one's running. No, I'm not close enough at this point to be seeing that. I wouldn't be showered with debris from my position here. I'm too far north of it. But I have a bird's eye view of what's happening. The route that I'm on is the emergency route right now, so all of the emergency vehicles are streaming past us. But as I was looking up I saw the entire explosion. It looked exactly like the first two. Unbelievable. And everyone who watched it around

me screamed. It was just a chorus of “oh my gods” from everyone standing around. I’m walking, so what I’m hearing are a lot of people whose cars are parked, who’ve got their radios tuned to local news stations and trying to catch up on just exactly what’s happening. But now I’m seeing people running. But I really don’t think they’re running from the area. We’re too far away to be in the direct line of any debris. But we certainly had the most perfect vantage point for that explosion. It was unbelievable. And the smoke now is so thick. It’s just incredible.”

Jansing [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS AND FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “And we can see from our pictures here, Ashleigh. And our picture — well, we’ve gotten it back. But there is a huge cloud of smoke virtually enveloping the downtown area of Manhattan. It is the Wall Street area. It is in the Battery Park City, Lower Manhattan. A series now of three explosions. Two planes: First one flew into one tower of the Twin Towers, then a second some minutes later. And just moments ago a third explosion in the area of the World Trade Center.

“In addition, let’s bring you up to date. There was an explosion. . .

One of the Twin Towers has collapsed! That was the explosion. It apparently was not a third independent explosion. It was not a bomb, it was not a plane. But there has been a collapse of one of the towers of the World Trade Center. You are talking about a 110-story building. On any given day, as many as 100,000 people can be there in their offices or visiting the World Trade Center. It is one of the most visible sights on the skyline of New York City. It is a main center of commerce. And there has apparently been a collapse of one of the two towers of the World Trade Center.”

Garrett [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “This may be one of the worst tragedies ever to strike this country. One of the World Trade Centers, having been struck by a plane in an apparent terrorist attack, has now collapsed.”

12:37 PM: Brian Williams, anchor

Williams [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “It was later in the morning, some say as a result of secondary and subsequent explosions, that both towers came down.”

1:40 PM: Brian Williams, anchor

Williams [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Alright, Ashleigh Banfield. Thank you for that live report from lower Manhattan just blocks away from where the explosions took place after, again, both World Trade Center towers struck by hijacked commercial aircraft earlier today. . . . The Trade Center towers collapsed in on themselves, and for that we are fortunate, thousands of New Yorkers are fortunate. But thousands have not made it — it is guessed — today.”

CNBC

10:01 AM: Mark Haines, anchor

Haines: “Now, we heard from them just moments before that another jet liner, a 737, crashed into the building, way down low. And that was apparently enough to take the World Trade Center South Tower out completely. The building is gone. The scope of this attack is mind boggling.”

[Note: Initially Mark Haines hypothesized that the South Tower had collapsed due to being hit by another airplane. We not count this as a mention of the explosion hypothesis nor the fire-induced collapse hypothesis.]

10:03 AM: Mark Haines, anchor

Haines: “The South Tower has disappeared. It collapsed, apparently when a third airplane hit very close to the base.”

10:12 AM: Mark Haines, anchor, and Alina Cho, anchor

Cho: “Mark, I want to remind you: The wire is saying that the South Tower there collapsed following this morning’s plane crash. There is not yet confirmation of a fourth plane. . . . We’re not sure if another plane was involved.”

Haines: “No, at the time we had MSNBC’s feed up. And we could clearly hear people in the background saying, ‘My god, another plane.’ And then the South Tower disappeared. So while officials may not have confirmed it, it seems

fairly clear — plus, the tower would not have collapsed absent some tremendous trauma.”

Cho: “Absolutely, that seems to make sense.”

10:14 AM: Mark Haines, anchor, and an unidentified anchor [speaking with reporter Maria Bartiromo]

Bartiromo: “Now I’m standing on the floor of the exchange. But I just came back from outside and I am covered with soot. Basically, I was outside when that third explosion occurred. . . . The whole area turned pitch black when that third explosion happened. . . . I don’t know if you can see my jacket and my shoes, but I’m completely covered in white smoke from that third explosion.”

Unidentified Anchor: Maria, do you know what that explosion was?

Bartiromo: “That was about 10 — I’d say 15 minutes ago.”

Unidentified Anchor: “But do you know what caused it?”

Bartiromo: “No, I don’t.”

Haines: “At the moment, Maria — and for the people with you — at the moment there are eyewitnesses who feel that another plane, a third plane . . .”

Bartiromo: “Yes, some people are saying that . . .”

Haines: “. . . hit the base of the South Tower.”

Bartiromo: “I was under the impression that it was just the actual collapse of the building. But some people are speculating that. I didn’t want to say that because”

Haines: “We had — at the moment it happened — we had MSNBC’s feed up, and we could hear people shouting ‘a third plane, a third plane.’ And then there was an explosion — ‘another plane, another plane,’ and there was an explosion.

Bartiromo: “That’s right. And I was outside during that explosion.”

10:16 AM: Mark Haines, anchor, and unidentified anchor

Haines: “Alright, Maria Bartiromo, stay where you are if you will. And, AP says two planes what? Two planes total? Alright, so AP is saying there was no third plane to hit the South Tower. Is that right? Okay, well that’s a possibility. We had no official confirmation. We did have people we heard in the background show that a . . .”

Unidentified Anchor [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Something ignited there, though. Maybe they had — that was an incredible . . .”

Haines [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “That was an incredible explosion.”

Unidentified Anchor: “And that was not caused from a . . .”

Haines: “I agree with you. I think it was a third plane.”

Unidentified Anchor [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “No, it could have been, it could have been something that was planted.”

Haines [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Or a bomb planted in the building, yeah.”

10:21 AM: Mark Haines, anchor

Haines [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “And here, this, 20 minutes thereafter, something happened to the South Tower. There were some eyewitnesses we heard in the background screaming that ‘another plane, another plane.’ But here you see an enormous explosion about midway up in the South Tower, and the entire structure collapses. It just disappears. . . . Now that’s interesting from a forensic point of view. The explosion that leveled the South Tower came, it seemed, roughly halfway up. And yet it took the entire tower out.”

10:28 AM: Mark Haines, anchor, and Bill Griffeth, anchor

Haines [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We have an enormous explosion in the remaining World Trade Tower Center! The second — I believe the North Tower is now gone as well. Yes, it is gone. Both towers of the World Trade Center have been destroyed. It happened the same way. The explosion started

high in the building and worked its way down. Now, of course, the entire lower section of Manhattan is a disaster zone of unbelievable proportions. I would imagine at any moment we will hear from — the National Guard is going to be brought in. I mean, this is far beyond anyone's ability, any one agency to cope with this. Not only do we have in that building any remaining people, but it was, I am certain, full of New York City firefighters, New York City policemen, New York City rescue workers. There you see — I don't understand, and I would be very anxious to hear in the future some, the forensics of this situation. But both towers — this is an unbelievable day. Both towers of the World Trade Center are now gone.”

“Joining me now is Bill Griffeth, my colleague . . .”

Bill Griffeth: “As we try to absorb the unthinkable here, Mark.”

Haines: “This is unthinkable. This is a situation that . . .”

Griffeth: “I mean, we are to maintain some modicum of immunity to all of this. But we are humans as well. And it is very, very tough to watch all this.”

Haines: “The scope is beyond comprehension.”

Griffeth: “I mean, I came up here five minutes ago getting ready to talk about which markets may be closing around the world. But now this is just becoming even . . .”

Haines [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “No, they're irrelevant. This is — there you see the building imploding. It, it — do you see what's happening? Now, what would cause that I don't know.”

Griffeth [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Well, you have — I mean . . . Certainly, the structure had been weakened by the impact. But you'd have to wonder if there was something else there. But we just don't know at this point.”

Haines: “Certainly, yeah, we don't know. But it looks like . . .”

Griffeth: “And at this point I can't imagine we're getting any word any time soon.”

Haines [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “I don’t think . . . I think we’re safe — here I think I’m on safe ground, Bill. I don’t think — This was clearly, the way the structure is collapsing, this was the result of something that was planned. This is not — it’s not accidental that the first tower just happened to collapse and then the second tower just happened to collapse in exactly the same way. How they accomplished this, we don’t know. But clearly this is what they wanted to accomplish.”

10:32 AM: Mark Haines, anchor

Haines: “I’ve been in this business for 35 years and I’m not prepared to deal with this. I keep thinking of all of the people in there. I think of the firemen, the policemen, the rescue workers, the people who go into hell to save others, and now apparently all for naught. And there you see a shot. This from the northern end. This is more from midtown. Those high buildings in the foreground, that’s midtown Manhattan. The Empire is just barely visible. Perhaps the smoke is just beginning to reach the Empire State. But you’re looking at several square miles of New York completely obscured by all of this. Again, both towers of the World Trade Center collapsing, attacked first by, apparently, passenger-laden jetliners, hijacked, at least one out of Boston?”

10:34 AM: Bill Griffeth, anchor, and Mark Haines, anchor

Griffeth: “Maybe we should perhaps try a recap, if anybody is now tuning in, especially for those on the West Coast who may be tuning in now for the first time. You’ve heard bits and pieces. It was about 10 minutes, 15 minutes before 9:00 AM on the East Coast that an explosion was witnessed at the World Trade Center, one of the World Trade Center towers. Mark Haines, by the way, yeoman’s duty, my friend. If you’re leaving us, thank you.”

Haines: “I’m just going to step back for a bit.”

