

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

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In commemoration of the 22nd anniversary of 9/11, we repost this article by Ted Walter and the late Prof. Graeme MacQueen, first published in 2022.

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

<i>Networks</i>	
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
<i>Cable News Channels</i>	
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
<i>Local Channels</i>	
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 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.)

- A. 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.
- C. 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.
- E. 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.
- G. 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

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