

CHAPTER EIGHT

Eyewitness Evidence of Explosions in the Twin Towers

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Many of us are convinced that the twin towers of the World Trade Center were brought down on September 11, 2001 through controlled demolition. But the question at once arises: if this is what happened, would somebody not have noticed?

The answer is that many people did notice. There is a good deal of eyewitness evidence for the demolition of buildings 1 and 2. This paper will give a brief overview of this evidence.

Before we look at the evidence, we must first confront one of the most common objections in response to it. Eyewitness evidence, say the objectors, is “soft,” untrustworthy, and unreliable. According to such critics, it does not matter how many eyewitnesses there are to an event or who these eyewitnesses are or how their accounts relate to each other; the best plan is just to dismiss everything they say. This is an odd view. There is no support for it either in social scientific studies of eyewitness testimony or in the scholarly literature on criminal investigation.²⁵⁵

Eyewitness evidence certainly has its vulnerabilities: we know that eyewitnesses can misperceive, misremember and deceive. However, as with other kinds of evidence, we have developed ways of checking to see if what the witnesses report is accurate. For example, we look for *corroborating evidence* – further eyewitness evidence as well as evidence of entirely different kinds.

Moreover, eyewitness evidence is highly relevant to the investigation of explosions. The National Fire Protection Association’s manual on fire and explosion investigations states clearly that in an explosion investigation, “the investigator should take into consideration all the available information, including witness statements.”²⁵⁶

The present paper offers not only an overview of eyewitness evidence of explosions but also a critique of the handling of this evidence by the 9/11 Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. But both of these organizations make extensive use of eyewitness evidence and obviously consider it valid and important. Therefore, disagreements with NIST and the 9/11 Commission on the legitimacy of eyewitness testimony are not at the level of principle but at the level of application.

One especially important source of eyewitness testimony is the oral histories of the Fire Department of New York (technically, World Trade Center Task Force Interviews), released in 2005 by the City of New York.²⁵⁷ The *New York Times* had taken the city to court to obtain the release of the documents, and when the material was released the newspaper hosted the oral histories in the form of a series of separate PDF files on its website.

The oral histories were collected by the World Trade Center Task Force of the FDNY after New York City fire commissioner Thomas Von Essen decided it would be important to have a record of what the members of the department experienced on that day. The Task Force interviews comprise 10-12,000 pages of statements by

approximately 500 “FDNY firefighters, emergency medical technicians and paramedics collected from early October, 2001 to late January, 2002.”²⁵⁸

Professor David Ray Griffin, with the help of able researchers, was the first scholar to ferret out fascinating descriptions of explosions from this material.²⁵⁹ The author of the present paper published a subsequent article after reading the oral histories, “118 Witnesses: the Firefighters’ Testimony to Explosions in the Twin Towers.”²⁶⁰

The presentation and analysis below build on this earlier work. As the evidence is presented, three important points will emerge. First, the conviction that the Towers came down because of explosions was common on 9/11. Second, there is substantial eyewitness evidence supporting this conviction. Third, this evidence has been ignored or suppressed by both the 9/11 Commission and NIST.

The explosion hypothesis was common on 9/11

In discussions of the events of 9/11, it is often implied that the original, obvious, and natural hypothesis concerning the destruction of the Twin Towers is some variety of gravity-driven collapse. It was obvious to everyone on 9/11, we are led to believe, that the Towers came down because the buildings simply could not withstand the plane strikes and subsequent fires and therefore gave way. Those who say the buildings came down because of explosions – who hold to an “explosion hypothesis” in the broad sense – are, according to this view, late arrivals. They are folks, it is argued, who came along after 9/11 and over-thought an initially simple situation due to a conspiratorial mind-set.

In fact, it is easy to prove that this is a falsification of history. Proponents of the explosion hypothesis were extremely common on 9/11, especially at the scene of the crime. Many people made their judgment on the basis of what they directly perceived while close to the buildings, while others accepted as a matter of course that complete and energetic pulverization of these enormous buildings must have entailed explosions. Below are five of many examples supporting these views.

