

2019

## It Could Not Have Been That Hard

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### Recommended Citation

Gomez, Ilene (2019) "It Could Not Have Been That Hard," *Writing Waves*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/writingwaves/vol1/iss1/6>

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# It Could Not Have Been That Hard

Ilene Gomez

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Keywords: 9/11, Analysis, Emergency, Government

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IT is easy to understand that under sudden attack a person in the World Trade Center, Buildings 1 and 2, could not answer a call from the outside because they were trying to evacuate safely. What is not easy to understand is: why the local and federal government could not communicate with each other to prevent the airplanes from crashing into the four locations once they found out the planes were hijacked or help the people inside the buildings to get out quicker. The United States' local and federal government failed to respond quickly and adequately to the attacks on 9/11. Local governments were not able to locate federal employees to decide what to do next. The officers and firefighters at the scene were giving completely opposite advice to the people inside the buildings and not understanding the full concept of what was going on in the air.

In 102 Minutes, by Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn, the Port Authority Police knew when the first tower was struck. They sought out help to figure out what happened and to help put the fire out. The Police and Fire Departments were already on their way to help. No one expected the South Tower to be struck, so the Port Authority did not feel the need to tell the people in the South Tower to evacuate. Those people were told to stay put and stay calm despite the fact that the building next to them was on fire. Many people inside the building were scared but trusted the Port Authority and did as they were told. Phones were ringing off the hook in the Port Authority's office but no one seemed to have any answers. In fact, the officers began asking the people questions:

Where was the fire? How fast was it spreading and where? Which stairways were clear? The chief it turned out, knew less than the people he was trying to rescue. They were being briefed on the phone by family and friends who were watching TV. He had no TV and the fire chiefs were getting only snatches of information from colleagues who walked outside and craned their heads. . . (Dwyer and Flynn 53).

Why was a person that is supposed to be prepared at all times to instruct his people to safety, asking the questions? Is it not his job to be ready in such crisis? Dwyer and Flynn made it seem that the family and friends on the other end of the phone call knew more about the situation from what they saw on the TV than the Port Authority and fire commanders did from being next to the scene. Even from craning their heads out of the station, the fire chiefs could

report how dangerous the impact of the fire was and could have shared that information with the Port Authority to give back to the people in the building.

Now inside the building, the firemen and police officers did not seem to have the best of communication skills with each other or with the civilians trying to evacuate. The civilians worked together well, they helped one another and pointed in which direction to avoid direct smoke inhalation. The police officers only had one motive: to get as many people out of the buildings as they could in a calm and orderly fashion. The only problem with that was, there was not enough time to get out in an orderly fashion. There was not enough room for everyone on the stairwells they were using. "Moreover, a single escape route- stairway A- remained open, though this was only known to only a few people, and the city's emergency response program had no mechanism for communicating any live information, as opposed to canned scripts, through its 911 call centers" (Dwyer and Flynn 186). There was a chance for more people to evacuate, through stairway A. Only because the emergency response program failed in leading the people in the proper direction, more lives were put at risk. One phone call from the emergency response program to the firemen or police officers could have made a big difference in evacuation. More people would have gotten out and they could have been out quicker, but they had "canned scripts" rather than proper instruction.

The federal government moved even slower than the local government. It took a long time before the federal government could comprehend that the planes had been hijacked. In The 9/11 Report, by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon, people were calling with questions but no one seemed to understand the problem. Finally, when the Federal Aviation Administration processed the information it was too late. They tried to pass down all of the information they knew to all of the Intelligence Community but no one with power was available:

The FAA, the White House, and the Defense Department each initiated a multiagency teleconference before 9:30. The National Military Command Center Started its conference call at 9:37. None of these conferences included the right officials from the FAA or Defense Department until 10 o'clock. The FAA representative who finally joined the call at 10:17 had no responsibility for hijackings or access to senior decision makers... (Colon and Jacobson 27-28)

The planes were hijacked well before 9 o'clock in the morning and the White House was still not informed. Our Commander-in-Chief was completely unaware of the multiple hijackings happening while he was reading to children in Florida. Why was there not one single phone number that each of these departments can dial without having to go through so many other unofficial employees? Had there been one direct line for communication, a plan could have been developed. Our country claimed to be ready for anything, but it could not get the only officials of the federal government on the phone with one another to solve a major problem.

