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CRIME SCENE - WORLD TRADE CENTER

A Special Editorial on the 15th Anniversary of 9/11

by J. R. de Szigethy

PROLOGUE

Since it's opening in 1973, there have been 3 Crime Scenes at the World Trade Center. Members of the National Police Defense Foundation have been actively involved in investigating each of these criminal acts. The first crime scene was on October 4, 1990, when the man who held the Contract to fireproof the Twin Towers was murdered in the parking lot underneath the North Tower. The second Crime Scene was on February 26, 1993, when terrorists drove a bomb-van into the parking lot underneath the North Tower. The explosion murdered 6 people and caused over \$1 billion in damage. The third Crime Scene occurred on 9/11, when over 2,700 men, women, and children were murdered by terrorists. The death toll from this terrorist attack continues to rise every year with the passing of more of the First Responders at Ground Zero.

THE FIRST CRIME SCENE: OCTOBER 4, 1990

The first Crime Scene involved the murder of Louis DiBono, who held the lucrative Contract to apply fireproofing foam to the steel crossbeams beneath each floor of the Twin Towers. DiBono was a member of the Gambino Mafia Family. He was ordered murdered by Godfather John Gotti for not showing Gotti what he determined to be the proper "Respect" befitting a crime boss. During his career as an NYPD Detective, Jack Holder, now the Police Foundation President, succeeded in planting an electronic eavesdropping "bug" inside a location that John Gotti frequented. During his career with the FBI, Foundation Vice-President Philip Scala performed a key role in securing the conviction of Gotti for the murders of DiBono and four others. Scala eventually took over as head of the Gambino Squad after the retirement of Agent Bruce Mouw, and would later supervise Joaquin Garcia, who became the most successful undercover Agent in FBI history.

The murder of Louis DiBono betrayed a shocking gap in the Security in place at the World Trade Center; no video camera surveillance photos existed to document who was responsible for this outrageous crime committed in a public place, and no eyewitnesses or 'ear witnesses' could be located. What is particularly disturbing about this crime is the fact that DiBono's dead body had lain in his car for 3 days before his murder was discovered. It should have been self-evident to Trade Center authorities that if a car could be parked for 3 days unexamined in a Trade Center parking lot with a dead body inside, such a vehicle could just as easily be left behind that contained a bomb. That is exactly what happened less than 3 years later, when a rented van was driven without challenge nor inspection into the same parking lot where DiBono had been murdered.

THE SECOND CRIME SCENE: FEBRUARY 26, 1993

Various organizations, law enforcement agencies, reporters, and investigators carried out investigations to determine who was responsible for this bombing. Many years later, former CIA Director James Woolsey would tell PBS that he was convinced that the mastermind of the bombing, Ramzi Yousef, was working for Iraqi Intelligence. That may in fact have been the case, but evidence would emerge that the funding for this terrorist attack came not from the government of Saddam Hussein, but rather from small businesses in the New York and New Jersey area involved in a lucrative yet simple scam. Police Foundation Executive Director Joe Occhipinti, who in an earlier career with the INS had become an expert on the various illegal activities taking place in such small businesses, assembled the evidence and turned it over to a New York Post reporter, Al Guart. The scam in question is called Coupon Fraud.

This is how Coupon Fraud works; every day, millions of Americans shop for groceries which they discount by redeeming a coupon on items such as soap, breakfast cereal, and other packaged foods. The grocery store then redeems the coupons with clearing houses and receives a monthly check as reimbursement. This industry is a multi-billion dollar a year operation, in which manufacturers print and distribute coupons in an effort to entice consumers to try their product. The costs of these coupons are passed on to the consumer through higher prices on just about all goods offered for sale in grocery stores.

What the coupon industry discovered in the late 1980s, with the help of a retired FBI Agent, was that in major cities across America cells of terrorists were raising many millions of dollars a year through Coupon Fraud. The terrorists would steal thousands of grocery coupons, either from their distribution centers or through the hijacking of trucks transporting the coupons. The coupons would then be redeemed from small grocery stores owned by the terrorists, as if the coupons had been turned in by consumers who purchased the products at those stores.

After several years of investigation, the Post published Al Guart's story, "U. S. Coupon Scams Tied to Terror Fund," in July, 1996. That story revealed the evidence that the first bombing of the World Trade Center had in fact been funded by Coupon Fraud committed by associates of the blind Sheik Omar Abdel-Rachman.

