

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH THOMAS KEAN, CHAIR,
AND LEE HAMILTON, VICE CHAIR, NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST
ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

TOPIC: 9/11 ATTACKS AND THE COMMISSION'S REPORT

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MR. SALANT: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. I'm Jonathan Salant, a
reporter for Bloomberg News and president of the club.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience today, as well as those of you
watching on C-SPAN.

Please hold your applause during the speech so we have time for as many questions as possible.
For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it is from the guests and
the members of the general public who attend our luncheons, not from the working press.

(Laughter.)

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by ConnectLive and is available to members only through the National Press Club's website at www.press.org. Press Club members may also get free transcripts of our luncheons at our website. Nonmembers may buy transcripts, audio tapes and video tapes by calling 1-888-343-1940. For more information about joining the Press Club, please call us at 202-662-7511.

Before introducing our head table, I'd like to remind our members of future speakers. On September 18th, Herbie Hancock, Grammy Award- winning musician; on September 25th, Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee; and on September 29th, Stan Kasten, the new president of the Washington Nationals baseball team.

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them on the cards provided at your table and pass them up to me. I will ask as many as time permits.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. Please hold your applause until all of the head table guests are introduced.

From your right, Herb Jackson, the Washington correspondent for the Bergen Record; Maureen Groppe, a member of the National Press Club's Board of Governors, and the Indiana reporter for Gannet News Service; Helen Thomas, columnist for Hearst Newspapers, and the dean of White House reporters -- (applause); Betsy Fischer, the executive producer of NBC's "Meet the Press"; Rick Dunham of Business Week, my immediate predecessor as president of the National Press Club. Skipping over Lee Hamilton for a minute, John Hughes of Bloomberg News and the chair of the National Press Club's Speakers Committee. Skipping over our second speaker, Bill McCarren, the president of U.S. Newswire, and the member of the Speakers Committee who organized today's luncheon. And, Bill, thank you very much. Sylvia Smith of the Fort Wayne News Journal, and secretary of the National Press Club, Eleanor Clift of Newsweek, and Chuck McCutcheon of Newhouse News Service. (Applause.)

Today we mark one of the most transforming events in American history. It's referred to simply as 9/11. No other explanation is needed. It's been five years since the attacks. Our job, in the best tradition of American journalism, is to tell the public what its government is doing and not doing to prevent another act of terrorism on American soil.

One of the stories we've been covering is that of the independent commission, created over the initial objections of the White House, to investigate how 9/11 occurred and what needs to be done to prevent a repeat.

Today, on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, we welcome the chair and the vice chair of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean and former Representative Lee Hamilton.

Governor Kean, a Republican, served two terms as chief executive of New Jersey and represents four generations of politicians. His father served in the House, his grandfather served in the Senate and his son, a state lawmaker, is running for the Senate this fall. After leaving office, Governor Kean served as president of Drew University in New Jersey.

Congressman Hamilton, a Democrat, spent 34 years representing part of Indiana in the House. He chaired the Intelligence Committee and what was then known as the Foreign Affairs Committee. Since retiring, he has also been active in academia, directing the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and Indiana University Center on Congress.

There were two rounds of nominations for the commission leadership. At first, President Bush nominated former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The Democrats chose former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. Both Dr. Kissinger and Senator Mitchell withdrew amid concerns that their private sector clients would pose conflicts of interest.

The 10-member commission issued its report in July 2004, warning that the United States faced one of the greatest security challenges in our history and offering dozens of recommendations on how to make the country safer. The commission's work done, its members remained together for another year to see how their proposals fared. In December 2005, the group issued its final report. "People want to know if we're safe," Governor Kean and Congressman Hamilton said. "Our answer is we are safer, but we are not yet safe. Four years after 9/11, we are not as safe as we could be, and that is not acceptable."

Another year has gone by, and we will ask the same questions of our speaker. Before they begin, let's stand for a moment of silence to commemorate the victims of the 9/11 attacks.

(Pause.)

Thank you.

Let us now welcome Governor Kean and Congressman Hamilton to the National Press Club.

Governor? (Applause.)

MR. KEAN: Thank you very much. It's a(n) honor and a privilege to be here and to give you a few remarks and then hopefully answer your questions.

It's, frankly, a difficult day for I guess any of us who've been involved heavily or worked in this area. I come from an area which lost a tremendous number of people. I lost a very close friend on the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania. I lost a number of other close friends from New Jersey. I spoke at funerals for three or four months, I guess, after the event, and today brings it all back and makes you wonder how the families are feeling today, seeing the planes again and again crash into those towers and hear people talk about it again and again. But it is difficult.

I didn't expect ever to be asked by the president to do the job I was asked to do. Never expected it. I hadn't been in government for a number of years, had refused every invitation to be in government given by any president of any party and thought I was, well, out of it, frankly.

And when -- but when the call came, it was not a call you could turn down, particularly one who had lost friends in the event.

But it was very difficult. And Lee and I write in our book that we think the commission in many ways was set up to fail, because we had not enough money; we didn't have enough time; we'd been appointed by the most partisan people in Washington, the leaders of the House and Senate; we were appointed in the most partisan year this country may have ever had going into a presidential election. And frankly, although Lee and I had met each other a couple of times, we had never worked together. I knew only one other member of the commission, Governor Thompson, because the two of us have been governors together. And suddenly, we were expected to put together a staff, get offices.

I remember, frankly -- this is only one brief story. I remember when the White House talked to me originally, they said, "Now, the first thing you'll need is a SCIF." Now, I've spent some time in New England. I thought that was a small boat. (Laughter.) I didn't know that we'd have to have these rooms that you point listening devices at and they can't get through the walls and so on.

