

# Participants in the Cover-Up of 9/11: The Case of American and United Airlines

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Elias Davidsson, 8 November 2004 (corrected on 4 May 2005, edited 8. Oct. 2005)

According to the official account, 19 Arabs hijacked four passenger planes on September 11, 2001 and crashed these planes with passengers and crew onto the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Two of the aircraft belonged to American Airlines and two to United Airlines.

In view of the huge losses incurred by these airlines in terms of human lives and material, one would have expected them to help shed light on the criminal events. As will be shown below, the airlines have, on the contrary, refused to disclose crucial evidence to the families of the victims and to the public in general and continue to do so. One of the immediate worries of American Airlines on September 11, 2001, was how to mould information flow to the general public and prevent “rumors” and wrong “theories” to leak out. A prestigious public-relations agency was put on the scene by AA “minutes after the first crash” to help carry out that communications task. Concurrent to such public-relations efforts, both airlines refused and continue to refuse to disclose the most fundamental data in their possession regarding the murderous events, such as passenger lists and access to eye-witnesses. This evidence suggests airlines complicity in covering up the truth on 9/11.

## THE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT

While the US administration has not issued any authoritative “official account”(or “white book”) of the events of 911, as promised shortly after the events by Secretary of State Colin Powell **(1)**, the report issued by the bi-partisan Congressional Commission of Inquiry in June 2004 **(2)** may be regarded as the nearest thing to an “official account.”

According to this report, 19 Arab hijackers, whose names and photographs have been posted shortly after the attacks on the FBI website **(3)(4)**, perpetrated the atrocities on September 11 through a collective suicide operation. Two AA and two UA passenger jets were, according to this account, flown as living missiles into the named targets. The first AA aircraft (flight AA11, tail no. N334AA) is said to have left Logan airport in Boston at 7:59 with 92 people on board (crew, passengers and hijackers) and crashed at 8:46 on the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. The second AA aircraft (flight AA77, tail no. N644AA) is said to have left Dulles airport in Washington, D.C. at 8:20 with 64 people on board and crashed into the Pentagon at 9:37. The above departure times, incidentally, are still disputed and in the case of AA11. As of November 13, 2003, the statistical database of the Department of Transportation (BTS) did not even mention AA11 as a flight scheduled for September 11, 2001 **(5)**. At a later date the Department added a record for this flight with the departure time set as zero. Checking again the BTS database for this article on November 18, 2004, I discovered that the DoT again amended its database by setting the scheduled departure of AA11 to the “official time” of 7:45 **(6)**. It appears that the DoT had received orders to align its database with the “official account” on the crime of 9/11. Should this have happened, there would be grounds to charge the DoT for falsification of official records and participation in a criminal cover-up.

Hundreds of questions regarding the events of 9/11 remain unaddressed by the Congressional Commission of Inquiry. The present article examines only one particular question: Whether American Airlines (and United Airlines) are participants in the vast cover-up of the crimes committed on September 11, 2001.

## WAS THERE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE ?

On the morning of September 11, 2001, the Dallas office of Weber Shandwick, one of world’s largest public relations agencies, mobilized a nationwide network of public relations professionals to assist the American

Airlines corporate communications department. The details were reported on Weber Shandwick's website (and later removed):

*Within minutes of the first terrorist attack involving American Airlines, Weber Shandwick put in motion a national strategic support network, comprising more than 75 Weber Shandwick professionals, to assist American Airlines during this unprecedented crisis situation. Over the following week, the W.S. team worked around the clock on site at the AA corporate headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, as well as in New York, Washington, D.C., Boston and Los Angeles, providing strategic counsel and tactical support for both internal and external communications. Additionally, the Dallas office of W.S. was staffed 24 hours a day, monitoring breaking national broadcast and online news. Communications specialists in crisis management, consumer relations, internal communications, and government affairs provided support....Externally, AA faced the difficult challenge of controlling what was being said about the airline by unauthorized spokespeople. Flight attendants, pilots and their unions – along with contracted security firms, airport authorities, government agencies including the FBI, FAA and National Transportation Safety Board, and local government agencies all issued statements regarding the events. Eyewitnesses, stranded passengers and post-September 11 travelers were also of concern. All of these external groups has an impact on American Airlines' communications strategy, requiring that the W.S. team ensure consistent communications with all audiences.(6)*

Timothy Doke was AA Vice President of Corporate Communications at the time of the 9/11 events. He is now Vice President – Corporate Communication at Freescale Semiconductor, Inc.