11:07 AM: Sue Herrera, anchor, Bill Griffeth, anchor, and Eric Gass, guest (structural engineer)

Herrera: “That was the collapse of the Trade Center tower, the South Tower, which we shot earlier this morning here on CNBC in our live pictures. Government buildings in Washington, including the Capitol and the White

House, have been evacuated. The North Tower of the Trade Center collapsed about an hour or so after the South Tower collapsed.”

Griffeth [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS AND FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Which is something I wanna get into here, Sue, because there’s been all kinds of speculation about how that would happen, whether it would be necessary for a further attack upon the buildings before they would collapse. And as it happens we have with us in studio here is a structural engineer, Eric Gass, who happens to be in the process of building a building that we’re putting together here at CNBC down the road. And you would have some sense since you’ve been a part of the construction of buildings of this magnitude, Eric, to give us some insight of what would happen with the kind of damage that was done with the jet attacks on the buildings and whether that’s enough to bring those buildings down by themselves.”

Gass [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Well, I think you’ve a got a couple of issues that are going on here. One is, these are concrete reinforced structures. And concrete is a compressive material. So as you can see, especially from the second attack, as it comes in, it appears to shear into the side of the building.”

Herrera: “The plane.”

Griffeth: “Right.”

Gass: “Absolutely. So you have a couple of issues. One, it probably has taken all the concrete away from the steel.”

Herrera: “And now you’re seeing that second plane.”

Gass: “Absolutely. So this structure, and I think as you see as it will collapse later on, it begins to tilt to that side. It has taken all of the concrete and put it into tensile property.”

Herrera: “And these are large planes.”

Gass: “Absolutely. If we’re dealing with a Boeing 767, you’re not just dealing with a large plane, you’re dealing with a large plane that’s coming in at over

500 mph. So you have all of the impact going in to those members. There is no building that I'm aware of that can take this kind of impact."

Griffeth: "So as we watch the first of the towers collapsing there, it was enough from the initial attack by the jet to bring the tower down eventually. Is that your understanding?"

Gass: "I would say so. Especially the second thing you would have going on, of course, is the airplane's going to have a great deal of fuel, and the fire is going to be working against that structural steel, which of course is why the fire codes are so stringent in this country. So then you're going to have a problem with once the fire takes place it's going to work against the structural strength of that steel and begin to collapse."

Herrera: "If I could just interrupt we're getting more information. The plane that crashed in Pennsylvania originated in Chicago. It was headed to Cleveland. There were 90 people on board. That comes from WPIX."

Griffeth: "Whether that is related to anything that's been going on today, it would be the most incredible of coincidences if it's not, but . . ."

Herrera: "That's true. But we do not know if that is the case."

Griffeth: "So you're not surprised that these would go down just based on the jet crashing into the buildings here, Eric?"

Gass: "No. As a matter of fact, as we were seeing the explosion the first time, that was the first thing that occurred to us, is that there would be an immediate weakening on that side of the building. I think if you look at the second tower that collapsed, you will see that it begins to collapse straight down, which as it appears from what happened in the impact, it impacted much more into the center of the building. Again, you would have gotten rid of all of the ability for fire protection to have gotten rid of some of the fire and the flames, which apparently is why it took longer. The other point too is that you have 15 floors of extremely heavy material bearing down on this situation. It would be impossible to see why it would be able to hold up."

Herrera: "Eric, if I can interrupt you. Canada has basically closed its airspace, but they are going to allow US diverted planes who may be in the air at this

point to land at their airports for humanitarian purposes. US airspace for all intents and purposes has been closed by the FAA.”

Griffeth: “The terrorist bombing of some years ago against the World Trade Center, which occurred essentially in the parking structure below the building, why didn’t that bring that down at the time?”

Gass: “Well, I think you’re dealing with a different issue. One, you’re dealing with a static explosion, where someone pulls a small truck underneath so you have all of the concrete not only keeping both of the floors above and below. But you’re dealing with the biggest structural strength of that building is sitting underground. Of course, New York is pure bedrock. So that would have been the worst place to attack it. Clearly it did not do that much damage, enough structurally to make major structural problems with the design, as I understand it. Here, you have a much larger vehicle, with much more speed, and literally shearing any of its structural capacity in those particular areas.”

2:25 PM: Bill Griffeth, anchor

Griffeth [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “We were witness to this horrifying spectacle of the Twin Towers just disintegrating to the ground. And we had heard from this structural engineer that we interviewed earlier that once these towers had been struck by these jets — I mean, these are structures that are built mainly, of course with steel, but with concrete. The concrete essentially was liquefied. Not to that degree, but it just was very suspect in the structure. And according to him it was only a matter of time before it came down. And course that is exactly what happened after the crashes.”

4:00 PM: Tyler Mathisen, anchor, and Liz Claman, anchor

Tyler Mathisen [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “And then, a half hour later, approximately 9:59 AM, the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapses in an explosion of concrete, steel, glass, and humanity. 110 stories fall as one, the building weakened by the impact of that first jet can no longer support its weight.”

Liz Claman: “So as people are rushing there to try and help those who were trying to escape, rescuers attempting to save those trapped in the second

tower, it too collapses, just a half hour later, in a rain of concrete and steel spreading for blocks, showering down debris on the streets of lower Manhattan below.”

WABC

10:08 AM: Lori Stokes, anchor

Stokes [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “One, it was just seven minutes ago that we saw the South Tower go down in a collapse right in the middle. Earlier, we had spoken to a witness and someone who was inside the tower talking about the damage that was sustained, particularly within the core. Anytime that the core has been damaged, there’s not too much then to hold up.”

10:09 AM: Bill Ritter, anchor

Ritter [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “And we do not know — we should re-emphasize — we do not know why the second tower collapsed. Whether it was, as the expert was talking to you and Steve and Jim, whether because the core of the building was damaged or whether because of some other kind of detonating device. We just do not know.”

10:17 AM: Bill Ritter, anchor

Ritter: “Nina, I want you to describe one more time what it felt like when that tower collapsed. What did it feel like to you on the ground there?”

10:22 AM: John DelGiorno, anchor

DelGiorno [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “The second plane hit the south building just at 9:00. And then that building subsequently collapsed shortly after 10:00. . . . That tower continued to burn for quite some time. And then, again, it subsequently collapsed down onto itself.”

10:34 AM: Bill Ritter, anchor, and Jim Dolan, anchor

Ritter [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We are about to see it here, Jim. The second tower just completely collapses on itself. And I — we don’t know what

caused the collapse. But it seems — it appears that just structural damage from all that fire. Although, we do not know whether there was some sort of timed explosion. But it does appear . . .”

Dolan [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “And in the end it doesn’t much matter. The core was damaged. We know that from talking to witnesses earlier, people who were in the building. We do know the core of both buildings were damaged, the cores were damaged. And apparently the building just couldn’t withstand the mass of the explosion.”

WCBS

9:59 AM: Lisa Hill, anchor, and Jim Smith, helicopter cameraman

Hill [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Marcia, Marcia. We gotta interrupt you. We just saw live from chopper 2 yet another explosion. Did anybody — Jeanine, what did you see? Was it an airplane or was it . . .”

Jeanine [Last Name Unknown]: “It looked like a part of the building, if not most of the top collapsed and all the debris from the building was falling down towards the ground.”

Hill: “Look at the smoke. Look at the smoke. This is unbelievable.”

Jeanine [Last Name Unknown]: “The whole building, did it collapse?”

Michael Palmer: “Do we have Jim Smith available on microphone chopper 2 as he takes these pictures? Jim?”

Smith: “Yes, I am here, Michael.”

Michael Palmer: “Jim, tell us what’s happening out there.”

Jim Smith [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We just witnessed some kind of secondary, follow-up explosion on the World Trade Center #2, the one that is on the south. And it’s difficult to make out through the debris and smoke. But it does appear that a portion, the top portion of the building, has collapsed down onto the streets below.”

10:00 AM: WCBS Caption

Caption [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Another explosion hits lower Manhattan”

10:02 AM: Marcia Kramer, anchor/reporter

Kramer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Right now police have to determine if whether that explosion was caused from the initial impact of the plane or whether it was something that was exploded on the ground. Generally speaking, for a building to collapse in on itself like that, it would seem to indicate — obviously, this is just early speculation — but it would seem to indicate that there could have been an explosion, a bomb planted on the ground, that would make the building collapse within itself.”

10:14 AM: Marcia Kramer, anchor/reporter

Kramer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Well, we have a number of updates. Number one: CNN is now reporting that there was a third explosion at the World Trade Center, probably an explosion from the ground that caused World Trade Center 1 to collapse on top of itself. Again, there was a third explosion. It is unclear what caused it, whether it was a bomb or whether the first plane that crashed into the tower had somehow been booby-trapped with a bomb that was timed to explode later after the crash had occurred. But CNN is reporting that there was a third explosion that caused World Trade Center 1 to collapse within itself and then collapse on other surrounding buildings.”

10:16 AM: Lisa Hill, anchor

Hill [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Governor Pataki we understand is in the city. Mayor Giuliani is also here, of course. And he was preparing to speak earlier this morning. But, of course, that was prior to all of the secondary blasts.”

10:18 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor

Palmer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “And for those of you just joining us, as you continue to look live at the only standing tower remaining of the World Trade Center, the second had collapsed not too long ago. Both had been hit by planes. We understand it was a third explosion, however, that brought the

tower to collapse on top of what we understand are other buildings in the area.”

10:23 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor

Palmer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Keep in mind that what you’re seeing on your screen right now is live. This is not tape at all. This is the only remaining World Trade Center tower, the other collapsing not too long ago, both victims of plane crashes. The second — or the tower, rather, that has collapsed, though, we are told collapsed because of a third explosion. The source of that, though, at this point we don’t know.”

