

What is 9/11 Truth? – The First Steps

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Lately there has been much written and said about the emergence of the 9/11 Truth Movement. Unfortunately, most of this ignores an important question - What exactly is “9/11 Truth”? The simple answer is twofold. The first truth about 9/11 that no one can argue with is that the official story of what happened has been used to “change everything”, meaning it has redefined all government priorities and international relations, and therefore the entire future of society. The second, more troubling truth about 9/11 is that the official story is false. Many people still don’t see this second truth clearly, however, so we must help them look again. But it’s important to realize that 9/11 Truth is not just about promoting new conspiracy theories, it’s more fundamentally about questioning the one we’ve been given.

The official story of September 11th is comprised of two reports. The first of these, the *9/11 Commission Report*, gives the government’s overall version of what happened that day and why. However, it is somewhat misleading to call this report the “official story” as the Commission’s executive director and *de facto* member of the Bush Administration, Philip Zelikow, controlled the entire investigation as well as the writing of the report. Most of the 9/11 Commission members were simply there to present an appearance of unanimity. Therefore the official story is not representative of work done by the US government as a whole, but is largely the view of the Bush Administration.

The Commission’s story has been shown to be entirely false due to lies of [omission and distortion](#), and one significant event their report omitted entirely was the collapse of WTC 7.¹ They left explanation for this disaster, and the collapse of the towers, to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) for publication as the second half of the official story, the NIST WTC report. This second report is a direct product of the Bush Administration, with cabinet member Carlos Gutierrez’ name emblazoned on page one. Of course NIST itself is a government agency whose directors are also Presidential appointees. Those relying on this report always fail to note the fact that the leaders of NIST’s WTC investigation were appointed directly by George W. Bush.

This fact should remind us that the Bush Administration has been criticized heavily for their disdain of science. The [House Committee on Government Reform](#) found “numerous instances where the Administration has manipulated the scientific process and distorted or suppressed scientific findings.”² A [group of leading scientists](#), now including 49 Nobel laureates, 63 National Medal of Science recipients, and 175 members of the National Academies, has said that the Bush Administration engages in “distortion of scientific knowledge for partisan political ends.”³

Add to this some preliminary considerations, and you can see the enormity of the challenge presented to the “political scientists” at NIST. To begin with, everyone knows that no tall steel-

framed buildings have ever collapsed from fire, yet we're told that the first three instances of this occurred all on the same day.⁴ Similarly, there is no precedent in which a building exhibiting all the characteristics of controlled demolition was not a demolition, and again we have three. We also know that the building's structural engineer, John Skilling, considered airliner impacts and the resulting jet fuel fires in his design, and assured us "the building structure would still be there."⁵ Additionally, the contractors and specialists the NIST used depended on good government relationships or on the political story itself. Finally, we know that the primary investigators behind the FEMA report, Larry Silverstein's insurance claim report, and the NIST report were largely the same group of people despite the ever-changing story.⁶

So what explanation did NIST finally give us four years later? Well, actually they haven't finished the job yet, having postponed their report on WTC 7. The [report released in September of 2005](#) is for the two towers only. And they don't really tell us how these buildings collapsed either, providing only a collapse initiation sequence, and then simply declaring that "global collapse ensued". But if we focus, we can examine the general features of their collapse initiation sequence to see if it is consistent with known facts, or is at least self-consistent. The seven steps of NIST's collapse initiation sequence that are common to both towers, clarified and summarized as fairly as possible, are as follows.⁷

1. A number of columns were severed by aircraft impact
2. Loads were redistributed to the remaining columns
3. Fireproofing was "widely dislodged"
4. Columns and floor assemblies were softened by high temperatures
5. Softened floor assemblies began to sag
6. Sagging floors pulled the exterior columns inward, causing columns to buckle
7. Instability spread around the exterior of the building

The first two steps of this sequence are not surprising, although there are assumptions on NIST's part. At **step one**, we can take their word for it that approximately 15% of the columns were severed in each building by aircraft impact. Note that this is quite low compared to original design claims reported in the mid-sixties by the Engineering News-Record that suggested the towers could lose more than 25% of their columns without having any problems. As for the **second step**, NIST says the loads actually decreased on some columns and increased slightly for others. Again, no problem here considering similar design claims that the exterior columns could withstand 2000% increases in live load.⁸

With **step three** we quickly get to the core of NIST's collapse initiation argument. Their report states that "The WTC towers likely would not have collapsed under the combined effects of aircraft impact damage and the extensive, multi-floor fires if the thermal insulation had not been widely dislodged or had been only minimally dislodged by aircraft impact." Considering that NIST so clearly depends on extensive fireproofing loss, you would think they would have spent a great deal of their time and money investigating this effect and communicating the details.

But no, one had to be very patient and focused to find what evidence NIST provided for this crucial claim. Their test for fireproofing loss, never inserted in the draft reports, involved shooting a total of fifteen rounds from a shotgun at non-representative samples in a plywood box.

