

American Airlines Flight 77—The Key to the 9/11 Enigma?

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Sophisticated and elaborate plots are often plagued with one or more serious flaws or oversights, which if followed up doggedly would expose them as malicious frauds. More often than not, such flaws are discounted or massaged by the architects and their abettors and although the explanations may not be generally accepted by astute observers they do contribute to the convoluted and tortuous pattern of evidence that keep researchers running in circles and chasing rainbows.

To solve the entire 9/11 puzzle—to connect all the dots—would certainly be desirable. But to dilute one's efforts by taking in all the broad aspects of the entire series of events at the outset would be unproductive.

Seven years have elapsed since the attacks took place at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and many of the pieces to the 9/11 puzzle still remain scattered and disconnected. A broad overview of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon points to American Airlines' Boeing 757, Flight 77 as the weak link in the 9/11 incident. The official account of the Pentagon explosion contains inconsistencies and aberrations that can and should be explored and exploited.

French author and researcher Thierry Meyssan provided detailed data, photographs and drawings in his book bearing the English title, *The Big Lie*. It offered sound evidence to support the conclusion that what struck the Pentagon was not Flight 77 but probably a missile. Another French writer, Emmanuel Ratier, published *Letter of Confidential Information—Faits & Documents*, which won first prize from *LeMonde* for investigative reporting together with his dramatic presentation of a series of photographs entitled, *No Plane Crashed Into The Pentagon*.

David Ray Griffin, Professor of Philosophy and Religion is the author of five books on 9/11, His latest work, *9/11 Contradictions: An Open Letter to Congress and the Press*, points out the many contradictory and false statements that have been allowed to remain without comment, clarification or retraction.

A recent analysis of phone calls from Flight 77 conducted by David Ray Griffin and Rob Balsamo, disclosed the many conflicting conclusions emanating from official agencies and sheds light on their shortcomings, contradictions and omissions that warrants further review. Rob Balsamo is co-founder of *Pilots for 9/11 Truth* and producer of *Pandora's Black Box* (a DVD series).

To this writer's knowledge only one book has undertaken the task of connecting the dots in the 9/11 series of events to form a hypothesis that cannot be readily dismissed. The book,

Smokescreen: 11 Days in September by Marcus Breau, was apparently researched in the early years of the 9/11 aftermath—2002 to 2003—and published in 2005. It is a detailed analysis of events leading up to the attacks, their alleged implementation and the discrepancies discovered in the media's reports. The book's conclusions of what happened that day, from the initial reports of hijacked planes, their assigned missions and their ultimate fate are noteworthy. Its determinations regarding Flight 77 and the alleged phone calls coincide with those of Griffin-Balsamo, Meyssan and Ratier but extend beyond that. Breau's book has received little attention. It may be mis-categorized or simply subjected to a treatment of benign neglect. It does, however, offer much fertile ground for the pursuit of related and as yet untapped approaches in the solving of the 9/11 mystery.

The alleged phone calls from Barbara Olson to her husband, United States Solicitor General Ted Olson, alleged to have been made sometime between 9:15 a.m. and 9:25 a.m., were widely publicized—and widely questioned. Ted Olson said that his wife, a passenger on the plane, called him twice at his Department of Justice office using her cell phone. She informed him that Flight 77 had been hijacked, its passengers and crew threatened with knives and box cutters and confined to the rear of the airliner. She requested her husband to contact the pilot to instruct him what to do.

That is indeed a strange story. Ted Olson, an able, learned and skilled legal scholar, on hearing his wife's report would have known immediately to contact the National Security Council, FBI, NORAD and his superiors in the Department of Justice. That would at least have given air defense 20 to 30 minutes to scramble and intercept the incoming airliner. Instead Olson called CNN the next morning to reveal the details of his wife's call. An alarm to Air Defense was never issued.

Did Olson contact his superiors about his wife's calls? He had to have done so. To remain silent about the calls until he revealed them publicly on CNN would have been a flagrant violation of trust, unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information and dereliction of duty. It can be concluded with great certainty that discussions did take place at higher levels and Olson was authorized to inform CNN of his wife's calls. Failure to issue an immediate Air Defense alarm, however, suggests that those authorities saw no reason to do so.