So I was a neophyte joining people who knew a lot more. I mean, Lee Hamilton knows so much more than I do, still, about this subject of intelligence and all that. But I learned, and I learned very fast. And we did our mandate which the Congress gave us, which was tell the story to the best of our ability. And we got hold of about 2 million documents -- and you remember the tremendous difficulty we had getting some of those documents, particularly the most secret ones -- and did, in fact, the largest investigation of the American government in our history.

But just as important as all of that was the recommendations, and that was the other mandate. You tell the story and then you make the recommendations. And I think what Lee and I and the rest of us are most concerned about now is that those 41 recommendations, a number of them still aren't put into place. And we are enormously concerned that five years later, some of the ones that seem most elementary to us and most fundamental still haven't been done.

If you had asked any of us, I think, on the commission when we made our recommendations, "What was the easiest one of all the recommendations?" we would have said, "Well, probably to give homeland security money on the basis of risk." That just sounded so logical and so easy. And yet five years later we're still not doing it. There is a bill that's passed the House, been pending forever in the Senate, and you look at the list of what the Senate leaders say is a priority, and obviously that (went/wasn't ?) on the list, and yet shouldn't we be giving Washington, New York and the areas we know the terrorists want to attack, the money? It just doesn't make any sense to us.

Congress itself hasn't reformed very much, and that's something Lee may want to talk about. I don't talk about it much. If he doesn't, I'll answer questions about it. But Congress itself has not made the kind of reforms it needs to properly supervise our intelligence agencies. Our first responders still don't have the help they need. They still can't talk to each other in the way they could. That cost lives on 9/11. It cost even more lives with Katrina.

We could talk about so many other things, how the information sharing is going and a whole bunch of other things, but the basic point is, to me, that five years later, although we've done a lot of good things and there are a lot of good people working very hard on this -- I don't want to

leave that impression that they're not -- but five years later there is still so much left undone that ought to be done.

And what I got -- I was talking to Lee this morning, and I said, you know, one of the things that I find very frustrating is we've got a congressional election this year, as you know, and I can't find a candidate in either party who will look at me and say, "I'm not for your 41 recommendations." So if everybody in Congress is for all 41 recommendations, what happened? How come they're not passed? How come the country isn't moving further on these things?

So anyway, that's where I'm coming from.

One of the tremendous pleasures, and actually essential to the success of our commission, was Lee Hamilton. I mean I knew him by reputation before I came on the commission, a reputation that he has always been excellent. But I didn't know until we started working together just how good he is and just how easy to work with. And I don't think -- we didn't make one judgment without the other way all the way through the whole process. We talked, I think, for a while, more than we were talking to our lives. (Laughter.) We formed not only a relationship, but a deep friendship. And I'll tell you, I've worked with a lot of people, Republicans and Democrats, in my life in politics and outside of politics. I have never worked with anybody I've come to respect more than Lee Hamilton. And I'd like to introduce him now to join me at the podium. (Applause.)

MR. HAMILTON: Thank you very much, Tom. It's a pleasure to be at the National Press Club, one of the preeminent public forums in this land. And a high privilege for Tom and me to be here.

Tom Kean and I have, I guess, a mutual admiration society. He is one of the preeminent public servants of our day, bar none. And it's a great rewarding experience for me to work with him. I often joked with Tom, after the report came out, that if I had been the chairman and he had been the vice chairman, instead of issuing the report in July, we would have gotten it out in January, the only difference being that in that January report there would have been 10 separate opinions. He brought us all together, and it was Tom's patience and remarkable leadership that enabled us to get a unanimous report.

Let me just take up where Tom left off and make a few additional observations. Some of these may be in the book, some not.

As I look back over the experience, I have come to understand that we discovered some very real defects in the federal government; obviously in the intelligence community, but also in the military and their ability, for example, to conduct what we call special operations now, ability to conduct covert actions -- not as nearly as good as it should have been.

I have come to understand that we discovered some very real defects in the federal government, obviously in the intelligence community, but also in the military in their ability, for example, to conduct what we call special operations now, ability to conduct covert actions -- not as nearly as

good as it should have been. Communications were not all that good. You'll remember even the president of the United States had trouble communicating from Florida to the White House.

We saw that the government lacked all kinds of capabilities that it should have had with regard to these and other matters. We found a disturbing lack of unity throughout the government, and we found a foreign policy that was often ineffective in reaching out to the world's Muslims.

Now, a number of laws have been passed since our recommendations were made. We made 41 recommendations; I think roughly half have been put into law. But the passage of the law is not the end of it; in many ways, it's the beginning of it. And everything depends upon the implementation of the law, and that's particularly true with regard to the intelligence community today.

We found that the Congress of the United States needs a lot of help. I'm not going to jump on the Congress at this moment, although I could do that. But I found and I think Tom found that this is an institution that is heavily burdened, under considerable stress dealing with the toughest questions we have in the country, and it often has to turn to commissions like ours in order to help them with their work. They simply do not have the time, frankly, to build consensus. I'll say a word about that in a moment. Consensus building takes time, and the Congress often lacks that time. And so many tough issues get pushed off onto commissions, and that was certainly the case with 9/11.

We found a reluctance of the government to look back. This disturbed me throughout the commission hearings. I asked again and again, "Well, why in the world didn't this department, this agency do what would happen, for example, in the private sector if things didn't go wrong?" Look back and say what went wrong. But it just didn't happen. For all kinds of reasons, I guess, policymakers and politicians are reluctant to have their records examined.

The in box is always full for anybody in government today. And government by nature, I guess, is a forward-looking business. But one thing it doesn't do very well, and that is look back and say, okay, where did we make a mistake here, and how can we improve it?

