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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE COMMISSION

The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation

by
Philip Shenon
www.thecommissionbook.com

In 2002, the most important federal commission in decades was established to examine the events surrounding the worst attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor.

In 2004, the 9/11 Commission issued its unanimous broad report to broad acclaim.

Now, in this riveting and groundbreaking investigation of the 9/11 investigators, veteran *New York Times* journalist Philip Shenon reveals stunning shortcomings in the Commission's work—a series of oversights, omissions, and distortions that raise fundamental questions about 9/11 and the government's failure to prevent it.

From the Commission's inception, Shenon covered its workings on a daily basis, developing sources at all levels of the investigation. For this book, he returned to those sources to write the definitive account of how the Commission operated, who influenced its findings, how political considerations interfered, and what didn't make it into the final report.

Taking readers behind the scenes, Shenon describes the valiant efforts of the Commission's investigators to uncover the facts surrounding 9/11, despite being obstructed and even deceived at many turns. His discoveries are revelatory: The executive director of the Commission, Philip Zelikow, maintained a clandestine relationship with Karl Rove and took actions that were seen as shielding President Bush and Condoleezza Rice from the panel's scrutiny. Investigative staffers at the Commission believe Zelikow repeatedly sought to minimize the administration's intelligence failures in the months leading up to 9/11, which had the effect of helping to ensure President Bush's re-election in 2004.

THE COMMISSION is an eye-opening account of how Washington really works: the manipulations of politicians, the secrets of intelligence officers, the battles over information, the pursuit of truth.

In vivid, sobering detail, **THE COMMISSION** shows how the events of 9/11 could have been avoided, how the Bush administration missed crucial opportunities to prevent it, and why the Commission could not tell the whole story.

THE COMMISSION: *The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation* by Philip Shenon will be published by Twelve, an imprint of Grand Central Publishing, on **February 5, 2008** (ISBN: 0-446-58075-9; \$27.00). For more information, or to arrange for an interview with the author, please contact Cary Goldstein, Director of Publicity, at 212-364-1266, cary.goldstein@hbgusa.com.

Philip Shenon is an investigative reporter at the *New York Times*, where he has worked since 1981. He was the lead reporter on the investigation of the September 11 commission and has held several of the most important assignments of the Washington Bureau, including chief Defense Department correspondent, diplomatic correspondent, Congressional correspondent and Justice Department Correspondent. Shenon has reported for the *Times* from scores of countries across six continents. **THE COMMISSION** is his first book. He lives in Washington, D.C.

Inside THE COMMISSION

- Why senior investigators on the Commission believed their work was being manipulated by the executive director to minimize criticism of the Bush administration, thereby helping to ensure President Bush's reelection.
- The secret relationship between Karl Rove and the executive director of the Commission.
- How the Commission was used to justify the invasion of Iraq.
- How Attorney General John Ashcroft mounted an attack on a member of the Commission to deflect criticism of his refusal to listen to reports on Al Qaeda in the months prior to 9/11.
- How Vice President Cheney tried to pressure the Commission to change its assessment of his actions on 9/11, and how he may have tried to cover-up his role.
- Why some people considered Condoleezza Rice “the worst National Security Adviser in the history of the job.”
- Why former National Security Adviser Sandy Berger smuggled confidential documents out of the National Archives.
- Why the Commission failed to expose Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s egregious errors in failing to prepare New York City for a terrorist attack.
- How the Commission failed to examine some of the most comprehensive intelligence available on Al Qaeda and terrorism—and how those National Security Agency files still haven't been studied.
- How FBI director Robert Mueller's charm offensive convinced the Commission not to recommend an end to the agency's authority over domestic terrorism cases.
- How CIA director George Tenet lost the respect of the Commission and consequently lost his role as the nation's chief intelligence officer.
- How Senator Max Cleland was discreetly removed from The Commission after he accused his colleagues of participating in a cover up
- The Bush administration’s efforts to destroy the credibility of Richard Clarke during his testimony before the Commission.
- How the Commission discovered President Clinton’s secret order to kill Osama bin Laden.

A conversation with Philip Shenon about THE COMMISSION

What does this book reveal about the 9/11 commission that the public didn't know?

Many, many things. I suspect some readers will be most alarmed by the book's disclosures about the relationship between Philip Zelikow, the commission's executive director, and officials in the Bush White House—especially Zelikow's secret communications with Karl Rove, President Bush's political guru, and with Condoleezza Rice. I think many people in Washington are, to this day, unaware of Zelikow's involvement on President Bush's 2001 transition team and of his role as the principal author of the 2002 White House strategy memo that was used a year later to justify the invasion of Iraq. Other readers will be most alarmed about the book's disclosures about what evidence was missed by the commission, especially the commission's failure to conduct an exhaustive search of the terrorism archives of the National Security Agency, the government's super-secret eavesdropping agency. Others will be alarmed by the commission's failure to support the findings its investigators about Saudi government connections to the 9/11 hijackers and about the need to overhaul the clearly dysfunctional FBI.

