

A Critical Review of WTC 'No Plane' Theories

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This is a condensed version of the original and now updated article at www.questionsquestions.net/WTC/review.html

Overview

With the amount of attention that the [Pentagon no-plane theories](#) have received, it shouldn't be surprising that some would also make the bizarre claim that no 767s hit the World Trade Center, despite voluminous video and photographic evidence to the contrary. [My previous articles](#) dealt with the core of these claims at length. Those articles were lengthy, so the purpose of this review is to provide a somewhat condensed and updated summary for those new to the subject or lacking in the time to delve into the details of the image analysis.

There have been two no-plane hypotheses put forward: The first, that small planes or missiles hit the towers and these were covered over in the videos and photos of the impact by synthetic 3D graphic images of 767s (including real-time superimposition of these images on all live TV footage as it was broadcast). The no-planers have labeled this scenario "TV Fakery." The second argument holds that the planes (at least the second plane) was in fact a hologram generated by classified technology. This hypothesis has since been abandoned. The proponents argue that anomalies in the visual record indicate the fraudulent nature of the computer generated second plane and show that the plane in the Naudet video of the first hit was not the size or shape of a 767.

The over-arching weakness of the TV fakery argument is this: how could the perpetrators have ensured control over all the images taken of the planes that approached the WTC? Only one unmodified image posted to the web would have exposed the operation. New York is a media capital of the world, with national networks, local network affiliates and independent TV stations, international media bureaus, and many independent video companies like the kinds I've worked for, and professional photographers. Professionals would have been rushing out to document whatever they could, through professional pride or the hope for making a buck off it. Evan Fairbanks and war photographer James Nachtway are some examples. And then there are also cameras in the possession of ordinary citizens and the thousands of New York's ever-present tourists. In addition, one should consider the possibility of foreign intelligence assets acquiring their own images of the attack (which so many knew was coming) which could be used for blackmail.

The following 3D relief diagram from "One Nation" shows how many vantage points were available to capture the approach of flight 175:



The plane would have been clearly visible over most of the southern tip of Manhattan, from the streets in a wide area of shorter buildings just south of the towers, the majority of the southern and eastern facing windows of the buildings south of the towers ([such as this photo](http://www.hereisnewyork.org) from [hereisnewyork.org](http://www.hereisnewyork.org)), the rooftops of those buildings, the Manhattan and Jersey shorelines along the Hudson, any boats on the water and Ellis Island, where camera toting tourists visit the Statue of Liberty. Moreover, since the plane, hitting at floors 77-85, was above most of the tall buildings on the East side, the plane was visible from higher vantage points all over midtown, Brooklyn and large parts of Queens.

What we have of images of flight 175 from 9/11 is exactly what we would expect: a great variety of still and moving images from a variety of angles from near and far and from mainstream media down to amateurs. There are absolutely no images of missiles or small planes. So, were these photographers and videographers all agents? There has been no research into their backgrounds. If they weren't, then what was the chain of custody of the tape before being aired? Was the allegedly modified footage the original or a duplicate of the original (as one would expect) supplied by the videographer? Who now has the original? If the photographer has the original, then are we to believe he or she does not care that their image showed something different than was on TV? None of these questions are answered. The default explanation, and the only answer possible, is the bug-eyed assertion that somehow the perps of 9/11 controlled all the cameras in NY on 9/11.

Perhaps, like the movie *Minority Report*, they had pre-cogs who intuited exactly where each and every person videotaping the plane would be standing.

In reality, the perpetrators would have found out about each image that they didn't control only after the image appeared on the web or in the media. And then it would have been too late to alter the image. The TV fakery hypothesis, therefore, is utterly absurd.

The Naudet Footage of the First Impact

In the case of the first impact we have two known pieces of footage. The better one, the Naudet video, is not good quality. This has led to a wealth of speculation that the footage does not show a 767 because the plane is not immediately recognizable as a 767. The reason for this is simple: [the plane is very small and the footage is out of focus](#), as one can see about 10 seconds after impact when the camera briefly zooms all the way in to the tower. It was adjusted for the firemen 10 or 20 feet away. But even if it was in focus, an object as small as the plane was in that footage would still not have been very clear, because video is not perfectly sharp down to the individual pixels, the square or rectangular blocks that make up digital images (at least in the type of cameras the Naudet crew used). The plane in the Naudet video occupied a space only about 20 by 20 pixels, not enough to show much detail even if the video were in focus. You might as well try to duplicate Michelangelo's "David" using bricks. The claim that the video should have clearly shown a 767 is an amateur argument born out of a lack of understanding of how [resolution](#) affects the clarity of that image. And this misunderstanding continues, at least in the case of Gerard Holmgren, [more than a year later](#).

Compounding the misinterpretations due to blurry footage, the no-planers were [originally using a half size, compressed mpeg movie to conduct their analysis](#). Moreover, Webfairy performed processing on this low quality movie which created even [more degraded images](#), aptly described by Mark Bilk as "abstract video art." The no-planers, not knowing what full quality video was or what compression artifacts were, claimed these muddy, altered images were proof of the absence of a real plane.

In reality, what can be seen in the unsullied Naudet footage shows [what a 767 should look like at that small resolution and out of focus](#).

