



What Hit WTC2? Another Look at the Second Plane

by Leonard Spencer



Along with the collapse of the twin towers, the spectacular impact of the second plane with the South Tower was the best recorded and most photographed of the events of September 11th. The first plane was caught only fleetingly in one or two brief, though revealing, seconds of documentary footage, while the attack on the Pentagon remains a conundrum of contradictory material evidence and even more contradictory eyewitness reports. Still less is known of the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. In the case of the second plane however we are faced not with a dearth of evidence but with an abundance of it. The incident was captured by scores of photographers and video camera operators, professional and amateur, drawn to the scene by the earlier attack on the North Tower. The photographs and video footage they captured have entered public consciousness as perhaps the defining images of 9-11, for it was these images, together with those of the collapse of the towers, which were beamed around the world and replayed constantly on TV in the days that followed.

The images of the second impact therefore represent a treasure trove of evidence for the 9-11 investigator, yet this is not altogether reflected in the amount of attention and analysis they have so far received. It is almost as though their very familiarity, borne of exposure to countless replays, has dulled our investigative curiosity. Whatever the reason, it is certainly the case that almost three years after the event, there still remains some important, but largely overlooked, evidence that casts valuable light on the true nature of this incident. There is so much in fact that it is difficult to know where to start.

Perhaps as good a place to start as any is with the scar that the second plane created in WTC2's facade and the official attitude towards it. Because the South Tower burned so intensely and because it collapsed only an hour after the impact, there are very few photographs in the public domain that provide a clear view of the scar when it was not obscured by thick smoke. There are some however and one of the best available is reproduced below.



As in the case of the first plane's impact with WTC1 (discussed [here](#)), official nervousness and lack of candour concerning the second plane and the scar it created is evident in FEMA's 'World Trade Center Building Performance Study', available in PDF format from www.house.gov/science/hot/wtc/wtcreport.htm. Section 2.2.2.1 of Chapter 2 of the report concerns itself with the initial damage sustained by WTC2 and depicts the scar in following diagram:

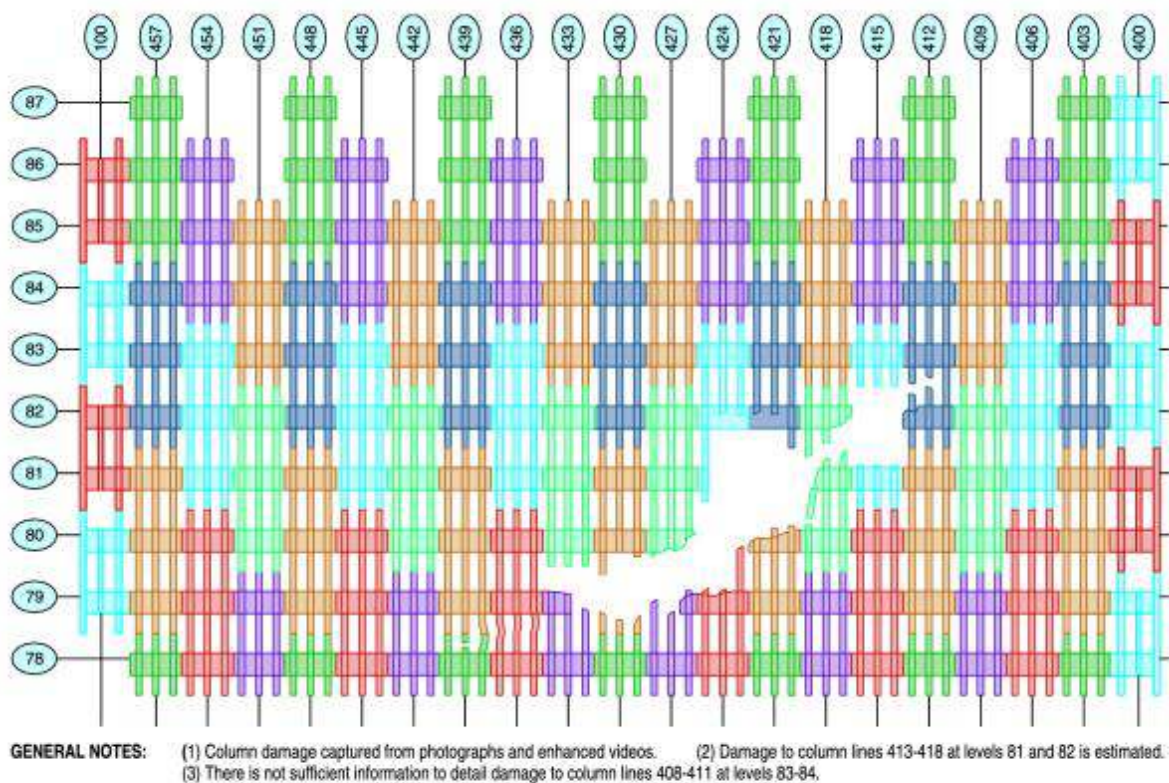


Figure 2-27 Impact damage to exterior columns on the south face of WTC 2.

