

Evidence that the 9/11 Commission Made False Claims Relevant to Donald Rumsfeld

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

We are offering a Series of Consensus Points from the international 24-member 9/11 Consensus Panel, which presents considerable new evidence about 9/11 in the form of its 44 Consensus Points to date. The official claims regarding 9/11 are contradicted by facts that have been validated by a scientific consensus process, based on a [standard medical model of investigation](#).

Point MC-5: Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's Behavior Between 9:00 and 10:00 AM

Introduction

Questions have been raised about whether Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld could have had responsibility for one or more of the 9/11 attacks, and whether he was partially responsible for the crash of United Airlines Flight 93, which the 9/11 Commission claimed, occurred in Shanksville, PA.

The Official Account

The activities of Secretary Rumsfeld on the morning of the 9/11 attacks show that he could not have had any responsibility for any of the attacks, even in the sense of having been able to prevent them, or anything to do with the crash of United 93.

- On the morning of 9/11, Secretary Rumsfeld held a breakfast meeting with members of Congress at the Pentagon, which lasted until about 9:00,¹ and as that meeting was breaking up, they learned that “the first plane had hit the World Trade tower.”² Authorities believed this crash to have been due to a pilot error.³
- “He [Rumsfeld] returned to his office for his daily intelligence briefing.” After he was “informed of the second strike in New York, . . . he resumed the briefing while awaiting more information.” After the Pentagon was struck, Secretary Rumsfeld went to the parking lot to assist with rescue efforts.⁴
- “Secretary Rumsfeld was not in the NMCC [National Military Command Center] when the shutdown order was first conveyed. He went from the parking lot to his office, where he spoke to the President [shortly after 10:00], then to the Executive Support Center, where he participated in the White House video teleconference. He moved to the NMCC shortly before 10:30, in order to join Vice

Chairman Myers.”⁵

As that summary shows, Rumsfeld was in meetings when the attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon occurred.

With regard to the Pentagon in particular, the military, as *The 9/11 Commission Report* pointed out, “never received notice that American 77 was hijacked.”⁶

- The military might have learned that American 77 (which, according to the 9/11 Commission, crashed into the Pentagon) was in trouble, possibly hijacked, if any of the people dealing with the crisis had been involved in the White House video teleconference, which was conducted from the Situation Room by counterterrorism coordinator Richard Clarke. However, the 9/11 Commission reported: “We do not know who from Defense participated, but we know that in the first hour, none of the personnel involved in managing the crisis did.”⁷
- Rumsfeld in particular, as the summary shows, was not involved in Clarke’s video conference until a few minutes after 10:00.

Moreover, Rumsfeld also could not have had anything to do with the crash of United 93, which occurred at 10:03, for two reasons:

- Rumsfeld, as the summary shows, did not enter the NMCC until 10:30.
- “By the time the military learned about [United 93’s hijacking], it had crashed.”⁸

The Best Evidence

Claims made about Rumsfeld in *The 9/11 Commission Report*, which reflect claims made by Rumsfeld himself in 2004, have been contradicted by several authoritative sources.

1. Richard Clarke, the national counterterrorism coordinator, wrote a best-selling book, *Against All Enemies*⁹— which came out in March 2004, several months earlier than *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Clarke’s book contradicts claims that would be made in this *Report* about Rumsfeld’s activities on 9/11 between 9:00 and 10:00 AM.

- Reporting about his video conference, which evidently began at roughly 9:10,¹⁰ Clarke wrote: “As I entered the Video Center, . . . I could see people rushing into studios around the city: Donald Rumsfeld at Defense and George Tenet at CIA.”¹¹ So, whereas Rumsfeld and the Commission say that Rumsfeld went from his breakfast meeting to his office for a CIA briefing, where he remained until the Pentagon attack, Clarke said that, shortly after the second WTC attack, Rumsfeld went to the Pentagon’s teleconferencing studio.
- Clarke indicated, moreover, that Rumsfeld continued to participate in the videoconference: After the Pentagon attack, Clarke could “still see Rumsfeld on the screen.”¹² A little later, Clarke wrote, “smoke was getting into the Pentagon

secure teleconferencing studio,” and “Franklin Miller urged him [Rumsfeld] to helicopter to DOD’s alternate site,” but Rumsfeld replied: “I am too goddam old to go to an alternate site.” So “Rumsfeld moved to another studio in the Pentagon.”¹³