We found a great thirst for accountability in this country. If you want to know why that book, that report sold almost -- well, it did; kept right up there with "Harry Potter" for a few weeks. (Laughter.) I think one of the reasons was that there was accountability there. We told the story that the people wanted to hear and had not been able to hear. So they appreciated the effort of the commission to set out the record.

Because of Tom's insistence, we had public hearings. I had some doubts about those initially. I've been in enough public hearings to get a little jaundiced, I guess, about them, and perhaps think they're not as important as they were. But Tom insisted throughout on public hearings, and he was right about that because he understood, as maybe the rest of us did not, that we needed to bring the public along as we went through our work. These hearings were not easy. We had a lot of trouble getting the people we wanted, we had a lot of trouble getting the documents we wanted. But the fact that we had open hearings, and we had Condi Rice, and Richard Clarke, and

all of the other important figures in government, come in and state their piece, became an enormously important part of the whole exercise.

I think we came to appreciate very much the value of a collective effort. We had an extraordinary group of commissioners. Tom and I tend to get a lot of the credit, but we'd be the first to acknowledge that every single commissioner -- I could go right down the list -- made a specific, important contribution to the work of the commission. Some of that was fortuitous; I don't think anybody planned it, so far as I know. But every one of them made a very important contribution to the work of the commission. And then we had an extraordinary staff -- 70 people. Tom and I never asked any staff member, "What are your politics?" To this day, I don't know the politics of most of the staff members. Some of them I do know because of their background. We were dealing with a lot of very technical fields, and we wanted people who had expertise. One of those staff members, Chris Kojm, I think I saw in the audience a moment ago, was crucial in developing the report. But we really had an appreciation of the contributions of the commissioners and the staff.

And then, if you ask any American today why the report was well received, I think they would say that in that partisan environment that Tom described, we came together, we built a consensus. And the question is how you do it. Well, I'll tell you how we did it. We talked and we talked and we talked. And if you know a way to build a consensus without talking to one another, let me know, would you please? I don't know how you do it. And we were dealing with every controversial issue on the mandate of the commission -- five Republicans, five Democrats, conservatives, liberals, moderates. And the only way I know to get an agreement is to talk it out. And so at 12:00 at night and 1:00 in the morning and 2:00 in the morning, we'd be sitting there talking about these recommendations and about the report itself.

So we came to respect one another as individuals. I didn't see my Republican friends with a big "R" on their head.

I saw them as a friend who had special contributions to make to the deliberations.

We also learned the power of facts. It's amazing how much time is spent in this city arguing about facts. It just is unbelievable. We spend so much time arguing about what the facts. The facts are not Republican and they're not Democrat. They're not ideological. Facts are facts. And so if there's one thing that Tom and I said to the staff -- indeed, this got to be kind of a joke -- we'd turn to the staff and say, "Look, what are the facts?" And if you'll remember the report, we had something like 1,400, 1,500 footnotes supporting what we found.

And so we went through that report and we struck out all of the adjectives, we struck out the spin, we struck out all the conclusions and we reported the facts. And, my goodness, when you agree on the facts, you don't resolve all disagreements, for sure, but it is amazing how many disagreements you do resolve if you can just get an agreement on the facts. And so we put an enormous amount of effort into that.

A lot of people make statements around this town because they believe them to be true. They do not know them to be true, and there is a very big difference between the two, and we insisted

that, to the maximum extent possible, that when we wrote it down that we knew the facts to be true.

Partner -- partisanship, of course, as Tom has described, is very much a part of it. I think probably this was our single greatest obstacle to overcome. There's been a lot of suspicions about the commission, and it was not easy to overcome it. The divisiveness in this city is just a fact of life that we live with now. It's certainly not going to dissipate quickly, but it is possible to overcome it.

And, of course, finally, 9/11 itself was the thing that kept us going. You asked me, what am I thinking about today? Well, I'm thinking about the voice of that flight attendant, Betty Ong, reporting from American Airlines Flight Number 11 shortly before it crashed with very a calm, deliberate voice. I'm thinking about Jose Melendez-Perez, who was an incidental hero in all of this at the Orlando border. He was a border inspector in Orlando and kept the 20th hijacker from coming into the country. I'm thinking, like you are, about those passengers on United Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania. And I'm thinking about that fire department chief who took command in the lobby of the World Trade Center, looked at a tape viewing his brother, also a fireman, charging up the steps, and, of course, he never came back. Well, those are the things on my mind, even more than the recommendations that Tom talked about and even more than some of the lessons we learned that I have mentioned.

I guess the final line would be that Tom and I both feel that the system worked in the end. It didn't work easily. It took a lot of work to make the system work, but it did work. And we were both very grateful for the opportunity to serve. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: Congressman Hamilton and Governor Kean, if you would join me up here, we have a lot of questions from the audience.

First one: Absent all the other failings you feel have occurred in the wake of 9/11, what one thing would you change now to make the U.S. a safer place?

MR. KEAN: There's one thing I worry about most, and it's my nightmare, frankly -- it may not be the most likely, but it's certainly possible -- and that is, a terrorist with a nuclear device. We know that there are about a hundred sites that have enriched uranium around the world. We know that a number of those sites, many of them in the ex-Soviet Union, are still not secure, don't have proper guards, sometimes rusty fences.

We also know that once a terrorist gets ahold of enriched uranium, you can read on the Internet how to build a bomb. And we all know our borders are not as safe as we'd like them to be. And you know the catastrophic effect that that kind of a device set off in one of our major cities would do to our people and to our economy.

So that's my nightmare. That's what I worry about most. So if you ask me what I think the president and the Congress and everybody else ought to be concentrating on, it's not solving this problem, as I've gathered, in 14 years, it's solving it in the next two or three years and getting

these sites secured and making that a real priority, because I think that is probably the greatest danger this country faces.