Comparing this diagram with the photograph above, it becomes immediately apparent that FEMA's depiction of the scar is wildly inaccurate, in terms of both its size and shape. Using the

vertical pillars of the box columns as a guide — these are clearly visible in the photograph and depicted also in the diagram — it is a straightforward enough task to confirm that the real scar measured about 37 pillars across. According to FEMA however the scar measured a mere 23 pillars in width, less than two-thirds of the true figure. It is clear also that FEMA's rendition of the shape of the scar is way off the mark.

Using the photograph above as a reference, I have redrawn the scar to create an approximation of how FEMA's diagram would have appeared had that organization been motivated by honesty and accuracy in this matter. My revised version of the diagram is shown below:

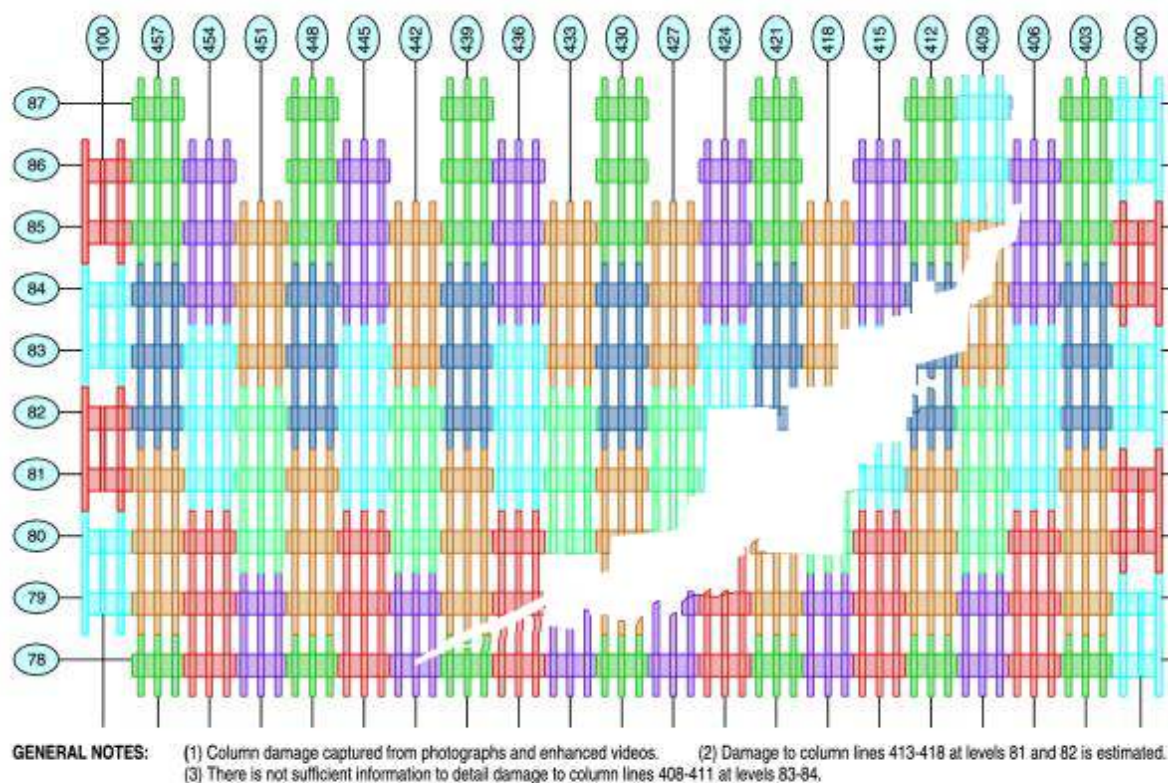


Figure 2-27 Impact damage to exterior columns on the south face of WTC 2.