1. In a video clip preserved from 9/11, ABC television reporter N. J. Burkett is seen standing close to the Twin Towers. He draws our attention to the firefighters at the scene and to the burning buildings themselves. Suddenly, the South Tower begins to come apart behind him. As the pulverized debris shoots into the air, Burkett says: “A huge explosion now, raining debris on all of us. We better get out of the way!” Mr. Burkett’s statement shows no evidence of over-thinking the situation or of a conspiratorial mindset. He certainly did not come along after 9/11: he expressed his judgment before the debris of the building had even reached the ground. Then he ran for his life. Half an hour later he would run for his life again as the North Tower came down.²⁶¹
2. In CNN’s same-day coverage of the events of 9/11, Mayor Giuliani was asked questions about explosions in the Twin Towers on two separate occasions. The second occasion is a press conference at about 2:39 p.m. A female reporter (off screen) asks the Mayor: “Do you know anything about the cause of the explosions that brought the two buildings down? Was it caused by the planes or by something else?”²⁶² Notice that she does not ask if there were

explosions: she assumes there were. She does not ask if these explosions brought down the Towers: she assumes they did. She merely wants to know what caused the explosions – the planes or “something else.”

3. In footage known as the “Matthew Shapoff video,” acquired from NIST through a Freedom of Information Act request, there are several people (off screen) chatting while they watch the events at the World Trade Center unfold at a distance and film them with their video camera. Suddenly, through their camera we see the North Tower begin to throw pulverized debris in all directions in huge plumes as it disintegrates. After a horrified, “oh, my God!” we hear a male voice, presumably that of Shapoff, exclaim as follows: “That was a bomb that did that! That was a fuckin’ bomb that did that! There’s no goddamn way that could have happened!”²⁶³ Again, this is a spontaneous reaction to what Shapoff was observing.
4. New York firefighter Christopher Fenyo, in a passage from the World Trade Center Task Force interviews, speaks of a debate that began among firefighters who were on the scene. The debate started after the destruction of the South Tower but before the destruction of the North Tower – in other words, between about 10:00 and 10:30 a.m.

“...At that point a debate began to rage because the perception was that the building looked like it had been taken out with charges.”

As with Shapoff, the statement concerns not just explosions generally but the intentional destruction of the building with explosives. That is, people were already debating a subcategory of the explosion hypothesis, the controlled demolition hypothesis, before 10:30 on the morning of 9/11.

5. The FBI’s name for its investigation of the 9/11 incidents is PENTTBOM, which stands for “Pentagon/Twin Towers Bombing Investigation.” Is it possible that when this name was assigned someone in the FBI thought a bombing had taken place? (Recall that according to the current official narrative there was no bombing at any of the affected locations.) On the day of 9/11, *USA Today*’s foreign correspondent Jack Kelley was seen telling his TV audience that the FBI’s “working theory” at that time was that “at the same time two planes hit the building...there was a car or truck packed with explosives underneath the building, which exploded at the same time and brought both of them down.”²⁶⁴ Given that Kelley was later shown to have routinely fabricated stories for *USA Today*, his allegations about the FBI would have to be corroborated. However, the general hypothesis ascribed here to the FBI - the buildings were brought down through the use of explosives - was common on 9/11. For example, Albert Turi, FDNY Chief of Safety, told NBC’s Pat Dawson not long after the destruction of the Towers that, in Dawson’s words, “according to his [Turi’s] theory he thinks that there were actually devices that were planted in the building.”²⁶⁵

These five examples have been offered in support of the contention that the explosion theory, even in its most robust form (deliberate destruction through

explosives), was familiar to eyewitnesses on the day of 9/11. It was widely accepted as a reasonable theory. That many people held this theory does not mean it is correct, but it suggests that if this theory is to be rejected it must be rejected on the basis of evidence, not because it is regarded as late, unnatural, exotic or conspiratorial.

There is strong eyewitness evidence supporting the explosion hypothesis.

The eyewitness evidence is strong in terms of both quality and quantity. The quality of the evidence is found in the richly detailed, mutually corroborating accounts of what was witnessed. At the same time, the quantity of evidence is impressive in both the number and variety of eyewitnesses who discuss explosions in their statements.

Quality

A conversation between Dennis Tardio and Pat Zoda about the destruction of the North Tower was captured on film by the Naudet brothers on the day of 9/11.²⁶⁶

Tardio and Zoda repeatedly affirm each other's accounts, both with words and with hand gestures. The hand gestures are like a series of karate chops starting high and going quickly downward. The witnesses evidently want to suggest that there were many discrete, energetic events that they observed, and that these started high up and then moved rapidly down the building at regular intervals.



Zoda says, as he moves his hand: "Floor by floor, it started poppin' out." Tardio concurs and uses the same hand gesture: "It was as if they had detonated, detonated (Zoda: "Yeah, detonated, yeah"), you know, as if they were planted to take down a building: boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom." Zoda adds: "All the way down. I was watching and running."

These are firefighters and they are used to encountering the standard sorts of explosions that occur in building fires. But they do not talk about smoke explosions, or

“boiling-liquid-expanding-vapor” (BLEVE) explosions, or any of the other expected forms of explosion. Instead, they are talking about, and acting out with dramatic gestures, something altogether different. They say that what they saw resembled a controlled demolition.