MR. HAMILTON: I just think in terms of urgency, our frustration is that so many of these recommendations we've made are really no-brainers, they're very common-sense solutions, and we just can't figure out, frankly, why they haven't been quickly adopted. And what we see, I think, is a kind of a lack of urgency across the board.

Now look, you've got a lot of good people in this city. They're working very hard on some of these problems. But like everything in this town, there are many, many items on the agenda. And our view is a simple one. It is that there is nothing -- nothing -- nothing more important on the agenda of any policymaker than to make the people of this country more secure. And so things like the radio spectrum being devoted to first responders, my goodness, here we are five years, and the police the fire and the health people STILL cannot talk to one another at the scene of a disaster.

I mean, where in the world have we been for five years? Allocation of money on the basis of risk -- no-brainer, simple, common sense. So I just want to see a sense of urgency brought to all of this, and say, "Okay. We've got a lot of big debates in this city and in this town and the country, but homeland security's at the top of the list."

MR. SALANT: What could the 9/11 commission have done better now that you've had time to reflect on the experience?

MR. KEAN: I'll take that one first. I think probably a feeling -- and I suspect it was my feeling -- is that we didn't keep in close enough touch with the Republican leadership in the House. I just didn't pay much attention to that problem. Lee, I know, is enormously well connected in Congress, on the Democratic side particularly. Tim Roemer had been in -- among the Democrats in the House. We had two Democratic United States senators and a Republican United States senator on the commission, all of whom contacted their colleagues. The Senate was kept up to speed very well.

But we didn't really make an effort to reach out to Dennis Hastert and the leadership, Republican leadership of the House, and we paid a price for it. Because toward the end when we needed things, when we needed an extension of time, a little more money to complete the job or our recommendations for that matter, that's where we ran into problems. And I think -- and I sort of blame myself for this -- I think if we'd -- if I'd reached out and brought them along more, I think we wouldn't have had some of those problems. That's the one thing I think that I personally would have done differently.

MR. HAMILTON: I think the story we told in the report has held up pretty well. I know there are a number of conspiracy theories out here in the country, and I've addressed some of those. But by and large, I believe we got it right, and I'm very confident that in the future when anybody looks at 9/11, they're going to have to begin with that report as a kind of a foundation to take off from.

On the recommendations, I believe that we had a constant tension there between, I guess, the ideal and the pragmatic, and we didn't want to be so ideal, so off-the-wall that the recommendations had no chance of adoption. On the other hand, we didn't want to make the recommendations too easy. We wanted to push. We wanted to set the bar a little higher.

When it came to the Congress, I'm not sure we hit it right. The Congress, we said, was dysfunctional on intelligence oversight. That part was right, and it came -- (laughter) -- incidentally, the word came not from us originally, but in my interviews with dozens of House intelligence and Senate authorizers. What we did recommend, I think, was probably beyond the ability of the Congress to achieve, and that was to combine authorizing an appropriation committee so that the -- in effect, the Intelligence Committee had the clout of the budget. If they don't have that clout, they're not going to be respected in the intelligence community. They're going to bypass, as they do regularly, the authorizing committees and go directly to the Defense Appropriations Subcommittees, which handles the defense budget.

So I'm not sure we got that quite right, and I've been very disappointed in the fairly mild response that the Congress has given. And I firmly believe today that you do not have robust oversight of the intelligence community. You got a lot of good people trying, but for a variety of reasons, they're not able to pull it off, and that's terribly important because the Congress is the only place that you can have independent oversight of the executive on intelligence.

And if you look at a lot of the big disputes we're now having in this country, much of that could have been resolved had you had that kind of oversight.

MR. SALANT: The Bush administration has taken credit for there not being another major terrorist attack on American soil since 9/11. Should they also take the responsibility for failing to prevent one if there is?

MR. KEAN: Lee. (Laughter.)

MR. HAMILTON: Well, the great good fortune of the country, of course, is that we have not had an attack in this country since 9/11. The truth of the matter is, nobody knows why. You do not know. You may think you know, but you don't because we cannot read the mind of the terrorist. Now we can make some pretty good educated guesses, but we don't know. So everybody's speculating at this point.

I believe, an educated guess, that a number of the steps that we have taken have been helpful. If you go to the Republican or the Democratic National Convention and you find a policeman every three feet, I think that has a deterrent effect. Going through the airport security lines, I believe, has a deterrent effect. Locking the cockpit doors, all the rest of it -- these are good steps and, I think, have been helpful. But I can't prove that, that it's deterred a terrorist attack.

The big mistake, however, would be to become complacent because we've not had that attack, and every time somebody says that, including myself, I get a little nervous because it adds to the complacency of the American people. And I've been reading a good many articles lately about people saying, "Oh, let's back off here. This is not as big a deal as we thought, and we better turn

our attention to other things." Complacency would be the worst step. It defeats that urgency I talked about a moment ago.

MR. KEAN: Yeah, just to add to that very briefly, the -- one of our big criticisms about the Clinton and Bush administrations before 9/11 was not that they weren't good people focused on this, not that wasn't on their radar screen, but it wasn't the top priority or even close to it. It was way down here somewhere, and that's why neither administration really did everything they should have when the threat of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda was emerging.

What our worry is, I think, is -- those of us at least on the commissioners -- commission looks at it, myself and Lee and my fellow commissioners -- is that we see that sort of starting to happen again, where some of these things are not as high a priority as they once were, and we're losing some of that focus. And if you believe, as we do, that the highest responsibility government has is the defense of the American people, particularly in the homeland, then we can't allow that to happen. We've got to focus on these recommendations and focus on whatever else we have to to make sure we're doing everything. These people are wiley; they take a long time. And as you know, the 9/11 attacks were planned over five or six years, and we can't let our guard down.