How different it is. Apart from the greatly increased size, note how the right 'engine hole' suggested by the FEMA diagram has all but disappeared. By superimposing a to-scale outline of a Boeing 767 over the revised scar (below) we get further insights into why FEMA elected to be so grossly misleading in this matter.

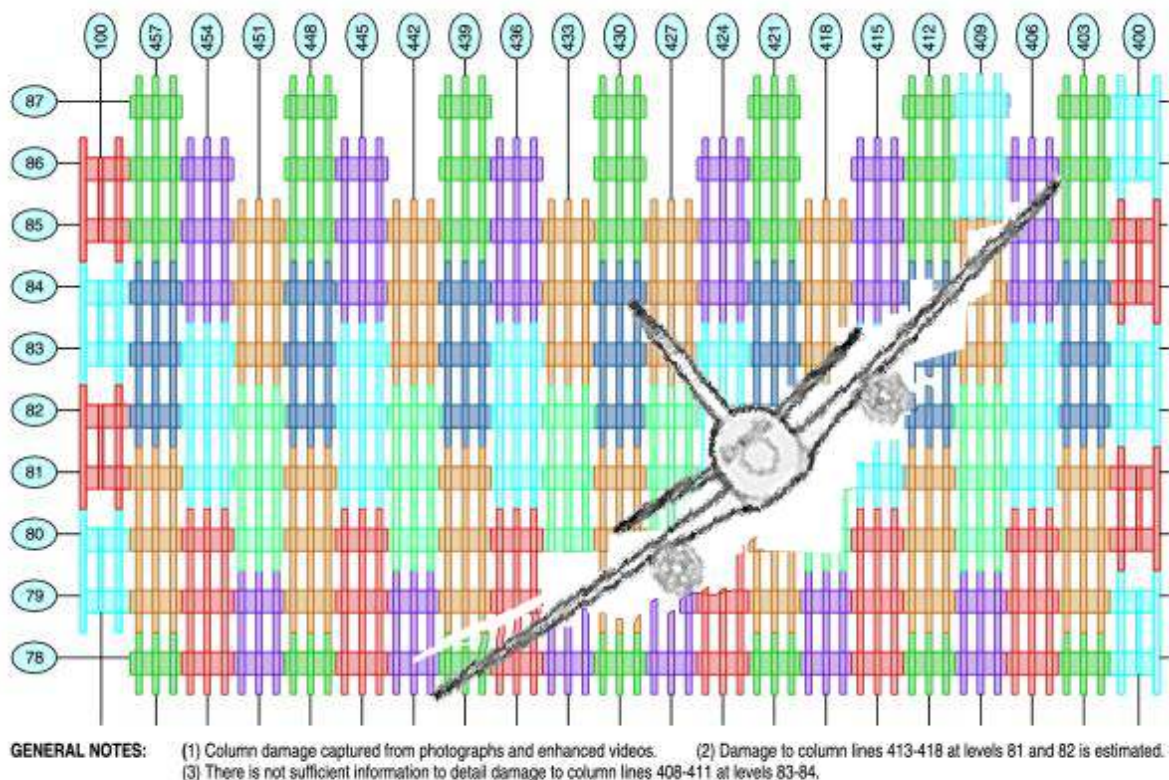


Figure 2-27 Impact damage to exterior columns on the south face of WTC 2.

To the left of where the left engine struck for instance is a somewhat larger hole. In FEMA's shrunk rendition of the scar this larger hole is clearly intended to be inferred as the hole caused by the left engine. The revised diagram shows also a large and anomalous cavity immediately below the plane's fuselage, yet this portion of the scar does not feature in FEMA's diagram at all. In the photograph it can be seen that this area of the scar is filled with debris from the plane; FEMA chooses to present this area as an undamaged part of the building. This rather interesting debris will be looked at more closely later.

Whatever it was that hit the South Tower, it seems that FEMA is keen to misrepresent the impression it made on the building. From this we may reasonably infer that FEMA is keen to misrepresent the nature of the plane itself.

So what did hit the South Tower? To answer this question we must look closely at all the photographic and video evidence that is available. Examination of these images shows there is good reason to believe that the plane was something other than United Airlines Flight 175, a Boeing 767 that had departed Boston's Logan Airport at 08.14 earlier that morning.