Flat steel plates were used instead of column samples, and no floor deck samples were tested at all. In the end, they slid the results into a [12 page appendix](#) to the final report.⁹

Unfortunately, it's not hard to see that these tests actually disproved their findings. One reason is that there is no evidence that a Boeing 767 could transform into any number of shotgun blasts. Nearly 100,000 blasts would be needed based on NIST's own damage estimates, and these would have to be directed in a very symmetrical fashion to strip the columns and floors from all sides. However, it is much more likely that the aircraft debris was a distribution of sizes from very large chunks to a few smaller ones, and that it was directed asymmetrically. Also, there is no indication that fireproofing was stripped from beneath the aluminum cladding on the exterior columns, but in subsequent steps of their story, NIST depends on this.

To put NIST's pivotal claim to rest, there was simply no energy available to cause fireproofing loss. Previous [calculations by engineers](#) at MIT had shown that all the kinetic energy from the aircraft was consumed in breaking columns, crushing the floors and destroying the aircraft itself.¹⁰ But NIST's tests indicate that 1 MJ of energy was needed per square meter of surface area to shear the fireproofing off. For the areas in question, more than 6,000 square meters of column, floor deck and floor joist surface, the extra energy needed would be several times more than the entire amount of kinetic energy available to begin with.

We could stop there, and realize that NIST's story is not plausible. But to emphasize just how implausible it is, let's go on to **step four**, where high temperatures softened the columns and floors. NIST did tests for this as well. The first test, that examined paint deformation on steel samples chosen specifically from the fire zones, showed that less than 2% of the samples had seen temperatures above 250 C. Another test gave the one-sided result that no samples saw temperatures above 600 C. The obvious problem here is that steel does not soften or lose significant strength at the low temperatures indicated, yet NIST's story depends on the softening or weakening of vast quantities of steel in both core and exterior columns, floor decks and floor joists. The less obvious problem is that structural steel components are chosen for use in buildings based in part on fire resistance tests. [According to Underwriters Laboratories' \(UL's\) Chief Executive Officer](#), tests on steel components for the WTC buildings were performed by UL nearly forty years ago, and the results verified conformance to the New York City code requirements for multiple hours of fire resistance at much higher temperatures.¹¹

An important thing to realize here is the duration of the WTC fires. Many have noted that these fires were not very intense, because the black smoke indicated Oxygen starved fires that would have produced relatively little heat. But according to NIST, the fires in the failure zones did not last very long either. NIST points to the east wall of WTC 2 as the failure zone, and say that the fires reached this area within 10 to 20 minutes of aircraft impact. NIST goes on to say that it took 50 to 60 minutes for the fires to migrate around the core of the building in WTC 1.¹² These official estimates indicate that the fires in the failure zones of the towers lasted for only about 45 minutes in each case, much less than the 3 or 4 hours of fire resistance required by the NYC code.

How about **step five**? As part of NIST's investigation, Underwriters Laboratories performed additional tests to establish the fire resistance of models of the WTC floor assemblies. The

results were that the floor assembly models not only didn't collapse, invalidating the long-standing "Pancake Theory", but the floors barely sagged – only about 3 inches, despite the use of double the known floor load and two hours of fire exposure (i.e. over twice the duration of fires known to have existed in the failure zones).¹³ NIST then added this 3 inch sag to their computer model, and by way of an unknown transformation, it suddenly became 42 inches of extreme sagging.¹⁴

At this point it is difficult to continue, but since our own futures depend on this story, we must. **Step six** says that sagging floors pulled exterior columns inward. To support this, NIST plugged at least nine different scenarios into their computer, with just one of these showing inward bowing in their virtual reality. To do this, they had to take a computer mock-up of a nine story high by nine column wide wall section, remove it from its web of support by "disconnection", strip off ALL the fireproofing, expose this section to twice the known fire time yet again (90 minutes), and then apply some unspecified, utterly miraculous inward pull.¹⁵ Without a doubt, one rarely finds more shameful and obvious examples of the distortion of science.

How about NIST's **last collapse initiation step**? They don't say much here except that "instability spread" around the entire building. Since the buildings came down uniformly into their footprints, and did so in approximately 10 seconds, there was precious little time for instability spread. If we give them half a second to accomplish this, the instability would have had to move at nearly twice the speed of sound. That is, of course, not realistic.

After providing a clearly false collapse initiation sequence, NIST leaves us to ponder the idea that "global collapse ensued". This is a chilling statement considering the purposes for which the official story has been used. With this statement, NIST avoids the actual collapse dynamics, following the 9/11 Commission's lead by omitting many of the most important and relevant facts. When you're ready to accept the fact that we still have a vital need for the truth, a good way of examining the many important facts NIST ignored, and considering what could have really happened in New York City, is to read Steven Jones' historic paper.¹⁶ As for the rest of the story, the next outrageous conspiracy theory can wait until we've rid ourselves of the first false one.

Our nation and the world have wagered everything on the Bush Administration's story of what happened on September 11th. It is now clear that their story is entirely false, and this fact points toward a greater crime than the crimes of 9/11 themselves.

