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"Farmer's accomplishment is to throw 9/11 into fresh relief. A precise and reliable accounting of what happened has been absent until now. This is it."
—JACOB HEILBRUNN, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

THE
GROUND
TRUTH

The Untold Story of America Under Attack on 9/11

John Farmer

Senior Counsel to the 9/11 Commission



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The Ground Truth: The Untold Story of America Under Attack on 9/11 John Farmer

From the senior counsel to the 9/11 Commission, a mesmerizing real-time portrayal of that day, why we weren't told the truth, and why our nation is still at risk.

As one of the primary authors of the 9/11 Commission Report, John Farmer is proud of his and his colleagues' work. Yet he came away from the experience convinced that there was a further story to be told, one he was uniquely qualified to write.

Now that story can be told. Tape recordings, transcripts, and contemporaneous records that had been classified have since been declassified, and the inspector general's investigations of government conduct have been completed. Drawing on his knowledge of those sources, as well as his years as an attorney in public and private practice, Farmer reconstructs the truth of what happened on that fateful day and the disastrous circumstances that allowed it: the institutionalized disconnect between what those on the ground knew and what those in power did. He details 'terrifyingly and illuminatingly' the key moments in the years, months, weeks, and days that preceded the attacks, then descends almost in real time through the attacks themselves, portraying them as they have never before been seen.

Ultimately, Farmer builds the inescapably convincing case that the official version not only is almost entirely untrue but serves to create a false impression of order and security. The ground truth that Farmer captures suggests a very different scenario—one that is doomed to be repeated unless the systemic failures he reveals are confronted and remedied.

The Ground Truth: The Untold Story of America Under Attack on 9/11 Details

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From Reader Review The Ground Truth: The Untold Story of America Under Attack on 9/11 for online ebook

Melinda says

'The most difficult problem facing government in attempting to adapt to changing circumstances is inertia. Bureaucracy is the enemy of preparedness. Bureaucracy survives, not by solving problems but by managing and perpetuating them. Bureaucracy thrives by defining its mission broadly enough to acquire turf, but narrowly enough to diffuse blame, should anything go wrong. It will outlast any temporary steward and it knows that. It is any administrations greatest challenge. In overcoming bureaucratic inertia it is not enough to identify a priority or to change an organisational box or two, it is necessary to drill down to change work rules and to train staff to the new priority.' John Farmer.

Brilliant book. Totally different spin on the 9/11 and Katrina events, not looking for conspiracy, but rather looking at government inefficiencies, bureaucracy bunglings, turf wars between agencies, lack of communication, layers of red tape and not learning anything at all about how to handle national level crises, between the two events. Really interesting. well researched, well presented. a great read - thoroughly recommend.

Ailith Twinning says

This seems like one of those books that's kinda dangerous if you don't bring enough information with you to the reading. But I'm gonna recommend it.

If you accept the well defended position that, basically, 9/11 was incompetence and separate systems matching with bad luck -- and whatever coverup there was was mostly just reflexive ass-covering, then you might be tempted to feel that the Patriot Act, or something like it, might have been an appropriate response.

I'm not inherently opposed to systems interoperability, especially if the agencies I feel should not exist at all were shuttered, and more (civilian) institutions with better defined purposes were set-up at the local level, without law-enforcement or military lenses. Especially for issues like Katrina, as discussed in the latter parts of the book. But looking at the NSA and CIA and FBI's failure in the face of 9/11, even given the seriously suspect powers they did have, and saying the restrictions they ****did**** have in defense of civic rights were too much, is just dangerous. Personally, it tells me that they have more power than is necessary to do what they ****can**** do, and attempts to put a total end to 'terrorism' are, absurd and, moreover, military is probably the wrong tool in the first place (consider instead humanitarian actions by non-military government organizations, especially shipping our massive food surplus abroad as food aid, for free, we pay the damn corn subsidy either way).

In any case, the point that, regardless what your intent is, your organization or agency must be designed from the ground up towards a specific goal, with specific powers, specific duties, and specific methods of integration to the rest of the government apparatus, that's all entirely sensible, the how is the concern, but that's what debate, congress, etc. are for.

Go ahead and give it a read if you're curios, because the author is certainly not writing a polemic here.