10:28 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor, and Jim Smith, helicopter cameraman

Palmer: “If Jim Smith is with us still at chopper 2 — Jim, are you there?”

Smith [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Michael, we just saw that, as well. The second tower, the only one that was standing, Tower #1, just — we saw some kind of explosion, a lot of smoke come out of the top of the tower, and then it collapsed down onto the streets below, much like we saw the first tower just about a half hour ago.”

10:33 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor

Palmer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “The first incident that we had was the plane crash just before 9:00 into the first tower. A second crash into the second tower 18 minutes later. A third blast brought down one tower. And then just moments ago the second tower collapsed.”

10:38 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor, and Lisa Hill, anchor

Hill: “Rose, we hate to interrupt you. Rose, we have interrupt you. We’ve just been told . . .”

Palmer: “A fourth explosion.”

Hill: “. . . of a fourth explosion, at the World Trade Center.”

Palmer: “Now in the area of the World Trade Center. Obviously, neither tower still standing. We don’t know the source of this fourth explosion. But we do have Cindy Shu in the newsroom. Perhaps she can shed a little on this. Cindy?”

Cindy Shu: “I can’t tell you that much about the fourth explosion.”

[Note: This is another appearance of the 10:38 AM explosion report. We did not count this as a mention of the explosion hypothesis.]

10:40 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor

Palmer: “As well as now a fourth explosion at the site of the World Trade Center.”

10:52 AM: Lisa Hill, anchor, and Michael Palmer, anchor

Hill: “This is tape of the initial explosion of World Trade Center 1 on your left side of your screen, and that’s the collapse there earlier today, about 10:30, 10:00 of World Trade Center 1.”

Palmer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Yeah, very difficult to keep track of time in these types of event. However, we can tell you, of course, that the crash happened before 9:00, the second one 18 minutes later, and then of course a third explosion and collapse of one tower, followed by an explosion of another.”

10:56 AM: Michael O’Looney, anchor

O’Looney [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “And again, those two towers came down this morning, both hit by planes. Tower 1 hit around 9:00, Tower 2 at 9:18, both towers later collapsing.”

11:02 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor

Palmer [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “The World Trade Centers, hit by hijacked planes, exploding, collapsing.”

11:25 AM: Michael Palmer, anchor, and Michael O’Looney, anchor

Palmer: “Michael O’Looney joining us now with a recap of just what’s happened today. Michael.”

O’Looney [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “...Then around 10:00 AM the first tower, Tower 1 of the World Trade Center, collapsed to the ground. . . . And at 10:30, the second tower of the World Trade Center also collapsed. About eight minutes later, there was a fourth explosion at the World Trade Center.”

11:30 AM: Todd McDermott, anchor

McDermott: “Let’s go back to recapping what happened this morning earlier. The second tower of the World Trade Center collapsing. About eight minutes after that a fourth explosion at the World Trade Center, perhaps at the base of the building.”

11:54 AM: Michael O’Looney, anchor

O’Looney: “About eight minutes later there was a fourth explosion at the World Trade Center.”

WNBC

10:00 AM: Glen Walker, anchor, and Jane Hanson, anchor

Walker [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Alright. Thank you very much, Walter. Again, one or two more explosions again around the World Trade Center. We don’t know if it was in the same building or adjacent buildings.”

Hanson [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Can we re-rack that video that we were looking at as Walter was interviewing those people, because perhaps that will give us some indication of what this was. Obviously, there are buildings nose to nose down there. We have no idea if this was a third explosion or if it might have been something from the debris raining down from one of the World Trade Center towers.”

10:03 AM: Jane Hanson, anchor

Hanson [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “We have just been told that what we thought was another explosion was indeed, according to the Associated Press, another building that has either been attacked or exploded. So it appears to be separate from the two that we have already witnessed this morning.”

10:05 AM: Jane Hanson, anchor

Hanson [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Again, we don’t know what truly occurred. But there’s talk of aircraft being hijacked, of second explosions, of etcetera, etcetera.”

10:09 AM: Glen Walker, anchor, and Jane Hanson, anchor

Walker: “We’ve also been told that the second tower that was hit by the second plane — which is 1 World Trade Center [sic] — we understand that that tower has actually collapsed at this point.”

Jane Hanson: “Well, I’m looking at this picture right now, and you cannot see the top of the second tower. So, a few moments ago, if you remember, there was just billowing smoke there.”

10:12 AM: Jane Hanson, anchor, Jim Rosenfield, anchor, and Glen Walker, anchor

Hanson: “The people that are just tuning in, we need to just reiterate and give them a bit more information here, because there have been a couple of recent developments that we need to tell people about.”

Rosenfield: “One of the most startling is the fact that we only see one tower of the World Trade Center Twin Towers still standing. We’ve gotten word that 1 World Trade Center [sic] has either partially or fully collapsed.”

Glen Walker: “It looks like a partial collapse. We can still see below the smoke.”

Chorus of People: “This is actually tape.”

Jane Hanson: “And you are now witnessing it.”

Jim Rosenfield [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Obviously, that structure weakened by the aircraft that we saw fly into it, what, over an hour ago now.”

10:17 AM: Jane Hanson, anchor, and Melissa Russo, guest (Saint Vincent’s Hospital worker)

Russo: After that last explosion, some ambulances took off and headed down 7th Avenue, which is otherwise closed to traffic.

Hanson [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “So, Melissa, what you’re telling us is that you have not seen the number of people that you might expect to be there after an explosion of this magnitude?”

Russo: “That’s right. I’ve only been here for about, I would say 20 minutes, 25 minutes. But we’ve seen a couple of ambulances come in. As I said, after that last explosion, I saw some more ambulances race out of here and head down 7th Avenue.”

New York 1

10:00 AM: Sharon Dizenhuz, anchor

Dizenhuz [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “One wonders if there was anything on the plane that could have caused such a structural damage below since it hit such at the upper portions of the building.”

[Note: While Dizenhuz does not explicitly speculate on the occurrence of an explosion, we counted this as a mention of the explosion hypothesis because she is wondering whether some secondary force besides the building spontaneously collapsing destroyed the rest of the structure.]

10:01 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [EXPLOSION HYPOTHESIS]: “Please let me know if we’ve reestablished contact with Kristen [Shaughnessy] as well. She saw the explosion in front of her in fairly close proximity as that happened.”

10:02 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS/AMBIGUOUS]: “We talked to several people who were in that area of lower Manhattan as this was happening. And a lot of them had this sense of security as well that this damage was 100 stories up. And now we’ve had this structural failure of 2 World Trade Center and literally saw the building disintegrate. And much of that is smoke. But much of it is just dust and debris as though they had — it’s a scene that you see when they deliberately demolish a building, but without any of the precautions or evacuations. And those who know that area well know that there is a building on every block there, multi-story buildings on every block. So there would undoubtedly be damage to those buildings as well, the subway lines below, the city’s infrastructure below. Let’s look at that videotape. This would have been at about 9:55 this morning as 2 World Trade Center started to rip apart in an explosion.”

[Note: We considered this ambiguous due to his use of the expression “rip apart in an explosion” and because of his previous statement, “She saw the explosion in front of her.” Kiernan continues to make ambiguous statements over the next hour as he apparently attempts to reconcile his visual perception of an explosion and his intellectual interpretation that it must have been a natural structural failure.]

10:06 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [AMBIGUOUS]: “There’s the explosion and the collapse of the tower looking from the north now.”

[Note: If another anchor had made this statement, we would count it as a mention of the explosion hypothesis. But based on the whole of Kiernan’s statements, we find that his interpretation of the event is more ambiguous.]

10:07 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [FIRE-INDUCE COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “And this is that picture again from about 9:55 this morning of the structural failure, the collapse of 2 World Trade Center after this plane crash.”

10:12 AM: Sharon Dizenhuz, anchor

Dizenhuz: “Andrew, when you saw this happen, what did it look like to you at close range? Because to us it seemed almost like dominoes, you know, going floor by floor by floor.”

Andrew Siff: “It was a little difficult to tell at first to figure out what was happening. We heard an explosion. We heard either an explosion or the sound of something making impact. We were in the middle. I was with news assistant Jason Post, and we were walking down West Street. And when we heard the sound we whipped around and saw just a buckling of the tower. And it just looked like it collapsed within itself. You could just see the top of the tower collapse. We can’t tell what happened to the bottom half of the tower from here.”

10:25 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [AMBIGUOUS]: “As we recap this, there is very little movement into or out of Manhattan, because of subway closures, PATH train closures, bridge and tunnel closures. And this is part of the reason for that, the explosion — first of all, the crash, then the second crash, and subsequently the structural failure and massive explosion that brought down 2 World Trade Center and sent debris raining down on a huge part of lower Manhattan.”

[Here Kiernan appears to be attempting to reconcile his intellectual interpretation that it was a structural failure by imagining that the collapse of the building caused the explosion.]

10:48 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor, and Sharon Dizenhuz, anchor

Kiernan [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “And following that we got those two structural failures of the two World Trade Center towers. And that perhaps came as the biggest surprise, is just how quickly these buildings disintegrated.”

Dizenhuz [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “This was the first one at about 9:55, 2 World Trade Center just collapsing like a heap of dominoes, leaving you with a sick feeling in your stomach wondering how many people were in there, how many people were hurt.”