The details of an intentional crash into the Pentagon by Flight 77 were extremely frail. No one saw the airliner. Crash debris and bodies were absent. Nothing substantive was being offered to support the official claim. Throughout the day doubts about the story increased. With Ted Olson's report of his wife's calls from the airliner, as broadcast by CNN the following morning the official story of the Pentagon crash was given a new life. It became believable—at least temporarily.

When it was disclosed that cell phone calls from airliners at cruising altitudes were not feasible Olson changed his story. Barbara used a passenger seat phone he said and called him collect because she did not have her credit card. But in order to get a dial tone from an on board seat phone a credit card had to be scanned into the instrument.

If a credit card was not required for the collect call an operator or an automated caller had to contact the called party to authorize payment of the collect charges. Consequently a record of the call would be available. Similarly, if a cell phone somehow managed to get through a record of the length of the call in minutes chargeable to that particular cell phone number would likewise be recorded. Neither Ted Olson nor the Department of Justice was able to verify the cell phone calls or the collect calls with documented proof.

Government authorities concluded that Barbara Olson's call from Flight 77 never happened. The calls to Ted Olson were fabricated, they said. His claim about receiving two calls from his wife aboard Flight 77 was not true and unless he was the victim of a hoax, he was lying.

These were strong charges against a high-level government official. Ted Olson was not a bit player in the Bush administration. On the contrary, as the U.S. Solicitor General he became the savior of the Republican party by arguing eloquently and successfully to the Supreme Court in 2001 to nullify the proposed recount of the questionable Florida election returns that resulted in awarding the presidency to George Bush.

The account that Barbara was the only passenger—having been herded to the back of the plane by hijackers—who was able to run into the aisle, grab a seat phone that didn't exist and make a call—and then make a second call lacks credibility. This fact alone is sufficient reason to believe that Barbara Olson could not have called her husband from Flight 77.

The official timeline presented for American Airlines Flight 77 states that it took off from Dulles at 8:10 a.m. destination San Francisco. At 8:50 its transponder signal was turned off and moments later it disappeared from radar at the Ohio-West Virginia line. If attempts were made to establish contact with Flight 77 they apparently were unsuccessful. The airliner's whereabouts were unknown. Clear Channel Radio station KOA in Denver reported that an aircraft had crashed at the Ohio-West Virginia border. The report was not confirmed nor was it later retracted. Nothing more was heard about the reported crash.

The premise that Flight 77 turned eastward heading for Washington is unsupportable unless one interprets Barbara Olson's call to Ted as offering that proof. Washington D.C., like no other metropolitan center in the world is heavily guarded by the most sophisticated defenses ever created. Its surveillance capabilities are highly refined having the ability to detect incoming craft at low levels and locking on to multiple targets simultaneously with a 99 % probability of interception. Surface to air missile batteries and fighter interceptors are on standby 24 hours a day and with the assistance of satellite surveillance and GPS guidance fighter planes can intercept intruders within minutes of scrambling. Only the most militarily proficient groups would dare challenge the Washington defenses.

The media presented the flight paths of all four hijacked airliners but this data did not come from official FAA records. Its source was unknown but rumored to be the product of a private firm. The FAA was repeatedly asked for information on Flight 77 and its course but steadfastly refused comment on the airliner's flight. The course shown for Flight 77 was displayed as a dotted line from the Ohio-West Virginia border to Washington.

If FAA was not able to track Flight 77 how was it possible to establish its course? If FAA refused to disclose information on Flight 77 where did the flight path data come from? Who other than the FAA would have this information? The dotted-line course was widely publicized as the flight path of Flight 77 into Washington. In a subdued reference that was easily missed the course was characterized as "reconstructed." But it could not have been the actual path of Flight 77 since radar and transponder data were not available and the plane at that point was considered to be missing. The general public was wrongly led to believe the depicted dotted line presented by the media to be the true course of Flight 77 that led directly to Washington and to the Pentagon.