It is also troubling to understand how the civilians on the planes were able to get in contact with their friends and families. They had to let their loved ones know that the planes had been hijacked, not knowing where they were

headed. The people on the plane can make phone calls yet the FAA could not inform the White House of the problem. "When American 11 struck the World Trade Center at 8:46, no one in the White House or traveling with the president knew that it had been hijacked. While that information circulated within the FAA, we found no evidence that the hijacking was reported to any other agency in Washington before 8:46" (Colon and Jacobson 29). The FAA did very little to try and communicate with people that have a higher power and that were trained to defend the country. It is their job to inform the president when the country is in danger. The President is the one that would have to report back to the citizens and explain the terrorist attack, but how could he when no one tried to reach him or the people that have direct contact with him. The President could have been just as confused as everyone else.

There was a lot more that could have been done to stop the terrorist attacks of 9/11 or could have helped save lives. I do not say prevented because that is unlikely knowing the attacks were thoroughly planned and happened very quickly. If there had been better communication within the people inside the towers and the Port Authority, many lives could have been saved. All it took was for the Port Authority to give the people the "okay" to evacuate rather than tell them to wait for further help. The FAA could have picked up the phone quicker to dial the White House or even jumped in on the teleconference a lot faster. With all the Defense Departments trying to reach out to and to get moving on the situation, some simple communication skills was all that was needed. The Intelligence Community should have one direct phone line that immediately dials the person in charge to save time. The FAA needs to come up with a plan for crisis and stick to it; a new protocol for communication. Finally, the local and federal government need to learn to work on communication skills. With an establishment of communication, chaos would be avoided and people's lives would not depend on authorities' differences.

## Works Cited

Colon, Ernie and Sid Jacobson. *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

Dwyer, Jim and Kevin Flynn. *102 Minutes: The Unforgettable Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers*. Holt, Henry, Company, Inc. 2011.

### It Could Not Have Been that Hard

It is easy to understand that under sudden attack, a person in the World Trade Center, Buildings 1 and 2, could not answer a call from the outside because he or she was trying to evacuate safely. What is not easy to understand is: why the local and federal government could not communicate with each other to prevent the airplanes from crashing into the four locations once they found out the planes were hijacked or help the people inside the buildings to get out quicker. The United States' local and federal government failed to respond quickly and adequately to the attacks on 9/11 due to not being able to locate federal employees to decide what step to take next, giving completely opposite advice to the people inside the buildings needed to evacuate, and not understanding the full concept of what was going on in the air.

**Commented [1]:** I would revisit this sentence as well. All great content and ideas but once again a little bit of a run on. Perhaps this sentence could be broken up into two more concise sentences.

**Commented [2]:** Another wordy sentence. I'm going to highlight more wordy sentences in the piece in green.

In 102 Minutes, by Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn, the Port Authority Police knew when the first tower was struck, and they sought out help to figure out what happened and to help put the fire out. The Police and Fire Departments were already on their way to help. No one expected the South Tower to be struck, so the Port Authority did not feel the need to tell the people in the South Tower to evacuate. Those people were told to stay put and stay calm despite the fact that the building next to them was on fire. Many people inside the building were scared but trusted the Port Authority and did as they were told. Phones were ringing off the hook in the Port Authority's office, but no one seemed to have any answers. In fact, the officers began asking the people questions:

**Commented [3]:** This could be edited into a second sentence to avoid being overly wordy. Also watch out for repetition words like "help" in this sentence doesn't need to be used multiple times because it is already used and implied again.

Where was the fire? How fast was it spreading and where? Which stairways were clear? The chief it turned out, knew less than the people he was trying to rescue.

**Commented [4]:** Weird block formatting, need to look up how to properly format.

They were being briefed on the phone by family and friends who were watching TV.

He had no TV and the fire chiefs were getting only snatches of information from colleagues who walked outside and craned their heads... (Dwyer and Flynn 53)

Commented [5]: Good citation! But it seems like your works cited page is missing.

Why was a person in charge, that is supposed to be prepared at all times to instruct his people to safety asking the questions? Is it not his job to know what to do in such crisis? Dwyer and Flynn made it seem that the family and friends on the other end of the phone call knew more about the situation from what they saw on the TV than the Port Authority and fire commanders did from being next to the scene. Even from craning their heads, the fire chiefs could report how dangerous the impact of the fire was and could have shared that information with the Port Authority to give back to the people in the building.