The next example is Paul Lemos, who, on 9/11, was in the vicinity of the World Trade Center to participate in the filming of a commercial. Lemos was interviewed on videotape on 9/11 near the World Trade Center, with WTC-7 still standing in the distance.²⁶⁷ He was filmed by a different film maker at a different location than the firefighters just described. This footage appears to be *entirely independent of the Tardio/Zoda footage just discussed*. However, when Lemos begins describing the demise of the North Tower, he uses the same hand gestures as Tardio and Zoda: rapid chops that start high and move at regular intervals down the building.



Here is what he says as he performs his gestures:

“All of a sudden I looked up and about twenty stories below...the fire...I saw, from the corner, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom...just like twenty straight hits, just went down and then I just saw the whole building just went ‘pshew’...and as the bombs were goin’ people just started running and I sat there and watched a few of ‘em explode and then I just turned around and I just started running for my life because at that point the World Trade Center was coming right down...”

Lemos is even bolder than Tardio and Zoda, in that he does not qualify his statement by saying “as if they had detonated.” He refers openly to “bombs” and he says

he watched them “explode.” In any case, the Tardio/Zoda footage and the Lemos footage are both rich in detail and mutually corroborating. The rich detail is apparent from the transcript, and the corroboration comes not just from the language used but also the hand gestures. These men clearly perceived the same event and came away with the same idea – that explosive devices in the buildings were used to bring them down.

Lemos also tells an interesting anecdote about a conversation with a person who was introduced to him as an architect, which is relevant to the tampering with and suppression of eyewitness evidence. Lemos states, “...now, they told me afterwards it wasn’t explosions. I was talking to one of the architects that they pulled in.” It is unclear who “they” is referring to in this statement, but a reasonable supposition can be made that “they” refers to the authorities on the scene. Therefore, it appears that the authorities had an architect there on 9/11 telling people like Paul Lemos what they had and had not perceived.

Regardless of whether or not this “architect” had a sinister purpose, we can be sure of the following facts about the architect: (1) unlike Lemos, he was not himself an eyewitness (he had been “pulled in” to the scene); (2) he would not have had time to carry out a thorough canvassing of eyewitnesses; (3) he certainly did not have time to do a comprehensive review of photographs and videos of the collapse; and (4) there is little possibility he could have studied the remains of the building in any detail – either the steel or the dust. Despite all of this, he feels he can tell an eyewitness what that eyewitness did not perceive. Not only is the architect making an unwarranted judgment, his behavior is extremely irregular insofar as it makes conducting an unbiased investigation much more difficult. Homicide investigations, fire investigations, and explosion investigations have strict principles, and in each case it would be unheard of to walk onto a crime scene and taint the evidence by interfering with an eyewitness.

This discussion of the architect is also important because of its wider significance. In the months following 9/11, many eyewitnesses muted, qualified and even rejected their own initial judgments after hearing that authorities had adopted a structural failure hypothesis that had no room for explosions. The structural failure hypothesis that was most common during that period, and that was widely advanced as correct, was the “pancake” hypothesis of sequentially failing floors. The pancake hypothesis has since that time been discredited and abandoned (it was specifically rejected by NIST) but in the early days it did a fine job of weakening the confidence of eyewitnesses who thought they had perceived explosions.

Examples of firefighters revising their judgment of what they had perceived on the basis of what authorities were saying at the time are common in the World Trade Center Task Force interviews.

Dominick DeRubbio says in his description of the destruction of the South Tower: “It was weird how it started to come down. It looked like it was a timed explosion, but I guess it was just the floors starting to pancake one on top of the other.”

James Drury says in his statement about the North Tower:“

...we started to hear the second roar. That was the north tower now coming down. I should say that people in the street and myself included thought that the roar was so loud that...bombs were going off inside the building. Obviously we were later proved wrong...”

John Coyle starts his important statement about the South Tower in a very tentative way:

“The tower was—it looked to me—I thought it was exploding, actually. That’s what I thought for hours afterwards... Everybody I think at that point still thought these things were blown up.”

All of these witnesses recall their initial impressions of what they saw and thought (and in the case of Drury and Coyle the initial impressions of their friends and colleagues who were also on the scene), and then try to back away from these impressions. Thus, we have clear evidence of both how common the explosive demolition theory was on 9/11, and how it was later marginalized— not by sound science but by speculative theories given a stamp of approval by authority figures.

Returning now to the issue of corroboration, there are additional evidentiary sources that corroborate the descriptions given by Zoda, Tardio and Lemos of regular, descending energetic events. First, here are three examples of corroborating eyewitness testimony.