The National Transportation Safety Board, NTSB, stated that they reviewed Flight 77's flight data recorder and derived its speed and altitude. How did NTSB manage to obtain that

information from a flight data recorder? Whatever, if anything, crashed into the Pentagon virtually vaporized itself and everything in it. No wreckage. No luggage. No bodies. No scattered effects or papers. And most certainly, no flight data recorder.

A journalist asked the FBI official at the Pentagon site if the plane's black box was found, referring to the flight data recorder. The FBI official stated that they found the FDR but it was damaged beyond salvation and was useless. The NTSB and FBI statements apparently sought to support the official claim that it was Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon.

From takeoff of Flight 77 until its alleged impact at the Pentagon the Boeing 757 was airborne for about one and a half hours. At normal speed it would have flown at least 700 miles in that time, taking into account the process of take-off, ascent to altitude and getting clearance for its course. At the point the airliner disappeared from radar and allegedly turned around toward Washington it had traveled only 220 miles. The return trip of 220 miles indicates that the airliner would have traveled a total of only 440 miles from takeoff to impact in the 1 hour and thirty minutes it was airborne. The average speed for Flight 77 that day, which should have been in excess of 500 miles per hour, was just 293 mph according to the official account. But the unpublicized fact is that the airliner could easily have traveled about 300 miles more in that time. And if it was not the craft that impacted at the Pentagon it could have done just that, which raises more questions.

If the airliner were flying "on the deck" on its return to the Capital to avoid radar detection Air Defense radars specifically designed for low-altitude detection would have picked up the intruder. Also, a low flying airliner roaring toward Washington in this relatively populated area of Virginia on a morning that had traumatized the entire nation with the images of hijacked airliners crashing into buildings, the sight of a roaring airliner flying at low level toward Washington would have elicited numerous reports from alarmed citizens. But there were no ATC reports of unidentified aircraft, no Air Defense alerts and there were no reports from outlying areas of low-flying airliners.

Short of being a silent, invisible phantom craft transparent to radar detection Flight 77 could not have penetrated Washington's defense perimeter. If highly effective Air Defense detection systems, surveillance satellites, Air Traffic Control monitoring and visual sightings from the ground failed to pick up the intruder one could rightly conclude that Flight 77 was not in the air space minutes away from Washington contrary to the stated claims of unnamed government officials and a contrived, reconstructed dotted line course drawn on a map of the state of Virginia as presented by the television networks.

The 9/11 Commission, FBI and apparently other government agencies reported months later that four calls were made from Flight 77 to DOJ, according to Griffin-Balsamo. The Commission stated that all four calls were made by Barbara Olson. The FBI concurred that such calls were made by Barbara. But Ted Olson says he received two calls from his wife. The preponderance of evidence, however, demonstrates that the calls, whether two or four, could not have been made under the circumstances known to exist aboard Flight 77 or as described by official government and media sources.

The news that the Pentagon had experienced a huge explosion coming minutes after the WTC was struck by hijacked planes and one of the towers had collapsed in a huge and monstrous cloud of dense vaporized material added numbness and fear to the already shocked populace. Bryant Gumbel of CBS broke away from his coverage of the WTC,

"There's been a huge explosion at the Pentagon!" he cried out. Sheryl Atkisson CBS National Security Correspondent said, "...there's a huge white and black plume of smoke. I didn't see a plane...didn't hear the noise even though, really, I was probably within a mile of the building." David Martin, CBS Pentagon reporter said, "I'm at the Pentagon where the explosion occurred." Bob Schiefer, long-time CBS newsman told Dan Rather, "I'm a block north of the White House some miles from the Pentagon, as you look over my shoulder...you can see there's still these huge clouds of smoke billowing out of the Pentagon. This was no small explosion. It can be seen literally for miles."

A plane crash into a building would not produce such an explosion or a massive amount of smoke. The huge Russian AN-124 that crashed into a building and an El Al Boeing 747 crashing into a 12-story apartment complex in Amsterdam produced no large explosions or billowing clouds of smoke and flame.

