

Science, Activism, and the Pentagon Debate

Frank Legge, BSc, PhD
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I am a scientist. I believe that the most useful thing I can do for the 9/11 Truth Movement is to provide scientific analysis of the best hard evidence. This type of analysis clearly leads to the conclusion that the official explanation of the events of 9/11 is false. Only if activists have confidence in the data and the analysis can they present their case to the public with conviction.

The case for government complicity in 9/11 has been established beyond all reasonable doubt by study of the collapses of the three buildings that came down at the World Trade Center (WTC). Scientific analysis of the evidence shows they were felled by controlled demolition. The website of [Scientists for 9/11 Truth](#) sets this out very thoroughly. This website supports the case by providing links to other reliable websites and to peer-reviewed papers such as those at the [Journal of 9/11 Studies](#).

When activists for 9/11 truth state that the official narrative of the events of 9/11 is essentially false, they are frequently challenged. If the challenger is sincerely seeking the truth it is appropriate to listen, to interact, and to clarify our findings. Not all challengers are sincere, however. In a high-stakes matter, such as this, where powerful people have something to lose, it is clear that there will be skills. If a challenger reveals that they are of a fixed opinion, impervious to evidence, excessively assertive or abusive, it is appropriate that they be ignored.

In regard to what happened at the Pentagon, the situation is more complex. The sincere 9/11 activists have divided into three camps: those who believe that the evidence strongly supports impact of a large plane with the Pentagon, as in the official report; those who deny this; and those who are unsure. Those who deny this can be further divided into two groups: those who assert that the plane flew over the Pentagon and those who say the flying object was not a large plane.

Many scientists investigating 9/11 have accepted that a large plane, probably Flight AA77, did hit the Pentagon, but, realizing that a highly acrimonious debate is continuing, have decided to keep away. They fear that, if they participate, the publication of their views and the resulting personal attacks against them might damage their status and credibility. This is reasonable and an important consideration. Their silence, however, makes it difficult for others who are interested in resolving the issue to find credible people they can turn to for advice.

Most scientists have been content to argue that the evidence for government complicity in the events of 9/11 can be easily demonstrated by reference to the demolitions of the buildings at the WTC. Finding this argument adequate, many scientists have not been interested in going further to look closely at the evidence about the Pentagon event. At the same time there are powerful websites presenting various alternative theories and it has become difficult for the newcomer to locate reliable sources of information.

Noting the apparent reluctance of scientists to get involved in the Pentagon debate, and being concerned that the dispute was harming the credibility of the 9/11 Truth Movement, I decided to become involved in the debate myself. Following the [pioneer work](#) of Jim Hoffman and Victoria Ashley on the Pentagon, I published my first paper on the subject in 2009: [What Hit the Pentagon? Misinformation and its Effect on the Credibility of 9/11 Truth](#).

This paper provides a detailed study of the evidence available at the time. Reading through the paper again, I find only two issues that I would deal with differently today. I said that there is evidence that the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) file had been tampered with, as the data stops short of impact at the Pentagon. We now know that it was only the easily-modified CSV version of the file, released initially by the National Transportation Safety Board, which stopped short. The original file

did not, but had not been fully decoded at that time, as has been discussed in later papers. Had this been known, much speculation in the paper and elsewhere about the discrepancy would not have taken place. The fully decoded file confirmed earlier suspicions that the times in the CSV file had been altered by 4 seconds, bringing the termination of the data close to the impact time. This deception obscured the fact that the data was incomplete and confused investigators. The other issue relates to "ground effect," which some claim would have prevented Flight AA77 from following its low course to impact. When I wrote this paper I did not know that ground effect declines with speed and becomes negligible at high speed. It therefore was not a significant factor. Following a period in which Pilots for 9/11 Truth continued to challenge my work, while failing to deal with errors published on their website, which various authors had pointed out to them, I added a postscript to the paper to discuss these errors. Although somewhat dated, this is still a useful paper for anyone interested in obtaining an overview of the Pentagon evidence.

As divisive debate on the event at the Pentagon continued I decided in 2012 to write another paper: [The 9/11 Attack on the Pentagon: the Search for Consensus](#). This paper attempted to gather together all the evidence that had accumulated to that date. Prior to this I had co-authored papers on the Pentagon with Warren Stutt, skilled in computer programming and data analysis; and David Chandler, mathematician and physicist; so had become well informed about the scientific aspects of the Pentagon case. Also, David Chandler and Jon Cole had published a [Joint Statement on the Pentagon](#) which sets out the many facets of the Pentagon issue. Similarly motivated, John Wyndham, physicist, decided to enter the fray, publishing a paper in 2011 in which he applied the scientific method of analysis to each of the many arguments used by no-plane-impact theorists: [The Pentagon Attack: Problems with Theories Alternative to Large Plane Impact](#). All these papers concluded that impact by a large plane is by far the most plausible theory.

Unfortunately the debate about the Pentagon continues with excessive acrimony to the detriment of the 9/11 Truth Movement. Since the debate shows no sign of going away, at least we should attempt to conduct it in a more scientific manner. To that end John Wyndham has created a new website, [Scientific Method 9/11](#), in which he has invited submission of articles and comments on listed papers for the purpose of moderated discussion and evaluation of the arguments, using the scientific method. While some will regard the Pentagon issue as already scientifically resolved in favour of large plane impact, others will feel that resolution will not have occurred until something approaching consensus has been achieved. As this has not happened, discussion of the Pentagon should be de-emphasized and divisive assertions should be avoided in our outreach to the public. Our presentations should instead focus on the ample hard scientific evidence we possess surrounding the WTC. This evidence clearly shows that 9/11 was an inside job. Starting presentations with Building 7 (WTC7) works very well, as demonstrated by the [success of Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth](#). How can we expect members of the public to take our arguments seriously about controlled demolition at the WTC if the strong scientific evidence present there is mixed with the incomplete and/or speculative theories surrounding the Pentagon?

It is to be hoped that members of the scientific community interested in the events at the Pentagon will bring to their study the same critical faculties that have been applied with great success at the WTC. This study will be facilitated by reference to the papers now listed in the [Papers Section](#) of the Scientists for 9/11 Truth website.