

APRIL 19, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY -  
9/11 COMMISSION**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued today's "Bush Administration's Misstatement of the Day" on the bipartisan commission investigating the 9/11 terrorist attacks. □ □

[On December 16, 2002](#), President Bush named former New Jersey Governor Thomas H. Kean Chairman of the National Commission to investigate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. □ President Bush said: □

It is important that we uncover every detail and learn every lesson of September 11th.

Today, however, the commission is under attack by Republicans and conservatives. □ [According to a report](#)

by the Center for American Progress released on April 19, 2004:

*"Despite the need for an investigation into the worst national security failure in American history, the conservative attack machine has employed all of its resources to both disparage 9/11 victims' families, and try to discredit the bipartisan 9/11 Commission."*

The report found:

**RIGHT WING MEDIA ATTACKS 9/11 WIDOWS:** In a scathing editorial, the right-wing Wall Street Journal said "the only question of interest that remains" about the 9/11 Commission is "how long before [Americans] turn off" their attention to 9/11 victims' families. The newspaper accused widows of having "victims' entitlement" because they want to know answers about why the government failed to foil the terrorist plot, and said Americans were "experiencing Jersey Girls Fatigue" in reference to 9/11 widows from New Jersey. And the right-wing "Media Research Center's" Brent Bozell wrote a column claiming that it is "dishonest" that women whose husbands were killed in the attack are being portrayed as "just a group of nonpartisan widows with no political axes to grind." [Source: Wall Street Journal, 4/14/04; Heritage Foundation, 4/14/04]

**ATTACKING 9/11 PANEL FOR ASKING TOUGH QUESTIONS:** On the eve of President Bush and Vice President Cheney much-anticipated testimony to the 9/11 Commission, House Majority Leader Tom Delay is leading the charge to malign the commission with unsubstantial charges of partisanship. Delay said that the "Some commissioners' tactics during questioning have served to distort witness statements, cut off witness answers and otherwise blur the distinction between the commission's work and a prime-time cable talk show." [Source: Congressional Quarterly, 4/16/04]

**CRITICIZING 9/11 INVESTIGATION FOR HURTING WAR IN IRAQ:** DeLay also claimed that "the politicization of the commission undermines the war effort and endangers our troops." [Source: Congressional Quarterly, 4/16/04]

**HERITAGE FOUNDATION DISPARAGES THE 9/11 COMMISSION:** The Heritage Foundation's website Townhall.com is filled with conservative columnists who are now attacking the very premise of the 9/11 Commission. For instance, columnist Rich Tucker says, "Let's shut down the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States -- the September 11 Commission. After all, what's the point?" Paul Rosenzweig writes that the Commission is "unseemly" for publicizing its work, even though the publicity is being urged by Republican Chairman Tom Kean who "believes the only way to force the government to change is to get the public alarmed and angry at the dysfunctional way the agencies now are operating." [Source: Heritage Foundation, 4/15/04 & 4/16/04; Scripps Howard News Service, 4/16/04]

**RUPERT MURDOCH STRETCHES ETHICS TO ATTACK 9/11 COMMISSION:** Using the extraordinary tactic of putting an editorial on the front page of his New York Post, Australian right-wing billionaire Rupert Murdoch attacked Democratic 9/11 commissioners as "shills." The editorial then went on to make factually inaccurate claims. For instance, the piece claimed pre-9/11 "intelligence reports all talked about attacks occurring against targets overseas," claimed "it clearly was not a fact that President Bush was warned against possible attacks in this country," and then accused Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste of slander for saying as much. But Ben-Veniste was entirely accurate: the bipartisan 9/11 congressional inquiry found the Administration received warnings of a possible homeland attack in May 2001, and the President was personally warned on August 6 of "patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks. The August 6 PDB also warned of the possibility "that a group of Bin Ladin supporters was in the US planning attacks with explosives." [Source: NY Post, 4/14/04; Joint Congressional Report, 12/02; Presidential Daily Briefing, 8/6/01]

**RIGHT-WING ATTACK MACHINE: Personal Attacks Unleashed**  
Conservatives have unleashed a barrage of personal attacks on key 9/11 Commission figures, but have provided no evidence to back up their charges. This follows the pattern of attacking others like former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, Gen. Eric Shinseki and others.

**ASHCROFT ATTACKS GORELICK FOR WRITING A POLICY THAT HE SUPPORTED:**

**Instead of explaining his own conduct Ashcroft launched a vicious personal attack on Commissioner Jamie Gorelick. Ashcroft declassified a memo Gorelick wrote in 1995, while she was deputy attorney general, calling it "the single greatest structural cause for the September 11th problem." But, contrary to Ashcroft's assertion, Gorelick's memo did not create a wall that prevented information sharing. The restrictions on information sharing, to the extent to they did exist, were not created by Gorelick, but by judicial interpretations of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that occurred in the mid-80s. Moreover, under questioning by the committee Ashcroft later admitted "that his own deputy attorney general, Larry Thompson, had renewed the terms of the Gorelick memo in August 2001." A senior member of the commission staff called the memo Ashcroft declassified "a red herring." [Washington Post, 4/13/04]**

**HOUSE LEADER IMPUGNS GORELICK, THEN GETS REBUKED BY REPUBLICAN CHAIRMAN: Archconservative House Judiciary Chairman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) appeared on Fox News and called on Gorelick to resign and stand as a witness before the 9/11 Commission because of her Bush Administration-endorsed memo. But Republican 9/11 Commission Chairman Tom Kean "dismissed the request and said Gorelick was one of the hardest-working and nonpartisan members of the commission. He also said she had recused herself from involvement in issues on which she worked while serving in government" - a policy that stands for all commission members with prior government experience. [Source: AP, 4/14/04]**

**WHITE HOUSE ATTACKS RICHARD CLARKE, PROVIDES NO SUBSTANTIVE CRITICISM: Instead of responding substantively to former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke's well-documented assertions, the Washington Post reported that "the White House went on the offensive" calling "Clarke's charges irresponsible and suggesting that they were politically motivated." The attacks included violating a confidentiality agreement with Clarke and exposing him as the anonymous source of a White House briefing in 2002. [Washington Post, 3/22/04, AP, 3/24/04]**

**RIGHT WING ATTACK MACHINE IMPLIES CLARKE IS A RACIST: Failing to substantively rebut Clarke's criticism, the right-wing attack machine tried to imply he was a racist. Conservative columnist Ann Coulter said on MSNBC's Scarborough Country that Clarke is "a career chair-warmer who is upset a black woman took his job." Similarly, Robert Novak on CNN asked whether a guest "believed that Dick Clarke has a problem with this African-American woman Condoleezza Rice?" [Source: MSNBC, 3/26/04; CNN, 3/25/04]**

**FRIST ATTACKS CLARKE, THEN CONTRADICTED BY HIS OWN PARTY COLLEAGUES: Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) delivered a speech on the floor of the Senate claiming Clarke "told two entirely different stories" about the Bush Administration's handling of terrorism. Frist implied Clarke had perjured himself by supposedly telling two different stories under oath to Congress in 2002 and then to the 9/11 Commission, and threatened severe consequences "if it is found that he has lied before Congress." But First soon admitted "that he personally had no knowledge that there were any discrepancies between" the two testimonies. Soon, Intelligence Committee Chairman Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) "contradicted" Frist and "said Clarke's 9/11 Commission**

**testimony did not contradict his 2002 testimony before Congress. [Sources: Floor Speech, 3/26/04; Slate, 3/27/04; The Hill, 4/14/04]**