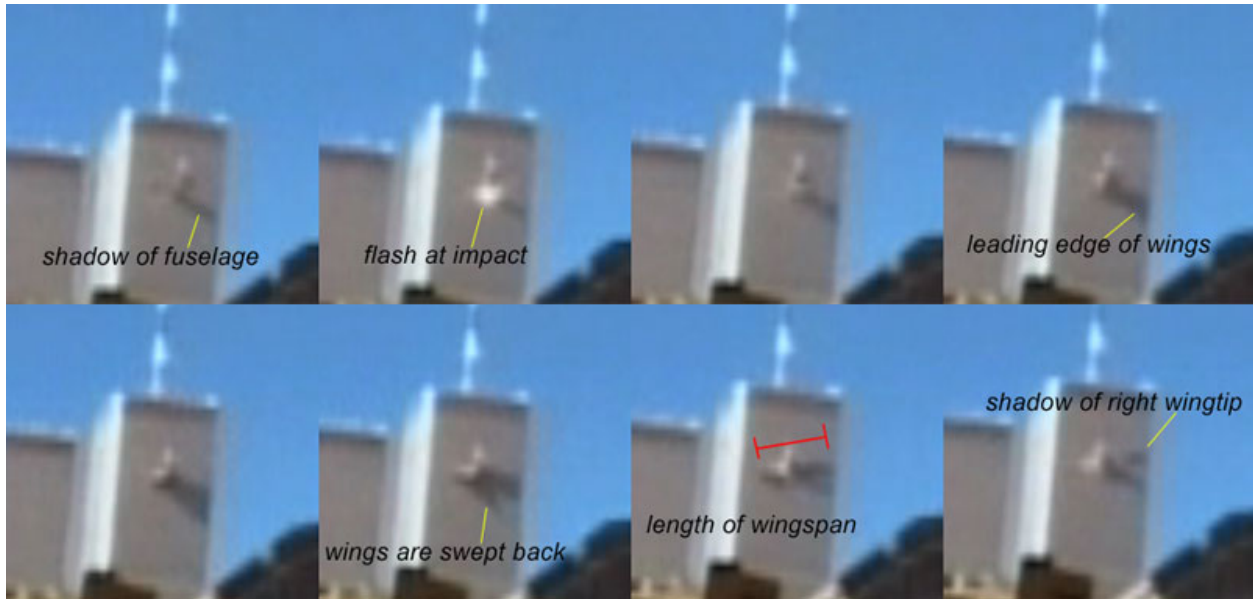
The object clearly [does have wings, a fuselage and a tail](#), ruling out the absurd missile hypothesis.



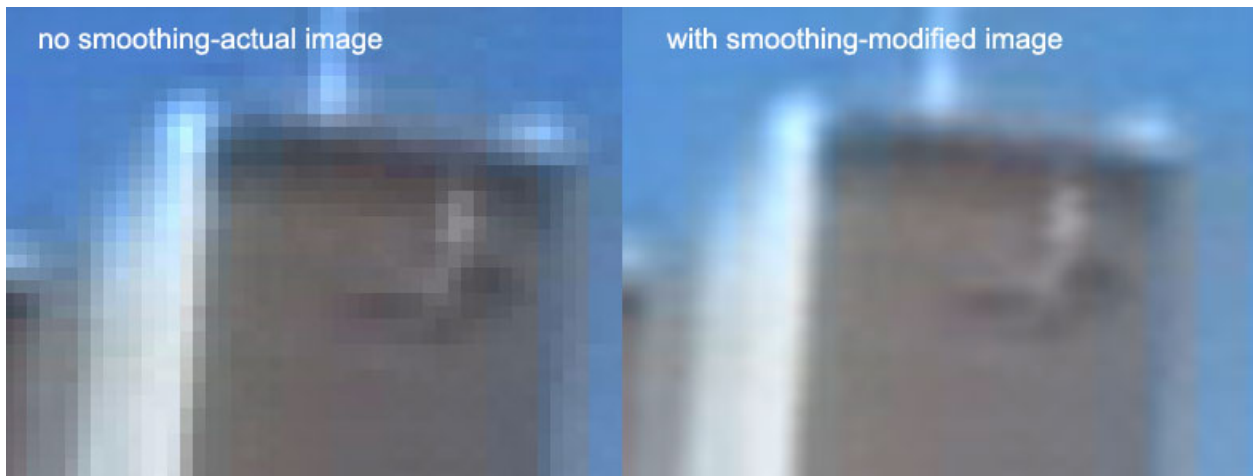
The fuselage, as best can be ascertained in the blurry footage, is [roughly the expected length of a 767](#).

The shadow of the plane, as seen below, tells us several things:

- this is an airplane, with a fuselage and wings.
- the wingspan is about 75% of the width of the WTC, the expected size of a 767.
- the wings are clearly swept back, refuting the claim that the wings extend straight out from the fuselage.