Take for instance the speed of the plane. Analysis of the video footage suggests that the plane was travelling at 590 mph when it hit the building. This is not far off the top cruising speed of a 767, but a regular 767 can only achieve such speeds when it is flying at high altitude. At sea level, where the air is much denser and offers far greater resistance, 590 mph is far beyond the capability of a 767. This casts doubt on whether the plane was powered by the Pratt and Whitney engines normally used on 767s and suggests a power plant of a type more usually found on military aircraft.

Close scrutiny of the photographs and video footage reveals other anomalies. Those in which the underside of the plane is visible show that it is carrying an anomalous device beneath its right wing root and that equally anomalous pipe work connects this device with the tail section of the plane. The device (or 'pod' as it has become known) also has a nozzle sticking out at the front. Footage captured by CNN and ABC (below) show these features particularly clearly.



Enhanced still from [CNN video](#) showing 'pod', pipe work and burst of flame from nozzle.



Still from [ABC footage](#) showing plane from different angle with 'pod' clearly visible.

As the plane's nose touches the building we see the apparatus come into action. At this moment a bright burst of flame is emitted from the device's nozzle. The CNN clip captures this with great clarity. There is another interesting piece of evidence concerning the burst of flame that unfortunately I am unable to reproduce here because it is too faint and subtle to survive the digitization process. It is available however to anyone who has a sharp analogue (eg VHS) copy of the CNN clip. In the frame immediately before that in which the the burst of flame occurs, the nozzle can be seen to emit a burst of grey vapour. This vapour then ignites to form the flame. It would seem that this burst of vapour is the device's own fuel supply priming prior to ignition. It would seem also that the production of the brief burst of flame is the device's sole purpose. You clearly need some rather specialized equipment reliably to produce a burst of flame from the front of an aircraft flying at almost 600 mph.

But what is it for? In an [earlier article](#) I suggested that the device was a form of ignition system, a hi-tech flame-thrower of sorts. I associated the device and its burst of flame with the massive fireball that resulted from the impact. I postulated that the plane itself was filled with fuel and that the burst of flame, produced by the device, ensured that this vast, flying reservoir of fuel exploded in a timely and suitably photogenic manner. There are however problems with this interpretation. I can see no reason for instance why such an ignition device, if one were needed, had to be placed so conspicuously on the exterior of the plane. It seems to me that a rather less eye-catching mechanism for achieving the same purpose could have been situated inside the plane. While not wholly discounting my original interpretation, I have nonetheless had cause to rethink the issue of the device's purpose on the basis of additional evidence that I shall look at later in this article.

For the time being I would like to take issue with the notion, which has gained some currency of late, that the plane fired a missile at the building prior to impact. As far as I can see the photographic and video evidence offers little to support this hypothesis. Unlike in the case of the first plane, there is no telltale explosion immediately before impact; all we see is a small burst of flame emanating from the device's nozzle. And as far as I am aware, missile launchers don't normally require lengths of tubing leading to the rear of the plane. Some support for the 'missile' theory has been drawn from a piece of footage taken by a German TV camera crew at the scene, the relevant stills from which are reproduced below.



Stills from [German TV footage](#) clearly showing the nozzle and the burst of flame. Does it also show a missile?

It certainly provides a fine view of the nozzle and the burst of flame, but does it show more than this? The second of these frames has been cited in some quarters as evidence of a missile being fired, but examination of this frame, in the context of those immediately before and after, shows that this is not the case. The apparent 'projectile' is simply a ghostly, superimposed image of the device's nozzle as it appears in the third frame. If you look closely you can also see a faint image of the plane's airframe, positioned exactly as it is in the third frame. This effect is a consequence of 'interleaving', whereby two adjacent frames are superimposed one over the other in order to create a new, intermediate frame. The digitized version of the German footage contains several other examples of this process, which helps make movie clips with a low frame-rate play more smoothly.

But what do the real sceptics say? Even within the 9-11 investigative community there is some resistance to accepting the existence, let alone the implications, of the anomalous forms seen on the underside of the second plane. For some, it is all too fanciful and incredible to be given serious consideration; we shouldn't even discuss it for fear of alienating the wider public. When they get down to the nitty gritty, the sceptics put forward three substantive objections.

The first is that the alleged device is simply a reflection (from the right engine perhaps), or some other trick of the light. This objection can be dismissed on the grounds that the 'pod' is visible from several angles (see for instance the two stills from the CNN and ABC footage [above](#)) and in each instance it is located in precisely the same place on the plane. Also, the device catches the sunlight at the same moment as the engines and casts its own shadow. We are looking at a physical object here, not a transient optical effect resulting from the chance interaction of camera angle and sunlight.