And so that's my worry is that it's not quite the priority it once was.

MR. SALANT: You mentioned the problem with first-responder communication systems. What needs to happen to get a nationwide system that would help save lives?

MR. KEAN: Well, the things we've recommended so strongly is that the first-responder community get a share of the spectrum. The spectrum right now is all gobbled by radio and television. The first responders don't have any, and that's the reason why in the World Trade Center, when the police tried to communicate with the firemen, they couldn't get through; because they weren't on the same spec, they couldn't do it.

That's the same reason it happened in New Orleans. And, God, did you see on television -- or all of us did, New Orleans, the attempts of people in helicopters to communicate with people in boats, and so on. Health leaders -- people died because of this.

And as Lee said, you know, the idea that -- Congress has a bill pending; it would give the first responders spectrum in 2009. Now, does anybody think there's not going to be some sort of a disaster between now and 2009, and that lives aren't going to be lost if people can't talk to each other?

So our strong recommendation, and it seemed to us like a commonsense one, is we do it immediately; that we lay aside some spectrum for these people who, after all, their job is saving our lives. And we got to give them the tools to do it, and the spectrum is the number one tool they need right now.

MR. SALANT: This questioner writes: I've always been shocked that after 9/11 no top official of the federal government was fired for dereliction of duty, for incompetence or, as would be the case in the military, because a tragic event had occurred on their watch. Richard Clarke, the

former head of counterintelligence at the CIA, testified before your commission when he addressed the American public with the words, "Your government has failed you."

Why didn't the commission recommend more accountability in terms of job security so that those entrusted with the nation's security would get a more sobering message: Do your job right, or you will be fired.

MR. HAMILTON: First of all, I think this is a major criticism of the commission. It's an understandable criticism. We did not point the finger at any one person. We did not think we had the legal authority to do so. Tom has described our mandate; that was the mandate. It said nothing about accountability of anyone.

Secondly, if you go up and down the list of people who made mistakes, it's a very long list, and it might include some people like myself on the commission, who served in the Congress during the '90s and did not, I think, sufficiently appreciate the threat of terrorism. You can look at the ticket-taker at the Logan Airport in Boston, you can look at border guards, you can look at presidents of the United States, you can look at all of the people in between and you can point the finger and say, "You didn't do your job right." Many Americans did not do their job right on that day. Richard Clarke is right; if we'd done our job, it would never have happened. We didn't do the job right.

What we said was that if you get into the business beyond your mandate of trying to point the finger at dozens and dozens of people who didn't do the job right, the commission would have spent their entire budget, their entire time -- and we had a limited amount of time -- pointing fingers at people, arguing the case back and forth, was he or she guilty or not guilty of dereliction of duty?

And it would have been a terribly divisive exercise, and in the end, wouldn't have gotten us anywhere because we didn't have any power to penalize anybody.

What we did say, as you all know, is that, look, the problems were systemic. They were all the way through the government, and so our recommendations were pointed to systemic corrections.

MR. SALANT: Terrorist organizations, according to the U.S. government, are in possession of shoulder-fired missiles. Should all U.S. airliners be equipped with defenses against these missiles?

MR. KEAN: Yes. (Laughter.) Although, I've said that. I don't know the expense of doing that. I assume -- I'm not technologically competent. If we're able to do that, of course we ought to do it and make some other technical corrections as well.

I asked a question when we having public hearings with the FAA -- which still haven't been answered to my satisfaction -- and that is, you know, these terrorists -- we lost these planes because all they had to do was go up in the cockpit and turn off the transponder. And all of a sudden, the plane disappeared from the sky, as far as the people who were trying to find them, and we didn't know where these planes were. I said in the hearings, I said, "Why can't you have a

responder that can't turn off from the cockpit (so we always have ?)" And they said, "Well, working on it." Well, I haven't heard anything about it since. I mean, that seems to me -- again, that should be simpler, I think, than (a defensive thing ?) is just to have transponders that somebody into the cockpit can't automatically turn off. I still don't understand why we -- or we can't do at least that.

MR. HAMILTON: My answer to the question is yes as well. I understand it costs about a million dollars for each aircraft, so it's not a(n) inexpensive item. We've got a lot of commercial aircraft and a lot of general aviation aircraft in the air.

But we will work towards that, should work towards it. Every time you and I -- every time I drive by the areas where people congregate to look at the planes coming in at Reagan National Airport, I think of this very, very simple thing to bring in a shoulder-fired missile into that area and shoot down one of those aircraft. We surely should have that.

MR. SALANT: Ninety-five percent of container ships reaching U.S. ports are not inspected, and this percentage has not improved. Can you predict when, if ever, this will change?

MR. KEAN: Well, the director of Homeland Security talked to both of us in the last week, and he said, as I remember, Lee, that this is changing and that we are doing a better job of looking at those container ships. We certainly now inspect the people who -- or at least require a security clearance of people who work in the ports, which we didn't used to do before 9/11.

But he said -- and, Lee, correct me if I'm wrong; this was a late-night phone conversation for me, and I'm not great late at night -- (soft laughter) -- but he said -- I thought he said that we will have about 90 percent of those things inspected -- I think he said by the next -- in the next year. Am I wrong about that?

MR. HAMILTON: It may be a little longer time. But I'm pleased to know that the secretary is focused on this.

Obviously, it's a very, very important matter. Containers come from Kuala Lumpur and Amsterdam and all over the world here. It's very, very important.