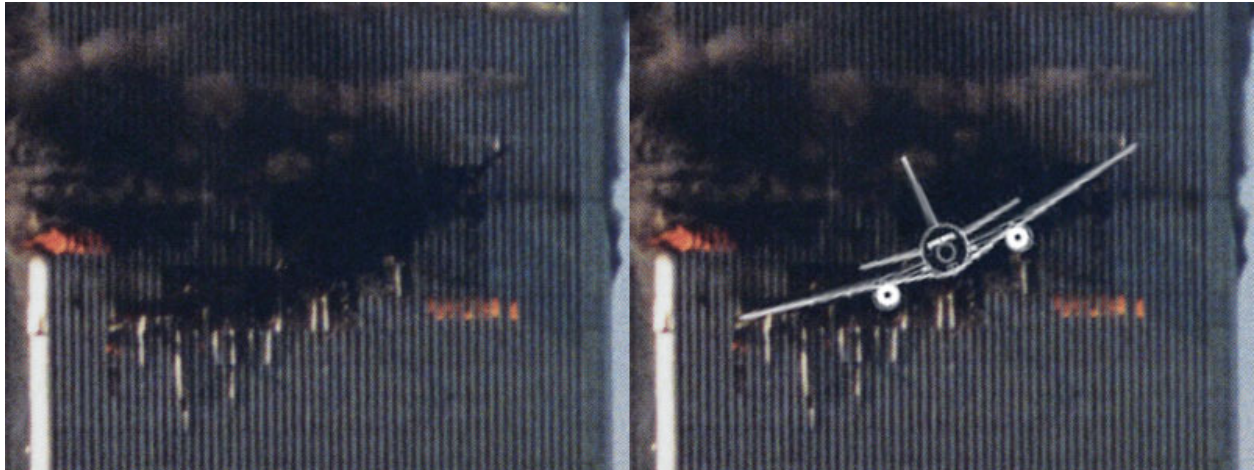
It should be noted that the magnified images of the Naudet video have been subjected to "smoothing" to blend the information between pixels, making it seem like there is more detail in the enlargements than there really is. This may contribute to the impression that a 767 should be more discernible. Scaling without smoothing shows the true lack of detail available to show the plane:



The WTC1 Hole

None of the arguments against a 767 can adequately explain how a hole in the building was created that fits a 767 perfectly, including widening of the hole where the engines were located. Here is a 767-200 diagram (with the wings tilted upwards 3 degrees to simulate flexing due to aerodynamic lift (aeronautic

experts will have to determine the exact amount of flexing), sized to 75% of the width of the WTC and rotated to fit over the hole in WTC1:



The [diagram from the NIST](#) report shows the same alignment:



No other plane fits the hole as precisely as a 767, down to the narrow grooves created by the wings on either side of the impact hole, especially visible on the right. Attempts at overlaying diagrams by no-plane advocates, such as [Stefan Grossmann](#) and the [German Engineers](#), are flawed, using inaccurate diagrams of 767s, aligning those diagrams incorrectly and/or using photographs from angles that appear to show debris where the engine holes should be.

Combined with the certainty that the large plane in the Naudet video has wing mounted engines, there is absolutely no rational reason to bother with considering planes other than a 767. Substituting another airliner with wing mounted engines gains the perpetrators nothing but the risk of exposure. Could it be a 767 other than flight 11? Possibly, but there is no physical evidence to prove that substitution. The claim that flight 175 was [a windowless 767 tanker is also baseless](#), since none of the images available are high enough resolution to discern the presence or absence of windows.

2nd Hit TV Fakery?

Unlike the first hit, the multiple videos and photographs of the second hit clearly show a 767, so the no-planers are forced to claim that these videos were faked with computer graphics, overlaid in real-time on live TV or on tape afterward. Why the perps would resort to this risky operation when there was no technical obstacle to flying a plane into a building is never credibly explained.

Not surprisingly, the anomalies turn out to be amateurish image analysis mistakes.

The observation of wings "flickering" on and off is one good example. These "flickering wings" only occur in the poorer quality video in which the brightness of the wing closely matches that of the background. What is happening is simple: noise and compression artifacts blur what little visual data there is of the edge of the wing. The wing then becomes indistinguishable from the background in that frame, hence the "disappearing wing" anomaly. Whether it happens or not in a particular frame is determined by random dispersal of noise and compression artifacts. But stepping back from the technical analysis, the flickering wing claim itself is fundamentally illogical: Other video angles show no flickering wing, undercutting the idea that the hologram was malfunctioning. And flickering like this simply does not happen in 3D animation unless the artist programs it to happen, thus eliminating the TV fakery hypothesis.

Markus Icke's argues that the plane was misshapen, with a "port-wing anomaly" that resulted in a droopy left wing. This argument arises from the fact that he used two images that had differing aspect ratios: one was stretched vertically compared to the other, creating a difference in their shapes. [When this is corrected, the "port wing anomaly" disappears.](#)

In the videos and photos, including the [Park Foreman footage](#) and the [CNN Battery Park footage](#), we can see detailed, realistic phenomenon occurring: the shadow of the smoke cloud, the reflection of the ground below on the bottom of the plane and water vapor condensing above the wings. In addition, the plane matches the motion of the cameras perfectly and disappears cleanly behind buildings. Yet the no-planers contend the shape of the plane is distorted, meaning the perps used a misshapen model, something that in the world of digital imaging can only happen on purpose. Given the accuracy of the other aspects of the images, this is grossly illogical.

Differences between the images in the color or brightness of the sky or plane are not necessarily indications of fakery. These differences can be caused by different lighting conditions, camera exposure levels or adjustments to the contrast, brightness or color of the images. Besides, someone who had the skill to create a photo-realistic plane, matched to the movement and focus of the camera and reflecting light from the surrounding environment, would have easily handled these much simpler aspects of digital image manipulation.