Ross Milanytch, an employee at nearby Chase Manhattan Bank, says of the South Tower: “It started exploding...It was about the 70th floor. And each second another floor exploded out for about eight floors, before the cloud obscured it all.”

John Bussey, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, said this of the South Tower:

“Off the phone, and collecting my thoughts for the next report, I heard metallic crashes and looked up out of the office window to see what seemed like perfectly synchronized explosions coming from each floor, spewing glass and metal outward. One after the other, from top to bottom, with a fraction of a second between, the floors blew to pieces.”²⁶⁸

Kenneth Rogers of the New York Fire Department said this about his experience with the South Tower:

“...we were standing there with about five companies and we were just waiting for our assignment and then there was an explosion in the south tower... A lot of guys left at that point. I kept watching. Floor after floor after floor. One floor under another after another and when it hit about the fifth floor, I figured it was a bomb, because it looked like a synchronized deliberate kind of thing.”

Corroboration can be even more impressive when it involves an entirely different form of evidence. Paul Lemos explicitly says that he was watching the North Tower, and, more specifically, a corner of the North Tower, when he saw the explosions. Evidence that corroborates his judgment that there were explosions occurring at a corner of the North Tower is found in high quality footage filmed during its destruction.²⁶⁹ This footage clearly shows a rapid sequence of forceful and focused ejections, apparently explosive, moving down the building. The size and velocity of these ejections can be measured, which means their existence and basic characteristics are not open to question.

Thus, there is a high degree of corroboration among the different eyewitness accounts, and between eyewitness evidence and other evidence.

Some who object to this compilation of eyewitness testimony say that what these witnesses experienced may not have been explosions at all. Falling bodies, crashing elevators, snapping columns and even sonic booms have all been proposed as alternative explanations. These assertions can be addressed by analyzing, quite closely, the statements of another eyewitness.

The witness is Sue Keane. She was, on 9/11, an officer in the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) where she had been for eight years. Before this she had spent 13 years in the U.S. Army, where she received training on how to respond to explosions.

Listed below are six common characteristics of explosions as described by former FBI explosives expert James Thurman in his book, *Practical Bomb Scene Investigation*.²⁷⁰ These characteristics are matched to selections from statements Sue Keane gave to the authors of the book, *Women at Ground Zero*.²⁷¹ These statements, given within a few months of the 9/11 events, are supported by her separate handwritten submission to the Port Authority Police Department.

1. Sound

Keane: “A couple of minutes later, it sounded like bombs going off. That’s when the explosions happened.”

2. Positive blast pressure phase

“The windows blew in...we all got thrown.” “Each one of those explosions picked me up and threw me.”

3. Partial vacuum during positive blast pressure phase

“There was this incredible rush of air, and it literally sucked the breath out of my lungs.”

4. Negative blast pressure phase

“Everything went out of me with this massive wind... Stuff was just flying past. Then it stopped and got really quiet, and then everything came back at us. I could breathe at this point, but now I was sucking all that stuff in, too. It was almost like a back draft. It sounded like a tornado.”

5. Incendiary or thermal effect

“...he threw me under the hose, which in a way felt great, because I didn’t realize until then that my skin was actually burning. I had burn marks, not like you’d have from a fire, but my face was all red, my chest was red.”

6. Fragmentation and shrapnel

“...there was stuff coming out of my body like you wouldn't believe. It was like shrapnel. It's still coming out.”

The handwritten PAPD report of this brave and obviously traumatized individual, which corroborates the above account in several crucial respects, is directly available in the PAPD documents released in 2003.²⁷² One page of that report is reproduced as follows.

PA 2265
11-72

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
HAND-WRITTEN MEMORANDUM

③

To: _____

From: _____

Date: 1 / 1 _____

Subject: _____

MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF Debris, CONCRETE DUST AND bodies OR PART were more frequent AT THIS POINT. THEN THERE WAS AN Eerie silence AND IT WAS LIKE YOU Knew something WAS going TO happen, there JUST seemed TO be one explosion AFTER ANOTHER. I WAS separated FROM the guys FROM the bridge (GWB) by ANOTHER explosion, MASIVE AGAIN SUCKING THE Air OUT OF YOUR LUNGS AND THEN JUST A WIND MORE intense THIS time WITH larger pieces OF Debris flying. When things cleared, there were still CIVILIANS IN the AREA AND myself, A NYPD cop AND 2 Firemen THEN attempted TO get the rest OF the people OUT. Since I ONLY knew how TO get back TO Tower 5, THAT IS how we got the rest OF the group OUT across the plaza, By looking up AND ONLY letting them go 2 or 3 at a time.