The second objection is that the device and the piping are simply aspects of the plane's paintwork and form part of the United Airlines livery. In response to this I would simply draw your attention to the following image. Those drawn to the 'trick of the light' theory may also wish to look at it closely. It is an enhanced still from the CNN clip showing the plane in the latter stages of its penetration into the building.



Note that, just like the engines, the anomalous device is leaving its own, slightly smaller, scar in the facade. Note too how the enhancement highlights the anomalous pipe work attached to the tail-section of the plane. Whatever the objects are they are clearly something more substantial than paintwork or a trick of the light.

The third objection of which I am aware is that the objects are in fact standard features of a Boeing 767. Anyone tempted to pursue this line might be advised carefully to ponder the significance of the Boeing Corporation's response when asked by Spain's La Vanguardia newspaper for its comments on the objects. La Vanguardia's edition of 22nd June 2003 (English translation available [here](#)) reports that:

"...a spokesman stated that Boeing was unable to offer an opinion "for security reasons" and because it had not officially participated in the investigation of the attacks".

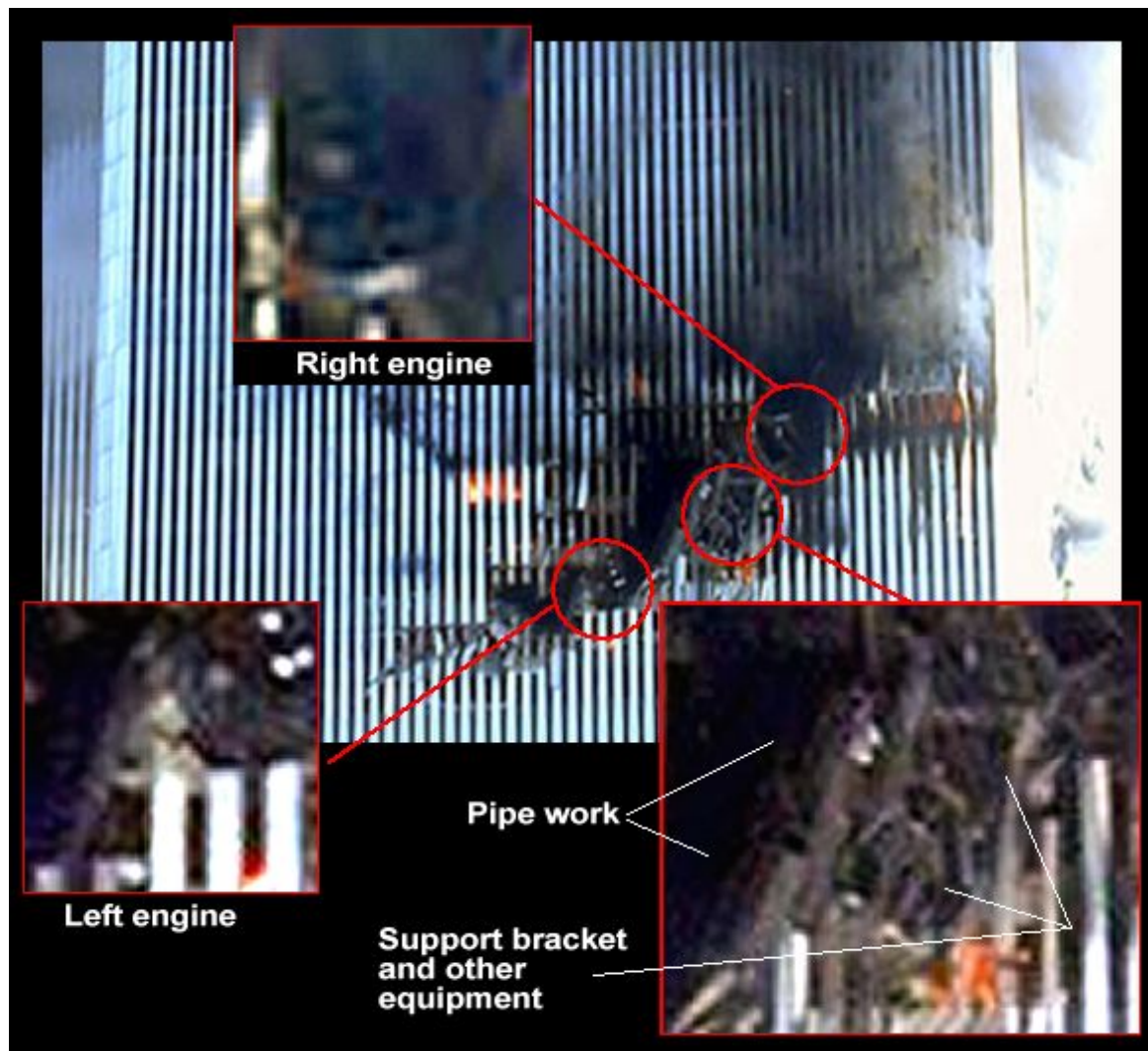
A rather curious response for a company that believed it was looking at regular and identifiable items of its own equipment.

