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Imagine the Twin Towers Hadn't Fallen on 9/11

By [Tom Engelhardt](#), [The Nation](#) and [TomDispatch.com](#). Posted [September 9, 2006](#).

What if there had been no giant cloud of destruction capable of bringing to mind the look of "the day after," no images of crumbling towers worthy of *Independence Day*?

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We knew it was coming. Not, as conspiracy theorists imagine, just a few top officials among us, but all of us -- and not for weeks or months, but for more than half a century before September 11, 2001.

That's why, for all the shock, it was, in a sense, so familiar. Americans were already imagining versions of September 11 soon after the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. That event set the American imagination boiling. Within weeks of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as scholar Paul Boyer has shown, all the familiar signs of nuclear fear were already in place -- newspapers were drawing concentric circles of atomic destruction outward from fantasy Ground Zeroes in American cities, and magazines were offering visions of our country as a vaporized wasteland, while imagining millions of American dead.

And then, suddenly, one clear morning it seemed to arrive -- by air, complete with images of the destruction of the mightiest monuments to our power, and (just as previously experienced) as an onscreen spectacle. At one point that day, it could be viewed on more than thirty channels, including some never previously involved with breaking news, and most of the country was watching.

Only relatively small numbers of New Yorkers actually experienced 9/11: those at the tip of Manhattan or close enough to watch the two planes smash into the World Trade Center towers, to watch (as some schoolchildren did) people leaping or falling from the upper floors of those buildings, to be enveloped in the vast cloud of smoke and ash, in the tens of thousands of pulverized computers and copying machines, the asbestos and flesh and plane, the shredded remains of millions of sheets of paper, of financial and office life as we know it. For most Americans, even those like me who were living in Manhattan, 9/11 arrived on the television screen. This is why what leapt to mind -- and instantaneously filled our papers and TV reporting -- was previous screen life, the movies.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the news was peppered with comments about, thoughts about, and references to films. Reporters, as Caryn James wrote in the *New York Times* that first day, "compared the events to Hollywood action movies"; as did op-ed writers ("The scenes exceeded the worst of Hollywood's disaster movies"); columnists ("On TV, two national landmarks" look like the aftermath in the film *Independence Day*"); and eyewitnesses ("It was like one of them *Godzilla* movies"; "And then I saw an explosion straight out of *The Towering Inferno*"). Meanwhile, in an irony of the moment, Hollywood scrambled to excise from upcoming big and small-screen life anything that might bring to mind thoughts of 9/11, including, in the case of Fox, promotion for the premiere episode of *24*, in which "a terrorist blows up an airplane." (Talk about missing the point!)

In our guts, we had always known it was coming. Like any errant offspring, Little Boy and Fat Man, those two atomic packages with which we had paid *them* back for Pearl Harbor, were destined to return home someday. No wonder the single, omnipresent historical reference in the media in the wake of the attacks was Pearl Harbor or, as [screaming headlines](#) had it, INFAMY, or A NEW DAY OF INFAMY. We had just experienced "the Pearl Harbor of the 21st Century," or, as R. James Woolsey, former CIA director (and neocon), said in *the Washington Post* that first day, "It is clear now, as it was on December 7, 1941, that the United States is at war. The question is: with whom?"

The Day After

No wonder that what came instantly to mind was a nuclear event. No wonder, according to a *New York Times* piece, Tom Brokaw, then chairing NBC's nonstop news coverage, "may have captured it best when he looked at videotape of people on a street, everything and everyone so covered with ash" and said it looked "like a nuclear winter in lower Manhattan." No wonder the *Tennessean* and the *Topeka Capital-Journal* both used the headline "The Day After," lifted from a famous 1983 TV movie about nuclear Armageddon.

No wonder the area where the two towers fell was quickly dubbed "Ground Zero," a term previously reserved for the spot where an atomic explosion had occurred. On September 12, for example, the *Los Angeles Times* published a full-page series of illustrations of the attacks on the towers headlined: "Ground Zero." By week's end, it had become the only name for "the collapse site," as in a September 18 *New York Times* headline, "Many Come to Bear Witness at Ground Zero."

No wonder the events seemed so strangely familiar. We had been living with the possible return of our most powerful weaponry via TV and the movies, novels and our own dream-life, in the past, the future, and even -- thanks to a John F. Kennedy [TV appearance](#) on October 22, 1962, during the Cuban Missile crisis to tell us that our world might end tomorrow -- in something like the almost-present.