References

1. David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions* (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2005). Griffin summarizes the omissions and distortions in "The 9/11 Commission Report: A 571-Page Lie," 911 Visibility Project, May 22, 2005 <http://www.septembereleventh.org/newsarchive/2005-05-22-571pglie.php>
2. United States House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform, Politics and Science in the Bush Administration, August 2003, http://democrats.reform.house.gov/features/politics_and_science/index.htm

3. Union of Concerned Scientists, *Restoring Scientific Integrity in Policymaking*, http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/interference/scientists-signon-statement.html

4. Those supporting the Bush Administration's theories often rely on the argument that aircraft damage contributed to the collapse of the WTC buildings. However, not only have aircraft struck other buildings without causing global collapse (notably the Empire State Building), but not all the WTC buildings were impacted by planes. More importantly, NIST's collapse initiation story has little or nothing to do with impact damage. Particularly for WTC 1, the NIST argument rests almost entirely on the weakening of the building by fires that had migrated to the side opposite of impact, and then burned for about 45 minutes in the manner of a typical office fire.

5. James Glanz and Eric Lipton, *City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center* (New York: Times Books, 2003), 138

6. For more on the consistency of personnel involved in the various official investigations, see my presentation from the Chicago 9/11 Truth Conference, *The NIST WTC Report: A New Standard for Deception*, June 4, 2006. http://www.scholarsfor911truth.org/PPT_Presentations.html

7. NIST NCSTAR1, Final Report on the Collapse of the World Trade Center Towers, Principal Findings, 175 (<http://wtc.nist.gov/NISTNCSTAR1CollapseofTowers.pdf>) and in more detail, NCSTAR 1-6, Probable Collapse Sequences, p 299 to 309 (<http://wtc.nist.gov/NISTNCSTAR1-6.pdf>)

8. For these original design claims, see "Structures Can Be Beautiful, World's Tallest Buildings Pose Esthetic and Structural Challenge to John Skilling," and "How Columns Will Be Designed for 110-Story Buildings," *Engineering News-Record*, April 2, 1964. The exact ENR comments referenced were "live loads on these [perimeter] columns can be increased more than 2000% before failure occurs" and "one could cut away all the first-story columns on one side of the building, and part way from the corners of the perpendicular sides, and the building could still withstand design live loads and a 100-mph wind force from any direction."

9. See NIST NCSTAR 1-6A, Appendix C, <http://wtc.nist.gov/NISTNCSTAR1-6A.pdf>

10. NIST gave 2,500 MJ as the kinetic energy provided by the aircraft impacting the north tower. Tomasz Wierzbicki and others from MIT calculated that all of this was consumed in damaging the aircraft and building, with no energy remaining. Wierzbicki's false assumption that the exterior columns were made of A36 steel cancels out his other false claim that high numbers of core columns were severed, meaning his overall estimate of energy loss from column breakage remains reasonably accurate. Wierzbicki's report, called Aircraft Impact Damage, can be found at this link. <http://web.mit.edu/civeny/wtc/PDFfiles/Chapter%20IV%20Aircraft%20Impact.pdf>

11. See my essay, *Propping Up the War on Terror: Lies About the WTC by NIST and Underwriters Laboratories*, in David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott, eds., *9/11 and the*

American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out (Northampton, Mass.: Interlink Books, Fall 2006). (http://www.911review.com/articles/ryan/lies_about_wtc.html)

12. In NCSTAR 1-6, section 9.4.3 (p 322) and section 10.9.4 (p 338), NIST says “The fires in WTC 2 reached the east side of the building more quickly, within 10 to 20 minutes, than the 50 to 60 minutes it took the fires in WTC 1 to reach the south side.”

<http://wtc.nist.gov/oct05NCSTAR1-6index.htm>

13. In NCSTAR 1-6, we see “...four standard fire resistance tests (ASTM E119) of the floor truss assemblies with twice the floor load that was on the WTC floors.” Chapter 10, p 332, Finding 17.

14. The extent of the floor deck sagging after the unrealistic time of two hours can be seen in NCSTAR 1-6 Figure 3-11 (p 49). The 3-inch result is visible there or, based on the 45 minute duration of fires in the failure zones, it can be seen in the graph of Figure 3-15 (p 52). The computer result of 42 inches of sagging is noted in the same report, Chapter 9, Figure 9-6 (p 297).

15. Case 8, the “DBARE” result where NIST was finally successful at causing inward bowing of a highly manipulated computer mock-up, can be found in NCSTAR 1-6, Chapter 4, tables 4-14 and 4-15 and pages 111 to 115. But of all the manipulations NIST uses, the really incredible part about this step is the “disconnection” scenario. Architect Eric Douglas has pointed out that it is difficult to understand how an inward pull force can be applied to columns that have been disconnected from the floors. It is the floors themselves that are supposed to be applying the inward force on the columns! See Eric’s excellent treatise on the NIST WTC report, entitled “The NIST Investigation – How Real was the Simulation?” to be published soon.

16. Steven Jones, “Why Indeed Did the WTC Buildings Collapse?”

<http://www.physics.byu.edu/research/energy/htm7.html>