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# POLITICS

## Panel: U.S. unprepared 'in every respect' on 9/11

Chaos and confusion during attacks

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**WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The independent commission investigating the September 11 attacks completed its public hearings Thursday by concluding that U.S. officials were unprepared "in every respect" to stop the suicide hijackings that killed nearly 3,000 people.**

The North American Aerospace Defense Command and the Federal Aviation Administration "struggled, under difficult circumstances, to improvise a homeland defense against an unprecedented challenge they had never encountered and had never trained to meet," the commission's staff concluded in a report read at the hearing's opening.

Gen. Richard Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the commission that the U.S. military was trained to "look outward." No one had used an aircraft as a guided missile since the Japanese kamikaze attacks of World War II, and the military had not drilled for the unprecedented multiple domestic hijackings, he said.

"There have been landings on the White House lawn. There was a landing in Red Square. There have been lots of stupid things," he said. "There was talk about crashing airplanes into the CIA. But in most of that threat reporting leading up to 9/11, it was hijacking an airplane and in the normal hijack mode, not in the mode of a weapon."

The commission is scheduled to issue a final report on its investigation in July, and its chairman, former New Jersey Gov. Tom Kean, promised a "full and complete accounting" of the circumstances surrounding the attacks.

Testimony at Thursday's hearing chronicled the confusion and delays by officials trying to confirm which planes had been hijacked and where they were headed.

"On the morning of 9/11, the existing protocol was unsuited in every respect for what was about to happen," the commission's staff report found. "What ensued was the hurried attempt to create an improvised defense by officials who had never encountered or trained against the situation they faced."

The staff reported Thursday that the military and the FAA failed to coordinate their

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**9/11 REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- U.S. military and civilian aviation officials were unprepared "in every respect" to stop the attacks.
- Protocols in place at the time did not call for intercepting hijacked planes.
- NORAD and the FAA "struggled, under difficult circumstances, to improvise a homeland defense."
- The NORAD commander said the Air Force could have stopped the planes if notified immediately.
- The military got first word of the American Airlines Flight 11 hijacking nine minutes before it hit the World Trade Center.
- Vice President Dick Cheney relayed President Bush's orders to shoot down hijacked jetliners, but the orders were apparently too late.

responses to the attacks, in which suicide hijackers crashed jetliners into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field.

Vice President Dick Cheney relayed orders from President Bush authorizing the Air Force to shoot down hijacked jetliners that morning, but those orders appear to have been too late and were never relayed to fighter pilots.

Air Force officers "expressed considerable confusion over the nature and effect of the order," and did not pass it along to pilots scrambled to defend the East Coast after the World Trade Center was hit. Government protocols "did not contemplate an intercept" and presumed a hijacking "would take a traditional form, not a suicide hijacking designed to convert the aircraft into a guided missile," the commission staff found.

Myers, then the deputy chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said he was not advised of the August 2001 presidential briefing that warned that al Qaeda might use airplanes as weapons. Nor was he aware of the arrest that month of suspected September 11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui, an al Qaeda member who had aroused suspicion at a U.S. flight school, he said.

Today, he said, Army radar and air defense systems are deployed to defend Washington and other places, and the Air Force has "lots of aircraft" on alert to respond to potential hijackings.

NORAD commander Gen. Ralph Eberhart said the Air Force could stop a similar hijacking plot today -- by shooting down a hijacked jet, if necessary.

"Today, we believe we would have 17 minutes to make that decision," Eberhart said. "On 9/11, we were 153 miles away; today we would be in position to fire for eight minutes to decide whether this is [a] hostile act."

After the hearing, committee Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton called Eberhart's contention "an extraordinary statement."

"Now he's making a lot of assumptions there as far as almost instantaneous communication, and it's almost a hypothetical -- it is I guess a hypothetical question. But I heard that statement with some surprise," Hamilton said.

"More important to me is that he feels that now the communication is instantaneous and that he believes that if such an event were to happen today, that they would be capable of taking out all four planes," committee Chairman Kean said. "I hope he's right."

Cheney told the commission that Bush, who was aboard Air Force One after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, had "signed off on the concept" of shooting down any more hijacked planes. But the report found that conversation did not occur until 10:10 a.m. -- by which time all four planes had crashed.

Cheney, at the White House, had communicated the authorization to intercept and engage inbound planes to defense officials, the report found, but the order did not reach Air Force commanders until 10:31 a.m. And NORAD commanders in Colorado and Florida never coordinated with the FAA to "organize a common response," the commission found.

- The 9/11 attacks cost somewhere between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to execute, plus the cost of training the 19 hijackers in Afghanistan.
- Al Qaeda spent \$30 million per year, according to the CIA.
- The largest expense went to the Taliban, at \$10 million to \$20 million per year.
- Most funds came from donations, with much money raised in Saudi Arabia.
- There's no evidence that any government gave money to al Qaeda.
- There's no "credible evidence" that Iraq cooperated with al Qaeda.

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