

and contributed to the attack of September 11.

My point today is that the leaks, the disclosures of the last couple of weeks, both from the FBI and now the indication of the CIA briefing to the President, just reinforces within me the fact that we need such an independent commission. In fact, in some ways it may argue even in a different more forceful sense for such a commission. If we don't have a comprehensive, public, official investigation, I fear leaks related to September 11 and the tragedy that occurred will continue for months, for years. We ought to try as best we can through the intelligence committee investigations and through such an independent commission to answer all the questions that can possibly be answered.

That is what I intend, I believe, with my colleagues: To offer this as an amendment at an early time.

I respond to the points the Senator from Arizona makes about the most recent disclosures on briefing to the President. They are quite on point. It is very important not to overreact to them. For the record, I have not in this case received any of the classified briefings. I speak based on publicly available sources in the media. Those are the reports of the various FBI memos that went into Washington and now this report of the CIA briefing of the President.

What truly troubles me and gnaws at me is not the President's behavior because, of course, if he had any indication in the briefing that an attack was imminent, he would have acted as Commander in Chief. My concern is about the quality of the information working its way up to the President as Commander in Chief.

More particularly, was there any point of connection between what we now know are the FBI memo's concerns about Moussoui's conduct in Minnesota at the flight school, the agent in Phoenix who had broader concerns, very acute, and unfortunately turns out to be right to the point, did those intersect on anyone's desk with the information that the CIA had which was the basis of a longer briefing to the President last summer in a way that would have led anyone to reach a more specific conclusion that they could have taken to the President?

I agree, there ought not be an overreaction. My reaction is, as I stated, as to whether all the systems underneath the President, as Commander in Chief, worked together as we would want them to, to be able to alert him to what was about to happen. And in a more direct sense, was this in any measure preventable?

I even ask the question with a sense of humility because I know the difficulty in an investigation of this kind. It is that which motivates me, and I am sure would motivate a commission and Intelligence Committees more than any second-guessing on the President's behavior.

I know we have used our time. I thank my colleague. I look forward to talking to him off the floor, and I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Two o'clock having arrived, under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until the hour of 3 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2 p.m., recessed until 3:01 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. REID).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York is recognized.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is not in morning business. We are on the trade bill.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator will proceed.

INVESTIGATE 9-11

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I rise today out of respect for and to speak on behalf of the people I represent in New York. I am especially mindful today of the memory of those whom we lost on September 11, their family members and their loved ones who, until this very minute, grieve for those who were sacrificed in the terrible attacks we suffered on September 11.

We have learned something today that raises a number of serious questions. We have learned that President Bush had been informed last year, before September 11, of a possible plot by those associated with Osama bin Laden to hijack a U.S. airliner. The White House says the President took all appropriate steps in reaction to that warning. The White House further says that the warning did not include any specific information, such as which airline, which date, or the fact that a hijacked plane would be used as a missile. Those are all very important issues, worthy of exploration by the relevant committees of Congress. The goal of such an examination should not be to assign blame but to find out all of the facts.

I also support the effort by Senators LIEBERMAN and MCCAIN to establish an independent national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States. That was reported out of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee in March. Such a panel can help assure the people of New York and America that every facet of this national tragedy will be fully examined in hopes that the lessons we learn can prevent disasters in the future.

I very much appreciated the remarks by Senator LIEBERMAN in the Chamber earlier today, indicating his desire to offer this proposal that he and Senator MCCAIN have put forth as an amendment at the earliest possible time.

Because we must do all we can to learn the hard lessons of experience from our past and apply them to safeguard our future, I also support the call by the distinguished majority leader, Mr. DASCHLE, for the release of the Phoenix FBI memorandum and the August intelligence briefing to congressional investigators, because, as Senator DASCHLE said this morning, the American people need to get the facts.

I do know some things about the unique challenges faced by the person who assumes the mantle of Commander in Chief. I do not for a minute doubt that any individual who holds that responsibility is the only person who can truly know the full scope of the burdens of that office. Just the other day there was a survey about the most difficult job in America, the most stressful position. It should not come as any surprise that President of the United States ranked at the top.

I have had the privilege of witnessing history up close, and I know there is never any shortage of second guessers and Monday morning quarterbacks, ready to dismantle any comment or critique any action taken or not taken. Having experienced that from the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, I for one will not play that game, especially in these circumstances. I am simply here today on the floor of this hallowed Chamber to seek answers to the questions being asked by my constituents, questions raised by one of our newspapers in New York with the headline "Bush Knew."

The President knew what? My constituents would like to know the answer to that and many other questions, not to blame the President or any other American but just to know, to learn from experience, to do all we can today to ensure that a 9-11 never happens again.

If we look back, we know that the Phoenix FBI memorandum in early July raised very specific issues about certain people of Arab heritage who were taking flying lessons. For what purpose? To do what?

We know that shortly after there was at least the news report of the Attorney General sending a directive that people of the Justice Department should no longer fly commercially. In fact, the Attorney General took a chartered plane for his own vacation.

We know that in August additional information came forward, including what we learned today about the intelligence briefing provided to the President.

The pain of 9-11 is revisited in thousands of homes in New York and around our country every time that terrible scene of those planes going into those towers and then their collapse appears on television. It is revisited in our minds every time we see a picture of the cleanup at Ground Zero. It is revisited every time the remains of a fallen hero are recovered, as they were yesterday for Deputy Chief Downey. And it is revisited today with the