Commented [6]: Unsure about the meaning of this sentence.

Commented [7]: Craning their heads where?

Now inside the building, the firemen and police officers did not seem to have the best of communication skills with each other or with the civilians trying to evacuate. The civilians worked together well, they helped one another and pointed in which direction to avoid direct smoke inhalation. The police officers only had one motive: to get as many people out of the buildings as they could in a calm and orderly fashion. The only problem with that was, there was not enough time to get out in an orderly fashion and there was not enough room for everyone on the stairwells they were using. “Moreover, a single escape route- stairway A- remained open, though this was only known to only a few people, and the city’s emergency response program had no mechanism for communicating any live information, as opposed to canned scripts, through its 911 call centers” (Dwyer and Flynn 186), there was a chance for more people to evacuate, through stairway A. Only because the emergency response program failed in leading the people in the proper direction, more lives were put at risk. One phone call from the emergency response program to the firemen or police officers could have made a big difference in evacuation. More people would have gotten

Commented [8]: Split this up into two sentences, it would make more sense than having the comma there.

out, and they could have been out quicker, but they had canned scripts rather than proper instruction.

Commented [9]: Not sure what this is entirely, and I'm afraid the readers won't know either.

The federal government moved even slower than the local government. It took a long time before the federal government could comprehend that the planes had been hijacked. In The 9/11 Report, by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon, calls were coming in and no one seemed to understand the problem. Finally, when the Federal Aviation Administration processed the information it was too late. They tried to pass down all of the information they knew to all of the Intelligence Community but no one with power was available:

Commented [10]: Calls were coming in from where?

Commented [11]: Is this what Jacobson and Colon stated in the The 9/11 report?

Commented [12]: If this is just referring to the intelligence community in general then I do not believe this is correct capitalized. If you were to be talking about a specific one i.e. FBI or NYPD then that intelligence agency would get a capital letter. Check out Purdue rules of capitalizing in MLA format for what gets capitalized and what doesn't.

Commented [13]: \_Re-opened\_

The FAA, the White House, and the Defense Department each initiated a multiagency teleconference before 9:30. The National Military Command Center Started its conference call at 9:37. None of these conferences included the right officials from the FAA or Defense Department until 10 o'clock. The FAA representative who finally joined the call at 10:17 had no responsibility for hijackings or access to senior decision makers... (Colon and Jacobson 27-28)

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It is also troubling to understand how the civilians on the planes were able to get in contact with their friends and families letting them know that the planes had been hijacked and they did not know where they were headed but the FAA could not inform the White House of the problem.

“When American 11 struck the World Trade Center at 8:46, no one in the White House or traveling with the president knew that it had been hijacked. While that information circulated within the FAA, we found no evidence that the hijacking was reported to any other agency in Washington before 8:46” (Colon and Jacobson 29). The FAA did very little to try and communicate with people that have a higher power and that are trained to defend the country. It is there job to inform the president when the country is in danger. He is the one that would have to report back to the citizens and explain the terrorist attack, but how could he when no one tried to reach him or the people that have direct contact with him. The president could have been just as confused as everyone else.

There was a lot more that could have been done in the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and it could have helped save lives. I do not say prevented because that is unlikely knowing the attacks were thoroughly planned and happened very quickly. If there had been better communication within the people inside the towers and the Port Authority, many lives could have been saved. All it took was for the Port Authority to give the people the “okay” to evacuate rather than tell them to wait for further help. The FAA could have picked up the phone quicker to dial the White House or even jumped in on the teleconference a lot faster. With all the Defense Departments trying to reach out to and to get moving on the situation, some simple communication skills was all that was needed. The Intelligence Community should have one direct phone line that immediately dials the person in charge to save time. The FAA needs to come up with a plan for crisis and stick to it, a new protocol for communication. Finally, the local and federal government need to learn to work on

Commented [14]: contradicting tenses here... because you used did earlier in the sentence this should be "were" to stay consistent with the past tense.

Commented [15]: Make sure to explain who "he" is; it could either be the president or someone within the FAA.

Commented [16]: Again, questionable capitalization

Commented [17]: because this is a fragment change the comma to a colon or a semi colon

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communication skills. With an establishment of communication, chaos would be avoided and people's lives would not depend on authorities' differences.

Commented [18]: Nice strong conclusion!