Several newspaper reporters were in the vicinity. One stated that he heard a screeching sound from a high-speed craft. Another thought a heat-seeking missile had struck the building. No one reported seeing or hearing a low flying, huge airliner coming in at ground level and impacting the building. No wreckage, bodies or effects could be seen on the Pentagon grounds. Since there was no sign of wreckage it was assumed that that the entire plane had been swallowed up within that vacant wing of the Pentagon. But the entry hole was roughly 10 feet in diameter. The Boeing 757 fuselage is 20 feet in diameter. The contradictions could not be ignored.

In the short span of 90 minutes Americans were shown television footage of two hijacked airliners coming out of nowhere to strike two WTC towers. The towers collapsed in an eerie and unprecedented manner. A huge explosion in the Pentagon quickly followed said to have been caused by a third, unseen hijacked airliner that disappeared inside the Pentagon wing. Twenty minutes later a fourth hijacked airliner was said to have crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania without being seen or leaving a trace of wreckage.

Earlier, the government's position was that no calls were made from Flight 77 simply because Barbara Olson did not have the opportunity to make any phone calls being held captive at the rear of the plane by hijackers and cell phones were inoperable from an airliner in flight and seat phones were not present. That should have ended the dispute. But with the FBI's astonishing announcement that four calls had been made from Flight 77 the issue became more complicated.

Apparently a record of four calls from Flight 77 was found—whether true or false—and had to be accounted for. The government probably chose to take the quickest way out of the dilemma by attributing the four calls to Barbara Olson. So from the strong evidence that Barbara could not have called from the airliner, a position that the government originally held, they now said that she made all four calls. An embarrassing question that was ignored was how were those four calls from Flight 77 made if cell phone use was not possible and passenger seat phones were not available?

Ted Olson remained silent on the government's claim of four calls from Barbara. He did not press the claim that he had received only two calls from his wife. He was not hailed by the media as the wronged public servant who had been vindicated. Instead, Ted Olson, the government and the media continued their silence on the entire phone call issue.

Ted Olson was a team player. He would pull out all the stops to achieve an important

outcome. He once addressed the Supreme Court with the statement that, "...it is easy to imagine an infinite number of situations where government officials might quite legitimately have reasons to give false information out." And this philosophy apparently permeated much of his accounts as well as the government's.

Details involving the protection of Washington D.C. after the 9/11 attacks were scant, even though the existence of highly sophisticated security measures and an impenetrable defense corridor around the Nation's Capital was and had been operational for several years. Government buildings such as the White House, Capitol, Pentagon, Senate and House Office buildings were heavily guarded and visitors were screened for proper ID and scanned with metal detectors.

A no-fly zone over the central area of the city was strictly enforced. In recent years secret underground facilities have been constructed for security purposes. Concrete barriers were erected at key points including pop-up devices in major roads. Traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue fronting the White House was barred, and a highly effective, state-of-the-art air defense and surveillance system, including surface-to-air missiles and fighter interceptors, was deployed. It is also presumed that around-the-clock satellite surveillance of the Capital was in operation.

Sophisticated security devices, surveillance cameras, quadrant sensors and other scanning devices would be expected to be positioned in and around all government buildings and facilities. The Pentagon, the powerful muscle, the heart and brain of United States military might—a high priority target for any enemy—would be expected to be ringed with even more elaborate detection devices including high-resolution, continuous scan devices and infra red versions for night surveillance.

Yet on September 11, 2001 none of the exotic devices charged with protecting the Capital of the world's foremost superpower managed to detect a single irregularity. The best video clip obtained was shown days later. It was an off color, badly blurred orange flash that the media described as the airliner crashing into the Pentagon. The film clip was in fact completely unidentifiable and had absolutely no resemblance to an aircraft and certainly not to a Boeing 757.

Official Washington must have been stunned by the news that an intruding aircraft had been able to penetrate the multi-layered defenses in place that day. In a cold sweat they realized that if it had been carrying a one-megaton thermo-nuclear bomb, they and the Capital city of Washington would have been obliterated. The brass at the Pentagon in charge of protecting the Capital had a lot to answer for. Expenditures for its defense were enormous. Estimates for the deployment and continual upgrading of the system ranged as high as \$3 trillion yet on September 11 that system had failed miserably. To add to the government's embarrassment the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, revealed just a day earlier, on September 10 that \$2 trillion of the Pentagon's funds could not be accounted for.