A key claim of the no-planers is that the plane did not decelerate as it should have when it hit the building. Hence, their oft repeated accusations of a fake "butter plane" melting into the building. This claim is easily disproved by [a visual examination of the motion of the 767 in the Evan Fairbanks footage](#). The plane *does* decelerate as it enters the building, losing about 12% of its speed and 25% of its kinetic energy as it passes through the outer wall and office space.

The no-planers have raised concerns about explosion not occurring at exactly at impact. But even if combustion started at impact, forward momentum would carry fuel further into the open interior space of the building as it started to spread and ignite, and the expanding gases of the explosion would only push back out through exterior walls a split second later, as we see in the video.

Those of us who have video production experience have been amused by the term "bluescreen fakery" used by the no-planers to describe the allegedly faked footage. Bluescreen is a technique used for keying real-life objects, not computer generated images, over other images. Computer graphics (CGI) use what is called an "alpha channel", a sort of virtual stencil, to overlay the image digitally. If bluescreen was used, this would mean that the plane we saw was a model on wires.

Faulty Physics

Morgan Reynolds cites the no-plane arguments of the "[German Engineers](#)" in his widely distributed article "[Why Did the Trade Center Skyscrapers Collapse?](#)" Jim Hoffman [deconstructs this easily rebutted material in his response to Reynolds' piece](#), so I won't go in depth with it here. The central argument of

the "engineers" is that the holes created by the impacts are simply not large enough to be made by 767s. There is no computer modeling of the physics involved. The authors simply draw circles around the areas that look open and note that a 767 doesn't fit within these circles. The impact areas are, in fact, easily explainable: the heavier, denser central parts of the planes penetrated the outer wall of the WTC but the thinner, lighter wings did not, leaving tell-tale indentations but not holes. And the debris occluding the holes could be either material that fell down from damaged areas just above the impact or flaps of wall or floor that folded to the side when the plane entered but then fell back once it had passed.

The German Engineers don't offer any structural analysis to support their claim that the wing tips should have penetrated the WTC outer wall. However, the NIST computer models testing the dispersal of kinetic energy on impact showed that every part of the airplane except for wing sections with empty fuel tanks would penetrate the outer wall of the WTC. This scenario explains the shape of the impact area perfectly. No-plane advocates have not conducted their own computer impact modeling, and until they do the NIST report remains the authority on the subject. Grossmann has stated his intention to conduct such a computer analysis, but I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for a complex model of the physics of impact from someone who can't even properly align a diagram of a 767 over the entry hole.

The attempt by the "engineers" to create doubt by showing differently shaped impact holes in buildings made of different materials and construction techniques than the WTC demonstrates nothing and is a waste of time.

Reynolds' more recent article ["We Have Some Holes in the Plane Stories"](#) contains numerous factual and analytical errors.

He mentions several times that there is no sound from the plane impacts. This is false. On the Naudet and CNN footage of the two impacts, we hear not only the sound of the jet engines (exhibiting the expected Doppler effect) but the sound of the impact (delayed slightly by the time it took the sound to reach the camera).

Also mentioned numerous times is the false claim that the plane did not decelerate. [As I showed above](#), the plane decelerates.

Reynolds presents a long-winded argument that posits that it was against the laws of physics for the plane to easily penetrate the outside wall and then be stopped further inside the building. This analysis demands the assumption that the central core has the same strength or stopping power as the outer wall when the core columns were thicker than the exterior columns and the plane had already lost 25% of its kinetic energy penetrating the outer wall and floors. It is only an illusion that the plane entered the building intact (more on this below). In reality it would have been partially fragmented (how much is hard to tell, as the MIT study points out) so the plane debris would have been spread out over a greater area, lessening the kinetic energy applied per unit area of the core columns, allowing the columns to better withstand the impact.

So why didn't more wreckage exit the other side of the building? In addition to the steel columns, the central core had a great amount of gypsum wall paneling. The NIST report states:

The stairwells and elevator shafts were surrounded by 2 in. thick, tongue-and-groove, cast gypsum panels, covered with two or three sheets of 5/8 in. gypsum board. The demising walls were made of two sheets of 5/8 in. thick gypsum wallboard on each side of steel studs.

We can estimate the total weight of the gypsum walls (from Jim Hoffman):

Assume a wall area on one floor of the core of $40\text{m} \times 3\text{m} \times 10 = 1200\text{m}^2$

Assume it's all 3cm thick gypsum, then it's 36m^3 or $36,000,000\text{cm}^3$

Gypsum is 2.31g/cm^3 , so the total mass is $83,000,000\text{g}$, or about 91 tons (US).

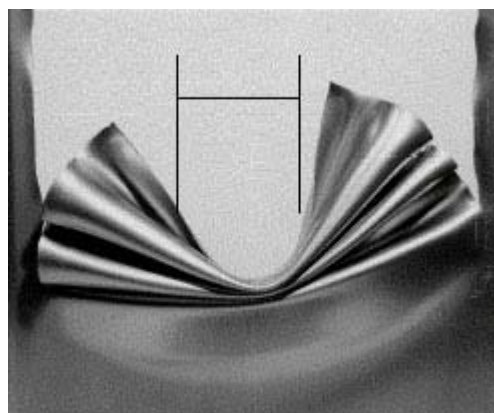
And given that the plane was spread over two floors or more, the total weight of the gypsum in the impact area probably outweighed the plane. The presence of this quite significant mass would have:

- helped convert the kinetic energy of plane parts to other forms, eg. heat and pulverization.
- transferred the momentum of the plane parts, moving at high speed, into the combined momentum of plane parts and building materials, moving at a much lower speed, and having a much greater frontal area. The south wall may have absorbed a good fraction of momentum, but by that time the material had a large frontal area and very little structural coherence, and was thus unable to puncture the wall, with a few exceptions.