What this question brings to my mind is the whole business of detection. And I'm frustrated here because we've not been nearly quick enough in getting these detection devices of all kinds and descriptions in place. An enormous amount of research is being done, a lot of money being spent, a lot of private businesses competing for contracts now. But take the business of liquid explosives that's very much on our mind now. That's not a new problem. We knew about that long before 9/11. And here we are still struggling to get a detection device for liquids that could bring about an explosion.

This is a classic example of moving too slowly, it seems to me, on a very obvious vulnerability that we have. And I'm glad to see the efforts are now being made. Getting these devices from the laboratory into the airplanes and into the airports has proven a lot more difficult than anybody thought. And it's going to be costly. But it should be done.

MR. KEAN: I think, by the way -- what I think, again, remembering the secretary's comments, was that the thing he's concentrating on is the machines to detect radioactive materials because that's the most important.

MR. SALANT: You both decided against recommending a domestic intelligence agency such as the MI5 in Britain. Do recent events, such as the failed terrorist plot in London, make that option more attractive?

MR. KEAN: The thing about the terrorist -- apprehension of the plotters in London that struck me was not the fact that MI5 is so good, which they are, but the fact that they were able to get a mole inside the operation, and patient enough to have that mole sit there until he got more and more information and more and more people and able to round up more and more until they were ready to move before any operation got launched.

Now, that tells me they have one thing that we don't have, and that is, a lot of people trained who can infiltrate these organizations. We have not had historically, in the FBI and probably in the CIA either, enough people who speak the languages, enough people who understand the cultures, enough people who look as though they can pass into these organizations and act as moles.

Human intelligence is something we've been very bad at. And I think when George Tenet testified before us two years ago that -- or three years ago, I guess, now -- that it would take at least five years to reform the CIA, I think that's what he meant. I think the training of people -- now, that's two or three years along, so hopefully, they're coming. But I think the failure of having human intelligence people who can get inside these organizations is probably the biggest failure of our intelligence, and that's the biggest success of MI5.

We turned down MI5 for a number of reasons. One was that we thought there are some civil liberties concerns with what they can do in MI5. But we thought at that point, when we needed so badly a proper working domestic intelligence operation, that to disrupt the FBI, to take it apart and establish an MI5 would be so cumbersome and take so much time and we'd lose so much time. We thought maybe if we started from day one, it would be different, but we're not starting from day one, we're starting with an established FBI.

And we were very impressed with the recommendations that Mr. Mueller made to reform the FBI. Now, we've been less than impressed with the way those recommendations are moving. But I think he is trying hard; I think he's trying very hard to transform the FBI, and we thought that would be better and more constructive in the long run than trying to set up a whole new organization.

MR. HAMILTON: The commission spent considerable time in this recommendation. If you were beginning, as the lawyers say, de novo, I don't think anybody would put into the same agency law enforcement and domestic intelligence. They're very, very different functions. And the FBI is going through this wrenching experience now of transforming the entire culture of the organization from law enforcement to domestic intelligence.

We made major recommendations for organizational institutional change in the federal government, particularly in the intelligence area. And one of the factors that played here was that we didn't want to overload the system in terms of organizational change. A federal government can only do so much organizational change at any one time. And so we held back here, also for the reason that Tom mentioned.

I don't have any doubt at all that if we were to take -- got the commissioners together now, Tom, there'd be a difference of opinion here --

MR. KEAN: That's right.

MR. HAMILTON: -- about the FBI; some less patient than others. And I think it's a major issue that will pop up.

I'll tell you a backlash that is going to occur, and that is the FBI now is retreating from all kinds of law enforcement. At some point, the American people are going to say, "What's going on here? Criminals are not being prosecuted." And there's going to be criticism of the FBI for not moving ahead. Now, the FBI's response to that is, well, we're going to pass off a lot of this responsibility to state and local officials, to the DEA, for example, on drug prosecutions. But I'm not certain that's going to hold. This is an issue for the future.

MR. SALANT: Were there any documents you would have liked to have seen or any people you would have liked to interview during the investigation that you did not have access to? What are they? And why couldn't you get them? (Laughter.)

MR. KEAN: I believe got finally, after pulling hair or pulling teeth, whatever we had to pull, all the documents we wanted. I don't know -- now, some might emerge out of government that we didn't know about. But after a lot of work and a lot of huge negotiations -- Lee and I were negotiating with the White House almost every day for a while, long hours, trying to get what we needed. But eventually we did get, I think, everything we needed, including access to the holy of holies, the PDB, presidential daily briefings.

As far as who to talk to, the only people we didn't talk to that we really wanted to talk to badly were the detainees. We asked for them; we got a flat "no." We came back and asked for them harder; we got an even flatter "no." And there was question, I think, that George Tenet was not going to give us any of those people or even tell us where they were. But on the other hand, I don't think the government was terribly happy about our making it a public case -- trying to issue subpoenas or anything like that. So we finally ended up with a compromise that really wasn't satisfactory to either of us, I don't think, but it was a compromise that we lived with, and that was that we could ask questions of any of the detainees in writing and that the people who were talking to them trying to get information out of them would those questions and come back with the answers to us; and we had follow-ups, we could do the same procedure.

It wasn't entirely satisfactory. When you look somebody in the eye and ask them a question, you can learn a lot more than just if you submit something in writing. But we just weren't going to win that one, and we didn't have time to fight it out in the courts. So we did what we could, and

we were able to talk to the detainees in a sense in writing. We got the answers back, and the judgment we had to make was, "How accurate are these statements? And how do they match up with other things we're doing," but we did our best. And the information from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a number of the other detainees is in fact in the 9/11 Commission Report.