As a response to the present author's inquiry, Tim Doke responded by email on October 6, 2004:

*Dear Elias. There seems to be some confusion around the way AA handled the crisis at the time of 9/11. We did not "outsource" all our crisis communications to Weber Shandwick. We managed it from beginning to end in-house. Because of our staffing resources were limited and the air transportation system was shut down, precluding us from getting our staff to key locations around the country, we relied heavily on W.S. professionals to supplement our PR resources at our headquarters in DFW and to provide on-site personnel to support our people in Boston, LA and New York...Nothing in [our crisis] plan contemplated having the FBI move into our offices, declare an incident a criminal investigation and shut-off any of the traditional external media communications we would do in the case of a crash.*

Tim Doke added, laconically: "Most of the people who were involved in the crisis on 9/11 have left AA."

According to Sherri Green and Claire Murphy of PR Week USA of November 11, 2001(7), who interviewed Tim Doke, he "immediately called Ken Luce, president of Weber Shandwick Worldwide's Southwest US office. The agency sent more than 20 people to American's headquarters and to airports around the U.S. [according to the agency, the figure was 75 professionals, see above E.D.]. It seemed like every media call raised a new issue". Doke also reportedly said that "spokespeople subtly steered reporters away from false rumors and leaked information. Employees from WSW and American's other agency, Burson-Marsteller, served as the firm's eyes and ears in the airports its staff couldn't reach while planes were grounded."

The above account raises various questions with far-reaching consequences:

(a) Weber Shandwick stated on its [website](#) that it deployed 75 P/R professionals around the country in support of AA "within minutes" of the crashes. The accuracy of this statement was confirmed to a colleague of the present author by Weber Shandwick's Ken Luce on October 5th 2004. How could Tim Doke, let alone Ken Luce of Weber Shandwick, know within minutes that AA aircraft were involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, when it is publicly claimed that neither the US President, the US military and other security agencies, knew at the time what was going on, let alone could know the identity of the crashed aircraft? Is it plausible that a service agreement, detailing the nature, scope and costs of Weber Shandwick's P/R services for American Airlines, could have been drafted, finalized and negotiated within minutes of the attacks? Or were AA and Weber Shandwick executives forewarned of the attacks, ready to act on the spur of the moment? If so, by whom were they forewarned?

In an email of November 7, 2004 to the present author, Tim Doke dismisses that AA or Weber Shandwick "had any premonition of the events of 9/11. It was the furthest thing from our minds." Regarding the promptness of Weber Shandwick's reaction he merely explained that "Weber Shandwick had people ready to respond quickly to this event."

(b) What were the specific interests that prompted AA to engage in a massive P/R efforts on the very day of the attacks? A hint is given in the statement by Weber Shandwick that it was necessary for AA to “ensure consistent communications with all audiences.” In his email of November 7, 2004, Tim Doke shed some light on the term “consistent communications” by saying: “Lots of people claimed to have knowledge or theories about what happened that they shared with any reporter who would listen. It was important for us to go ‘off the record’ with certain media who were straying from the facts as we, at AA, uniquely knew them. We did this to prevent inaccurate reporting.” However, in his email he maintained that “employees who were in contact with the terrorists on the ground were fully interviewed by the FBI, but had no desire to speak to the media.” Of course, they could not talk to reporters anyway under the FBI’s restrictions.

One may surmise that AA employees were strictly forbidden to talk to media and the public about what they knew so that only “authorized” individuals could describe the events in line with what the corporation wanted the world to know. This required to “subtly steer[...] reporters away from rumors and leaked information.” AA was apparently concerned, and seriously so, that some facts regarding the events of 9/11 and AA’s relation to these events, would reach the public.

*Weber Shandwick’s chairman, Jack Leslie, appears to have privileged links to the U.S. foreign policy bodies. He was the only public relations executive to testify before the U.S. House International Relations Committee, already in November 2001, in relation to the U.S. government’s efforts to promote the “war on terror.”*

## **PARTICIPATING IN A CRIMINAL COVER-UP ?**

As mentioned already in the previous section, part of the public relations efforts carried out by Weber Shandwick, at the request of American Airlines, was to “subtly steer[...] reporters away from rumors and leaked information.” What type of “leaked information” was AA concerned with?

It is argued here that the information AA did not want to “leak” to the public was the same information that AA refuses to reveal to the families of the victims and to the public in general since 9/11. Such information includes:

- (a) Names of ground personnel who saw off the passengers and crew at the departure gate on 9/11 and could testify on what they saw;
- (b) Authenticated copies of the flight manifests, which would show the names of the alleged hijackers and of the passengers;
- (c) Copies of boarding cards, which would show the names of the alleged hijackers and of the passengers and confirm their seat numbers;
- (d) Computer listing of the boarding times of individual passengers and hijackers;
- (e) Positive evidence that the aircraft which left the airport was indeed the aircraft which later crashed into the known target (aircraft serial number, tail number, engine serial numbers, black boxes, etc.);
- (f) Names and contacts of AA personnel who reportedly communicated by cellphones with crew or passengers on the hijacked aircraft and could publicly testify on these conversations.