So many streams of popular culture had fed into this. So many "previews" had been offered. Everywhere in those decades, you could see yourself or your compatriots or the enemy "Hiroshimated" (as *Variety* termed it back in 1947). Even when Arnold Schwarzenegger wasn't kissing Jamie Lee Curtis in *True Lies* as an atomic explosion went off somewhere in the Florida Keys or a playground filled with American kids wasn't being atomically blistered in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, even when it wasn't

literally nuclear, that apocalyptic sense of destruction lingered as the train, bus, blimp, explosively armed, headed for us in our unknowing innocence; as the towering inferno, airport, city, White House was blasted away, as we were offered Pompeii-scapes of futuristic destruction in what would, post-9/11, come to be known as "the homeland."

Sometimes it came from outer space armed with strange city-blasting rays; other times irradiated monsters rose from the depths to stomp our cities (in the 1998 remake of *Godzilla*, New York City, no less). After *Star Wars'* Darth Vader used his Death Star to pulverize a whole planet in 1977, planets were regularly nuclearized in Saturday-morning TV cartoons. In our imaginations, post-1945, we were always at planetary Ground Zero.

Dystopian Serendipity

Increasingly, from Hamburg to Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan, others were also watching our spectaculars, our catastrophes, our previews; and so, as Hollywood historian Neal Gabler would write in the *New York Times* only days after 9/11, they were ready to deliver what we had long dreamed of with the kind of timing -- insuring, for instance, that the second plane arrived "at a decent interval" after the first so that the cameras could be in place -- and in a visual language American viewers would understand.

But here's the catch: What came, when it came, on September 11, 2001, wasn't what we thought came. There was no Ground Zero, because there was nothing faintly atomic about the attacks. It wasn't the apocalypse at all. Except in its success, it hardly differed from the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, the one that almost toppled one tower with a rented Ryder van and a homemade bomb.

OK, the truck of 1993 had sprouted wings and gained all the power in those almost full, transcontinental jet fuel tanks, but otherwise what "changed everything," as the phrase would soon go, was a bit of dystopian serendipity for Al Qaeda: Nineteen men of much conviction and middling skills, armed with exceedingly low-tech weaponry and two hijacked jets, managed to create an apocalyptic look that, in another context, would have made the special-effects masters of Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic proud. And from that -- and the Bush administration's reaction to it -- everything else would follow.

The tiny band of fanatics who planned September 11 essentially lucked out. If the testimony, under CIA interrogation techniques, of Al Qaeda's master planner Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is to be believed, what happened stunned even him. ("According to the [CIA] summary, he said he had no idea that the damage of the first attack would be as catastrophic as it was.") Those two mighty towers came crumbling down in that vast, roiling, near-mushroom cloud of white smoke before the cameras in the fashion of the ultimate Hollywood action film (imagery multiplied in its traumatizing power by thousands of replays over a record-setting more than ninety straight hours of TV coverage). And that imagery fit perfectly the secret expectations of Americans -- just as it fit the needs of both Al Qaeda and the Bush administration.

That's undoubtedly why other parts of the story of that moment faded from sight. On the fifth anniversary of September 11, there will, for instance, be no memorial documentaries focusing on American Flight 77, which plowed into the Pentagon. That destructive but non-apocalyptic-looking attack didn't satisfy the same built-in expectations. Though the term "ground zero Washington" initially floated through the media ether, it never stuck.

Similarly, the [unsolved anthrax murders-by-mail](#) of almost the same moment, which caused a collective shudder of horror, are now forgotten. (According to a LexisNexis search, between October 4 and December 4, 2001, 260 stories appeared in the *New York Times* and 246 in the *Washington Post* with "anthrax" in the headline. That's the news equivalent of a high-pitched scream of horror.) Those envelopes, spilling highly refined anthrax powder and [containing letters](#) dated "9/11/01" with lines like "Death to America, Death to Israel, Allah Is Great," represented the only use of a weapon of mass destruction in this period; yet they were slowly eradicated from our collective (and media) memory once it became clearer that the perpetrators were probably homegrown killers, possibly out of the very cold war U.S. weapons labs that produced so much WMD in the first place. It's a guarantee that the media will not be filled with memory pieces to the anthrax victims this October.

The 36-Hour War

Indulge me, then, for a moment on an otherwise grim subject. I've always been a fan of what-if history and, when younger, of science fiction. Recently, I decided to take my own modest time machine back to September 11, 2001; or, to be more exact, the IRT subway on several overheated July afternoons to one of the cultural glories of my city, the New York Public Library, a building that -- in the realm where sci-fi and what-if history meld -- suffered its own monstrous "damage," its own 9/11, only months after the A-bombing of Hiroshima.