Kiernan [AMBIGUOUS]: “And then to about half an hour after the first structural failure, here’s another. It began with an explosion near the top, near the scene of the plane crash. And the building story by story, top to bottom, ripped apart. That transmission tower on the top of 1 World Trade Center — you saw it for a moment just tumbling away.”

[Note: We counted this as ambiguous because Kiernan again uses the word “explosion.”]

11:00 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor, and Mayor Rudy Giuliani, guest

Kiernan [FIRE-INDUCED COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS]: “Did the fire department have any warning that the structures of the two World Trade Center towers were compromised? Did they have some sense that they had to pull their people away from there?”

Mayor Giuliani: “We were actually in a building two blocks away when it crashed and had to evacuate the building, and for a while we were stuck in there. So I can’t tell you right now if they knew. My recollection is when we were in the building we probably had about a minute’s notice, maybe two minutes.”

11:05 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [AMBIGUOUS]: “And then once the fire and police personnel moved in and thought they were dealing with a fire that was confined to the top of the World Trade Center towers, they quickly heard that next explosion, and the structure of the two towers was compromised. And in relatively quick succession the two towers ripped apart.”

11:16 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [AMBIGUOUS]: “This videotape again shot well over an hour ago. This was just in the minutes after the explosion that ripped down the first of the two towers to collapse. You can see at that point people running away, just having no idea what the threat was. It was in the moments that we saw when both towers were still standing a more orderly evacuation. But then there was that explosion through 2 World Trade Center initially, the South Tower, that collapsed. And this is just in those few minutes as people just had no idea what

they were dealing with and were running for safety, trying to get out of the footprint of any sort of debris that might have fallen.”

[Note: This is the closest Kiernan comes to fully voicing the explosion hypothesis, but we decided to count it as an ambiguous statement due to the totality of his statements.]

11:18 AM: Pat Kiernan, anchor

Kiernan [AMBIGUOUS]: “This is the videotape when only one of the two towers remained standing. And you can watch here. I think the explosion is about to occur as we watch this videotape. The fire was burning. They had moved in personnel in the area to try to fight the fire. But what was unknown to everybody was just how fragile the structure of the World Trade Center was.”

Appendix B: Brief Osama bin Laden Discussions

Note: For guests who were current or former dignitaries, their highest title is given below.

Fox News

9:03 AM: Jon Scott, anchor

Scott: “Given what has been going on around the world, um, some of the key suspects come to mind — Osama bin Laden...who knows what?”

[Osama bin Laden’s name is given at 9:03 AM, approximately 42 seconds after the airplane strikes the South Tower. Scott offers no reason or evidence.]

9:32 AM: Rita Cosby, correspondent

Cosby: “Jon, I’ve just been told from a U.S. law enforcement official that, they are saying it is evident that this is a terrorist-related attack and among the key targets, key people they’re looking at, is Osama bin Laden.”

[Reason given:] “It was just last Friday that the U.S. State Department put out a world-wide caution to American citizens traveling abroad, and also to U.S. government facilities, and they said that terrorism knows no limits, whether it’s on U.S. soil or outside....they [State Department] were not aware of any specific threat of the targeting of the Twin Towers, but they did have specific threats against Americans and American facilities around the world and that’s why they issued the worldwide caution.”

9:33 AM: Rita Cosby, correspondent

Cosby: “But they are definitely looking at this as a terrorist-related act, looking, at this point, not knowing who is behind it, but looking at the strong possibility that it may be Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the East African embassy bombings several years ago.”

9:34 AM: Jon Scott, anchor, and Bill Daley, guest (former FBI investigator)

Scott: “Bill, I know that Osama bin Laden likes airplanes. And, again, um, we are not attributing this act to his organization, but he was implicated in a plot to blow up something like 13 airliners in 13 days, or eight in eight days...was that back in the Philippines, back in the 1980s, I believe.”

Daley: “Exactly.”

Scott: “Um...airplanes have been his terrorist weapon of choice in the past.”

Daley: “They have because they hold, for someone like a bin Laden, or other terrorists...the fact that you could take a plane and with just the number of people on the plane commit such a horrendous act at one time makes an impact to the world.

10:21 AM: David Shuster, correspondent

Shuster: “Now we have, Jon, from, ah, from sources, intelligence sources, what

may be a claim of responsibility here. Now, I want to caution you before I note this that at times like these all sorts of claims are made. So this needs to be treated with some caution. But some intelligence sources are now saying that the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine is claiming credit. In the meantime, however, the Israeli government is said by sources to believe that Osama bin Laden is responsible for the operation and those two organizations are related but they are not exactly the same.”

10:25 AM: Alexander Haig, guest (former U.S. Secretary of State)

Haig: “We have to be reasonably assured that those we are moving against are the perpetrators and I think we know where to center our look. All we have to do is look at the world today with the Palestinian and bin Laden groups.”

10:49 AM: Bill Daley [apparently], guest (former FBI investigator)

Daley: “Clearly, some terrorist experts that I’ve spoken to this morning say this has the signature of Osama bin Laden. That he has had pilots...on his payroll.” He goes on to say that three of the “alleged conspirators” involved in the East Africa bombings trial in New York had pilot’s licenses.”

11:05 AM: Eric [Unknown Last Name], guest, and Bill Daley, guest (former FBI investigator)

Eric [Unknown Last Name]: “Did they shoot the pilots and then jump in the seats? What happened? Osama bin Laden, sources have told me, has had pilots on his payroll. We have three pilots that were accused of being conspirators in the East African embassy bombing trial here in New York City...”

[The anchor informs us that Daley was formerly an investigator for the FBI.]

Daley: “As Eric just mentioned, there may have been some involvement of groups like Osama bin Laden or others...”

11:16 AM: Jon Scott, anchor, and unknown speaker

Scott: “In the meantime, an Arabic newspaper — a fairly authoritative source — the editor of that London-based newspaper says bin Laden, Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born, now exiled to Afghanistan rebel leader; Osama bin

Laden, according to this newspaper editor, warned three weeks ago that he would attack American interests, and he promised a very big one. Now, we cannot yet attribute this to Osama bin Laden; however, that was the promise from this fairly authoritative London newspaper.”

[Unknown Speaker]: “Well, Jon, certainly sources that I have talked to this morning — terrorist experts — say this has the signature of Osama bin Laden, that he has the money, the network, the ability to carry out this type of coordinated attack. And let me point out that in the East African bombing terrorist trial here in New York City...that three of the alleged co-conspirators...they had pilot’s licenses and they can fly airplanes...Were these planes hijacked by bin Laden people? Did they rush up to the cockpit? You don’t need a gun. You can burst in, several of them, and strangle the pilots or something, and then take over the controls.”

11:36 AM: Jon Scott, anchor, and Newt Gingrich, guest (former Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives)

Scott: “Obviously, it’s too early to know who is responsible, but let’s say that it turns out that Osama bin Laden is somehow behind this, so what does America do, what kind of pressure can we bring to bear on the Taliban government that is harboring him that we haven’t brought to bear already?”

Gingrich: “Well, let me just say that, that we don’t know yet who’s done this and I don’t think we should rush to judgment, but it is fair to say that bin Laden has claimed credit for having sponsored and financed and structured earlier attacks on the embassies in Africa, for example. It is clear that three weeks ago bin Laden said he would strike the United States in the United States. And the only point I’d make today in the middle of a tragedy — I think we first have to take a deep breath and recognize how big this tragedy is for the American people...for eight years we have said publicly that bin Laden is a major threat to the United States. And yet for eight years, while we have launched Tomahawk missiles, we’ve done other things, we haven’t taken him as seriously as he has taken us. And all I’m suggesting is that if we don’t have a decisive response to convince observers that you cannot kill innocent Americans in peace time without retaliation of severe proportions.”

12:34 PM: Rita Cosby, correspondent

Cosby: “Also, law enforcement sources are telling us, and [inaudible] this is interesting, that there was word put out through an Arab newspaper about three weeks ago that bin Laden himself, the mastermind behind the East African bombings, the embassy bombings there in east Africa, that he apparently did put out word about three weeks ago, saying that he was planning an unprecedented attack against U.S. interests.”

[Osama bin Laden’s picture is shown on the screen.]

“Since that time they got other information that there may be some sort of attack against U.S., possibly, governmental facilities. And then as we know on Friday the State Department did put out a worldwide caution basically telling U.S. citizens, and also particularly government and officials that they should be in a heightened state of alert.”

[She goes on to say that despite this, officials were stunned and said they had no idea the attack was going to be on U.S. soil.]

“I will tell you also law enforcement officers do know that Osama bin Laden — right now they believe he’s sort of the prime suspect.”

12:55 PM: Shepard Smith, anchor

Smith: “There is a report from Afghanistan now, from Kabul, Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden’s people, and actually the Taliban now responding to this. [He now appears to be reading from his computer screen.] Afghanistan’s hardline Taliban rulers have condemned this devastating terrorist attack in New York, and the one in Washington, and rejected suggestions that Osama bin Laden could be behind them. The Taliban’s ambassador to neighboring Pakistan has now said that bin Laden, the Saudi dissident who has been given asylum in the country, does not have the facilities needed to carry out such an attack.”

1:17 PM: Shepard Smith, anchor

Smith: “The Taliban has made a statement as well, saying that it is not right to be putting this off on Osama bin Laden at this moment, that he does not have the resources available to do such a thing. And the Taliban there has itself condemned today’s attacks.”

1:19 PM: Jon Scott, anchor, and Bill Richardson, guest (former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations)

Richardson: “It looks like the work of Osama bin Laden, who I had tried to extradite several years ago from Afghanistan as UN Ambassador. It’s a coordinated attack. I think we have to get the best intelligence we can from our allies and friends around the world and then basically plan a huge, massive response against these perpetrators.”

