

9/11 nonsense

By William Rivers Pitt

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The attacks of September 11 have become, morosely, a political football. The Bush for President campaign is running commercials that display burning towers and the faces of brave firefighters, said firefighters being played by actors. Despite outraged howls from real firefighters, who were joined in rage by family members of 9/11 victims, the commercials continue to run. Bush believes his leadership in the aftermath of the attacks should be a campaign issue, and so there it is.

In truth, however, September 11 became a political football on September 11. Conservative columnist Andrew Sullivan, in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, blamed the Clinton administration. “The decision to get down and dirty with the terrorists, to take their threat seriously and counter them aggressively, was simply never taken,” wrote Sullivan. Senator Orrin Hatch referred in 1996 to the terrorist threats, threats which compelled Clinton to attempt the passage of a comprehensive anti-terrorism bill that would have gone a long way to stopping 9/11, as “Phony threats.” After September 11, he joined the ‘Blame Clinton’ chorus.

During his administration, Clinton offered legislation that would give the Treasury Secretary broad powers to ban foreign nations and banks from accessing American financial markets unless they cooperated with money-laundering investigations that would expose and terminate terrorist cash flows. The legislation was killed by Texas Republican Senator Phil Gramm, who was chairman of the Banking Committee. At the time, he called the bill “totalitarian.” It was revealed later, of course, that Gramm killed the bill because it would have blocked Enron officers from laundering stolen stockholder money through the same offshore conduits the terrorists were using. Gramm, from Texas, was beholden to Enron, and killed the bill at their behest. Of course, he joined the ‘Blame Clinton’ chorus after the attacks, and never mind the facts.

There was Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell blaming the attacks on gays, feminists and the ACLU a couple of days after the horror. They claimed the attacks were God’s justice being levied against America for tolerating such people. No one quite explained the glaring hole in this logic – if the terrorists were acting as an instrument of God’s justice, doesn’t that mean the terrorists themselves are blameless instruments of the Lord? – but in the end, the

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message was clear. Liberals like Clinton were to blame for the attacks.

The list goes on. September 11 became a political football on that very day, and it has since been punted all over the playing field. The GOP has tried relentlessly to throw the blame at Clinton, but on Tuesday, the game took a bizarre new turn. According to an editorial in the New York Post, John Kerry is to blame for the attacks of September 11. Yes, you read that right. John Kerry did it.

The article, written by Paul Sperry and titled “The Warning Kerry Ignored,” claims that Kerry was given a warning some months before the attacks of security problems at Logan Airport, where two of the planes originated, and failed to handle them properly. He sent the warning, received from an FAA agent in Boston, to the Department of Transportation’s Office of the Inspector General. According to this FAA agent, and according to Sperry, this wasn’t good enough. Because of Kerry’s failure, the article argues, 3,000 people are dead.

Hm.

The Bush administration received a blizzard of warnings before September 11 that something huge was about to happen. The security agencies of Germany, Israel, Egypt and Russia delivered specific warnings about airplanes being used as bombs against prominent American targets. FBI agents were raising alarms in Minnesota and Arizona. Donald Kerrick was a deputy National Security Advisor in the late Clinton administration. He stayed on into the Bush administration. He was a three-star General, and absolutely not political. He has reported that when the Bush people came in, he wrote a memo about terrorism, al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The memo said, “We will be struck again.” As a result of writing that memo, he was not invited to any more meetings. No one responded to his memo. He felt that, from what he could see from inside the National Security Council, terrorism was demoted.

Richard Clarke was Director of Counter-Terrorism in the National Security Council. He has since left. Clarke urgently tried to draw the attention of the Bush administration to the threat of al Qaeda. Richard Clarke was panicked about the alarms he was hearing regarding potential attacks. Clarke is at the center of what has since become a burning controversy: What happened on August 6, 2001? It was on this day that George W. Bush received his last, and one of the few, briefings on terrorism. According to reports, the briefing stated bluntly that Osama bin Laden intended to attack America soon, and contained the word “hijacking.” Bush responded to the warning by heading to Texas for a month-long vacation. It is this briefing that the Bush administration has refused to divulge to the committee investigating the attacks. There was not a single Republican member of Congress who ever raised a single question or put a query to the Clinton National Security Council

about its efforts against terrorism before the attacks. When the Clinton team left office,

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their National Security group conducted three extensive briefings of the incoming Bush people. The attitude of the Bush people was, essentially, dismissive, that it was a “Clinton thing.” Condoleezza Rice has admitted that the massive file on al Qaeda and bin Laden left for her by outgoing National Security Advisor Sandy Berger went completely unread until the attacks had taken place. This happened despite the fact that Berger told her during one such briefing, “I believe that the Bush Administration will spend more time on terrorism generally, and on al-Qaeda specifically, than any other subject.”

One FAA agent delivered a security warning that was forwarded to the proper agency by the Senator who received it. Meanwhile, dozens of alarm bells were blaring in the White House, and especially in the Oval Office, about impending attacks using airplanes against prominent targets. This particular chapter of the 9/11 blame game would be uproariously hilarious if it were not so completely absurd.

William Rivers Pitt is the senior editor and lead writer for truthout. He is the bestselling author of two books - 'War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know' and 'The Greatest Sedition is Silence.'