In November 1945, *Life* magazine published "The 36-Hour War," an overheated what-if tale in which an unnamed enemy in "equatorial Africa" launched a surprise atomic missile attack on the United States, resulting in 10 million deaths. A dramatic illustration accompanying the piece showed the library's two pockmarked stone lions still standing, guarding a ground-zero scene of almost total destruction, while heavily shielded technicians tested "the rubble of the shattered city for radioactivity."

I passed those same majestic lions, still standing (as was the library) in 2006, entered the microfiche room and began reading the *New York Times* as well as several other newspapers starting with the September 12, 2001, issues. Immediately I was plunged back into a hellish apocalypse. Vivid *Times* words and phrases from that first day: "gates of hell," "the unthinkable," "nightmare world of Hieronymus Bosch," "hellish storm of ash, glass, smoke, and leaping victims," "clamorous inferno," "an ashen shell of itself, all but a Pompeii." But one of the most common words over those days in the *Times* and elsewhere was "vulnerable" (or as a *Times* piece put it, "nowhere was safe"). The front page of the *Chicago Tribune* caught this mood in a headline, "Feeling of Invincibility Suddenly Shattered," and a lead sentence, "On Tuesday, America the invincible became America the vulnerable." We had faced "the kamikazes of the 21st century" -- a Pearl Harborish phrase that would gain traction -- and we had lost.

A thought came to mind as I slowly rolled those grainy microfiches; as I passed the photo of a man, in midair, falling headfirst from a WTC tower; as I read this observation from a Pearl Harbor survivor interviewed by the *Tribune*: "Things will never be the same again in this country"; as I reeled section by section, day by day toward our distinctly changed present; as I read all those words that boiled up like a linguistic storm around the photos of those hideous white clouds; as I considered all the op-eds and columns filled with all those instant opinions that poured into the pages of our papers before there was even time to think; as I noticed, buried in their pages, a raft of words and phrases -- "preempt," "a new Department of Pre-emption [at the Pentagon]," "homeland defenses," "homeland security agency" -- already lurking in our world, readying themselves to be noticed.

Among them all, the word that surfaced fastest on the heels of that "new Day of Infamy," and to deadliest effect, was "war." Senator John McCain, among many others, labeled the attacks "an act of war" on the spot, just as Republican Senator Richard Shelby insisted that "this is total war," just as the *Washington Post's* columnist Charles Krauthammer started his first editorial that first day, "This is not crime. This is war." And they quickly found themselves in a milling crowd of potential war-makers, Democrats as well as Republicans, liberals as well as conservatives, even if the enemy remained as yet obscure.

On the night of September 11 the President himself, addressing the nation, already spoke of winning "the war against terrorism." By day two, he used the phrase "acts of war"; by day three, "the first war of the twenty-first century" (while the *Times* reported "a drumbeat for war" on television); by week's end, "the long war"; and the following week, in an address to a joint session of Congress, while announcing the creation of a Cabinet-level Office of Homeland Security, he wielded "war" twelve times. ("Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there.")

What If?

So here was my what-if thought. What if the two hijacked planes, American Flight 11 and United 175, had plunged into those north and south towers at 8:46 and 9:03, killing all aboard, causing extensive damage and significant death tolls, but neither tower had come down? What if, as a *Tribune* columnist called it, photogenic "scenes of apocalypse" had not been produced? What if, despite two gaping holes and the smoke and flames pouring out of the towers, the imagery had been closer to that of 1993? What if there had been no giant cloud of destruction capable of bringing to mind the look of "the day after," no images of crumbling towers worthy of *Independence Day*?

We would surely have had blazing headlines, but would they have commonly had "war" or "infamy" in them, as if we had been attacked by another state? Would the last superpower have gone from "invincible" to "vulnerable" in a split second? Would our newspapers instantly have been writing "before" and "after" editorials, or insisting that this moment was the ultimate "test" of

George W. Bush's until-then languishing presidency? Would we instantaneously have been considering taking what CIA Director George Tenet would soon call "the shackles" off our intelligence agencies and the military? Would we have been reconsidering, as Florida's Democratic Senator Bob Graham suggested that first day, rescinding the Congressional ban on the assassination of foreign officials and heads of state? Would a *Washington Post* journalist have been trying within hours to name the kind of "war" we were in? (He provisionally labeled it "the Gray War.") Would *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman on the third day have had us deep into "World War III"? Would the *Times* have been headlining and quoting Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz on its front page on September 14, insisting that "it's not simply a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism." (The *Times* editorial writers certainly noticed that ominous "s" on "states" and wrote the next day: "but we trust [Wolfowitz] does not have in mind invading Iraq, Iran, Syria and Sudan as well as Afghanistan.")