Clarke’s account of Rumsfeld’s location from 9:10 to 9:45 seems more plausible than the account provided by Rumsfeld and *The 9/11 Commission Report*, because:

- Clarke’s account, if false, could have been proven wrong by the videoconference tape.
- It is not plausible that, after being told of the second attack on the World Trade Center, the Secretary of Defense would have continued listening to a CIA briefing.
- It is not plausible that, if the 9/11 Commission could have contradicted Clarke’s account of Rumsfeld, it would have failed to do so. Instead, it simply did not mention it.¹⁴

2. Robert Andrews, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, gave a lecture in 2007 that contradicted the Rumsfeld-9/11 Commission account of Rumsfeld’s movements:¹⁵

- Knowing that Rumsfeld had gone to the Executive Support Center (ESC) to join Clarke’s video conference after the second WTC attack, Andrews stated, he rushed to the counter-terrorism center [CTC] to get materials that Rumsfeld would need.¹⁶
- Then, after feeling and hearing an explosive event in the Pentagon, Andrews rushed back to the ESC, where he served as Rumsfeld’s advisor during the White House videoconference. “I was there in the Support Center with the Secretary when he was talking to Clarke on the White House video-teleconference, and to the President,” Andrews said.¹⁷

3. A third authoritative source contradicting the official account of Rumsfeld’s activities was Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, in an early April 2002 interview with military historian Dr. Alfred Goldberg,¹⁸ who would later be the first author of *Pentagon 9/11*.¹⁹ Wolfowitz gave a report inconsistent with the 9/11 Commission’s claim that Rumsfeld had not gone into the NMCC until after United 93 had crashed:

- Wolfowitz stated that after the Pentagon attack, he and others were told to go outside the building, but that they were allowed to go back in within “less than ten minutes” – which means, if the Pentagon was attacked at 9:38, he was referring to going back in at roughly 9:50.
- Wolfowitz reported: “We went into the NMCC, where the Secretary was, and General Myers. General Shelton was in Europe.”

- He next said: “We proceeded with discussions by secure video conference. One issue was what to do about the plane over Pennsylvania, getting orders to get fighters up to intercept it, and the Secretary getting approval from the President to shoot it down.”²⁰

This report by Wolfowitz contradicted two central elements in the account of Rumsfeld’s locations provided in *The 9/11 Commission Report*:

- Whereas the 9/11 Commission claimed that Rumsfeld did not go into the NMCC until 10:30, Wolfowitz reported talking with Rumsfeld there before 10:00.
- Whereas the 9/11 Commission claimed that the military did not learn about UA 93’s troubles until after it crashed, Wolfowitz reported that he and Rumsfeld, along with General Myers, had discussed “what to do about the plane over Pennsylvania.”

Conclusion

The 9/11 Commission absolved Donald Rumsfeld of any responsibility for what happened after 9:03 that morning by claiming that, in the first hour of the White House video teleconference, “none of the [Defense] personnel involved in managing the crisis [participated].”²¹ Reports by both Richard Clarke and Robert Andrews, however, show that Rumsfeld participated in this videoconference during this crucial hour.

The 9/11 Commission also absolved Rumsfeld from any involvement in the crash of UA 93 by claiming that the military did not know anything about UA 93 until after it had crashed, and that Rumsfeld was not in the NMCC prior to 10:30. Paul Wolfowitz, however, indicated that he discussed what to do about UA 93 with Rumsfeld and Myers before 10:00.

Testimonies by Richard Clarke, Robert Andrews, and Paul Wolfowitz, accordingly, provided very strong evidence that the 9/11 Commission made false claims relevant to Rumsfeld’s behavior. Further investigation of Rumsfeld’s actual behavior on the morning of 9/11, therefore, is needed.

References for Point MC-5

1. Donna Miles, [“Vice Chairman: 9/11 Underscored Importance of DoD Transformation,”](#) American Forces Press Service, September 8, 2006.
2. [“Rumsfeld’s War,”](#) *Frontline*, PBS, October 26, 2004.
3. [The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States](#), Authorized Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 35.
4. [Ibid.](#), 37.
5. [The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 43-44. The Commission’s account corresponds to one given by Rumsfeld himself, in which he said: “I was in my office with a CIA briefer and I was told that a second

plane had hit the other tower. Shortly thereafter, at 9:38, the Pentagon shook with an explosion of then unknown origin. I went outside to determine what had happened. I was not there long because I was back in the Pentagon with a crisis action team shortly before or after 10:00 A.M. On my return from the crash site and before going to the Executive Support Center, I had one or more calls in my office, one of which was with the president. I went to the National Military Command Center where General Myers . . . had just returned from Capitol Hill. . . . I joined the air threat telephone conference call that was already in progress” ([9/11 Commission Hearing](#), March 23, 2004).