One of the biggest challenges for those investigating terrorism is the fact that the vast majority of immigrants to America, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, are not involved in committing crimes. Thus, finding that very small percentage of those who do commit crimes requires very specific knowledge as to how these criminals operate. Coupon Fraud was a simple scam, and yet it offered for those willing to investigate it a simple method of tracing the money raised through this operation, some of which was sent overseas. What Al Guart found was that some of the money raised through Coupon Fraud was making it's way to terrorists in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq.

THE THIRD CRIME SCENE: 9/11, 2001

On 9/11, 2001, members of the Police Foundation were among those who died at the World Trade Center, and many Foundation members were also among the First Responders to Ground Zero. One such, a Psychologist, soon developed permanent lung damage.

After 9/11, this reporter began an investigation of the fireproofing of the World Trade Center. What was discovered was that Louis DiBono had maximized his profits by not completely applying the fireproofing foam as required. Photographs by Forensic Buildings Investigator Roger G. Morse taken in the 1990s revealed that the fireproofing was not consistent throughout the building, this many years after DiBono's murder at his workplace. The photographs show some fireproofing completely missing, while fireproofing was also incorrectly applied to rusted steel, essentially offering no fire protection.

Professor Frederick Mowrer of the Fire Protection Engineering Department of the University of Maryland, is among those experts funded by the National Science Foundation who investigated the collapse of the Twin Towers. These experts suggest that the inadequate fireproofing of the Twin Towers may have been a significant factor in their collapse. Their findings suggest that had the Towers been adequately fireproofed, these buildings would have stood much longer, allowing the evacuation to safety of many more victims of this terrorist attack.

A thorough analysis of the fireproofing at the World Trade Center can also be found at the website of retired FDNY Deputy Chief Vincent Dunn.

With each passing year after 9/11, it became clear that First Responders to Ground Zero were being impacted by serious diseases, many of them rare forms of cancer. Thus, on November 21, 2006, this reporter joined a renowned Congressional investigator in producing a Health Care Conference on behalf of First Responders held at the New Jersey Expo Center. The Conference was organized by Angela Clemente, a Forensic Intelligence Analyst who has worked with Congressional Committees on issues related to corruption in government. The conference brought together Joe Soldevere, representing the office of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Dr. Jacqueline Moline, Director of the WTC Medical Monitoring Center at Mt. Sinai Hospital, Psychologist Diana Salvador, Commander Jeffrey Endean of the Morris County Sheriff's Office, a law enforcement First Responder, and Vito Valenti, a civilian First Responder, among others. Also in attendance was John Feal, who lost a foot while working at Ground Zero as a Demolition Worker, and retired Police Chief Joseph Zadroga, whose son James died after working at Ground Zero and for whom the pending Congressional legislation was named that would provide health care to the First Responders.

From this Conference, John Feal emerged as the acknowledged leader of the First Responder movement, centered around his non-profit "Feal-Good Foundation." Those in attendance at this Conference would spend the next 4 years lobbying Congress to pass the Zadroga Bill. The Bill was finally passed by Congress and signed into law in January, 2011 by President Obama. Some experts now predict that the number of First Responders killed due to exposure to toxins at Ground Zero will soon exceed the numbers of people murdered there on 9/11.

EPILOGUE

Anyone who has ever been in the company of several First Responders to Ground Zero is haunted by the constant, repetitive sound of “The Cough,” a condition most Responders are inflicted with, a reflexive effort by their body to dispel and discharge foreign miniscule particles which each human cell instinctively understands to be hostile to human life. “The Cough” is an echo of the Evil that was perpetrated upon the world back on a beautiful, cloudless day in New York City in 2001, during which 343 Firefighters and 71 law enforcement officials re-defined the meaning of “Courage.”

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J. R. de Szigethy is a New York City-based crime reporter who can be reached at this address:
e-writer10065@nyc.rr.com

Sourcing for this Editorial if to be found in the following Feature Articles published by this author at AmericanMafia.com:

“Crime Scene: World Trade Center,” September, 2004.
http://www.americanmafia.com/Feature_Articles_275.html

"A Tale of Two Murders: A Special Report on the Fifth Anniversary of 9/11," September, 2006.
http://www.americanmafia.com/Feature_Articles_360.html

“Crime Scene - World Trade Center: Part Three: The Terrorists, the Mafia, and Missed Opportunities. A Special Report on the 10th Anniversary of 9/11,” September, 2011.
http://www.americanmafia.com/Feature_Articles_482.html