Would state-to-state "war" and "acts of terror" have been so quickly conjoined in the media as a "war on terror" and would that phrase have made it, in just over a week, into a major presidential address? Could the *Los Angeles Daily News* have produced the following four-day series of screaming headlines, beating even the President to the punch: Terror/Horror!/"This Is War"/War on Terror?

If it all hadn't seemed so familiar, wouldn't we have noticed what was actually new in the attacks of September 11? Wouldn't more people have been as puzzled as, according to Ron Suskind in his new book *The One Percent Doctrine*, was one reporter who asked White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, "You don't declare war against an individual, surely"? Wouldn't Congress have balked at passing, three days later, an almost totally open-ended resolution granting the President the right to use force not against one nation (Afghanistan) but against "nations," plural and unnamed?

And how well would the Bush administration's fear-inspired nuclear agenda have worked, if those buildings hadn't come down? Would Saddam's supposed nuclear program and WMD stores have had the same impact? Would the endless linking of the Iraqi dictator, Al Qaeda, and 9/11 have penetrated so deeply that, in 2006, half of all Americans, according to a Harris Poll, still believed Saddam had WMD when the U.S. invasion began, and 85% of American troops stationed in Iraq, according to [a Zogby poll](#), believed the US mission there was mainly "to retaliate for Saddam's role in the 9-11 attacks"?

Without that apocalyptic 9/11 imagery, would those fantasy Iraqi mushroom clouds pictured by administration officials rising over American cities or those fantasy [Iraqi unmanned aerial vehicles](#) capable of spraying our East Coast with chemical or biological weapons, or Saddam's supposed search for African yellowcake (or even, today, the Iranian "bomb" that won't exist [for perhaps another decade](#), if at all) have so dominated American consciousness?

Would Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri be sitting in jail cells or be on trial by now? Would so many things have happened differently?

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

What if the attacks on September 11, 2001, had not been seen as a new Pearl Harbor? Only three months earlier, after all, Disney's *Pearl Harbor* (the "sanitized" version, as *Times* columnist Frank Rich labeled it), a blockbuster made with extensive Pentagon help, had performed disappointingly at the multiplexes. As an event, it seemed irrelevant to American audiences until 9/11, when that ancient history -- and the ancient retribution that went with it -- wiped from the American brain the actual history of recent decades, including our massive covert anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, out of which Osama bin Laden emerged.

Here's the greatest irony: From that time of triumph in 1945, Americans had always secretly suspected that they were not "invincible" but exceedingly vulnerable, something both pop culture and the deepest fears of the cold war era only reinforced. Confirmation of that fact arrived with such immediacy on September 11 largely because it was already a gut truth. The ambulance chasers of the Bush administration, who spotted such opportunity in the attacks, were perhaps the last Americans who hadn't absorbed this reality. As that New Day of Infamy scenario played out, the horrific but actual scale of the damage inflicted in New York and Washington (and to the U.S. economy) would essentially recede. The attack had been relatively small, limited in its means and massive only in its daring and luck -- abetted by the fact that the Bush administration was looking for

nothing like such an attack, despite that [CIA briefing](#) given to Bush on a lazy August day in Crawford ("Bin Ladin Determined To Strike in US") and so many other clues.

Only the week before 9/11 the Bush administration had been [in the doldrums](#) with a "detached," floundering President criticized by worried members of his own party for vacationing far too long at his Texas ranch while the nation drifted. Moreover, there was only one group before September 11 with a "new Pearl Harbor" scenario on the brain. Major administration figures, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, had wanted for years to radically increase the power of the President and the Pentagon, to roll back the power of Congress (especially any Congressional restraints on the presidency left over from the Vietnam/Watergate era) and to complete the overthrow of Saddam Hussein ("regime change"), aborted by the first Bush administration in 1991.

We know as well that some of those plans were on the table in the 1990s and that those who held them and promoted them, at the [Project for the New American Century](#) in particular, actually wrote in a proposal titled "Rebuilding America's Defenses" that "the process of transformation [of the Pentagon], even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event -- like a new Pearl Harbor."

We also know that within hours of the 9/11 attacks, many of the same people were at work on the war of their dreams. Within five hours of the attack on the Pentagon, Rumsfeld was urging his aides to come up with plans for striking Iraq. ([Notes by an aide](#) transcribe his wishes this way: "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] at same time. Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden]. Ö Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not.")