Sceptics might also be well advised to take a much closer look at that photograph of the scar, blow it up a little and see what's to be found nestling inside. To assist in this exercise and help us get our bearings, I've superimposed a scaled image of the plane penetrating the building over the scar and circled in red the impact points of the two engines and the 'pod'.



By removing the superimposed plane but retaining the circles, we are left with an accurate indication of where these three objects struck the building. Examination of these particular parts of the scar reveal some very interesting details indeed.

In the image below I have included enlarged details of those parts of the scar that correspond with the impact points of the engines and the 'pod'. The details have been sharpened a little and the brightness and contrast increased to aid clarity.



Firstly, we can see that just where the left engine struck, an object looking suspiciously like an engine is sitting, largely intact, just a few feet inside the building. A similar object is to be seen very close to where the right engine struck. This is perhaps what you might reasonably expect, were it not for the fact that an engine, purportedly from the plane, was found at the junction of Church Street and Murray Street immediately after the attack.

The area of the scar where the 'pod' struck reveals yet more evidence about the plane that hit the tower. This is the part of the scar that FEMA prefers not to acknowledge. Here we can clearly see a rather interesting collection of pipe work. Not solid, rectangular sections of the building's own box columns, but hollow, tubular pipe work. Several sections of pipe work in fact, of differing sizes and welded together. To its right we can also see a mangled collection of other curious objects, including what looks like a support bracket and other bits and pieces. I would suggest we are looking here at remnants of the pipe work attached to the plane's underside — perhaps from near the tail-section — and the devices used to attach it to the plane.

There are some conspicuous absentees from the scar. Although the engines and parts of the underside apparatus survived the impact rather well, nothing of the plane's airframe seems to have done so. The wings, tail and fuselage have totally disappeared, as if vaporized. It is notable from videos of the impact that the plane appears to 'melt' into the building as it strikes and, interestingly, this same word was used by several eyewitnesses to describe the impact of the plane at the Pentagon. Here too, virtually no debris from the plane was found and it is tempting to wonder whether the two incidents are related, particularly on the matter of the composition of the planes.

The photograph reveals other anomalies too. Notice that the points where the engines struck form rather narrow parts of the scar. Yet to the left of the left engine hole and to the right of the right engine hole are much larger impressions, corresponding to the 'official' engine holes implied in FEMA's diagram. What caused these larger holes? They are perhaps suggestive that explosive devices were carried in the plane's wings, the purpose of which were to create these artificial 'engine holes'. Scrutiny of full-length versions of the CNN clip shows these secondary explosions erupting either side of the engines, shortly after the plane has passed through the building's facade. And what are we to make of that strange, isolated outward bulge to the right of the main scar and near to the building's edge? It seems to have been caused not by the impact of the plane but by an explosive charge *inside* the building, forcing the vertical pillars to bend outwards.

Far from being fanciful and incredible, I believe the objects visible on the underside of the second plane are demonstrably real and their remnants are available for all to see within the scar of the South Tower. I believe also that these objects represent perhaps the strongest and most compelling evidence in our possession that the true nature of September 11 was something radically different from the scenario suggested by the official account.

There is further evidence concerning this particular attack that helps us gain a more complete understanding of what really took place. Several pieces of video footage, particularly those that give a clear view of the northern and eastern walls of the South Tower, show a very interesting event that occurred immediately after the impact. Out of the NE corner of the building there emerges a missile-shaped object that is propelled northwards across the plaza. One of the best videos that captures this event was that taken by the Gamma Press and a copy may be downloaded [here](#) (1.8 Mb). Webfairy has also produced a shorter, edited version of this clip, focusing on this 'missile' event, which is available [here](#) (108 Kb). The two images below — the first a still from the Gamma Press video and the second a photograph taken by an AP photographer at the scene — clearly capture the emergence and flight of this object.