THIS IS STARTING TO get HARD TO write I'll try again IN A few days.

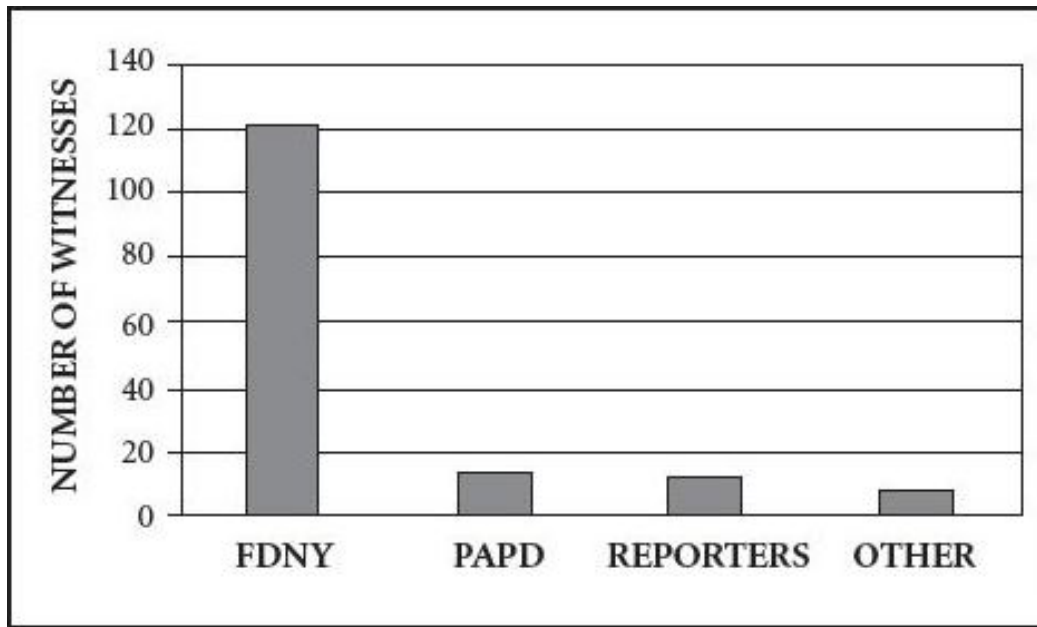
On what reasonable grounds can we exclude Sue Keane’s statements as we attempt to determine the causes of the destruction of the Twin Towers?

In summary, the eyewitness testimony of Tardio/Zoda, Lemos and Keane are examples of “quality,” meaning evidence that is rich in detail. Below, the issue of “quantity” of eyewitness evidence is considered.

Quantity

It is difficult to formulate a complete account of eyewitnesses who describe, expressly or implicitly, explosions near the time of the destruction of the Twin Towers. Neither the FBI, nor the 9/11 Commission, nor the National Institute of Standards and Technology have published a count. I have compiled the most complete known list of witnesses to explosions at the Twin Towers. There are 156 such witness statements. The two graphs presented below summarize certain aspects of the list.

FIGURE 8-1: WITNESSES BY PROFESSION/AGENCY



Of the 156 eyewitnesses, 121 are from the Fire Department of New York. Another 14 witnesses are from the Port Authority Police Department. Thirteen are reporters, most working for major television networks. Eight are listed as “other,” usually people who worked in the vicinity of the Towers.

Members of the FDNY and PAPD are typically referred to as “first responders.” So 135 out of 156 witnesses, or 87% of the total, are first responders. This is significant because these people have much more experience with explosions than most people. Moreover, their statements were given to superior officers as part of their professional duties, and the circumstances in which the statements were collected make this eyewitness evidence very strong.

The reporters also occupy an important position in the list because their accounts in most cases are directly captured on videotape. Their voice inflections and often their body language can be examined in detail. The reporters' accounts are also important because they are in most cases given spontaneously, with little reflection, very soon—minutes or even seconds—after the event they witnessed. Spontaneous witness statements are widely viewed as credible because there is little time for internal or external filtering of what is stated. In fact, the U.S. Federal Rules of Evidence typically do not admit into court statements made by witnesses outside of court, which are referred to as hearsay. However, one exception to the rule against hearsay is the “excited utterance” exception. The excited utterance exception allows hearsay to be admitted when it is “a statement relating to a startling event or condition made while the declarant was under the stress of excitement caused by the event or condition.” (Fed. Rules Evid. 803(2)) As expected, with respect to 9/11, the distorting tendencies in recollection have worked *against* the explosion hypothesis, for the simple reason that people progressively adjusted their stories as time went on to better accord with what they were being told by authority figures.²⁷³