We know that by the 12th, the President himself had [collared his top counterterrorism adviser](#) on the National Security Council, Richard Clarke, and some of his staff in a conference room next to the White House Situation Room and demanded linkages. ("öLook under every rock and do due diligence.' It was a very intimidating message which said, öIraq. Give me a memo about Iraq and 9/11.") We know that by November, the top officials of the Administration were already deep into operational planning for an invasion of Iraq.

And they weren't alone. Within the Pearl Harbor/nuclear attack/war nexus that emerged almost instantly from the ruins of the World Trade Center, others were working feverishly. Only eight days after the attacks, for instance, the complex 342-page Patriot Act would be rushed over to Congress by Attorney General John Ashcroft, passed through a cowed Senate in the dead of night on October 11, unread by at least some of our Representatives, and signed into law on October 26. As its instant appearance indicated, it was made up of a set of already existing right-wing hobbyhorses, quickly drafted provisions and expansions of law enforcement powers taken off an FBI "wish list" (previously rejected by Congress). All these were swept together by people who, like the President's men on Iraq, saw their main chance when those buildings went down. As such, it stands in for much of what happened "in response" to 9/11.

But what if we hadn't been waiting so long for our own thirty-six-hour war in the most victorious nation on the planet, its sole "hyperpower," its new Rome? What if those pre-existing frameworks hadn't been quite so well primed to emerge in no time at all? What if we (and our enemies as well) hadn't been at the movies all those years?

Movie-Made Planet

Among other things, we've been left with a [misbegotten "billion dollar" memorial](#) to the attacks of 9/11 (recently recalibrated to \$500 million) planned for New York's Ground Zero and sporting the kinds of cost overruns otherwise associated with the occupation of Iraq. In its ambitions, what it will really memorialize is the Bush administration's oversized, crusading moment that followed the attacks. Too late now -- and no one asked me anyway -- but I know what my memorial would have been.

A few days after 9/11, my daughter and I took a trip downtown, as close to "Ground Zero" as you could get. With the air still rubbing our throats raw, we wandered block after block, peering down side streets to catch glimpses of the sheer enormity of the destruction. And indeed, in a way that no small screen could communicate, it did have the look of the apocalyptic, especially those giant shards of fallen building sticking up like -- remember, I'm a typical movie-made American on an increasingly movie-

made planet and had movies on the brain that week -- the image of [the wrecked Statue of Liberty](#) that chillingly ends the first *Planet of the Apes* film, that cinematic memorial to humanity's nuclear folly. Left there as it was, that would have been a sobering monument for the ages, not just to the slaughter that was 9/11 but to what we had awaited for so long -- and what, sadly, we still wait for; what, in the world that George Bush has produced, has become ever more, rather than less, likely. And imagine our reaction then.

Safer? Don't be ridiculous.

Tom Engelhardt, editor of [Tomdispatch.com](#), is co-founder of the American Empire Project and author of [The End of Victory Culture](#).

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3000 died on 9-11. Who cares? The real apocalypse is the 18000 who die every year from no healthcare

Posted by: rebel_pig on Sep 9, 2006 12:24 AM

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See how the fakeleft and the Right collaborate to mold the political culture by using the 911 imagery to create political expectation, to mold the political debate?

Why don't they ever mention that the 3000 who died on 9-11 are small potatoes compared to the 18000 who die every year who would not have died had they lived in any other western nation? Those 18000 die every year for lack of basic healthcare. There is your real apocalypse.

But those who control our institutions do not want universal healthcare for Americans. Oh no, that would take power from the capital class and give it to the laboring class.

And it looks like FakeLeft outfits like Alternet are in on the ruling class game. Look how the FakeLeft will ALL OVER this WTC 911 thing this 5 year anniversary.

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[» 3000 died on 9-11. Over 450,000 have died from AIDS.](#) Posted by: sasha40

what if

Posted by: rsaxto on Sep 9, 2006 12:44 AM

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And the big what if is: what if the Bushies planned and created the whole thing including explosive charges to bring the buildings down for sure and for maximum video effect and for maximum propaganda value then and into the future? And what if whistleblower(s) corroborated this ugly scenario? The jig would be up and the Bushies would be in jail. That's both scary and righteous. Secrets do not last forever.

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[» Secrets do not last forever](#) Posted by: Lloyd Drako

» [RE: Secrets do not last forever](#) Posted by: leftylawyer

» [I hardly know where to begin](#) Posted by: Lloyd Drako

The Liberal Misinformation About 9-11

Posted by: johndoraemi on Sep 9, 2006 1:47 AM

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It doesn't surprise me that The Nation Magazine (or Alternet) published this article so prominently (and long and boring, but that's not the main beef).