'Missile' emerging from NE corner of WTC2



'Missile' in flight

What is this object and where did it come from? While proponents of the view that the plane fired a missile prior to impact might argue that this lends further support to their argument, there is much to suggest that this not the case. Firstly, the object appears too large to have originated from the plane. Judging by the still above and the photograph of its exit hole (below), the object was at least the height of one storey in diameter, far larger than anything seen attached to the plane. Secondly, the object emerges out of WTC2 in a seemingly pristine state. Had it been fired from the plane it would, by the time it emerged from NE corner, already have passed through four walls of the building. To do this without detonating or losing its immaculate torpedo-like form is, I would argue, implausible.

I would argue indeed that the object is not a missile at all, at least not in the usual sense of the word. This is because, although the object has a missile-like appearance, it simply does not behave like one. It does not detonate and explode for instance; there are no reports of a large secondary explosion in the vicinity of the plaza that could be attributed to this 'missile' and there is no video evidence that suggests this either. Also, if you follow closely the course of the 'missile' as it flies across the plaza (you need the full-length version of the Gamma Press video to do this) it can be clearly seen to disintegrate in flight, leaving by the end only a rather small, dark core object to complete the trajectory to its (non-explosive) resting place somewhere to the north of the tower.



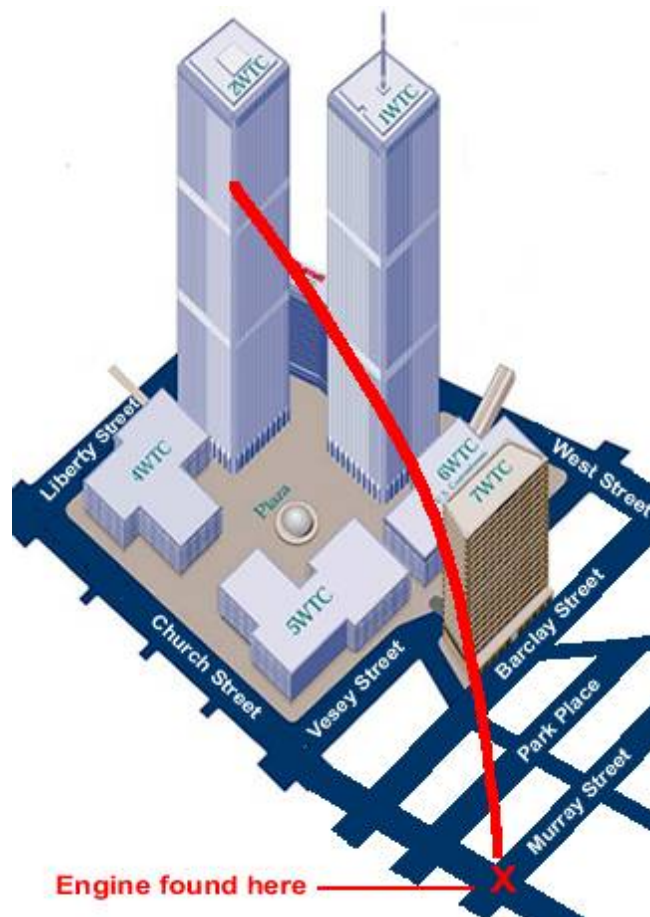
Exit hole in NE corner of WTC2



Engine found in street
after WTC2 attack

So if the object is not a missile, what is it? The official account of course would have us believe that the object is one of the plane's engines, smashing its way through the building and coming out the other side. This explanation however can be readily disproved; both the plane's engines can be seen sitting largely intact just inside the scar in the building and, in any case, those stills and photographs show something far bigger than a Pratt and Whitney engine emerging from the building. Nonetheless, I believe this explanation is not quite as far off the mark as we might think. Parts of an aircraft engine were of course found in the vicinity after the attack on the South Tower, at the junction of Church Street and Murray Street. The Naudet Brothers' documentary '911' records the discovery of this debris shortly after the impact. These engine parts had to come from somewhere.

It is interesting to note that the trajectory of the 'missile' northwards across the plaza corresponds rather neatly with the point where this debris was found, suggesting that the arrival of the debris was indeed intimately connected with the 'missile'. The diagram below illustrates this.