You covered the commission for nearly two years. Why wasn't this information disclosed earlier?

The commission's staff director, Philip Zelikow, effectively shut off all communication between the commission's staff and reporters. They were ordered not to talk to reporters under any circumstances. He even tried to shut off communication between the staff and the 10 commissioners. So during the life of the investigation, virtually all information had to be funneled through Zelikow and his deputies. Much of the information disclosed in this book comes from staff investigators who agreed to speak to me only long after the commission shut its doors. Some of the commissioners felt able to speak to more freely after the commission ended its investigation.

Did the 9/11 commission fail to uncover the truth about 9/11?

In many ways, the 9/11 commission's final report is still the definitive account of the events of Sept. 11, 2001. It revealed important information about the 9/11 plot and debunked a range of conspiracy theories. Much of it is beautifully written. It is that rare thing: a government report that succeeds as literature. But I don't think anyone, including the commissioners and key members of the staff, believe that it got to all of the full truth about the attacks. It clearly missed evidence and ignored clues.

What questions about 9/11 and about the commission are still unanswered?

Many. At the top of my list of unanswered questions: What else is in the NSA archives on terrorism that went unseen by the commission? What else is in government's files about the network of Saudis and other Arab expatriates in southern California who stepped forward to help two 9/11 hijackers during the year they lived in San Diego? What exactly did Philip Zelikow discuss with Karl Rove during his telephone conversations with him in 2003? Why did Zelikow ask his secretary to stop listing his phone calls with the White House in the commission's telephone logs?

Do you think the CIA intentionally withheld evidence from the 9/11 commission?

Clearly the CIA did withhold videotapes of the interrogation of Al Qaeda terrorists, as was disclosed by the *New York Times* in December 2007, just as my book was sent to the printers. But as of January 2008, it is not clear to me that the commission made an explicit demand for videotapes. The commission backed away from its initial demand for face-to-face interviews with the Al Qaeda detainees and agreed to a process in which the commission submitted written questions to the detainees that would be asked of them by CIA interrogators, with the answers returned to the commission in writing. Several members of the commission's staff said they were otherwise impressed by the willingness of the CIA to open its archives to the commission. The Justice Department has just announced a criminal investigation of the CIA's destruction of the interrogation tapes, so a grand jury may have some answers to these questions within several months.

Did George Tenet lie to the commission?

Clearly, many on the commission's staff and many of the commissioners believed that Tenet was either being untruthful or had an extraordinarily faulty memory. Tenet was under oath in all of his private and public questioning by the commission. Many of Tenet's supporters at the CIA are furious about the allegation. They say that they believed Tenet told the full truth as best he could remember it given the whirlwind of his responsibilities. In fairness to Tenet, it has to be remembered that he was being questioned by the 9/11 commission in the early days of the Iraq war, a time when Tenet was under as much pressure as any man in Washington.

How did you research this book?

I had a head start, since I covered the commission for the *New York Times* from the day it opened for business in January 2003 until the day it closed down in August 2004. During the course of the investigation, I spoke almost daily with some of the 10 commissioners. The panel's chairman, former New Jersey governor Tom Kean, and the vice chairman, former Congressman Lee Hamilton, were almost instantly available to me by telephone in 2003 and 2004. I had some sources on the commission's staff, but it was only after the commission shut down after releasing its final report that many staffers agreed to talk to me. It was those interviews that produced the major "scoops" of this book.

Where should other reporters, researchers and students start if they want to study the 9/11 commission in the future?

There is some essential reading, beginning with the commission's report itself. It is available in almost any bookseller and, electronically, for free, at the commission's own website, which is being maintained for now by the National Archives: www.9-11commission.gov. Kean and Hamilton wrote their own account of the investigation in *Without Precedent*, published in 2006 by Knopf. I found it invaluable in piecing together the chronology of the commission's work. Also essential was a case study prepared for the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University by Kirsten Lundberg ("Piloting a Bipartisan Ship," in 2005). It can be purchased and downloaded through the Kennedy school's website for a nominal fee. Lundberg was granted interviews with all of the principal players on the commission, and she clearly gained their confidence. A couple of key anecdotes in my book are drawn from her reporting work, and I am pleased to give her credit.