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# White House papers no help, says member of 9/11 panel

Friday, February 13, 2004

**BY ROBERT COHEN**  
**STAR-LEDGER WASHINGTON BUREAU**

WASHINGTON -- A Democratic member of the national commission investigating the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks said yesterday that restricted access to White House intelligence documents will make it difficult for the panel to give a full accounting of the tragedy.

In comments contradicting Commission Chairman Thomas Kean, Bob Kerrey, a former senator from Nebraska, said a summary of the classified presidential daily briefing papers made available this week to the bipartisan panel is inadequate.

"What we got was a summary that had been modified substantially with many things taken out," said Kerrey. "I have not seen everything I need. The summary was confusing and limited, and does not inform anyone reading it what was going on in the White House from February 1998 to September 11 (2001)."

The summary was put together by three of the panel's members and its executive director, who were allowed to review the classified documents and report back to the other members. The commission on Tuesday voted to accept their summary, which had been edited by the White House.

With Kerrey and two other Democratic members dissenting, the commission also voted against issuing a subpoena to obtain access to the

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original White House documents for all 10 commissioners.

Kerrey said it is central to the inquiry to know exactly what Presidents Clinton and Bush and their top policy-makers were told about a possible terrorist attack on U.S. soil, and "what the primary national security people were doing to prepare themselves."

He said the White House promised to provide this information and "broke its word to give our reviewers wide latitude" in taking notes and making complete information available to all 10 commissioners.

"Those who read the full reports are better prepared to give a full accounting than those of us who did not have complete access," said Kerrey, a former Senate Intelligence Committee member. "I wasn't able to bring my knowledge and experience to evaluate the presidential briefing papers."

Kean, the former Republican governor of New Jersey, said this week he is confident the panel has obtained all the information it needs from the documents relating to the al Qaeda threat and the events of Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorists hijacked four airliners and killed nearly 3,000 people.

"A majority of the commission felt our review team saw every document, that nothing was hidden and the summary report gave us enough to do our work and issue a report with integrity," said Kean.

One of the other dissenters, former Democratic Indiana Rep. Tim Roemer, said there was new information in the summary report but he, too, complained the material was insufficient.

"It seems inconsistent to me for the White House to say we were not warned prior to 9/11, but you can't see all the documents that might help you understand this," said Roemer. "If they want to make the claim, let us see the documents so that we may or may not validate that."

Neither Kerrey nor Roemer would discuss the contents of the documents.

The commission continues to struggle with other issues, including a request to Congress to extend its deadline for completing its work from May 27 until July 27.

The panel also is still trying to work out arrangements to take testimony from Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, as well as former Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. Kean has said for months that the panel will want to hear from them, as well as key Cabinet and intelligence officials from both administrations, preferably in public hearings.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan declined to say yesterday whether Bush would testify. He said it is an issue that "we will continue to discuss with the commission in a spirit of cooperation."

Asked on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday about testifying, Bush said "perhaps."

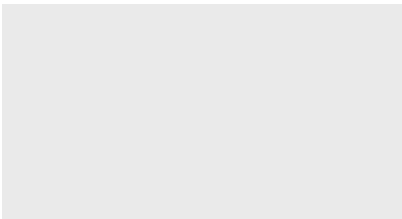
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