MR. HAMILTON: Just an anecdote, we had a meeting set up with George Tenet and his top officials at the CIA to discuss access to the detainees. We gathered around in the directors luncheon room, and we were standing at the seats before we took our seats for lunch. And George Tenet leaned over and said, "Lee, you're not going to get access to the detainees. Meeting adjourned." So we knew very early on their attitude on this. We kept plugging along, as Tom -- we suggested all kinds of things: questioning these people behind mirrors, going blindfolded to the sites and many other options. They rejected all of them.

In the end, we submitted thousands of questions to them, and we got those answers, but they came through the CIA interrogators. The problem here, of course, is obvious. The CIA was questioning those people in order to prevent future attacks; that's their aim. We had a different purpose. We wanted to question them about what happened in the past, two very different purposes, and there were reasons for the CIA's position. But a disappointment on our part that we didn't see them eyeball to eyeball.

MR. SALANT: Earlier this morning just down the hall at the Press Club, conspiracy theorists talked about their belief of a government 9/11 cover-up and called the 9/11 commission a fraud. What do you say to them? And what explains the prevalence in popularity of the 9/11 conspiracy theorists?

MR. KEAN: I'm a historian by training, and it seems every time there's a traumatic event in American history it spawns conspiracy theories. I mean, people still think that John Wilkes Booth got away and hid somewhere in the South.

You know the ones involving Pearl Harbor. Franklin Roosevelt knew ahead of time about Pearl Harbor and that he just hid it from the American people. And I won't even mention John Kennedy.

It kind of seems to be the kind of nature that we are. What I think bothers Lee and I a bit is that the conspiracy theories are asking for a level of proof from us they don't demand of themselves in coming up with these various theories.

Where we found, by the way, where they came to us during the work of the commission and we had a legitimate theory of some conspiracy or something happening, we checked it down. We sent two or three staffers on it and we said find out if this is true, because if it was true, we wanted to know for the purpose of the report.

For instance, when Michael Moore had in his documentary about the Saudis were released early from this country, bin Laden's family and a number of others who were flown out before the airspace was open and all of that, we spent an enormous amount of time checking that out because it had been in a movie and it was so prevalent. And it turned out that, no, it wasn't true;

that the people had been allowed to leave, but only after they'd been checked by the FBI and only after American airspace was open. And the guy who made the decision to let them go was not the president, it was Richard Clarke.

So where we had one of these theories, we tried to track it down and say yes, it's true, or it isn't. But they're still around. I know that. I don't know what to do about them.

MR. HAMILTON: And they'll be around.

Just a word about conducting a major investigation. You have a limited amount of money. You have a limited staff. You have limited time. You have, in an event like 9/11, thousands and thousands of questions. You cannot possibly answer all those questions.

Tom and I could never go into any group of any kind anywhere without people pressing upon us questions to be addressed, giving us a copy of a book, giving us a copy of an article. And what was true of us is true of the other commissioners. So we got all of these questions piling in. Every single day Tom and I would make decisions to direct the staff, "You're not going to look at this, you are going to look at this." I don't know that we called all of those right. You know, we made hundreds of those decisions. We may have goofed up here and there. But I think we called most of them right.

And there's always a touch of humor. We had a woman who came up to one of us who claimed to be the lover of Mohamed Atta. (Laughter.) And we explained to that woman that he was dead. And she was quite shocked. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: A number of 9/11 families just held a news conference here in which they said that 70 percent of the questions and concerns they had were not addressed adequately by the commission. Is a new investigation needed?

MR. KEAN: I don't know which families those are. I don't know the questions. There are, of course, any number of groups of families. The largest group of families is the Voices of 9/11. We're still working with them on a number of areas. They have a whole series of groups for counseling families; they have another whole operation to help get our recommendations through, and we're working with that group still very, very hard.

And they're supportive of us, supportive of the recommendations. We're very supportive of them, and we're working together as a team.

Now, the families, like everybody else, are not one group. There are a number of groups with a different -- number of different families. The families, when we started, a number of them gave us, I think -- I don't know how many questions, I mean at least --

MR. HAMILTON: A hundred fifty.

MR. KEAN: -- a hundred and fifty questions. We gave them to our staff and said before we finish, we'd like to get these 150 questions answered to the satisfaction of the families. They

would pass questions up at the hearings. And because I knew a lot of them, being from New Jersey, I would get these things and I would ask the question, I'd say, "The families want to know" of Condi Rice, or whoever the hearing was. And we tried to answer every question we could. I'm sure there are some still out there, and I'm sure there are some questions that we didn't get to of families -- members of one kind or another would like to see answered. And I don't know what the questions are, but some of the questions are ones I may like to see answered too. (Laughter.)

But these families are wonderful. Yes, they've had tough times. Some of them are angry. Some of them are bothered. Some of them are -- but so many of them took this incredible tragedy and turned it into something positive for the country to do their best to try and make sure that no other families had to go through this again. And they are the most incredible group of people. A lot of them became not only colleagues of ours, but friends of ours along the way; and some of them are still friends. I see quite a number of them quite often in New Jersey. And I don't bow to anybody in my admiration for them, what they're trying to do. And if they think something ought to be done, they're not necessarily wrong.

MR. SALANT: Governor, you were an adviser to ABC during the making of its 9/11 miniseries. What do you say to allegations from President Clinton that elements of the movie contradict the facts and even the commission findings?

And, Representative Hamilton, you've stayed silent so far. What's your impression of the miniseries?

MR. KEAN: A friend of mine from New Jersey asked me if I'd advise these people with the comment that, "you can't make it any worse." (Laughs; laughter.) I thought I was doing something which was going to be helpful. NBC, by the way, asked me to do the same thing on a miniseries they were doing. They later withdrew from theirs because I guess either ABC got ahead of them or they ran out of money or something, but ended up as ABC's.