Before discussing the next graph, it is appropriate to describe how the list of explosion witnesses was compiled. Eyewitnesses are included in the list if they use, in their statement, at least one of the following terms: “explosion” (or the corresponding permutations of “to explode”), “blast,” “blow up” (or “blow out”) “bomb” (or “secondary device”), or “implosion.” There is also a category called “other CD,” which includes cases that do not use one of these terms, but that are in some respects strongly suggestive of controlled demolition. The point of this method is not merely to be able to quantify explosion reports, but to reduce the list compiler’s role in the interpretive process. Eyewitnesses are included in the list not because an outside observer interprets what they witnessed as explosions, but because the eyewitnesses themselves interpret what they witnessed as explosions.

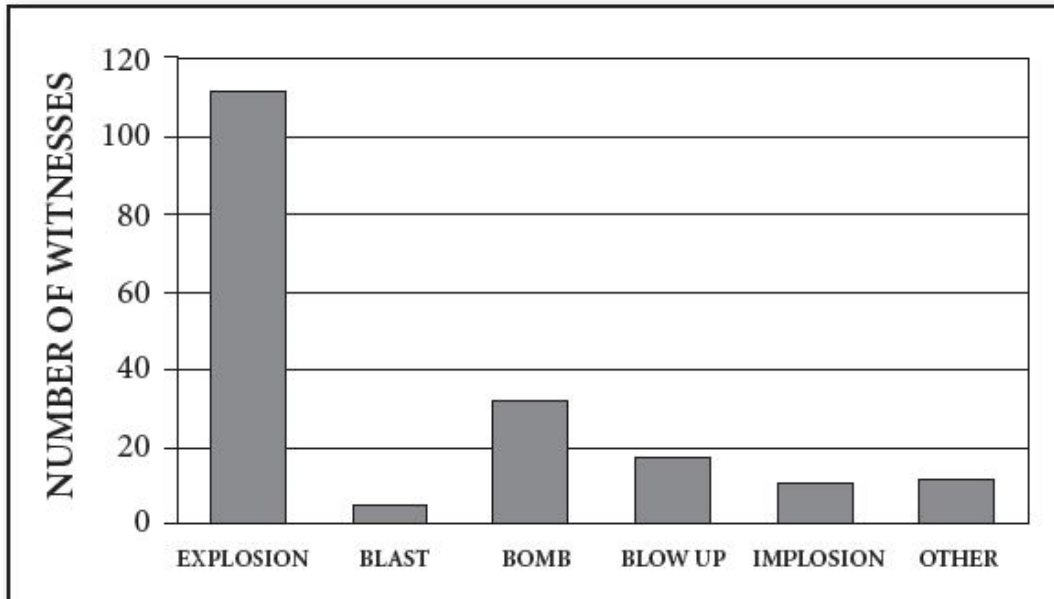
Additionally, there are processes available to investigators that can help check the quality of the evidence. The witnesses can be closely scrutinized (names, occupations, reliability, experience); motives for deception can be looked at; quality of sources can be examined; chain of custody for all witness accounts can be verified; and, of course, corroboration through other evidence of both similar and dissimilar kinds can be confirmed. Corroboration is so massive in the present case that the other processes have received less attention.

The “explosion” category is by far the largest, with 112 eyewitnesses. However, the “bomb” category, with 32 eyewitnesses, is extremely important as well. Most of the people on this list speaking of bombs are firefighters, and it is clear from their use of the word “bomb” that they are not talking about the sort of explosion they expect to encounter in a high-rise fire.

Now, there are three common objections to the demolition argument as based on eyewitness evidence. Two have been addressed already: eyewitness evidence is “soft” and can be disregarded; and eyewitnesses may have mistakenly reported explosions when, in fact, non-explosive events (such as falling elevators) were at issue. The third objection is the only one that can be taken seriously. It is this: there are many natural forms of explosion that occur in large fires, and the mere fact that there were explosions does not mean that explosives were used. It is an unjustified leap, claim these objectors,

to go from eyewitness statements about explosions to the controlled demolition hypothesis.

FIGURE 8-2: WITNESSES BY TERM USED



The types of explosions that typically accompany a fire are described in detail in various publications, probably most authoritatively in the National Fire Protection Association's *Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations*. There the NFPA describes four types of explosion that would have been expected to accompany the fires in the Twin Towers.

1. BLEVE ("boiling-liquid-expanding-vapor-explosion," as with an exploding boiler)
2. Electrical explosion
3. Smoke explosion (i.e. backdraft)
4. Combustion explosion (e.g., natural gas, jet fuel vapor)

There are three characteristics of the eyewitness statements that rule out all four types of explosion. That is, these four sorts of explosions may well have occurred, but they do not account for the main explosions witnesses say they perceived. Here are the three characteristics that must be explained.