The Nation has a CIA man on its editorial board, by the name of Max Holland. Max Holland also writes for the CIA's own website, and he has a long and disreputable history of fabricating "KGB" links to the John F. Kennedy assassination.

But let's examine the disinformation or (misinformation, depending upon the motives/knowledge of the author) strategy of this article:

- 1) Discredit "conspiracy theories." As Gore Vidal has pointed out, we take it on faith that there just are no conspiracies in American life.
- 2) Reinforce the "new Pearl Harbor" myth repeatedly, comparing the 9-11 attacks to the Japanese attacks repeatedly, in almost every conceivable manner.
- 3) Ignore the real 9-11 evidence of government complicity (standard operating procedure) and redirect attention to the cold war, nuclear arms, Iraq, the 9-11 memorial, movies, anything that avoids looking at that day's events.

Now, this should all be obvious after 5 years of media spin that defends the unelected and criminal Bush regime automatically.

But sadly, across the "alternative" media there has been the same defense of Bush regarding 9-11, even as they attempt to bash Bush on other issues.

This legitimizes his most criminal and treasonous regime. We should not be talking about elections, but about impeachment, arrest, war crimes trials, the rescuing of our dying Republic from outright tyrants.

I like to keep the focus of 9-11 on conspiracy FACT, not fiction.

When the author above talks about, "**the fact that the Bush administration was looking for nothing like such an attack,**" he's either lying, ignorant, or he believes the massive lies told by the Bushies themselves, known liars of Goebbel's proportions.

And I can prove it with -- not a "fact" that is really an opinion -- but with a hard core fact that personally affected the president.

I'm talking about the Genoa G-8 summit, July 20 of 2001. There is where Italian officials were informed of an alleged "Al Qaeda plot to assassinate Bush and other world leaders" (September 27, 2001, LA Times)

Bush was literally moved from a high rise hotel (target) to a low rise building with no unique signature to home in on. Anti-aircraft missile batteries were stationed around Genoa because the known method of attack was to be a hijacked commercial airliner. Bush did not stay with any other world leaders.

Are we all to pretend that this never happened?

Because the Secret Service did nothing at all to secure the president from assassination after not one, but two Manhattan skyscrapers were attacked by hijacked commercial jets.

They left Bush in a publicly announced photo op, at great risk, IF the 9-11 attacks were an unknown surprise, as claimed.

For 20 minutes, Bush sat reading about a Pet Goat instead of DEFENDING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FROM WHAT THEY NOW CALL AN "ACT OF WAR."

All the while, the FACT of a July warning about a "known Al Qaeda plot to assassinate Bush" has been known to the secret service, the president and his entire entourage.

Does this pass the smell test?

Not in the least.

The ignorant read this stuff, and defensively reach for the first straw that pops into their head: What motive would they have for leaving Bush there?

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» [To stall for time.](#) Posted by: johndoraemi

» [RE: To stall for time.](#) Posted by: lively56

» [Stop the BS!](#) Posted by: Mycos

» [RE: Stop the BS!](#) Posted by: leftylawyer

» [RE: Stop the BS!](#) Posted by: Lloyd Drako

need to know

Posted by: rsaxto on Sep 9, 2006 3:27 AM

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We need to know the whole truth whatever it is. If we do not get the whole truth from at least one reliable source then we are headed straight toward genuine and ugly and immoral fascism.

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» [RE: need to know](#) Posted by: cuja1

» [Consider the possibility](#) Posted by: Lloyd Drako

U.S.A is a nation crumbling like the WTC

Posted by: mat38 on Sep 9, 2006 4:29 AM

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We are on fire from above. There is no way to escape. Global climate change will wreak havoc over the planet while our Pentagon and Military Industrial Complex - the real government - wage wars, arm the world, ignore the broken infrastructure hear at home, destroy others like our proxy military force Israel has done in Lebanon. We, us, the U.S.A. are the shame of the earths recorded history of people. We consume the vast majority of the world rescources and create the vast majority of the worlds pollution. Yet, we care almost not at all for the health of our own citizens so why would anyone expect better from us around the world. The world will one day turn agaisnt us out of need for survival and we desreve it for allowing "American" corporations to rape the earth and resources of the earth, including labor for your Walmart and Macy's t-shirts and everything you own. There's so much we have done wrong, we are evil, of there is such a thing.