An investigation of this critical and potentially catastrophic failure would have warranted an immediate investigation by a blue ribbon commission, Senate and House hearings and think-tank analysts. But that did not happen. It was business as usual in Washington D.C. in the days that followed, a response that would have been expected if there had been no intruder on 9/11.

The FBI's revelation of the four calls made from Flight 77 presents an intriguing and perhaps

an illuminating scenario. It could be the crack in the wall of silence that explains critical elements in the Flight 77 mission. It is important to note that neither Ted Olson nor any other official source was able to verify the approximate time the calls were made. They could have been made at any time after the airliner's takeoff and even after the explosion at the Pentagon. There is very good reason to believe that Flight 77 did not crash into the Pentagon but continued its flight after it disappeared from radar and turned off its transponder at the Ohio-West Virginia line.

If any calls were made from the airborne Flight 77 there was only one way of doing so. Cell phones were useless in flight and seat phones were unavailable. The calls had to be made from the cockpit of the Boeing 757 using radio channels dedicated to private or proprietary communications. For example, a regional American Airlines office or other designated ground station would be contacted by radio. The caller, the pilot or co-pilot, would request a phone patch to the number he wished to reach. The ground operator would dial up the number. The four calls from Flight 77 could have been made in this way including any calls from Barbara Olson.

It is doubtful that this method—under the circumstances of that day—would have been used. Anyone with a short wave or VHF receiver would be able to pick up the conversation while the secondary relay source, the ground station, would be required to monitor it. Nevertheless four calls from Flight 77 may have been made in this way including calls from Barbara Olson. The detected location of the call, however, would be the ground station's telephone and not the airliner.

Alternately, if Flight 77, with another identity, had already landed—perhaps in Parkersburg, West Virginia, Columbus, Ohio, Wright Patterson Air Force Base or Chicago—in response to FAA's order issued at 9:25 that morning for all airborne flights to land at the nearest airport, all or some of the calls could have been made from that location by cell phone, land line or radio-phone patch, including those from Barbara.

The implication of this deduction is staggering. It presents the astonishing suggestion that the original pilots and flight crew remained in command of the airliner. There were no hijackers and no impact on the Pentagon. If Flight 77 remained in control of the original flight crew they must have had a role in the Pentagon deception.

If this analysis is valid as the evidence and rationale presented strongly suggests, the entire September 11 episode involving the WTC and Flight 93 must be seriously questioned and reappraised.

The media coverage in the aftermath of the attacks was sterile. They and their underlings danced around the many questionable 9/11 details with skill and agility. Some even managed to levitate—as a dense cloud—over a particularly sensitive issue. To this day the dance continues to tunes orchestrated by the powers that be. Nevertheless, viewed from any angle, the role of Flight 77 in the 9/11 attacks can be seen as being in grave conflict with the official account.

Of course the keystone of the series of 9/11 incidents is the disquieting and unearthly collapse of the twin towers. It continues to perplex a broad segment of technically competent researchers. Most theorize that the collapses were effected by a form of controlled demolition in spite of the fact that structures of the size and sophisticated design of the World Trade Center towers have never before been demolished by such means or by

any other technique.

The following three critical elements in the unprecedented destruction of the WTC towers constitute the basic character of that destruction. They have not received the attention they deserve.

1) The collapse began with a powerful tremor that was sustained during the progressive disintegration of the tower.

2) The duration of the tremor and that of the collapsing tower that occurred in a nearly free-fall mode. The tremor recorded on a seismograph at Columbia University registered 2.0 on the Richter scale and its duration was synchronous with the tower fall time of 9 to 10 seconds.

3) An enormous amount of the tower's material was vaporized into a powdery substance that covered many blocks of Manhattan, clung to persons and cars and was blown out to sea. Vehicles positioned at a distance from the collapsed tower were mangled and forcibly ejected. These are uncharacteristic effects of any known form of demolition.