Scott: “Well, as you say, you have tried to get him extradited before: the U.S. has been pressuring the Taliban to give him up for years. What further pressure can we bring to bear?”

Richardson: “Well, I believe that the first thing we need to do is penetrate those terrorist cells to find out exactly where he is. We need a massive response against him there. Secondly, we have to raise the stakes in the international community — to initiate sanctions if nations don’t cooperate in extraditing him to the United States or finding him. This man is a menace to the international community, not just to the United States. And, thirdly, I believe that we have to bring the international community, our allies in developing countries, in a war against terrorism. Terrorism hits across borders...”

1:22 PM: Rita Cosby, correspondent

Cosby: “Jon, I’ve been talking to intelligence sources...a few hours, and the last thing that they said to me was all signs are strongly pointing to Osama bin Laden. One intelligence — this is a senior official in an intelligence agency — told me that on June 20th of this year, bin Laden released a video to his followers, saying, quote, “It’s time to penetrate America and Israel and hit them where it hurts the most,” signalling that he may plan some sort of attack on U.S. soil. In addition to this, Jon, they’re also looking at who would have had the capability, who would have had the motivation. They said in recent weeks there has been a lot of activity on Islamic chat rooms, talking about threats against the United States. But in terms of actual training for Osama bin Laden, he does own a number of planes, also trains specific pilots to actually be able to carry out these type of attacks. And this is something that intelligence sources are saying that they were aware he was doing this type of training —

not necessarily to attack the U.S., but to train for suicide attacks on planes and other mechanisms. He also, as we know, is believed to be behind the attack on the U.S.S. Cole...”

...

“They do, believe, however, if he is connected to this — and, again, this is just a strong possibility that they’re looking at — that it would have been augmented by another group. They said that of course he has widespread tentacles across the world, and has followers across the world, and among the possibilities that could have, that they’re looking at right now in [inaudible] augmenting, would have been a Palestinian group and also the Hezbollah.”

1:29 PM: Newt Gingrich, guest (former Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives)

Gingrich: “Bin Laden has been a known opponent of the United States for eight years, and we have not exerted the kind of pressure we’re capable of. This is an act of war against the American people, against freedom as the President said, and I think we have to react on behalf as we did in 1941 after Pearl Harbor. We have to react with total effort to make sure that this doesn’t happen again.”

1:38 PM: Shepard Smith, anchor

Smith: “This now coming from the Associated Press, which has just been handed to me [he scrutinizes a sheet of paper], an update coming from AP: “With editor of a London-based Arabic newspaper, saying he received a warning from associates of Osama bin Laden, but did not take them seriously.”

1:39 PM: Shepard Smith, anchor

Smith: “Osama bin Laden’s name has been mentioned here. The Taliban has said throughout the day, rejecting claims that Osama bin Laden may have been involved. There is dancing in the streets in one city on the West Bank it is now being said [he’s still looking at a sheet of paper, it seems]. We have video tape as a matter of fact.” He adds that people are handing out candy in the streets and saying that God is dead.

“Now, this as an aside. In June a United States judge had set this Wednesday — tomorrow — as the sentencing date for a bin Laden associate, for his role in the bombing of a US embassy in Tanzania that killed 213 people. So an associate of bin Laden would have been sentenced tomorrow in Manhattan at a courthouse just across the street from the World Trade Center.”

1:54 PM: Jon Scott, anchor, and Alexander Haig, guest (former U.S. Secretary of State)

Scott: “Is it time to be talking about that? Is it time to declare some kind of a war here, Mr. Secretary?”

Haig: “Well, the terrorists have declared war on us for a number of years now; we simply haven’t treated it as a war. I’m sure this very shocking and horrible day will, will certainly energize that kind of thinking. And I would be for it, certainly. We should declare war on terrorism. And we should take all the actions necessary to stamp it out. And that means working with our allies in close harmony, but also not to be hog-tied by moral equivalence arguments which have seemed to dominate our response up till now.”

[Haig tells Scott we should certainly be having second thoughts about having let Saddam Hussein survive the Gulf War.]

“But we also know that bin Laden has made it very clear that this is a war against the United States and Israel. And we should take action accordingly. We haven’t done that. And those who are giving them harbor and sanctuary we should talk to in *very* forceful terms, and take action is that’s necessary.”

2:18 PM: Rita Cosby, correspondent

“In addition to that, we are told from a number from a number of U.S. officials are telling Fox News that there are, quote, “strong indications” that people linked to Osama bin Laden, and also his group, the al-Qaeda group, which is his group that he organizes out of Afghanistan, that they are strong indications that people linked to him and his group are possibly behind this. They say that for a number of reasons. They say that they have the training in place, they have the capabilities in place, the resources in place. Also, an intelligence official telling me that they do have information that bin Laden is in Afghanistan, and that there was some movement of his troops in recent weeks

— in the last week and a half, specifically.”

[Then she talks about the assassination (“in recent days”) of Masoud (she doesn’t name him, just calls him a Norther Alliance leader), described as very much against bin Laden and the Taliban.]

“And soon after that bin Laden’s followers put out a word, saying that we’re going to attack all enemies of bin Laden. In addition to this, on June 20th of this year, bin Laden and his followers released a videotape in which bin Laden was saying, quote, “It is time to penetrate America and Israel and hit them where it hurts the most.”

“...intelligence sources are telling me that they had no idea that this attack was going to happen, but they were certainly getting some hints that there may be something on U.S. soil based on this message that he put out just June 20th of this year. And also, they said, on some of the Islamic chat rooms there’s been a heightened amount of activity...particularly in the last week and a half. And U.S. officials are strongly looking at the possibility of bin Laden and also his group, al Qaeda, being behind this.

“...They also said that there was information, some intelligence information, that it was *training* individuals for suicide bombings, as we know from the USS Cole. Of course, a number of Yemenese have been tried in that case — the trials are still going on at this point — but some of them are believed to have ties to Osama bin Laden and intelligence officials tell me privately that they believe he was behind that attack...”

[She continues, talking about the Cole bombing and the East Africa bombings...the trial in New York, the involvement of pilots. She concludes...]

“So he certainly had the capabilities, the finances, and intelligence officials — one senior official telling me just a few moments ago, strong indications that this attack could be possibly linked to him and his group.”

2:30 PM: Tony Snow, anchor, and Sandy Berger, guest (former U.S. National Security Advisor)

Snow: “Mr. Berger, first your reaction. Does this at least have the feel to you of an Osama bin Laden operation?”

Berger: “Well, it’s a massive and coordinated attack on the United States, of a kind that we have not seen before — a major escalation of a terrorist assault on the United States. It’s a sophisticated operation, uh, that obviously involved, uh, dozens of people in the United States, penetrating the United States, um, and, um, I think we’ve got to be careful not to leap to conclusions, but certainly, uh, bin Laden and al Qaeda would be a suspect.”

3:35 PM: Unknown interviewer and Lawrence Korb, guest (former Assistant Secretary of Defense)

Interviewer: “We understand that at least three Palestinian groups — Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine — they have all denied any responsibility for these terrorist acts. Some, actually a number of terrorist experts, have believed, have said that they believe, it is the work of Osama bin Laden. What do you think?”

Korb: “Well, he certainly has said he was going to do something, and so that would be logical to expect him to do it.”

3:53 PM: Unknown anchor

Unknown anchor: “No one able to figure out why particularly September 11th, the year 2001. One person has mentioned that it was supposed to be tomorrow that an associate of Osama bin Laden was due to be sentenced in New York. And others have mentioned that they believe Osama bin Laden is perhaps the only terrorist with the kind of organization who could plan something this massive and this deadly.”

4:08 PM: Lawrence Eagleburger, guest (former U.S. Secretary of State)

Anchor: “Mr. Eagleburger, we thank you very much for being with us. Your first thoughts as to who might be capable of coordinating this massive terrorist attack.”

Eagleburger: “Well, you have to start out with the normal, conventional wisdom, which is Osama bin Laden, the point being, I think it’s now very clear that this took tremendous planning. It was, in its own way, brilliantly done. The timing was perfect; they did everything very, very professionally. It took

money; it took training; it took time. And you have to ask yourself who is capable of that, and you start out with Osama bin Laden.”

4:21 PM: Professor Barry Levin, guest (terrorism expert)

[Levin is asked who are the prime suspects.]

Levin: “Well, there are a handful of organizations, I think, obviously. Osama bin Laden is at the top of the list.”

4:25 PM: John Gibson, anchor, and Colonel Robert McGinnis, guest (Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army)

Colonel Robert McGinnis says that, because of lack of funding, U.S. human intelligence has deteriorated in recent years and we might have to resort to something like forensic investigation to figure out who did this. He mentions Osama bin Laden as a possibility and he mentions Palestinians as a possibility, and he mentions the possibility of a plane headed for Camp David. He thinks the signs are that this has something to do with the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. He says tension, and dissatisfaction with the US, is the highest he’s seen in three decades.

News anchor John Gibson expresses his puzzlement that people are angry at the US.

McGinnis notes the \$3 billion the U.S. gives to Israel every year and explains that the Israelis have been using U.S. weapons to kill Palestinian leaders. He says there are many radical Islamic groups that are possible, but the question is, who has the deep pockets? So here’s where Osama bin Laden becomes a natural suspect.