Stephanie says

Somehow putting this under "true crime" seems appropriate...so this is supposedly the "untold story of America under attack on 9/11" -- yeah, right. This guy is just another shill for the coverup. I don't know who did what, and I am not convinced that it was an inside job...but I AM convinced that the "investigation" was a sham, and that we need to have a REAL investigation in order to know what REALLY DID HAPPEN. Until then, I will keep looking at the books that come out but doubtful that I will be convinced by the ones that are done by the "team."

Marc says

WTF! It took 8 years for someone to tell the truth about the events of 9/11. I've read the inside story of the 9/11 Commission-what a joke. This is an important book.

I bought this book in a used books store in Asheville NC only a few days after visiting the newly-opened Flight 93 Memorial in Pennsylvania. Worth 10x the \$8 cost.

I give 4 stars only because the books complexities could have been better coordinated. I agree with other reviewers that say the book could have been shorter-especially the last bit on Katrina (perhaps this could have been written for a different publication).

I did like the idea of Years, Days, Hours, Minutes. Timelines of the hijackers over years is provided **but timelines of the commercial flights would have been helpful**. They would have helped solidify the author's thesis. I did this (while reading "WTF: The Tale of Tales") and it makes much more clear the lies and misinformation that the Bush team and military later put out. Their myths were designed mainly to absolve, and wash the sins of leadership, where the truth of the admittedly confusing day's events would have simply implied that these folks are human. Their errors were made in the many years before and since.

What this book says more generally is we in the west are incredibly badly served by our leadership (elected or not). I include Canadians especially in this generality even though the events are part of American history-many Canadians died in those Towers also.

To understand our decline in leadership Goodreaders should also look at these books too:
1995 Christopher Lasch (prescient); The Revolt of the Elites: And the Betrayal of Democracy
1997 David J. Bercuson, Robert Bothwell, J.L. Granatstein; Petrified Campus
2007 Lee Iococca; Where Have All the Leaders Gone?
2007 Joe Bageant; Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War
2010 Chris Hedges; The Death of the Liberal Class

MJ Samuel says

Insightful but too much talk about ways the government failed on that day without enough solutions (just a mere 12 or so pages at the end). I also felt there was not enough honoring of first responders (also

government).

Sally says

The senior council to the 9/11 Commission, and former Attorney General of New Jersey in charge of that state's emergency management department, analyzes government response to the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina day by day, telling what happened and highlighting what went wrong. He concludes that few steps have been taken to implement the problems these disasters revealed about government emergency response, particularly on the federal level.

David Quinn says

A thorough and reasonable account of the failure of our government to prevent and properly respond to the events of 9/11. (The author was special counsel to the 9/11 Commission.) The tie-in to our government's failure to properly and effectively respond to Hurricane Katrina was reasonable and convincing.

I read the 2010 version with a new afterward which I would strongly recommend. The author added recent examples of terrorist attempts which nicely underscored the points he made earlier in the book.

My only complaint was that the writing at times was extremely dry and clinical.

Bob Bauer says

The out of touch/communication of leadership was very disturbing but not surprising to me. The initiative of some lower level managers was impressive. The lying and obfuscation by senior leaders and politicians and their constant need to spin was disgusting.

Ray says

I initially thought this book might be another conspiracy theory book, but that wasn't the message. Instead, Farmer points out that many of the specific details released by various government agencies and / or military don't always parallel the documented facts. And he presents the timeline in extreme detail to back-up his findings. I don't classify this as a government cover-up as much as the natural tendency of a government bureaucracy to spin the facts as much as possible to present their agency in the best possible light. There also may have been some initial reluctance on the part of leadership to admit to shortfalls for fear of encouraging copy-cat attacks if weaknesses are documented. But Farmer makes his points, and also makes a case for much needed government and bureaucratic reforms. I believe Farmer is / was a Republican, which may explain to some extent why he was quite gentle on the Bush Administration, given the errors and inadequacies he uncovers. He also took on the task of documenting government and military misstatements without making this a partisan political attack on the Bush Administration.