Any theory or hypothesis regarding the collapses of the WTC buildings must address these collapse characteristics and effects. A clue can be had from the comment of Steven Warran who wrote: "We stand at the beginning of a new age. Our government has in its hands a method of disrupting the molecular basis for matter, and its first impulse was to weaponize it. Is this so hard to understand? Like splitting atoms to create destruction was so hard to understand in 1945?"

Dr. Judy Wood, a former Professor of Mechanical Engineering, and John Hutchison, experimental scientist, stated that photographic and video evidence suggest that the World Trade Center towers were destroyed using Directed Energy Weapons (DEW). Col. Dan Bearden offered a similar opinion that "longitudinal" or "scalar" waves might have been used in that destruction.

What can be extrapolated from the sequence of events that occurred on September 11th is that a highly refined plot had been set in motion by an unknown rogue consortium. They used sophisticated technologies and carefully orchestrated procedures that coincided with scheduled events and depended on the expected television reporting to successfully convey and record their mission. But their plot was not perfect. There were flaws.

The use of nineteen unpredictable and unskilled wannabe Arabs would not be consistent with the plotter's exacting requirements and use of effective technologies for total success. Assigning them the task of hijacking four huge airliners from three major U.S. airports with rigid security restrictions and with a record of never before having had a plane hijacked would be a plan guaranteed to fail. And that assessment must have been apparent to the plotters as well.

Therefore, can it not be assumed that a far simpler, more effective and less risky method was used instead? As accomplished technocrats the plotters were aware of the latest advances in video manipulation as is done on television every day. With real time video insertion the allegedly "hijacked" planes piloted by "Arab terrorists" could be shown crashing into buildings while at the instant of impact a series of low level explosives on the buildings surface would be initiated to etch the outline of a banking plane into its structure.

The nineteen Arabs would be blamed for the hijackings and the attacks even though they did not travel to the airports, their names were not on any plane's passenger list and they were not apprehended, questioned or photographed by security cameras in any of the three airports. And since seven of the nineteen "hijackers" have been reported as being alive and well in their home countries this would not be an idle speculation.

It might stretch the imagination to accept this alternate scenario as it would be to accept the fact that an airliner, said to be American Airlines Flight 77, did not crash into the Pentagon but continued flying to another destination on a sinister mission. The accumulated evidence however, presents credible findings to support those conclusions. An example to be noted involves a search one investigator conducted into the Dulles Airport schedules for September 11. The record showed that Flight 77 was not listed to fly on that date but was scheduled for its normal run on the following day, September 12.

Another point to consider is that the two United Airlines planes, Flight 93 and Flight 175, were reported by news sources and by the Mayor of Cleveland as having landed in Cleveland, Ohio around 10:30 a.m. and were identified as such by United Airlines. To add to the growing threads of evidence, a search of federal records months after 9/11 found that Flights 93 and 175 remained listed in the FAA Aircraft Registry as operational aircraft under their original Boeing serial numbers and may still be flying under different N- numbers. Such discoveries support the theory that airliners did not crash at any of the four sites. No wreckage, luggage, personal belongings or bodies have ever been found at any of the sites.

By following through on the plausible leads presented here and in the referenced published books, many of the camouflaged 9/11 elements can become distinguishable and connectable. A concerted focus on developing and expanding the assertions set forth here can result in an irrefutable case against the official 9/11 story.

A breakthrough in that wall of deception already exists and taking it down to its foundations can be achieved. But it would be futile and counterproductive to attempt to assign responsibility for the 9/11 disaster to identifiable organizations, groups or individuals. The public will never know who they are. But if the manner in which the attacks were carried out is firmly established the general groupings within which the guilty might be hiding could be greatly narrowed.

Obviously the series of pernicious events that followed 9/11 cannot be reversed. One cannot put the scattered evildoers back into the box that Pandora opened or an egg yoke back into its broken shell. What it can do is convince the American people—as President Eisenhower tried to do—that they must always guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the corporate-military-oligarchic complex whose power exists and will persist to endanger their liberties and democratic processes.

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