I would suggest that the object that emerged from the NE corner of the South Tower was in fact a canister containing items of appropriate 'debris', which was propelled from the building to lend credence to the notion that a regular passenger jet hit WTC2. And if this canister did not originate from the plane we must conclude that it was already planted in the corner section of the tower before the attack, to be fired out at the requisite moment. That it was a pre-planted device is strongly suggested both by its pristine condition when it emerges and its exit from the exact corner of the building.

If this is the case then it raises some rather tricky technical issues. Not least is the timing and co-ordination of the sequence. The timing of the object's emergence from the tower was in precise accordance with the impact of the plane and it was preceded by an equally well-timed salvo of explosions across the face of the east side of the tower, as the video clips clearly show. If, as I believe, these too were caused by pre-planted explosives then the co-ordination seems too impeccable to have been the work of a human operative pushing buttons. We are surely witnessing here the workings of an automated system, with the trigger being the plane itself.

Several commentators have noted the apparent differences between the first and second planes in the manner in which they approached their respective targets. While the first plane approached WTC1 with smooth, seemingly pre-programmed precision, there is by contrast something distinctly erratic about the second plane's arrival at its target. It approached at an extraordinarily high speed and had to perform a sharp bank to left in the final seconds in order to avoid missing the tower altogether. These observations have led some to conclude that the first plane was flown using cruise navigation technology while the second was under some form of remote, manual control, perhaps using the Global Hawk system.

This of course has important implications for the theory that the 'missile' emerging from the NE corner of the tower was already in situ prior to the impact of the plane. If the exact point of impact could not be determined in advance, there would surely need to be several such

'missiles' and other explosives planted on several floors, to ensure that those in the appropriate position were activated when the impact came. It is quite possible however that the approach of the second plane was not as erratic as the footage suggests. It is possible that the plane was targeted with the same deadly accuracy as the first and its banking manoeuvre was no more than an intentional final flourish to further reinforce the impression of a manually piloted plane. If this is the case then the strategy was misjudged, for it was this manoeuvre that enabled the waiting media to record for posterity the mysterious apparatus on the underside of the plane.

In any event, the issue of the 'missile' ejected from the corner of WTC2 has given me cause to rethink my interpretation of the 'pod' and the burst of flame it produced. I now consider it possible (and I am prepared to put it no more strongly than that) that the burst of flame played a crucial role in setting off the sequence of explosions — and the ejection of the 'missile' — that followed the impact. On the morning of September 11 the southern wall of WTC2 may have been scanned by infrared sensors wired to a computerized detonation system. The heat from the burst of flame may have triggered the activation of this system, ensuring the timely eruption of the dazzling pyrotechnic display that followed. Since we know that over the weekend prior to 9-11 the South Tower was subjected to [a prolonged 'power down'](#) during which much intensive and undocumented work took place, there was certainly ample opportunity to install such a system. I may be straying well into the realms of science fiction here, but it is nevertheless a result only of the examination and analysis of all the rather excellent evidence that is available.

To those seeking a safe and mundane explanation of events at WTC2, a mild variation perhaps on the official account, I must extend a big apology. I just cannot deliver on this occasion. It may indeed be asking a lot of the general public to accept it, but I believe the evidence is there for anyone who cares to look: the attack on the South Tower was one of the most fantastical and audacious pieces of theatre ever set before the viewing public.

The impact of the second plane, along with the collapse of the towers, was above all a televisual event. It was timed and planned to make an indelible impression in the minds of the millions who watched the event over and over again on TV. If the idea of a remotely-controlled, lookalike 767 filled with fuel, which triggers the scattering of fake debris before creating a carefully contrived, spectacular explosion sounds just too far-fetched to you, then perhaps you are not thinking about it in the right way. For I suspect that if I were describing instead the making of the spectacular finale of a Hollywood blockbuster you would simply smile knowingly at the ingenuity of the film industry and think no more about it. The only difference is that on this occasion the action was played out live (with no retakes) and appeared in the TV shows scheduled as 'news'.

Extravagant film stunts and elaborate magic tricks can be totally convincing. 'How did they do that?' we ask ourselves, thoroughly perplexed. But implicit in the question is at least the knowledge that 'they' are 'doing' something. Movie-makers and conjurers always have the courtesy to announce themselves as such. But when their skills are used to create illusions that are presented to us as stone-cold reality, how well-equipped are we to see through the illusion? The answer is that we are not very well-equipped at all. Because of this humanity is being guided, slowly and remorselessly, towards an unknown and most probably very undesirable fate.

— Leonard Spencer

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