And I have been confounded by this whole controversy because I didn't see it coming. My experience is that the people who were doing it for ABC were serious people who wanted to do the best job possible. I didn't see the kind of problems that people have presented. But again, it was very hard to have a debate because the people who were presenting it, 99 percent of them hadn't seen the thing they were talking about.

A couple of you said to me, as I walked in here today, "What was all the fuss about? We saw it last night. We don't see what everyone was talking about."

I don't know if many of you feel that way, but I did not see, as I looked at the product, the extent -- all I can say is that maybe it was just too early. I mean, people are still so enormously sensitive on this subject and so concerned and so volatile and so angry and so everything else, that maybe five years just isn't long enough.

But these people, I think, tried to do the best job possible, given the fact of what they were trying to do, which was a miniseries, not a documentary. They promised me, and have fulfilled that

promise, that they would lead from the events into the recommendations; that they would finish, as they will tonight, with a report card showing what the American people still have to do to make us safer. And to me, it was a -- given the nature of what it was, was a responsible project. I didn't agree with everything. Some of the recommendations I made were not followed; most of them were. But overall, I thought they did a good job. I was not the producer, director, or the author or the writer or whatever else. But I can say I think they did a pretty good job, and I think the people who watch it all the way through will learn something about the terrorist threat and the kind of things we have to do to try and prevent a future attack.

MR. HAMILTON: I was not asked to participate in the ABC production. As far as I can remember, Tom, it's about the only time, when you and I were asked to do so many things together, they didn't ask me to participate in this. I didn't even know about it. Tom mentioned on one or two occasions that he was advising ABC, and I didn't pay much attention to it.

After there was a screening on a Sunday night, as I recall, which I did not attend, I got calls from several Democrats who objected very strongly to the way in which Sandy Berger and Madeleine Albright and even President Clinton were portrayed. As it was described to me then, I thought that the letter signed by Bruce Lindsey and Mr. Band, Doug Band, I think it is, was accurate in their criticisms of ABC; that they portrayed Sandy Berger and Madeleine Albright doing things that they did not in fact do.

Now, ABC presents this, as I understand it -- I didn't see it last night either -- as a "docudrama". (Chuckles.) I don't like the ring of that. (Laughter.) It is either a documentary or it is a drama, and to fudge it causes me a great deal of concern and suggests to me that news and entertainment are getting dangerously intertwined, and I do not think that that is good for the country, because an event of this consequence is very hard to understand, and to distort it or not to present it factually in this kind of a presentation I think is -- does not serve the country well.

Now, the other thing I would say about this is that I understand the desire to look backward, and I share that, obviously, to some degree. But at this point in time, what we do -- what we need to do is to look forward. There are items on the congressional agenda right now -- Tom's already mentioned them -- that will be either up or down in the next few days. And my interest at this point is not to evaluate what ABC did. My interest is to get those recommendations approved so that we make the American people safer. That's where the focus ought to be of ourselves and, I think, the country. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: We've run a little over. I have one last question. But before we do that, I'd like to offer both of you the official National Press Club coffee mug. (Laughter.)

MR. KEAN: Thank you.

MR. HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

MR. SALANT: And certificates of appreciation for appearing before us today.

MR. KEAN: Thank you.

MR. SALANT: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. HAMILTON: Thank you. Thank you very much.

MR. SALANT: Our final question: if we stand here together on September 11th, 2011, what successes will we talk about from the past five years and what failures?

MR. KEAN: You and I can both talk about that for a long time, but -- (laughter) -- well, I think the kind of things we're talking about. The intelligence communities are talking to each other more than they used to. Lee and I, I think, would both say not enough -- and we still got a ways to go in that area -- but it's a lot better.

The air safety we've got -- we are safer than we used to be in the air, even though uniform equipment isn't installed at all the airports. It has to be done. If I go through Newark now, I go through something called a Puffer Machine. I don't know if you have that in Washington yet or not, but it's supposed to detect traces of explosives. If that's important, it should be at all the airports, not just at some of them.

Cargo screening is starting to happen, but not at all places, and not with modern equipment, not with the latest equipment.

The recommendations -- which I won't go into again -- which Lee and I mentioned, which seem obvious to us that are still not done are pretty inexcusable five years after 9/11, and, frankly, pretty upsetting.

But -- and the area we haven't talked about at all -- and I'm not going to start in on it because you've got to leave -- but part of the -- part of our report that really didn't get the attention that it ought to is the section on foreign policy. We are still not doing what we need to do to talk to the Arab world, to recognize the problems in places like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, two of the most dangerous countries in the world, to see what's necessary and a change in policy so we're not just the man in the tank over there.

But we let them know who we are and what we can do. You know, the most Muslim country -- biggest Muslim country in the world, as you probably know, is Indonesia. Well, Indonesia had a -- I guess about a 25 percent favorability for the United States; not very high, but similar to a lot of the other Muslim countries. The tsunami came. And there were pictures on the front of all the Indonesian newspapers of American soldiers bringing help to those people and those victims. And it was followed by President Clinton and the elder President Bush, and so on. And you know something, it went up to almost 60 percent favorability. Now, that's a lot cheaper than war, it really is. And that's the kind of thing we ought to be doing. (Applause.)

We got to -- you know, "hearts and minds" is not a -- is the expression, but we got to find some way so we're not killing terrorists and more are being created as we kill them. That's a no-win situation, and we got to do a lot better in that area.

MR. HAMILTON: I think that's a good answer.

MR. SALANT: Well, thank you for coming today. (Applause.)

I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booze, and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. And thanks to the Eric Friedheim National Journalism Library at the Press Club for its research. Research is available to all club members by calling 202-662-7523.

We're adjourned.

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