

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



United States Department of Defense.

## News Transcript

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20031031-0834.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html> or +1 (703) 428-0711

Menu

Updated: 31 Oct 2003

### NEWS

[DoD News](#)  
[Advisories](#)  
[Contracts](#)  
[Live Briefings](#)  
[Photos](#)  
[Releases](#)  
[Slides](#)  
[Speeches](#)  
[Today in DoD](#)  
[Transcripts](#)

[American Forces](#)  
[News](#)  
[Articles](#)  
[Radio](#)  
[Television](#)  
[Special Reports](#)

[DoD Search](#)

[About News](#)  
[News Archive](#)  
[News by E-mail](#)

[Other News Sources](#)

**Presenter:** Senior Defense Official

Friday, October 31, 2003

## Backgrounder on DoD Support to the 9/11 Commission

Staff: Let me just go over the ground rules real quick. This is on background - Senior Defense Official.

You know sometimes a few weeks back actually it might be more than that -- 6 weeks maybe or so -- we gathered here and told you about the on-going efforts in the Department to support the 9/11 Commission with documents, with interviews. And we made a commitment to you at that time that we would keep you informed about our support to the 9/11 Commission and what we're doing. And this is just a way of continuing that effort to let you know how we're supporting them.

It is about our support to the 9/11 Commission and only that. There are no other topics that we'll be discussing today, so once we're finished with that -- we're done.

I think you might want to talk a little bit first about where we're at and then take some questions.

*(Unrelated side discussion)*

Senior Defense Official: Background and Commission -- we have been working with them since roughly the first part of May -- May 9<sup>th</sup> or thereabouts is when we started to get requests from them.

We have received from them over the course of the last few months something on the order of 10 formal requests for documentation and had made considerable progress toward getting them done. And I'll give you some indication of that as we go through it.

We have about 20 people overseeing what we're doing with the Commission at this point. There are -- that's on a day-to-day basis here -- there's about another 58 of them from different components who try to scare up the documents and vet them and record them and catalog them and prepare them for transport. And by the time you get done counting all the noses who have been involved in this in one fashion or another we've got probably 130 people or so who've been involved. And we're calculating something on the order of about 8,000 man-hours of time to date.

And so we are probably -- well they report out on May 27<sup>th</sup> is their current report date so we're still 5, 7 months so, we'll probably have something approximating that amount of man-hours spent still trying to meet what they're looking for.

The range of material in case you're not familiar with it and you would want to talk to Phil Zelikow to get specifically how they organize themselves.

But they've got sort of 3 major areas of interest. One is the period from roughly 1 January 98

through September 11<sup>th</sup> of 01 in terms of counterterrorism policy and the activities of the government.

The period between 9/11 and the decisions having to do with the reaction to the attack in later September, and then what has the government done since then to support counterterrorism operations and policy. And the reason I say that is because then if you think about what they've been asking us for, it makes some sense.

There have been document requests that have focused on the day itself – 9/11 itself -- looking at NORAD and its activities and that of the various Air Force Squadrons that had responded on that day.

They've looked for oral histories that we have. As you know, the DoD historian and some of the service historians make it a practice of going around and interviewing people who are involved in events like that and so there is some insight to be gained from those kinds of things.

They have asked us for what we may have had in the way of intelligence which as you know is not what we do here, we in that sense receive it. It is true that the Defense Intelligence Agency is a producer but that information is gotten through the process that they have in place with the intelligence community.

We have had their staff over here. I know I spent twice, three times with them now going through details on various programs and activities here.

*(Senior Defense Official goes off the record)*

So there's been a pretty full engagement with them on these kinds of things.

There's been a concern on the part of the commission, which I must say I appreciate, that they have a deadline they're working against. It's the 27<sup>th</sup> of May when they're to report. There's an awful lot of material to get through, and so they're anxious to see those that they have requested documents from get them to them in a timely fashion.

And you know it's hard to estimate where you are in delivering product to them. In part because we're not always sure that we know what they're looking for. And as they learn from the original request, and as they learn more from the documents you deliver to them, they will come back and ask for additional material based on what they think they've learned. So we are now in that process of sort of a second round of requests to see if we can't fill in some of the holes that they have in their knowledge.

The commission was not exactly happy with us back in July when they did their initial report. [My staff] has made a considerable effort to revamp and energize people who are working on this and so by the late-July timeframe they were acknowledging that our – let's see and this one is the 28<sup>th</sup> of July -- that their experience with us has "improved remarkably" was their comment.

And I think that's sort of been a progression of how we have gone. And then when we got to the statement that Kean and Hamilton made in October, you know that we produce large quantities of documents but not quite the ones they're looking for yet. And as I say, a moment ago, I understand that they're anxious in getting there.

One of the biggest tranches of documents we have left are those, which are when you might want to call policy documents. That is the information that was generated as part of the input to the principals for their attendance at interagency staff meetings.

And I was told today that the estimate of what we have in archives alone measures 90 of those storage boxes. So they are in the process of having those retrieved from the archives and then we will have to go through them, sort them, find the ones that are relevant, then there's a process by which we go through here inside the building vetting them and then in turn they over for a second vet with the

Department of Justice for executive privilege issues and things of that sort.