Identification

If the explosions encountered were the type typically encountered in fires, the firefighters would be expected to recognize them as such and name them. There are very few instances where they do so. On the contrary, they clearly feel these were different types of explosion than those they were used to encountering, as evidenced by, for example, the number of references to bombs.

Power

Many eyewitnesses clearly thought they were watching explosions destroy the Twin Towers (“I looked up, and the building exploded...The whole top came off like a volcano”) But none of the common four types of fire-related explosions could accomplish this. Recall that according to NIST, the Twin Towers were essentially intact beneath the point where they were hit by the planes. While BLEVEs and combustion explosions sometimes destroy structures such as wood frame houses, there are no examples of these explosions causing the destruction of such robust steel structures as are at issue here. Also, there is no evidence that the right conditions for such explosions (for example, the necessary quantities of natural gas or jet fuel) existed in the Twin Towers at the time their dramatic destruction began.

Pattern

As described above, many eyewitnesses reported regular, rapid energetic events in sequence down the building, which cannot be explained by any of the four common types of explosion. If these patterned ejections are the result of explosions, they can only be explosions resulting from explosives.

Eyewitness evidence was ignored/suppressed by the 9/11 Commission and NIST

The discussion above gives a brief overview of the eyewitness testimony available to investigators. The last main point here is that this evidence has been ignored or suppressed by both the 9/11 Commission and NIST.

In its 585 pages, the 9/11 Commission Report contains one partial sentence referring to eyewitness reports of explosions at the time of collapse. The context is a discussion of firefighters who were on upper floors of the North Tower when the South Tower came down. The sentence fragment is as follows: “...those firefighters not standing near windows facing south had no way of knowing that the South Tower had collapsed; many surmised that a bomb had exploded...”²⁷⁴ In other words, according to the 9/11 Commission, a subcategory of firefighters – those in upper floors of the North Tower with an impeded view—mistook the collapse of the South Tower for a bomb. The implication here is that the explosion witnesses, presumably few in number, made a mistake.

Of course, a careful examination of the available eyewitness testimony, as set forth above, would show that it is categorically false that all or most of the explosion witnesses were in the upper floors of the North Tower, and that only those with an

impeded view thought a bomb had exploded. The truth is that witnesses were in a great variety of locations and many of them had an exceptionally clear view of the Towers.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology gave even worse treatment to the eyewitness testimony. One of NIST's stated objectives is to "determine why and how WTC 1 and WTC 2 collapsed following the initial impacts of the aircraft."²⁷⁵ But in the 295 pages of this report, there is not a single reference to eyewitnesses who perceived explosions in the Twin Towers.

Some may argue that this is not surprising because NIST deals with hard evidence, not soft evidence. NIST is concerned with things like column size, temperatures reached, and the yield strength of steel; NIST does not deal with eyewitnesses. This is a misconception. The truth is that NIST openly discussed its attention to eyewitnesses.

Very early in its investigation of the Twin Towers, NIST adopted a sophisticated method of collecting eyewitness evidence, and the results can be seen in Chapter 7 ("Reconstruction of Human Activity") of the NIST final report. Telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, and focus groups were all used.²⁷⁶ Note, for example, the following statement: "225 face-to-face interviews, averaging 2 hours each, gathered detailed, first-hand accounts and observations of the activities and events inside the buildings on the morning of September 11."²⁷⁷ Although Chapter 7 is not about the destruction of the Towers, elsewhere NIST explicitly recognizes the relevance of eyewitness evidence to the understanding of how the buildings came down.²⁷⁸ [33] Yet NIST somehow fails to note even one eyewitness reference to explosions or bombs, not only among its interviewees but also in the literature. It misses, for example, all of the 156 eyewitnesses used as the basis of this paper, even though it had access to all of the sources used to compile the list.

The 9/11 Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, apparently following the lead of the FBI, have violated standard principles of investigation. Whether this is evidence of incompetence or of deliberate cover-up is irrelevant to my present argument. Either way, it is obvious that the official investigations carried out to this point have been grossly inadequate and that a new and thorough investigation is essential.