6. [The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 34.

7. [Ibid.](#), 36. The Commission added: “And none of the information conveyed in the White House video teleconference, at least in the first hour, was being passed to the NMCC [National Military Command Center].”

8. [Ibid.](#), 34.

9. Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004). [MSNBC said](#): “The publishing phenomenon of the year. . . . Sales soar for book by former terrorism adviser”.

10. Clarke reported that, after having arrived at the White House shortly after 9:03 (when the second World Trade Center building was hit), he started his videoconference shortly after having a brief meeting with Dick Cheney and Condoleezza Rice (Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 1-3). Clarke indicated that, several minutes after the conference had begun, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta arrived, and Clarke “suggested he join the Vice President [who had gone down to the PEOC]” ([ibid.](#), 5). Mineta told the 9/11 Commission that he “arrived at the PEOC at about 9:20 AM” ([9/11 Commission Hearing](#), May 23, 2003.) Clarke’s account agrees with that of Mineta; see [“Statement of Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, May 23, 2003”](#). It takes a few minutes to get down to the PEOC from the Situation Room, so if Mineta is right about getting to the PEOC by 9:20, he must have started down at roughly 9:15. And if this is correct, the videoconference must have begun at about 9:10.

11. Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 3.

12. [Ibid.](#), 7.

13. [Ibid.](#), 8-9.

14. The fact that the Commission did not mention Richard Clarke’s treatment of Rumsfeld does not mean that this treatment did not influence the Commission’s account of Rumsfeld. According to early (2001 and 2002) discussions of Rumsfeld’s movements by him and his assistant Torie Clarke (no relation to Richard Clarke), Rumsfeld went, after going to the reported crash site, directly from his office to the NMCC; the ESC was not mentioned (“Assistant Secretary Clarke Interview with WBZ Boston”; [“Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with John McWethy, ABC,”](#) U.S. Department of Defense, August 12, 2002). But Clarke’s book appeared on March 10, 2004, two weeks before Rumsfeld’s

March 23 testimony to the 9/11 Commission. During this testimony, Rumsfeld modified his story, saying: “On my return from the crash site and before going to the Executive Support Center, I had one or more calls in my office. . . . I went to the National Military Command Center. . .” ([9/11 Commission Hearing](#), March 23, 2004). This modification allowed the 9/11 Commission to soften the contradiction between its story and Clarke’s: The Commission wrote that Rumsfeld “went from the parking lot to his office . . . , then to the Executive Support Center, where he participated in the White House video teleconference. He moved to the NMCC shortly before 10:30” ([The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 43).

15. As shown by his biographical statement, [“Robert Andrews, Consultant”](#), Andrews has received the Department of Defense Award for Outstanding Public Service (2007) and the medal for Distinguished Civilian Service to the United States Army (2009).

16. “The moment I saw the second plane strike ‘live,’” said Andrews, “I knew Secretary Rumsfeld would need the most up-to-date information, and ran down to our counterterrorism center [CTC] to get maps of New York and other data to take to him in the Executive Support Center [ESC].” Quoted in Barbara Honegger, “Special Operations Policy Expert and Veteran Robert Andrews Gives Distinguished Visiting Guest Lectures at NPS,” September 4, 2004. Honegger could not publish this interview (it belongs to the Naval Postgraduate School, her former employer), but she will supply it on request.

17. Honegger, “Special Operations Policy Expert.” Andrews hence said that Rumsfeld was in the ESC when he talked to the President, not – as *The 9/11 Commission Reports* said – in his office.

18. [“Pentagon Attack: Interview with Paul Wolfowitz.”](#) by Alfred Goldberg and Rebecca Cameron, April 19, 2002.

19. Alfred Goldberg et al., *Pentagon 9/11*, Defense Studies Series (Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense: Washington, D.C., 2007).

20. [“Pentagon Attack: Interview with Paul Wolfowitz.”](#)

21. [The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 36.

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