Reynolds later concedes that the core is strong and might have stopped the plane, but changes his argument. He claims that if the core stopped the plane we should have seen the tail sticking out of the hole because planes don't fold up "accordion style". [A test run by Sandia laboratories \(alternate link\)](#) disproves this claim: the plane in that test, travelling at 480 m.p.h., was completely pulverized into small, confetti-like pieces as its forward progress was stopped by a concrete barrier. The speed of the 767 in the second impact has been measured at 500-590 m.p.h. At the point of collision with an object sufficiently strong to stop forward motion the structure of the plane would be broken apart instead of remaining whole to transmit a stopping force to the rest of the plane. Too much kinetic energy was being dissipated at the point of collision for the plane to retain its structural integrity. This fracturing process would continue with the impact of the rest of the plane. Only a more gradual deceleration through weaker material (such as the office space) would leave larger pieces intact ([such as the fuselage section](#)). In the Sandia test, we see the same illusion of the plane "melting" into the barrier—without any compression or distortion of the fuselage—that we see in the collision of the 767 with the WTC. If this illusion could happen with a solid concrete block, it should be obvious that it could happen with the WTC.

Strangely, Reynolds makes his "accordion" argument despite showing pictures of other plane crashes where the fuselage has come into pieces.

Reynolds states several times that the wing tips should have "bounced off" the building in larger pieces than we see on the images of the impact. In support of this he cites what he calls the "shredding mechanism" proposed by the [MIT damage analysis](#) (Wierzbicki et al). His argument distorts and misrepresents information presented in the MIT study. This image that he shows



is not a modeling of how the airplane wing material would wrap around the exterior columns as he claims. It is a photo of a laboratory demonstration of a phenomenon called "concertina tearing" seen in a metal sheet cut by a blunt object. The black line figure represents the blunt object in the test, not a exterior WTC column. The MIT study mentions that lower velocity impacts (like car crash tests) are characterized by deformation or bending of material while higher velocity impacts have fracturing as well. The above image only shows deformation, but the MIT study states that the collision of 767 and WTC is a "problem of interactive failure and fragmentation of two deformable and fracturing bodies." The study actually does

not specify the exact behavior of the wing segments hitting the exterior columns, but we already know from the real-life Sandia test the very large amount of fracturing that happens in a collision of this speed. The outer parts of the wings that hit the columns would not have remained in large pieces that wrapped around the columns, but instead would have been fractured into small pieces. The segments of the wing over the windows would have continued into the building. The wing material left outside would fall to the ground as small particles.

To put it another way: Technically, it was not the hardness or thickness of the concrete block that caused the complete pulverization of the airplane in the Sandia test. The kinetic energy of the plane itself caused the disintegration (and certainly some heat energy as well). The cement block merely facilitated that conversion of kinetic energy. Any object that could stop the forward motion of a plane (or part of a plane) moving at that speed would cause the same amount of fracturing. The outer wall columns of the WTC completely stopped the forward progress of the outer half of the wings. Thus, the wings were pulverized. The concrete floors would have had a similar effect on any parts of the airplane whose forward motion was halted. Thus, the videos of the second impact are *totally* realistic and are simply a verification of the results of the Sandia test. Those who have denounced them as showing impossible "melting planes" are simply displaying a lack of understanding of physics.

Reynolds goes on to argue that the shock of impact should have caused the wings to break off and move forward. The study he cites is a simulation of a 747 whose forward progress comes to a complete stop. Obviously, the mere 12% reduction in speed of the 767 on penetrating the outside of the building was not sufficient to make this happen.

More detailed analysis of the physics and material science involved would have to be done by someone with more knowledge than me, but it should be clear at this point that Reynolds' core arguments fall apart merely by the application of elementary principles and existing test results.

Near the end of the article, Reynolds cites a series of alleged anomalies in the images of the impact that supposedly indicate fakery. As shown above, I've already [addressed the majority of these "anomalies"](#) and they turned out to be amateurish misrepresentations of normal video phenomena.

Reynolds says: "Sorting out theories of 'what really happened' awaits another day..." No doubt he wants to put off explaining the impossible: how the perps of 9/11 could have controlled all the cameras present on 9/11.

Unfortunately, Reynolds' contribution to 9/11 truth effectively functions as a Trojan horse, sandwiching bogus no-plane theories between more reputable data, like the tower demolitions. Undoubtedly, the black ops behind 9/11 must be pleased when Reynolds talks about the no-plane theories [on national TV](#).

767 Debris

Wheels, engine parts, a piece of a fuselage and other 767 debris were [found in and around the WTC](#). The argument that there is not enough wreckage to account for a 767 crash is purely speculative: We don't know how much plane debris was recovered from the rubble of the WTC. The government refuses to allow independent access to all the debris collected, and they may even be deliberately withholding evidence to create suspicions and encourage no-plane claims.