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WHAT IF THE TOWERS HAD NOT FALLEN !!!

Posted by: Christie on Sep 9, 2006 5:07 AM

[[Report this comment](#)]

Yes, imagine if the Twin Towers hadn't come down even though two airplanes flew into them causing balls of fire (large towers had never been brought down by fire before). Physicist Steven Jones has published an article (it's online) based on one

and one-half years of laboratory research in which he states that the chemical thermite was used in controlled demolition to cause the buildings to implode and collapse at free fall speed, not to pancake. According to a Zogby poll, 42 % of Americans (plus 10 % "not sure") believe that the US government and its 9/11 Commission concealed or refused to investigate critical evidence that contradicts their official explanation of the September 11th attacks, saying there has been a cover-up.

What if Americans in overwhelming numbers demanded a new, impartial investigation by a panel of the best available experts who have no political agenda?

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» [Just count them](#) Posted by: Mycos

» [RE: Just count them](#) Posted by: Lloyd Drako

» [Watch the video](#) Posted by: Mycos

"If" is for children

Posted by: IslamIslam on Sep 9, 2006 6:06 AM

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The towers fell. Deal with it.

Also, since when is concern about horrible deaths or the inequities of life a zero-sum game? I can care about those who died on 9/11 AND care about those who die because of no health insurance. It's called being able to hold two thoughts in your head at once.

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surprise?

Posted by: orwellwasn'tdreaming on Sep 9, 2006 6:34 AM

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My first reaction to the attacks was "The shoe finally has dropped" because it was an eruption much presaged by rumbling and small quakes, not least the first attack on the WTC. My second was, "Now will the U.S. pay any attention to the way we're perceived in the world or at least try to understand why people might *think* their actions are justified?"

Silly me, I didn't realize that it was because we're free. I thought it might have been because we're arrogant, bullied other countries, and have long forgotten Teddy Roosevelt's "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

I didn't think we needed to apologize to anyone, just do a little quiet soul-searching and self-analysis.

Incidentally, a friend of mine said the most prescient thing I've ever heard at about 10 AM that morning: "There go our civil rights."

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What if.....Indeed!

Posted by: janenj on Sep 9, 2006 7:05 AM

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It has been interesting to read the comments to this piece by Tom E. As baby boomers we not only watched endless horror movies about radiation damage or alien attack we also were taught to duck under our desks in the case of an nuclear attack. Of course, the most powerful aspect of that strategy was that it put fear deeply inside our consciousness. Fear has been the primary tool for the Bush administration and I suspect without even knowing it, we who despise his tactics have some old primal fears residing in our brains learned from long ago. However, because we were raised under the spectre of nuclear annihilation it has been hard for many of us to swallow the notion that we were invincible, that we could not be hit. Who really in their heart of hearts could harbor such infantile thoughts? Everything changed. Give me a break. Everything is always changing. Human history, if any one still pays any attention to it, is a pretty grim read, we're not the most warm and fuzzy critters on the planet,

never have been probably never will be. What fantasy have Americans bought into and why? My what if about 9/11 is, what if Bush and his gang had actually insisted that Americans cut back their use of oil by at least half; maybe instituted some kind of national car pool plan or give up one day of driving a week commitment; keep those thermostats down and use ac sparingly. What if they had given us some goal to focus on to cut back our dependence on oil so significantly that new sources of energy would now be commonplace? Look at how quickly we mobilized after Pearl Harbor, that is still an entirely miraculous story, most Americans didn't really want to get involved until that moment and after PH the mobilization effort was simply extraordinary, Rosie the Riveter included. Imagine if we had been given that charge, to mobilize all our talent and imagination to remake our world, and to get out of the Middle East. We'd have started cleaning up the planet, we'd have created a new less materialistic center to our lives, we'd be energized and would deserve to be proud of our efforts. But no, Bush tells us to go shopping. Good Grief Charlie Brown, how stupid was that?

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If the towers hadn't fallen ...

Posted by: Loopylafae on Sep 9, 2006 7:12 AM

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..then Cheney et all would've gotten busted for the trillions they has misappropriated for aipac (& for which the evidence could be found IN the towers) and so the admin would've been boiled in a hot & public soup.....If the towers hadn't fallen, there wouldn't have been a "need" for the un-Patriot act ...nor a very profitable (for the elites in power) war ...If the towers hadn't fallen, the sheeple might not have reduced their brain capacity to fear & reaction ...in short, if the towers hadn't fallen, those currently in power wouldn't be --which is precisely WHY they DID@!