Chapter 8 Endnotes

²⁵⁵ The importance of eyewitnesses in criminal investigation is affirmed in such publications as: Charles Regini, "The Cold Case Concept," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Aug. 1997; Charles Welford and James Cronin, "Clearing up Homicide Clearance Rates," *National Institute of Justice Journal*, April, 2000; and Vivian Lord, "Implementing a Cold Case Homicide Unit: A Challenging Task," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Feb. 2005. Among social scientists an attack against naive acceptance of eyewitness evidence (and especially against a naive view of human memory) was led some time ago by Harvard's Elizabeth Loftus. See, for example, her *Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979). But Loftus did not claim to have made eyewitnesses unnecessary. As she said in a book co-authored with James Doyle in 1997, "Despite the inaccuracies of eyewitness testimony and the misconceptions of jurors, the legal system can neither afford to

exclude eyewitness testimony legally nor ignore it. Sometimes it is the only evidence available, and it is often correct.” Eyewitness Testimony: Civil and Criminal. Lexis Law Publishing, Charlottesville, 3rd ed., p. 7.

- ²⁵⁶ NFPA 921: Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations. NFPA publication. Massachusetts, USA., 2004. Section 21.16.
- ²⁵⁷ “Explosive Testimony: Revelations about the Twin Towers in the 9/11 Oral Histories.” January 26, 2006. Available online at:
<http://www.911truth.org/article.php?story=20060118104223192>
- ²⁵⁸ Graeme MacQueen, “118 Witnesses: the Firefighters’ Testimony to Explosions in the Twin Towers.” Journal of 9/11 Studies, 2006, p. 47. Available online at:
http://www.journalof911studies.com/articles/Article_5_118Witnesses_WorldTradeCenter.pdf
- ²⁵⁹ “Explosive Testimony: Revelations about the Twin Towers in the 9/11 Oral Histories.” January 26, 2006. Available online at:
<http://www.911truth.org/article.php?story=20060118104223192>
- ²⁶⁰ Graeme MacQueen, “118 Witnesses: the Firefighters’ Testimony to Explosions in the Twin Towers.” Journal of 9/11 Studies, 2006, p. 47. Available online at:
http://www.journalof911studies.com/articles/Article_5_118Witnesses_WorldTradeCenter.pdf
- ²⁶¹ A lengthy and important video clip showing Burkett fleeing from both collapses can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBO2rlo_QbQ
- ²⁶² <http://www.archive.org/details/cnn200109111421-1503>
- ²⁶³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv6LfwLeRxo>
- ²⁶⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npAbNl2ihY>. Jack Kelley eventually had to resign from USA Today in disgrace. http://www.usatoday.com/news/2004-04-22-report-one_x.htm
- ²⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VBUOo2isRM>
- ²⁶⁶ The clip from the Naudet film is available online at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jODfN8oZWe0>.
- ²⁶⁷ The Lemos interview is available online at
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4AcOsaz0LI>

- ²⁶⁸ Note that Bussey has been given a structural failure hypothesis within which, in the full article, he situates his experience, apparently not realizing that his description of what he actually saw is incompatible with that hypothesis.
- ²⁶⁹ A well-known video clip, shown on network television on 9/11 and variously magnified and analyzed, is available online at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZKOKv0q8I8>.
- ²⁷⁰ Taylor & Francis. Boca Raton, 2006. This book is part of the series, Practical Aspects of Criminal and Forensic Investigation.
- ²⁷¹ Susan Hagen and Mary Caroub, *Women at Ground Zero: Stories of Courage and Compassion*. Alpha, 2002.
- ²⁷² The reports submitted by PAPD officers were released along with other materials in August, 2003 after The New York Times sued the city of New York to make them public. See Kevin Flynn and Jim Dwyer, “The Port Authority Files: Voices; Officers’ Sept. 11 Accounts: Catastrophe in the Details.” *New York Times*, August 30, 2003. The PAPD reports in their entirety were posted in 2003 by The Memory Hole and, although this site was hacked in 2009, the documents are available online at:
<http://adam.pra.to/public/mir/www.thememoryhole.org/911/pa-transcripts/>
- ²⁷³ This is what we expect. The tendency of people to adjust their memories in this way has been noted by social scientists researching eyewitness recollection. See Loftus and Doyle, p. 54: “The ‘contamination’ of recollection can occur through witnesses talking to other witnesses, through questions asked by authorities, by media accounts.” And in the same volume (p. 98): “it has been shown that highly credible people can manipulate others more readily. They can persuade others, they can change attitudes, and they can influence the behavior of others in countless ways.”
- ²⁷⁴ *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 306.
- ²⁷⁵ NIST NCSTAR 1: Final Report on the Collapse of the World Trade Center Towers.
National Institute of Standards and Technology. Sept. 2005, p. xxix.
- ²⁷⁶ NIST final report on the Towers, Chapter 7, p. 155 ff.
- ²⁷⁷ NIST final report on the Towers, p. 157.
- ²⁷⁸ NIST final report on the Towers, pp. xxxvii and 143.