Movement of WTC2

Image analysis of the Scott Meyers footage of the second impact in the [NIST report](#) shows that the entire south tower swayed back and forth in an oscillating motion for at least 4 minutes after the impact, something that certainly couldn't have been caused by explosives inside the building and presumably not by the impact of a relatively small-mass object like a missile.

Radar Data

With the combination of the civilian and military radar recordings from 9/11, either the transponder or primary radar returns from flights 11 and 175 were recorded for the entirety of those flights, according to [documents recently released by the NTSB](#) which show both the complete flight path and the altitude profiles of each flight. It doesn't appear that either plane was missed by primary radar for any significant length of time during the flights.

If the data presented is authentic, two things are clear: The flights started and ended where they were claimed by the official reports, and the altitude profiles show that neither plane was anywhere close to the ground except at takeoff and the termination of flight at Manhattan, which would rule out substitution scenarios involving landing at some other unknown airport along the flight path.

It is true that the [civilian flight controllers lost track of flight 11](#), but it seems this happened for the following reason: civilian radar apparently did not have full primary radar return coverage, so flight 11 would have disappeared from their scopes (because the transponder was turned off) and would have been difficult to re-identify when it reappeared later without the transponder signals (which broadcast the identity of the flights). But this loss of identification does not support plane swapping. The entirety of the plane's flight path has been plotted with the recorded radar data, eliminating the possibility that the plane deviated from the course described in the official reports. Whether a plane swap was achieved by two planes coming close together and switching flight paths is something that cannot be discerned from the data available and will always be nothing more than speculation unless someone can get access to the original radar data recordings and demonstrate through expert analysis that the data supports this possibility.

The burden of proof now lies on those who wish to support plane substitution to prove that the information provided by the NTSB is inaccurate.

Was the Second Plane a 737?

Jon Carlson and others have claimed that the [second plane to hit the WTC was in fact a 737](#). This claim is easily dismissed. The jet that hit WTC2 was much too large to be a 737. 737s have a much narrower fuselage than 767s, and a 737 that has the same proportions of fuselage length and width to wingspan size as a 767-200 videos is much smaller than the plane seen in the images. Additionally, 737 engines are mounted flush with the wings and are closer to the fuselage than they are on 767s. Several images of the WTC2 hit show a plane with engines that hang below the wing and which are mounted farther apart than 737 engines. Additionally, 737s do not fit the entry holes: even the largest 737 model has a wingspan that is about 40 feet too short.

This claim is also poorly considered. Making measurements of the size and proportion of the plane in the videos is extremely easy and would invariably and inevitably expose the identity of a 737. The perps of 9/11 would never have made this substitution unless they deliberately intended to blow their cover.

The Flashes

The flashes that occur at the beginning of both impacts have been the object [of much speculation](#). While it is difficult to say exactly what the flashes are—and this is not my area of expertise—it is easy to say what they are not. There are no missiles visible in any of the pieces of footage. The flashes appear and disappear within 1/30th of a second in both collisions, ruling out some kind of missile exhaust or explosion. The flashes do not seem to cause damage to the building, apparently contradicting the claim that the flashes were the result of some destructive weapon used to clear the way for the penetration of the planes.

The flash at the collision of flight 11 and WTC1 did not happen before impact, as some claim. The nose of the plane was almost touching the building in the frame (field, actually) before the flash making it a

certainty that in the next frame showing the flash contact was occurring. Additionally, the claim made in the "In Plane Site" video that the flash in the second hit is separated from the fuselage is not reliable. The appearance of a space in between is probably a result of the [shadow of the building on the plane](#).

Eyewitness Testimony

Since we have so many good images of the second hit, and because physical evidence is profoundly more reliable than witness testimony, investigations into this aspect of the case are largely irrelevant. The only potentially meaningful study of eyewitnesses would be a survey of a substantial number of the witnesses who were observing the tower at the time of impact. And it's very easy to surmise that the number of witnesses should be, at the very least, in the thousands, and more probably in the tens of thousands due to the attention the smoking north tower was receiving from a city of millions and the vast number of potential vantage points with a view of the second plane's trajectory. A study with a large sample would minimize the influence of either planted testimony or erroneous reports.

What we do know of eyewitness testimony so far supports the scenario of 767s hitting the towers. In addition to accounts from civilians like [Evan Fairbanks](#), the [oral histories](#) released by the New York Times show that at least 50 FDNY firemen [saw planes or plane debris](#) in the streets. The no-planer treatment of eyewitnesses is as weak as their physical evidence analysis. The second plane was not visible from some vantage points because downtown buildings or the WTC themselves were in the way. Therefore, some people only saw the explosion. Not surprisingly, the no-planers have [tried to present these accounts](#) as no-plane testimony. Morgan Reynolds [told MSNBC](#) that he doesn't "believe anyone in Lower Manhattan" and implies that anyone who saw a plane was an actor on the government payroll.

The Database Errors

Perhaps the only interesting bit of data that has come from the no-planers has been the [discrepancies in the BTS database](#) involving the airline flights involved in 9/11. The problem with this evidence is that databases can be hacked, as any computer programmer can tell you. This evidence can't be regarded as reliable, let alone unimpeachable. That anyone would make it a centerpiece of an investigation is baffling. And even if the database anomalies were reliable, it would only establish the possibility of plane substitution, and would shed no light at all on what type of plane actually hit the North tower.

