



# Newsweek Periscope

## The White House: A New Fight Over Secret 9/11 Docs

### Newsweek

- Periscope
- National News
- Campaign 2004
- World News
- The War in Iraq
- Business
- Tech & Science
- Health
- Society
- Entertainment
- The Tip Sheet
- Columnists
- Letters & Live Talk
- International Ed.
- Multimedia
- Search Newsweek



Evan Vucci / AP

Squaring off: Bush may be coming to blows with the 9-11 commission over access to his top secret intelligence briefings

**By Michael Isikoff**  
Newsweek

Feb. 16 issue - The White House is facing a new battle with the federal panel investigating 9/11. To mollify the panel chair, former governor Thomas Kean, President George W. Bush last week reversed course and agreed to a two-month extension that is supposed to ensure a final 9/11 report by July. But that might not be enough. Commission sources tell NEWSWEEK that panel members are fed up with what one calls "maddening" restrictions by White House lawyers on their access to key documents. Unless the panel gets to see the docs, the report "will not withstand the laugh test," a commission official says. The panel is threatening to force a showdown soon—by voting to subpoena the White House.

The documents at the heart of the dispute are the so-called presidential daily briefs, or PDBs—the daily intelligence brief given to Bush by a senior intelligence official, usually the CIA director or his deputy. White House lawyers have guarded the documents as the "crown jewels" of executive privilege. But last year Kean and other commissioners complained they couldn't write their report without seeing exactly what Bush, and Bill Clinton before him, had been told about the threat of Al Qaeda. The White House then agreed to a complex deal that would allow four panel officials to review the PDBs and then brief the full 10-member panel. But the arrangement hasn't stopped the wrangling. The four-member team asked to look at 360 PDBs dating back to 1998; White



Subscribe Now

- News
- Business
- Sports
- Tech / Science
- Entertainment
- Health
- Travel
- Opinions
- Weather
- Local News
- Newsweek
- Today Show
- Nightly News
- Dateline NBC
- Meet the Press
- MSNBC TV
- News Video
- MSNBC Shopping
- Search
- MSNBC:
- Advanced Search

House counsel Alberto Gonzales permitted them to see just 24, arguing that only those that specifically mentioned possible domestic attacks or airplane hijackings were relevant. (One panel member was allowed to read all 360—but couldn't share the contents with colleagues.) The team was permitted to write brief summaries of the PDBs they did read. But White House lawyers objected to some of the wording. The bickering has meant the full panel has yet to be told *anything* about the PDBs—even while it was conducting interviews with top officials, like last Saturday's with national-security adviser Condoleezza Rice. The restrictions are especially infuriating, one source notes, because at least some of the PDBs appear to have been selectively shared by the White House two years ago with author Bob Woodward for his book "Bush at War." White House officials insist they are protecting the principle of confidential advice for the president and have given the panel "unprecedented" access to sensitive material. "We are doing everything we can to cooperate with the commission," a White House spokeswoman says. Still, some commission officials see an element of politics. While the commission's work has uncovered no smoking gun, sources say, the cumulative impact of the intelligence documents and other material is damning—showing far more screw-ups by both Clinton and Bush officials than the public has yet to learn.

© 2004 Newsweek, Inc.

- [Is Vice President Cheney Dragging Bush Down?](#)
- [The Kerry Clan as a Campaign Asset](#)
- [Onscene at the Iraqi-Syrian Border](#)
- [NASCAR's R&D Lab Works on Racing Safety](#)

**MORE FROM NEWSWEEK PERISCOPE**

**Next → CW: Intel Malfunction Edition**

- [The White House: A New Fight Over Secret 9/11 Docs](#)
- [CW: Intel Malfunction Edition](#)
- [First Lady: 'We're Not Relaxed'](#)
- [Ricin Attack: The Federal Investigation's Slow Start](#)
- [Health: The Next Epidemic](#)
- [Sneakers: Spree and Easy](#)
- [Reissues: Nancy's Still Nice](#)
- [Westminster: Can I Get a Doggie Bag?](#)
- [Surveys: Hear It for The Boys](#)
- [Fast Chat: Something to Smile About](#)
- [Newsweek Periscope Section Front](#)

- PERISCOPE**
- [The White House: A New Fight Over Secret 9/11 Docs](#)
  - [CW: Intel Malfunction Edition](#)
  - [First Lady: 'We're Not Relaxed'](#)
  - [Ricin Attack: The Federal Investigation's Slow Start](#)

**Newsweek TOP STORIES**

- [The Wedge War](#)
- [Who Killed Jesus?](#)
- [A Problem in the Bunker](#)
- [A Vital Merger](#)
- [Holding the Line](#)

**TOP MSNBC STORIES**

- [Mad cow probe ends](#)
- [Kerry looks to Tenn., Va.](#)
- [Stewart star witness questioned](#)
- [U.S.: Letter asks for al-Qaida aid](#)
- [Day-care info leaked via Web](#)

[ARCHIVES](#) | [MULTIMEDIA SHOWCASE](#) | [NEWSWEEK RADIO](#) | [ABOUT NEWSWEEK](#)  
[SUBSCRIBER SERVICES](#) | [PRESSROOM](#) | [ADVERTISING INFORMATION](#) | [VIEWPOINT](#) | [CONTACT US](#)  
[EDUCATION PROGRAM](#) | [SHOWCASE ADS](#) | [BACK COPIES](#) | [RIGHTS AND REPRINT SALES](#)



[Cover](#) | [News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Tech/Science](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Travel](#) | [Health](#) | [Opinions](#) | [Weather](#) | [Local News](#)  
[Newsweek](#) | [Today Show](#) | [Nightly News](#) | [Dateline NBC](#) | [Meet the Press](#) | [MSNBC TV](#)

[About MSNBC.com](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Search](#) | [Help](#) | [News Tools](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy](#)

© 2004 MSNBC.com

**MSN - More Useful Everyday**

[MSN Home](#) | [My MSN](#) | [Hotmail](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Money](#) | [People & Chat](#) | [Search](#)

[Feedback](#) | [Help](#)

© 2004 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. [Terms of Use](#) [Advertise](#) [TRUSTe Approved](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [GetNetWise](#) [Anti-Spam Policy](#)