

Captain Ray Lahr (ret.)

October 31, 2002

The Honorable Warren B. Rudman
Co-Chairman
U.S. Commission on National Security

Dear Senator Rudman:

I was one of the millions who watched your interview on PBS this evening and I applaud your work on behalf of this nation. I served in the war ahead of you – I was a Navy pilot in World War II and then spent my career as a pilot for United Airlines. I note that you served with distinction in Korea. I would like to mention two other Navy pilots, Commander William ‘Bill’ Donaldson and Major Fred ‘Fritz’ Meyer, who served in the war behind you, namely Viet Nam (Fritz later joined the National Guard which explains the Major).

During your interview you mentioned the shoot-down of TWA800. It was shot down, as you know. Fritz was in a helicopter with Captain Bauer and they were making a practice ILS approach at the Suffolk airport waiting for it to get dark so that they could practice night refueling. They were on short final with Captain Bauer flying and Fritz handling the radios and lookout. The tower called and said there was a Cessna entering the traffic pattern for their runway. Fritz was leaning forward in the cockpit trying to pick up the Cessna when he saw a missile arc across the sky. It disappeared momentarily and then there were at least two bright-white military ordnance explosions. Then followed the huge fuel explosion and fireball. All of the debris fell downward out of the fireball. Fritz immediately cleared from the tower and flew to the accident site. They were the first on the scene and they stayed out there looking for survivors until they ran low on fuel. Fritz and I have become friends and I can provide to you a video tape and an 8 page transcript of his description of the accident. Or you may call him at (631) 495 3999 or email him at fmeyer8775@aol.com. Would you believe that the FBI interviewed 750 eyewitnesses, yet not a single one was allowed to testify at the accident investigation hearing?

Commander Donaldson retired from the Navy with just about every rating a pilot can get including accident investigation. Bill just couldn’t accept the misinformation appearing in the media. He launched his own investigation and he formed an Association of Retired Aviation Professionals to help. No less a person than Admiral Thomas Moorer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joined Bill’s cause. Admiral Moorer even made a personal appeal to Congress to reopen the investigation. Bill devoted the last years of his life trying to present the truth to the public. He went into Walter Reed hospital with a back problem. They operated on his brain and we lost a wonderful patriot. However, Bill’s research was put onto a website and it is being continued by his brother, Bob Donaldson. Please go to www.TWA800.com and you will find an unbelievable amount of evidence supporting the shoot-down.

My personal involvement started with the FAA radar tapes which showed a missile approaching TWA800 prior to the explosion. The controllers immediately reported what they had seen and the word went right to the top. A copy of the tape reached my fellow pilot, Captain Richard Russell, and he showed it to me. When word got out on the internet, the FBI threatened Captain Russell and then came to his house and confiscated a tape. Pierre Salinger was ridiculed for releasing the same information.

In order to discredit the eyewitnesses, the CIA proposed that after the nose was blown off of TWA800, the aircraft continued to fly and climb 3200 feet trailing flames. This was supposed to be the rising bright streak seen by the eyewitnesses (never mind that the eyewitnesses saw the streak rising from the surface, not from a point 13,800 feet in the sky). The CIA prepared a video animation of this zoom-climb and James Kallstrom presented it on national TV when he announced that the FBI was withdrawing from the investigation. Well, such a nose-less zoom-climb is aerodynamically impossible, and Boeing issued a statement the following day denying any knowledge of the data and conclusions used for the CIA animation.

A month later, the NTSB presented a similar video animation at the public hearing. However, the NTSB also included a table of data in its report that was provided by Boeing. Using that data, I calculated that when the nose was blown off, the aircraft immediately pitched up and stalled. The most it could have climbed is about 200 feet. This is confirmed by the eyewitnesses who saw the debris fall downward out of the fireball.

I went to the NTSB hearing on August 22, 2000, and asked the NTSB author of the zoom-climb, Dennis Crider, and his supervisor, Bernard Loeb, how they had calculated the zoom-climb. They wouldn't give me an answer. I wrote to Jim Hall, chairman of the NTSB, and asked for the calculations. We exchanged several letters but still no answer. Then I submitted Freedom of Information Act requests to the CIA and the NTSB. The CIA responded that it had used data and conclusions provided by the NTSB. The NTSB responded that it couldn't release the information because it was proprietary to Boeing. But Boeing had already denied knowledge of the data and conclusions. Now I am preparing a lawsuit to obtain the information.

I mention all of this because this secrecy on the part of our government is working at cross-purposes with your efforts to alert the public to the threats against us. Who knows, if we had faced up to TWA800, we might have averted 9-11. Whenever possible, the government clamps a lid on terrorist actions in an effort to convince the public that the terrorists are not really hurting us. On the other hand, groups like your Hart-Rudman Commission are trying to raise public concern so that we will take preventive action.

I guess the part that bothers me the most is that they are destroying my trust in my government. Before he died, I discussed with Bill Donaldson why he was putting so much effort into this cause. His answer was, "Nobody is going to screw around with my constitution". Well, I guess there are a few of us odd-balls out here who are willing to fight to get the truth out of our government.

Sincerely,

Ray Lahr