It is standard operating procedure for false and misleading evidence to be planted to discredit conspiracy researchers. We can be nearly certain that this has been done with 9/11 evidence and these database errors are a leading candidate for suspicion.

Still, there is documentary evidence for at least the idea of flight substitution in the Operation Northwoods documents, which call for the substitution of a chartered airline flight to be substituted with a drone. This drone was to be shot down and the downing of the plane blamed on Cuba. What has seemingly been lost on the 9/11 plane substitution advocates is that the Northwoods plans called for substitution because this was to be a fake plane flight to begin with, a charter full of intelligence assets who would be quietly and secretly disembarked later. The whole point of substitution was to avoid real casualties. The perpetrators of 9/11 obviously did not care about casualties so why would substitution be necessary? In a substitution scenario they would need to divert the original flights, so logically they would have had full control over those planes. There was no technical obstacle to flying the planes into the towers, so if they had control why didn't they do that and avoid all the risks? And it should be noted that Operation Northwoods calls for the drone to be a copy of the airliner, not a missile or smaller aircraft, even despite the fact that it was not going to be flown over a populated city whose attention-and cameras-were riveted on the target. To suggest that the perps of 9/11, with the resources at their disposal, would have taken the risk of using an airplane other than a 767 is nonsensical.

Do Anomalies Constitute Proof of No-767 Hypotheses?

The possibility that anomalies that defy easy explanation might exist in the visual record must be considered when analyzing the no-plane hypothesis. It may very well be that the explanation of some alleged anomalies might require a level of technical capacity far beyond any researchers in the 9/11 movement now dealing with this issue. For example, a professional 3D modeling of the plane's approach to the WTC with photo-realistic lighting combined with simulation of physics properties such as momentum or aerodynamics and using research into the exact location and lens type of the camera in question might be needed. But even if a confirmed anomaly in the visual record were someday found, it would not constitute proof that no 767s hit the towers: It would prove only that that particular video was faked, and the perpetrators of 9/11 could have distributed faked videos to encourage the no-plane hypothesis. Given that the perps couldn't have controlled all the cameras in New York on 9/11, and that absolutely no images showing something other than 767 impacts have surfaced, it is arguable that anomalous videos shouldn't even be considered compelling evidence, let alone proof, of no-767 claims.

Conclusion

There are many solid pieces of visual evidence—video recordings and photos—that show 767's impacting the World Trade Center towers. If only one of these images is authentic, the entire no-plane hypothesis is invalidated. There are absolutely no images of anything else hitting the towers despite the attention the burning WTC1 tower was receiving from a city of millions. The attempts by the no-planers to create credibility for their hypothesis by citing purported anomalies in the visual record have been characterized by a high degree of technical incompetence and illogical thinking. Because an authentic visual anomaly would only prove that that particular image was faked, and would not prove that something besides 767s hit the towers, it is clear that there is no supporting physical evidence whatsoever for the no-plane hypothesis.

Commentary

When I told friends who were open to 9/11 skepticism that I was working on some articles critical of these no-plane theories, they looked at me askance, as if to say "why are you even wasting your time on that?" Overall their reaction was appropriate. Frankly, I've been embarrassed to admit to ordinary folks that I've been working on these articles and have begrudged every moment of time I spend on it. These theories never were and never will be broadly accepted among the 9/11 skeptic community, let alone the broader public, even with the attention of high profile figures like Morgan Reynolds or Jimmy Walter. But that doesn't mean that they are not a threat, especially to a particular minority segment of the 9/11 skeptics community.

The treatment of the pod issue by Popular Mechanics should be a warning.

The pod theory was never supported by any more than a small minority of 9/11 researchers. But as a result of Von Kleist's error-ridden "In Plane Site" DVD and forwarding of pod articles by naive individuals who thought they were encouraging dialogue, enough noise was built up around the issue to give PM the justification to portray the "pod" as a widely-held view. And their treatment of it was a master stroke. They gave it marquee position at the beginning of the article: a first impression tainting all the other stronger evidence to follow. And then their debunking was weak, simply a one-liner from an expert claiming it was

an illusion, allowing the pod advocates to declare victory and continue to push their theory. Overall, a lose-lose scenario for 9/11 truth.

One has to wonder, with the no-plane theories gaining the support of big shots Morgan Reynolds and Jimmy Walter, if a repeat of the pod debacle is in the cards.

If so, there are many reasons why it has progressed to this point. The phrase "Fools Rush In" has never been so appropriate than in describing the rougher edges of the 9/11 truth movement, in which we've seen all sorts of instant experts talking about technical subjects far removed from their expertise. Some researchers who are quite good at tracking down information have proven themselves completely incompetent at making a sound technical analysis. It's a completely different skill set.

The no-plane ideas are a manifestation of an epidemic of "smoking gun fever," the rush to see promising evidence in any and every perceived anomaly. One could chalk this up to technical incompetence, reckless enthusiasm, or a desperate desire for ammunition to use against a terrifying conspiracy, but the problem is deeper. It is often driven by a partisan imperative to pursue a more radical case. And by radical I don't mean "leftist" but simply more divergent from the official story. If you look at the rhetoric of a no-plane supporter, such as Nico Haupt, you see an attempt to make accepting no-plane claims synonymous with pursuing the "real truth." Likewise, the "[Gatekeepers" research of Bob Feldman](#) (for which I helped build the flowchart graphic) has been hijacked and transformed from a complex analysis of elite control of lefty media into a simplistic ideological litmus test: "If you don't support my spurious physical evidence claims you're a 'gatekeeper.'"