So it is unfortunately a longer term, more drawn out, process I think than one would care to admit but it's a reality and that's why we have you know some 50 to 60 people everyday working on the problem.

Those are some of the sort of high points of where we are.

At some point the Secretary and the Deputy and the Chairman and the Vice Chairman will undoubtedly be called by the commission to go over and talk with them so one of the other things we're going to have to do, of course, is get them prepared.

So in addition to responding to the needs of the commission itself, we'll have to work with the people who are anticipated to be witnesses. So that's sort of background.

*(Unrelated side discussion)*

Q: So are you done with your prepared remarks?

Senior Defense Official: Yes, sure.

Q: I'm sort of confused why you guys just don't hand over everything. What's -- explain to me what the concerns are. What are you afraid to --

Senior Defense Official: It's not that.

Q: -- that you would -- pardon me.

Senior Defense Official: To that contrary. We are under explicit direction from the Secretary to make sure that we cooperate with the commission and get them what they ask for. The challenge is to marry their requests to the proper component in the building, and then within those components to find the proper offices, to get the paperwork that's asked for, and then move it back up the respective chains here, review it before you give it to them because you need to know what you're giving them, cataloging it and so forth.

And then there is a review that takes place at the Department of Justice to assure that the -- all of the -- you know, concerns about executive privilege are being met and then they're turned over. So there's not any reluctance to do it. To the contrary, it's a desire to get it to them.

Q: What could you have that would be protected by executive privilege that would nevertheless be germane to what they're doing? And how does that get worked out?

Senior Defense Official: That's worked out over with the Department of Justice people and the White House folks and we're informed. We don't make that judgment.

Q: How much stuff have you sent over?

Senior Defense Official: Everything goes through that loop.

Q: No I mean how much stuff? Have you weighed it? Do you know the number of papers, the number of documents?

Senior Defense Official: You mean how much do we deliver over there?

Staff: We're up to about 38,000 pages of information.

Senior Defense Official: It's hard to judge the value of that number you know.

Q: What was the problem in June why – what was?

Senior Defense Official: A slow start in July that concerned them.

A lower start than we should have had, that's all. I mean again, they are anxious to get going with their work and they need to have materials flowing to them at a fairly rapid rate. And for each day they don't get something, it's one day lost or closer to their deadline. And so as I say, I have a great deal of appreciation for their sense of urgency in getting this done.

Q: You talk about the 38,000 pages of info. Is there any anything that's recorded? You talked about its oral histories but are there any recordings that you have?

Senior Defense Official: There are transcripts. Yeah, the transcripts.

Q: So.

Senior Defense Official: So I mean – there are for example, the you know the day of the 9/11 there are transcripts of – there's an event conference that takes place and so getting, finding tapes, getting them transcribed, getting them fact-checked. I mean you want to make sure that they're correct in sending them over to – it just takes time.

Q: You mean tapes recorded such as the same way this is?

Senior Defense Official: Yeah they, you know those are standard things and it comes out in a big fat document like this and it breaks your arm to hold it and then you sort of read it and put – you know and from that they can then begin to trace out their lines of inquiry and then they follow those lines of inquiry. And what will happen is where we may not see – you asked a question – why don't you turn it over?

We may not see something of value. I mean you go through it and you turn over what you think they've asked for. When they go back through the materials you give them they have additional questions, which leads to additional searches for documents to satisfy the need for information.

Q: Have any documents been refused for whatever reasons of executive privilege or?

Senior Defense Official: No I can't speak for any other agency. I don't believe any of ours have. Right? No.

Q: How specific are their requests? Or do they say just send us anything that has to do with counterterrorism? Or do they say, send us this date, this memo?

Senior Defense Official: No, it's nothing like that. It's- we're getting to – we will get progressively closer to those specific requests. Where you started with for example was what I described a moment ago.

With respect to the US government deliberations on counterterrorism policy, can you provide those materials that were used in support of the principals at interagency meetings? And so that's – so you start there with a fairly wide net and then it can close down pretty quickly from there.

Q: Are these documents always of high level of classification or does it range?

Senior Defense Official: It's all the way up and down depending on what the subject is and that's yet another issue is making sure that you're not jeopardizing any of the information when you release it so you take the proper precautions for putting some in one channel and other material in a different channel.

Q: Are you taking steps to try to make the process faster?

Senior Defense Official: I think we have. I mean that was the addition of people. You know the military culture does things in a – the Defense Department culture does things in a terribly hierarchical-and-serial fashion. And we have asked that we not allow the last chain of review out of a component to slow down the delivery of the product here to the Department because once it gets through the chain – the component chain -- it goes through another review here. Right? So can we do it in parallel please -- so as soon as we have a component's material ready for their principal to see, please ship it here so we can do the same review. And that's cut the time, I think, considerably.

*(Unrelated side discussion)*



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

---

[Site Map](#) | [Privacy & Security Notice](#) | [External Link Disclaimer](#) | [Web Policy](#) | [About DefenseLINK](#) | [Contact Us](#)