4:32 PM: Rita Cosby, correspondent

Cosby: “Law enforcement sources are telling me that all the focus is still right now as the prime suspect — and, again, they’ve stressed, just a suspect — but all signs, they say, are still pointing as to Osama bin Laden as most likely being the candidate behind this, him and his group, al Qaeda, which has been behind a number of additional attacks. They are saying that this group, and particularly Osama as the mastermind, are really the only ones that seem to

have the specificity, the sophistication, also the coordination to carry out this type of attack. Law enforcement sources are saying no one has claimed responsibility, which is typical of the case when bin Laden's group has been involved in all the prior attacks that they believe that he's been responsible for — he has never claimed responsibility. So they believe they're seeing a pattern of sophistication, and they do know that he was training pilots, was training suicide pilots, in addition to other types of suicide bombers, so he certainly had the capability to carry this out.”

CNN

9:55 AM: John King, correspondent

“...I spoke to an Administration official shortly after the President delivered his statement, who said obviously the operating assumption here is terrorism. The initial assumption, this official said, was that this has something to do — or at least they were looking into any possible connections — with Osama bin Laden. The administration recently released a warning that they thought Osama bin Laden might strike out against U.S. targets.”

11:12 AM: David Ensor, correspondent

Ensor: “In terms of claims of responsibility so far, there is an *Agence France* press report in which a group with the word ‘Palestine’ in the name claims responsibility. There is also a report quoting personnel close to Osama bin Laden, the fugitive Saudi, accused terrorist, denying that that group was involved. But, again, US officials say they can't shed any light on whether these reports are correct or incorrect.”

11:14 AM: Aaron Brown, anchor, and David Ensor, correspondent

Brown: “As a practical matter, there are not a whole lot of groups that the United States government knows about that are sophisticated enough and have the kind of money, the resources, to pull off something like this. Fair enough?”

Ensor: “That's absolutely true, and obviously, despite the denial, attention will quickly turn to the bin Laden group because it has long tentacles; it has connections with all sorts of other groups. We saw at the millennium a group

of Algerians apparently involved in trying to arrange bombings in the United States, and now there is evidence being produced in court sessions that those Algerians were working for the bin Laden group. So that group will come under immediate suspicion — there are very few others that could have pulled this off.”

11:34 AM: Judy Woodruff, anchor, and General Wesley Clark, guest (former Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO)

Woodruff: “Well, speaking of that, General Clark, wouldn’t you agree there are very few of the terrorist groups, at least that we’re familiar with, who would have the capability to pull off something this coordinated, on this scale?”

Clark: “I think that’s exactly right. There’s only one group that has ever indicated that it has this kind of ability and that’s Osama bin Laden’s. So, obviously, that’ll be the first suspicion.”

12:27 PM: Judy Woodruff, anchor

[Woodruff says we’ve finally got a statement from the Taliban. She quotes from part of the statement, saying Afghanistan feels your pain (directed to U.S. children) “and we hope that the courts find justice.” The statement is by the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan. She says this statement was made in Islamabad, and that a statement from Kabul is coming up.]

Woodruff: “Afghanistan being the country where we have every reason to believe Osama bin Laden, the leader of a huge terrorist network, continues to live in hiding. The Taliban has denied his presence there from time to time but it is believed by those who follow the activities of his organization that he is in Afghanistan.”

12:40 PM: U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, guest

[Hatch says he is on both the Judiciary Committee and the Intelligence Committee, and he says he’s been briefed by the highest levels of both the FBI and “the intelligence community.”]

Hatch: “They’ve come to the conclusion that this looks like the signature of Osama bin Laden and that he may be the one behind this.”

...

“What it means is that it seems to me that if that turns out to be true, we’re going to have to revitalize Shah Masoud and the other people in Afghanistan...”

[It is interesting, given his vaunted intelligence connections, that he doesn’t yet know Masoud is dead.]

[Hatch adds that we’d also have to ask our friends in Pakistan to be more cooperative than they have been in the past.]

“Then we’d have to work with our allies to have an international strategy to combat this kind of international jihad against the West.”

12:54 PM: Taliban News Conference

Banner: “TALIBAN NEWS CONFERENCE”

[Taliban Foreign Minister in Kabul, Wakil Ahmed Mutawakel, speaking through a translator. Denies involvement of both the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.]

1:04 PM: Aaron Brown, anchor

Brown [looking at a document of some kind]: “We also have a report coming out of London from the Associated Press that followers of Osama bin Laden warned three weeks ago that they would carry out a huge and unprecedented attack on U.S. interests. That according to a London-based Arab journalist. He adds, they said it would be huge and unprecedented but did not specify what it was.”

1:14 PM: Peter Bergen, analyst, and Jeff Greenfield, analyst

[CNN’s Peter Bergen has supposedly been tracking the government of Afghanistan for some time, and he joins by video link, having listened to the Taliban spokesperson.]

Bergen [described on screen as “CNN TERRORISM ANALYST”]: “Well, we just heard from the Foreign Minister, Wakil Mutawakel, who’s, relatively speaking, a moderate of the Taliban movement. He basically repeated what I think is a standard Taliban line — we’ve heard it for the past at least couple of years — which is that Osama bin Laden isn’t a terrorist and that he’s being contained by the Taliban, and that he’s not able to conduct political or military missions. This, unfortunately, is really a false statement, since Osama bin Laden has been fingered by both Yemeni and U.S. authorities for the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen in October, 2000. There isn’t an indictment there yet — the FBI continues to investigate — but senior Yemeni officials and senior U.S. officials have said that he’s the primary suspect. So, we’ve seen that bin Laden was able to bomb two U.S. embassies in Africa in ’98 within nine minutes of each other; we’ve seen that bin Laden was able to blow a huge hole in the side of one of the most sophisticated warships in the U.S. navy, the USS Cole, in Yemen in October of last year; and, unfortunately, he must be top of the list the persons sophisticated enough in terms of operations to bring off these kinds of terrible disasters we’ve seen today. If you’re looking for who is the most likely suspect, he has to be it. You’ve got an operation which several people appear to commit suicide. You’ve also got an operation in which people obviously had some skill in piloting planes. These are clearly attributes of his organization. We know that he has pilots in his organization; we’ve seen in several instances members of his organization commit suicide in attacks. We’ve also seen a pattern of warnings in previous bin Laden attacks, in which this fits. Nine weeks before the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa in August of ’98 bin Laden held a press conference in Afghanistan talking about quote, “good news in coming weeks”. A few months before the USS Cole was bombed in Yemen a videotape circulated around the Middle East in which bin Laden was wearing a Yemeni dagger, which he’s never done in previous photographs, and his Number Two called for attacks on U.S. targets in Yemen. Just recently there’s been a videotape floating around the Middle East in which bin Laden, a very confident bin Laden, calls for attacks on the United States — says that the victory of Yemen, referring to the USS Cole attack, will continue. People that I’ve talked to familiar with the bin Laden organization said that the threats on this tape were very serious, that there was an imminent attack in the works. I spoke to somebody who was familiar with the organization a few weeks ago who made those statements to me. I had been very concerned about a potential attack as a result of this tape. It fits with the modus operandi, which is to talk about potential attacks coming up relatively soon without being particularly specific.”

[Aaron Brown interrupts and says Senior Analyst Jeff Greenfield is there with Brown and has a question.]

Greenfield: “Hi, Peter. If I’m not mistaken, you actually interviewed Osama bin Laden some years ago. Correct?”

Bergen: “Yeah, in ’97. For CNN.”

Greenfield: “Now, at that time what did he say about the notion of targeting civilians? I mean, what is the rationale behind targeting civilians for death and destruction?”

Bergen: “Well, at that time, Jeff, he told us that because of the American military presence in the Middle East, that he was calling for attacks on U.S. *soldiers*. Now, he said, if American civilians got in the way, that was sort of their problem. So at that time in ’97 he was really only calling for attacks on American military targets. Later, that position evolved — like, by ’98 he was calling for attacks on all Americans, whether civilian or military. I think the rationale behind that thinking is that in his view if you’re an American taxpayer you’re subsidizing the “anti-Islamic,” quote, activities that he’s against, whether that’s in Saudi Arabia, with the American military presence there, or with America’s support for Israel in the ongoing *Intifada*.”

[Horrific video images of WTC destruction are playing in the background during this conversation.]

1:18 PM: Aaron Brown, correspondent

[Aaron Brown thanks Bergen for the background and context that help us understand why the focus is on bin Laden and the says...]

Brown: “But we should add that as we talk to you now we can’t be certain. We do not know that that’s who is behind what has happened.”

1:23 PM: Richard Holbrooke, guest (former Assistant Secretary of State), and Jeff Greenfield, analyst

Holbrooke: “But I need to underscore one point. To find the people

responsible is going to take a unified international effort. No one nation, not even the United States, can do it on its own. We must have the full cooperation of the Russians, of the states in the Middle East — I think the assumption that that's the region where this was planned — and — and I repeat this again — any nation that is seen to have harboured or abetted or sheltered any of these people must be treated as co-equally responsible. They cannot hide behind the facade we just saw in the remarks of the Taliban Foreign Minister. And Peter Bergen's extraordinarily insightful explanation a few minutes ago on CNN, I think, is the first real glimpse into...that the viewers have had into how dangerous this is. If the Taliban shelters Osama bin Laden, as they do, and if Osama bin Laden is responsible for this, as, I think, almost everyone is going to suspect, then the Taliban must be held equally responsible for what has happened today."

Greenfield then asks: "Ambassador Holbrooke, what — I'd like you to be specific — what does that mean? Are you talking about a retaliatory strike...[continues in this vein]?"