The discussion of physical evidence has been politicized, subject to the old and tiresome radical-moderate dialectic. I worry that the 9/11 truth movement is devolving towards a predictable, manufactured divide: moderates who treat physical evidence responsibly but who advocate limited-hangout analyses of both 9/11 and world politics, and radicals who pursue a deeper and more accurate overall analysis but who lunge after spurious and sensational physical evidence claims in the name of exposing a deeper truth. For example, you can find Haupt questioning the "peak oil" theory one minute and posting the [windshield UFO garbage the next](#). That behavior discredits those who are pursuing more radical analyses.

Discussion of physical evidence should be egoless and non-ideological, characterized by stark realism. First the evidence has to be demonstrated simply to be reliable. Then it must be decided whether there is enough evidence to make a convincing case. The no-plane theories don't even make it past the first test. Every day prosecutors drop charges in criminal cases because they don't have enough evidence to go to trial, and they may do this even though they know the suspect is guilty as sin. Why? You pick your battles carefully, pick those you can win. In the end, *the physical evidence may only support a limited hangout*. If that is the case the answer is not to give up and go home but to augment the physical evidence with research about the past history of elite manipulation. Despite some forays into questionable evidence, Webster Tarpley has done exactly this in his book "9/11 Synthetic Terror."

On the other hand, massaging the evidence to fit a more radical analysis is exactly what the perps of 9/11 want: It leads to straw man arguments that the debunkers can knock down.

It should go without saying that an investigation of a conspiracy like 9/11 will always be a two-front war against disinformation: On one side are the gatekeepers pursuing a limited hangout. On the other side are crackpots and disinfo agents pushing bogus, discrediting evidence. Weeding out bogus claims is neither gatekeeping nor censorship but an absolutely critical activity. In defending no-planers and pod people, some who don't even support the theories have cited "freedom of speech" in defending those theories' place at the table, evidently feeling that if there is any tendency to reject any lines of inquiry, then there will not be an atmosphere conducive to uncovering the full truth. This attitude simply ignores one front of the two-front war we're involved with. The treatment of the "pod" issue by PM is a perfect example of how this "freedom of speech" argument can backfire. It's clear the advocates of certain theories have

shown themselves to be completely egotistically and ideologically attached to those theories. They'll never change. So if this breaks through and embarrasses us like the pod issue did, the real responsibility will be with those who kept forwarding or tolerating the no-plane material in the interest of "dialogue" or "exploration" or "askin' questions" and who failed to use their powers of discernment to see through a baseless argument.

In between the two fronts of this information war there is a lot of grey area, with quite a bit of room for principled disagreement about both evidence and tactics. Of course, principled disagreement is exactly the opposite of the obnoxious behavior of the no-planers, some of which [I've documented in my articles](#), and which has included [aggressive bluffing](#), [bald-faced denials of obvious mistakes](#) and [personal attacks upon critics](#) of the theories. This behavior creates an acrimonious and divisive atmosphere in a movement that prevents productive work, and is usually the MO of deep cover agents. But I'm not suggesting no-plane advocates are agents. In fact I believe that most are deluded "useful idiots," as the terminology goes. As such, their offerings are misinformation, not disinformation. But that doesn't mean that the spooks wouldn't flood lists and forums with vociferous multiple-pseudonym supporters of these theories, in a tactic similar to the [astrourfing](#) of mainstream politics. If I were in charge of the cover up I would let the authentic fools emerge and then use mind control to encourage egomaniacal, narcissistic, and aggressive tendencies. But while general comments on what theories constitute disinfo are reasonable, it's useless to let fly specific accusations of disinfo activity regarding individuals. There is never any evidence. Charges going back and forth is what the cover-up crew wants: Divide and conquer. And given the historical record of COINTELPRO, the ones making the accusations are most likely to actually be the agents.

Of course, the no-planers have been constantly accusing other activists of being agents, always without proof and based on the most tenuous of reasoning. Simply working at a university that received government funding is [cause for suspicion](#) in their eyes. Imagine what they would say if a 9-11 activist used to work for the Bush administration itself. They would go ape, slandering that activist incessantly, accusing them of posing as a defector to be able to encourage the most unproductive areas of 9-11 research. But wait, I forgot: Morgan Reynolds IS from the Bush administration. But, of course, for the no-planers he's completely above suspicion because he supports their arguments. Just goes to show the incredibly biased thinking going on in those quarters.

If this is a disinfo operation we can expect that more "defectors" from high places will come forward to support it. The ongoing strategy will not be to win over the entire 9/11 truth movement, but simply to establish the legitimacy of investigating it so that people like Morgan Reynolds or Jimmy Walter will have just enough political support to give the impression to the general public that this is a key issue to 9/11 research. Therefore, the action for 9/11 activists to take now is not just to oppose the no-plane garbage but to shun the figures who promote it. After all, the success of the Loose Change DVD showed us (despite its [flaws](#)) that you don't need to be famous or rich to have a profound influence. We don't need standard bearers who push discrediting ideas, no matter how fortuitous their support seems.

Eric Salter has more than a [decade of professional video experience](#), which has included editing, 3D animation, compositing, motion graphics, image retouching, and camera operation.