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Targets

Posted by: DoctorAndy on Sep 9, 2006 7:25 AM

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It would be well if our efforts were directed toward giving justice not billion\$ to Larry Silverstein rather than persecution of 911 truthers like Stephen Jones. The American corporate media through its constant reinforcement of the 911 lie is creating a disfunctional, split-personality nation...half informed and half disinformed.

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[» Truthseekers are Kooks](#) Posted by: Mycos

Is Englehardt saying

Posted by: daw13 on Sep 9, 2006 7:33 AM

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- (1) The Administration really really needed the towers to come down, not just be messed up.
- (2) Maybe it was just good luck that the Administration got what it needed,
- (3) And maybe it wasn't?

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IMAGINE

Posted by: VZEQICVA on Sep 9, 2006 7:39 AM

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Everything all around the world suddenly stopped on 9/11. No one anywhere knew what to do. At long last, it was us they were all talking about. I found clippings I saved and there's one from PRAVDA (Russia 9/12/01.) "U.S. retribution acts are inevitable. Without them there will be no George Bush Jr. Admin. The retribution should fall on the concrete culprits" said Dmitry Rogozin. We can read today's paper and see what he meant. It never was Iraq. Thanks, ANNA

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davidslesinger

Posted by: davidslesinger on Sep 9, 2006 8:26 AM

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Praise for the mention of the anthrax attacks.

Please consider the implications of this: the only elected officials who received weaponized anthrax were Senators Daschle and Leahy at the moment they obstructed the first passage of the Patriot Act.(freefromterror.net) The AP(10/24/01) notes that the White House staff(especially the VP's office) took CIPRO on 9/11/01, a week before any anthrax was mailed. The NYT on 11/9/01 notes that 70 years worth of Ames Strain anthrax was destroyed with FBI approval(impetus?) in October of 2001. Is this obstruction of justice? Scooter Libby has a second nickname, "germ boy". It came from his championing of inoculation of the whole US public against bioterror.(Jeremy Scahill in the Nation)

Is there a reason the good people at Alternet wouldn't want to ask all the hard questions about the current regime?

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» [So?](#) Posted by: Mycos

You might as well ask, "What if our government wasn't crooked?"

Posted by: monkeywrench on Sep 9, 2006 9:32 AM

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From the article:

"What if the two hijacked planes, American Flight 11 and United 175, had plunged into those north and south towers at 8:46 and 9:03, killing all aboard, causing extensive damage and significant death tolls, but neither tower had come down?"

How about asking, "What would have happened if 9/11 had not?" Answer: Bush would have faded away as the most ineffectual president in our history, a sort-of White House Chauncy Gardener, the Project For a New American Century would be gathering dust and the Patriot Act might not exist (by the way, practically NO one in Congress read it before voting.)

O.K. — what if the buildings were hit but had not come down (you mean, like no other skyscraper in history ever has, before or since)? Bush and his band of neocon criminals would have continued with their plans, spawned long before 9/11 (Bush wanted to invade Iraq in 1999, before he became president), and mounted the same propaganda campaign. It might not have worked quite as well, but its implimentation would have been just a matter of time, because we americans are so easily frightened. Hell, Osama bin Laden has been left free to act as the "Boogy Man;" you cannot convince me that the most deadly military in the world, coupled to the largest intelligence gathering agency in the world, could not capture one man (news agencies held interviews with the guy!).

The coincidences surrounding 9/11 are too numerous and facile to have been chance. Does anyone really believe that the framers of the Project For a New American Century would go to all that trouble, gain control of both the presidency and Congress, and just let their plan lie there as an academic exercise? C'mon! Apply Occum's Razor to all of the "coincidences" and physical evidence of 9/11, and what emerges is a "terrorist attack" that was at least exploited from the inside (buildings asymetrically damaged do not fall straight down into neat piles, they topple; jet fuel cannot melt steel and heated steel does not lose strength in an instant – hell, other steel skyscrapers subjected to far worse fires burning for far longer have never...fallen...down!).

Cheney/Rumsfeld//Wolfawitz and the rest of the neocon wingnuts needed 9/11, and needed it BAD; without it, or something like it, their plan would have gone down in flames along with what was then a floundering boob of a president. Just look at the "coincidences" between setbacks in the administration's agenda and "terrorist warnings" (as Keith Olbermann has done) and you will see how we have been played as suckers, turned into Pavlovian lab dogs (every time they say "terror," we pant, whine, pee, and push the "save me" bar once again...).

We're being processed like so much baloney into a dictatorship, and it pains me to no end that the american people are too trusting, too gullible and too uninformed to realize it.

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