The present author asked both American and United Airlines to provide some of the above information. Both airlines declined to provide the information and referred the author to the FBI for all such data. The last attempt to obtain information from American Airlines (a letter to AA spokesman Marty Heires of October 6, 2004) did not elicit any response at all. Neither airline, however, justified in its answer its refusal on a legal restraining order or on the need to protect the privacy of the families of the victims or of its personnel. The author has not come across any Justice Department order, or any legal ruling, that prohibits airlines from releasing the above information and airline personnel to communicate freely with the media on matters relating to 9/11. However, Tim Doke, in his email to the present author said that the FBI limited what “we could say publicly through the media” and that “employees who were in contact with the terrorists on the ground... could not talk to reporters... under the FBI’s restrictions.”

A spokesperson of the FBI, asked why the agency has not publicized the original flight manifests in support of its allegation against 19 named hijackers, did not maintain that the FBI or the airlines were legally prohibited from disclosing the original flight manifest. She simply referred the present author to the airlines for such information.

The airlines’ apparently uncoerced refusal to produce the above information suggests that this refusal is prompted by their interest to prevent their employees, the families of victims and the public from knowing the full truth on the events of 9/11.

## **DID AA OFFICIALS POSITIVELY IDENTIFY THE CRASHED PLANES ?**

In order to obtain insurance benefits, owners of a crashed plane must positively identify the plane as theirs. Yet, in the case of the reported crashes of the four planes on September 11, 2001, no evidence could be found in the public domain that airline experts positively identified the crashed planes from the planes' wreckage. If such expertise did take place beyond public gaze, why would American or United Airlines not announce such positive identification on their website or in a press release? The Report by the Congressional Inquiry Commission does not either, for its part, refer to any positive forensic identification of the aircraft by the airlines or by public agencies.

According to the "official account", the aircrafts were the weapons with which the passengers were killed. In a proper criminal investigation, one of investigators' first tasks is to identify the owner of the murder weapon and find out how that weapon reached the scene of the crime. Yet, no reference to such an investigation could be found in the allegedly "comprehensive" report by the Congressional Commission of Inquiry.

The lack of positive identification of the aircraft means that the families of the dead or missing passengers cannot know with certain where and how their beloved ones actually died nor who caused their deaths.

## **WHAT COULD THE AIRLINES BE COVERING UP ?**

It might be argued that the airlines' secrecy is prompted by their fear of being sued for negligent security measures rather than by charges of criminal complicity. If this were the case, what would explain the refusal of the airlines to release the original flight manifests or allow eyewitnesses to be questioned publicly? It appears, therefore, that the airlines cooperate with US public agencies in covering up the crime of 9/11.

Unless American and United Airlines show readiness to produce the above evidence, duly authenticated, and cooperate fully with the families of the victims and the general public to shed light on the events of 9/11, they must be regarded as suspects in the vast criminal conspiracy to commit a mass murder in America on September 11, 2001.

## **Notes**

1. "We are hard at work bringing all the information together—intelligence information, law enforcement information and I think in the near future we'll be able to put out a paper, a document, that will describe quite clearly the evidence that we have linking him to this attack," said Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2001/09/mil-010924-usia13.htm> (mirrored at: <http://www.aldeilis.net/english/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=371&Itemid=107>)
2. <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm>
3. <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/091401hj.htm>
4. <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/penttbom/penttbomb.htm>
5. According to Gerard Holmgren's report dated Nov. 13, 2003 (<http://members.surfeu.fi/11syyskuu/holmgren.htm>), and a display of BTS database records of all American Airlines flights scheduled on September 11, 2001 from Logan Airport, Boston (at [http://www.the7thfire.com/Politics%20and%20History/american\\_airlines\\_flight\\_11\\_did\\_not\\_takeoff.htm](http://www.the7thfire.com/Politics%20and%20History/american_airlines_flight_11_did_not_takeoff.htm)), no AA11 flight was scheduled from Logan on that day."
6. Weber Shandwick removed sometimes between Nov. 8, 2004 and May 4, 2005 from its website the page on which this text appears. The author has, however, kept a hard-copy example of the page and possesses, in addition, a confirmation by Ken Luce of Weber Shandwick, dated October 5th 2004, that the cited text is accurate.
7. <http://www.sherrigreen.com/American%20Airlines%20braces%20for%20most%20turbulent%20journey.htm>? mirrored at: <http://www.aldeilis.net/english>