Holbrooke: "Jeff, let me be very frank — and I don't want to lapse into bloody-minded verbal excesses at a moment of high emotion. But let's be very blunt about this. If a country, or regime — the Taliban or some other regime to be determined by the intelligence community — has sheltered people who played a role in this, they cannot hide behind the attributes of "they didn't know it, they had nothing to do with it." They must cooperate in the pursuit of the people responsible. And since the Taliban leader has been publicly proclaimed by Osama bin Laden as the present spiritual leader of the Muslim world — I'm referring to bin Laden's declaration that Mullah Mohammed Omar is the rightful spiritual leader of the Muslim world, something he said on tape, quoted by John Burns in the *New York Times* two days ago, and if, in fact, these people are in some degree of collusion, I personally believe — and I'm only speaking for myself here — I personally believe that the Taliban should be regarded as co-equally responsible for this, and therefore, if and when we consider military action, it is fully justified and the Taliban should face the same consequences."

2:30 PM: Nic Robertson, correspondent

Robertson, reporting by telephone video live from Kabul: "We are hearing from Mullah Omar in the spiritual capital of Afghanistan about 300 miles

south of here [Kandahar]. Mullah Omar in the spiritual leader of the Taliban here, and he's recently issued a short statement. In that statement criticizes what he called "an act of terrorism", and he was very explicit: He said that Osama bin Laden was not responsible for it, and he said that all he wanted for his country was peace, and peace for other countries in the world. And he went on to say that he believed Osama bin Laden could not have been responsible for such a complex act of terrorism. And he also said that Afghanistan is a poor country and therefore he believed there was no way that Afghanistan could be involved in such a complicated act of terrorism."

3:06 PM: Aaron Brown, correspondent, and William Cohen, guest (former U.S. Secretary of Defense)

Brown: "Secretary Cohen, you were in office, if memory serves me correctly, when the Cole was attacked. Obviously, this is a much more horrific event. Did the Cole incident flash back in your mind?"

Cohen: "It flashed back in my mind, but also the bombings in East Africa flashed even more vividly before me because they were, again, nearly simultaneous explosions directed against innocent civilians."

3:41 PM: CNN Banner

Banner at bottom of screen: "TALIBAN DENIES ROLE IN ATTACKS, SAYS OSAMA BIN LADEN NOT TO BLAME"

3:45 PM: Judy Woodruff, anchor

Woodruff: "I can report that sources are telling CNN's National Security Correspondent, David Ensor, that there are, quote, 'good indications' that people with links to the Osama bin Laden organization are responsible for today's attacks. We can't do much better right now at identifying [she winces] these sources, but again they're saying 'good indications'. And this is, again, no proof but this is very much in line with what [still photo of OBL on screen at this point, with AK-47 in the frame] high-ranking people have been telling us throughout this day, all the way from former NATO Commander, Wesley Clark, [video clips of OBL on screen] told us hours ago, and then again just a few moments ago — we spoke with him just a few moments ago. He said that there are very few organizations that would have the sophistication, the

financial resources, the organization, the network of contacts to carry out an attack this sophisticated, this organized, where we have planes hitting these key locations...within just minutes of one another. People who could take over the cockpit of an airplane..."

3:46 PM: CNN Banner

Banner at bottom of screen: "SOURCES: 'GOOD INDICATIONS' OSAMA BIN LADEN INVOLVED IN ATTACKS"

4:00 PM: David Ensor, correspondent, and Judy Woodruff, anchor

Ensor: "Comments by the Afghan government, by the Taliban government by [the Taliban foreign minister] and Mullah Omar, the leaders over there who have commented today in which they deny that Osama bin Laden has ever organized terrorism out of Afghan territory. One official calling that lies. 'Lies, lies, lies'...and when I asked whether there were considerations being given to some sort of retaliation against targets in Afghanistan, one official said: 'I wouldn't be planning your vacation there if I were you.'"

Woodruff: "When they describe this new and specific information, do you know enough about the kinds of sources, or the methods here that you could characterize where this information might be coming from or in what form?"

Ensor: "Well, they are not saying anything specific about exactly what the nature of this information is, as you can expect, Judy. However, when I talked to officials about the kinds of information that they would be gathering now, they confirmed that that information includes passenger lists of the aircraft that were downed, videotape at airports, from cameras, from security cameras in the airports. In a few days they will have cockpit recordings. And there's also a limited number of people who are suspected of belonging to terrorist groups who are known to be able to fly aircraft..."

Woodruff: "Absolutely chilling..."

4:01 PM: CNN Caption

Caption at bottom of screen: "OFFICIALS: 'GOOD INDICATION' OSAMA BIN LADEN INVOLVED"

4:50 PM: CNN News Crawl

News crawl at bottom: "PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS, OSAMA BIN LADEN-LED GROUP ISSUE DENIALS"

5:49 PM: Judy Woodruff, anchor, and Lawrence Eagleburger, guest (former U.S. Secretary of State)

[Woodruff says to Eagleburger that many Americans are going to want to strike back quickly. She asks for his reaction.]

Eagleburger: "Oh boy, that's a very tough question. Well, it won't be quick, I think. It'll take us some time to organize ourselves and try to figure out who was responsible for this, although I might say, by the way, that's less of a concern to me than it will be to a number of others. We know who most of the terrorists are — we may not know which ones did this, although they have to have been very, very well organized and very well financed. But, "getting back at" almost is the wrong way, I think, to put this, though that's what a lot of people will want. What I think we need now to understand is, this really is a war with terrorism, and we need to be prepared to act as if we are at war. And that does not necessarily mean that you have to strike back only at those that you know were the perpetrators of this thing."

Woodruff: "Well, what does it mean?"

Eagleburger: "We know a lot of terrorists around the world and we know a lot of governments that have financed and supported terrorism. And you start with Osama bin Laden, I suppose, you start with the Afghans, but either..."

Woodruff: "What can you do, Mr. Secretary?"

Eagleburger: "Well, what you do, and this is...what you do is you strike at them militarily. I mean I know this is going to sound awful. But my point is there's only one way to begin to deal with people like this and that is, you have to kill some of 'em, even if they are not immediately, directly involved in this thing. We do know that the Taliban, and the government of Afghanistan, has mothered Osama bin Laden for years: they need to be hit. Either they need to be hit or they need to understand very quickly that they have got to stop

supporting terrorism, and then make it evident that they are stopping the terrorism.”

Woodruff: “So you’re not talking about a long, drawn-out investigation as we had with Pan Am 103 over Lockerby...

Eagleburger: “I hope not.”

Woodruff: “...a long drawn-out effort to extradite possible suspects...”

Eagleburger: “I hope not, I hope not. Because if that’s the case...well, you saw what happened with Pan Am 103. I mean by the time it was all done, uh, first of all, many people had lost all interest in the subject. This is an act of war — when they compare this to Pearl Harbor I don’t think they’re wrong, in the sense that it’s a surprise attack and, I suspect, if we are wise about this, Pearl Harbor brought the American people together and made us recognize we had something we had to deal with. Perhaps this will do the same thing for all of us.”

5:55 PM: CNN News Crawl

News crawl at bottom of screen: “SEN. JOHN KERRY: ‘I HAVE NO DOUBT IN MY MIND IT’S OSAMA BIN LADEN.’”

5:57 PM: CNN News Crawl

News crawl at bottom of screen: “EXPLOSIONS IN KABUL, AFGHANISTAN”

6:10 PM: CNN Banner

Banner at bottom of screen: “SUSPECTED TERRORIST BIN LADEN BELIEVED TO LIVE IN AFGHANISTAN.”

6:11 PM: Judy Woodruff, anchor, and U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, guest

Woodruff [still discussing the explosions in Kabul]: “If this were the West, if this were the United States, would it be appropriate to retaliate so quickly?”

Hatch: “Well, we have some information, you know, about a month ago we had

information that they were planning on some big strikes — people who were affiliated or associated with bin Laden. Then, just today we've intercepted some information where some people who are associated with bin Laden basically said that they had hit two targets. So, it looks to me like there's increasing evidence, even though it's fragmentary, and even though it's not positive, that bin Laden is behind all this. And, of course, I first warned the nation in 1996 on Meet the Press that we'd better get hold of bin Laden or he's going to kill Americans."

6:16 PM: Paula Zahn, anchor, and Aaron Brown, anchor

[They're looking at the live video-phone images from Kabul.]

Zahn: "I think we need to make it clear at this point that no group has claimed responsibility for the multiple attacks today, and yet, U.S. intelligence officials confirmed with David Ensor earlier today that they believe a group connected to Osama bin Laden may have been involved.

"You have talked about this all day long [no, Brown actually hasn't], and I think you've done a very good job of explaining how well financed would had to have been, how well orchestrated. It begs the question, if not Osama bin Laden, then who?"

6:22 PM: Paula Zahn, anchor, Orrin Hatch, guest, William Cohen, guest (former U.S. Secretary of Defense), and Aaron Brown, anchor

[Zahn asks Orrin Hatch what he thinks of William Cohen's view that you plan an attack on someone until you know they actually carried out this attack on the U.S. Hatch says he agrees with Cohen — we have to be very cautious — but he refers approvingly to what, according to him, Eagleburger said, namely...}]

Hatch: "Look, the Taliban have been harboring Osama bin Laden. Osama bin Laden has said that it is the duty of every Muslim to kill Americans. There's no indic...there's every indication that he has been behind some of the attacks against American installations, and we happen to know just today that we've got information that, that ...indicates that representatives who are affiliated with Osama bin Laden were actually saying over the airwaves, that, uh, private airwaves at that, that...they had hit two targets...

“So...they should not be harboring this criminal and we’ve gotta, it seems to me, go after ‘em, and it does look, although the evidence is fragmentary, as though he’s had a major role in what’s happened here today.”