Tom Schulte says

the intro pumps up the excitement of presenting 9/11 audio transcripts, which seems forced and even rather morbid. following preliminary material is dry, but the enedited transcripts do deliver. kudos to the narrator covering all the voices, grammatical imperfections, and time readings to the second. in that drier intro material, the ex-government author points out Saudis were used over, say Yemenis, simply because America was more amenibal to Saudis flying about. more revelations are in the post-mortem. fighters were not ready to shoot down airliners until only non-hijacked targets remained, only opening the door to accident. the actions of military and government actors to cover incompetence with false reports is sad and reprehensible, learning opportunities lost to image protection. but, do we want to live under a government capable and prepared enough to destroy civilian aircraft that it would have mattered? the author concludes with enough of an overview of Katrina to show lessons learned were not applied.

Peter Carlisle says

Draws comparisons between government response and spin to 9/11 and the response and spin of Hurricane Katrina. If you are looking for a book that really lays out the exact timeline of what happened on 9/11, read this book. Large portions are transcriptions of the responders at NORAD and FAA who seem to have handled 9/11 on their own. Asserts that Dept of Defense and the executive branch were basically irrelevant to the immediate response on 9/11. Then, several years after 9/11, the same sort of breakdowns in response happened again for Katrina. An interesting read for sure.

Chris says

Some disturbing facts about how 9/11 got by all of our agencies, and how the lessons we should have learned about this have all been swept under the table in agency efforts to protect their little domain.

The book did tend to repeat itself a lot and used a lot of pages to back up its assertions with transcript notations and recitations- necessary, but a little long in the tooth. But the revelations about how the command structure failed to have the FAA in on the communiation and how decisions to circumvent the communication chain in order to get fighters in the air might have helped in the moment but ended up with the unintended consequence of the brass and white house having no idea what the fighters jets were up to.

The part where the failings that lead to 9/11 and then were left unaddressed leading to the catastrophe of Katrina seemed to me like a. it was a stretch and b. it was added in because his book was not long enough. Katrina was a debacle, but that was anotehr book altogether.

Overall, interesting for the detail, infuriating for the government persisting to stick by story lines that they knew were utterly false in numerous instances (we did not have F-15 tracking United 93, Jessica Lynch, Pat Tilman), but felt like it really could have been a long New Yorker article instead of a book.

Barbara says

This is a very important book that will probably be lost in all the books written about the incompetence, arrogance and just plain ugliness of the Bush years. John Farmer, Senior Counsel to the 911 Commission, tries to set the record straight based on new information and insights into the events of September 11, 2001. In short, he confirms that information was withheld, that lies were told, and that the Commission report is, at best, only partially useful. In this version, the reason for the dissembling came from the bureaucratic desire to CYA. No one wanted to be held responsible (nor were they) for the lack of government response to planes flying into the twin towers and Pentagon. He makes a good case, exposing worrisome fault lines in our national communications infrastructure. On 911, the FAA computers couldn't talk to the military computers, the airport computers, the NORAD computers or the NEAD computers, and the "chain of command" was seen instantly (and appropriately) as too unwieldy for unfolding events. As a result, national leadership became virtually irrelevant for several hours. Decisions with far-reaching consequences were made and carried out by lower-level and local officials who were required to act immediately. The hijackers exploited holes in the policies regarding hijackings, in the failure to set up effective screenings and harden cockpits. Future terrorists may well exploit obvious holes in our hundreds of overlapping bureaucracies, turf battles and policies, leaving ordinary citizens to cope on their own. Unfortunately, because the CYA factor is so strong in today's bureaucratic maze, a full examination of what happened has never been conducted; no problems have been identified or solved. We are virtually where we were on September 12, 2001. Farmer makes an eloquent plea for a deep analysis and reformation of our government bureaucracy. Given the incredible gridlock at the federal level it will most likely fall on deaf ears. And the terrorists wait and watch.

Jena says

This book really scared the crap out of me. It brought home to me all the lies that have been told and the cover-ups that have been perpetuated in the United States since 9/11. Again, scary. But eye-opening.

Andrew says

A highly detailed and revealing critique of how the various agencies of government handled the September 11 terror attacks. Farmer goes on to draw correlations between the mistakes of 9-11 and those of the government's handling of Hurricane Katrina. Most refreshing to see these two subjects handled with analytical insight, wisdom and sanity. On the more critical side, a healthy portion of the sometimes tedious transcripts of communications between agencies such as the FAA, NEADS, and NORAD (serving as backup evidence) may have better served the book in an appendix, with judiciously chosen excerpts making the points in the book's main body.