Zahn: “Secretary Cohen, are you as convinced as Senator Hatch is that Osama bin Laden played some role in this tragedy here today?”

Cohen: “I think if you were to cast the searchlight of probability on these footprints they would lead to Osama bin Laden, but I still think that we have to get more evidence. This is not evidence that you would need in the prosecution of a criminal act. I distinguish between terrorism and a criminal act, and so I would think you just need more evidence than we have right now. But it doesn’t have to be something you can use in a court of law. I think that the probability is that points to Osama bin Laden himself or the groups that he supports, and therefore I think we ought to keep our focus very much on him but not exclude others. And so I think a little more time is necessary but I don’t disagree with Secretary Eagleburger that we need to respond swiftly and very strongly to those who have inflicted this great tragedy upon the American people.”

Brown: “Secretary Cohen, it’s Aaron Brown. We have heard in a number of conversations that we’ve had today that the United States needs to be more aggressive, or more proactive, in its counterterrorism efforts, and you can’t wait until something’s happened and you have to stop it before, and it may be that some innocents will suffer because of it. That’s a political problem, isn’t it?”

Cohen: “It is. And the thing we have to keep in mind is we do not want to allow terrorists to strike such terror in the hearts of the American people that we become like them — that we become indifferent to how many innocent people that *we* might kill. That is what separates us from terrorism.”

[6:25 PM: Aaron Brown, correspondent, and U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, guest](#)

Brown: “And, Senator Hatch, do you think that the political equation on how the United States deals with this has changed because of what’s happened today?”

Hatch: “No question about it. We can’t take this kind of action without a very heavy response. And we have some information, it may be fragmentary but the fact is we have some information, that indicates that Osama bin Laden and many of his affiliates and associates — he’s certainly the motivating force behind these people; he certainly has the money and he certainly has the ability to motivate antagonistic forces against the United States and he’s said he wants to do that. So, it looks, it looks very much like that, although we’re not absolutely certain at this point.”

Brown: “Senator, what Secretary Eagleburger said a little while ago others have said: it’s not that we as a country, not that the United States, *responds* all the time, that at some point it needs to take a proactive — it needs to strike before the attack itself, before the terrorist attack. And if some innocents are hurt, if mistakes get made, that is an unfortunate reality. Has that — that’s a political problem and I want to know, I guess, from you if you think the country which has been reluctant to do that will be less so because of today.”

Hatch: “Well, this is an act of war. As far as I’m concerned, war’s been declared against the United States: we ought to act accordingly. And we should have a very stiff response to that. And to be honest with you, it looks to me as though what’s happened in New York — just think about it, there are literally, there must be thousands of people killed here. Probably more than at Pearl Harbor, by far. And, and there is evidence, there is indication, that there were people who have been affiliated with Osama bin Laden, whose communications have been intercepted, that, basically, have said that they got two targets. There’s a lot of other information that is coming forward, although it’s fragmentary and nobody can absolutely be guaranteed in the surety of it, but we all know that Osama bin Laden is doing everything he can to antagonize American forces, to try and hit against Americans. He’s called for the death of Americans, and we ought to respond forcibly.”

...

“As a matter of fact, we haven’t been putting enough money into the intelligence community and we certainly haven’t been putting enough human on the ground...and we gotta start doing that...we’ve been allowing our military to deteriorate...and the people who are excited about this over in the Middle East, who are dancing in the streets, who are making fun of the United States, we oughta remember who they are because they’re enemies of our

country.”

7:48 PM: Richard Holbrooke, guest (former Assistant Secretary of State)

Holbrooke: “In the past, Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, who do not represent national governments — a distinction which is critically important — but are sheltered in various countries in the world, including Afghanistan, sometimes North Korea, Iraq, Libya, have played this shell game...”

[For the remainder of his comments, see under the War on Terror narrative section.]

8:20 PM: Wolf Blitzer, anchor, and L. Paul Bremer, guest (Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorism)

Blitzer: “Whose fingerprints do you suspect are over this operation?”

Bremer: “There basically are four groups that you can imagine having the capability of doing this. Bin Laden is certainly one.” [The others are “some of the more radical Palestinian groups” and two states, “Iraq and Iran.”]

8:23 PM: CNN Banner

Banner at bottom of screen: “OFFICIALS SAY ‘GOOD INDICATION’ OSAMA BIN LADEN INVOLVED”

8:34 PM: John King, correspondent, and Aaron Brown, anchor

King: “Just before the President was speaking I checked in with a couple of Congressional sources who are telling CNN that in private briefings today key members of Congress were told by senior Administration officials that the Administration is, quote, ‘confident,’ based on the early evidence in this investigation, quote, ‘confident,’ that Osama bin Laden is responsible for this attack. Now, in those briefings, we’re told, the Administration did not say that with a *certainty*, but did say it was *confident* that it had hard evidence in hand, that the investigation was continuing...”

Brown: “Mr. bin Laden has been an elusive character out there for a long time now. I guess he is on notice today — I think the President pretty clearly made

that known — but he has not been easy to find, Mr. bin Laden, has he?”

King: “He has not been easy to find and there has been a great deal of criticism — some from the Congress, some from members of this President’s Cabinet now during the prior administration — that the United States government was not doing enough on the second point, not only to try to go after Mr. bin Laden but to take action against those governments that provided him sanction [sic].”

...

“Obviously, as we learn more about the investigation in the days ahead and the outreach from this government to allied governments around the world, and perhaps to other governments suspected of giving aid and comfort to Mr. bin Laden, in the next few days...”

8:37 PM: Paula Zahn, anchor, and Jeff Greenfield, analyst

Zahn: “There was a report in an Arab newspaper that is actually based in London where the editor actually indicated that Osama bin Laden had telegraphed this attack as long as three weeks ago. If that is true, one could expect there to be some political fallout from this.”

Greenfield: “Peter Bergen, who interviewed bin Laden three or four years ago and who was on earlier, made the point that every time bin Laden has been involved in an attack on American interests or personnel he has, in fact, telegraphed, as he did, presumably, with the USS Cole and other events. And, he said, bin Laden, who once targeted American soldiers, has now changed his view: any American civilian [inaudible] taxpayer [inaudible] bin Laden thinks, is complicit in what he regards as America’s misdeeds. So, you know, that’s why the speech tonight [i.e., the speech just given by Bush] is just the first of a very long chain of events whose end we can’t possibly predict.”

9:04 PM: Larry King, host, and William Baker, guest (former U.S. Secretary of State)

[Larry King interviews James Baker, former Secretary of State. Baker responds to King’s question as to whether this is a failure on the part of American policy.]

Baker: "I don't think it's a failure on the part of American policy, Larry, I think that there probably were some, perhaps some lapses in security."

...

"You know, my favorite suspect here, and I have no inside information with respect to this, is Osama bin Laden. He seems to be the favorite suspect of a lot of people. And this guy has done some things in the past that didn't depend on whether or not we were making progress towards peace in the Middle East."

[Baker lists past attacks allegedly carried out by bin Laden.]

9:35 PM: Larry King, host, and William Cohen, guest (former U.S. Secretary of Defense)

King: "Were you shocked or was there an expectancy of something like this?"

Cohen [says he was shocked to witness the event, but]: "Was I surprised? The answer is, no. We have known for some time that Osama bin Laden and other organizations have targeted the United States abroad and at home. We formed the so-called Hart-Rudman Commission [chartered under Cohen's direction in 1998, released January 31, 2001] several years ago and they filed three reports, the last of which was quite prophetic, indicating that we should anticipate acts of terrorism on American soil by terrorists who may, in fact, use weapons of mass destruction and engage in nearly simultaneous types of multiple attacks."

[He says he agrees with much of what other commentators have said, but...]

"We also have to take care that we don't engage in the wholesale slaughter of innocents abroad."

[In response to further questions from King he says we need more information, even though he thinks the footprints are currently indicating bin Laden. We go to those harboring the suspect individuals and ask them to produce them. We take diplomatic, economic, and "perhaps even military action."]

9:51 PM: Larry King, host, and Tim O'Brien, correspondent

[Anonymous phone-in caller to Larry King's show. She says that "on all of the channels, and especially on CNN...Osama bin Laden seems to be the prime suspect" and "he, supposedly, three weeks ago, gave notice that this was going to happen." She wants to know who dropped the ball.]

King: "Tim, was that a fact? Did we know that bin Laden had made some sort of threat three weeks ago?"

O'Brien: "There was knowledge that he made some kinds of threats but they were general and there was nothing new about that. He's making threats all the time."

10:49 PM: Bill Richardson, guest (former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations), and Julie Sirrs, guest

[Wolf Blitzer has Bill Richardson on the show. Blitzer notes that Richardson went to Afghanistan and met with Taliban leaders in 1997. He also has Julie Sirrs on the show, former DIA agency analyst specializing in bin Laden and the Taliban.]

Richardson: "My gut feeling, Wolf, is, yes, that every indicator, which is similar to the bombing of our two embassies, to the USS Cole, the modus operandi, the three to five [inaudible], that mostly likely it is Osama bin Laden. I believe that intelligence is also indicating that he's now in Afghanistan."

Sirrs: "I agree with Ambassador Richardson and the other experts that I know you've had on throughout the day that, yes, all the indicators do seem to point to Osama bin Laden being responsible for this attack."

[She says the Taliban are fully responsible for harboring bin Laden.]

10:50 PM: CNN News Caption

Caption at bottom of screen: "U.S. INTEL. OFFICIALS: 'GOOD INDICATION' OF LINKS TO OSAMA BIN LADEN"