

Thoughts from a Former NIST Employee

Letter by Peter Michael Ketcham, USA

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I was a member of the NIST technical staff during the period 1997-2011. I initially joined the High Performance Systems and Services Division and later became a member of what was, at the time, the Mathematical and Computational Sciences Division of the Information Technology Laboratory. My fellow NIST employees were among the finest and most intelligent people with whom I have ever worked.

I did not contribute to the NIST WTC investigation or reports. But in August of this year, I began to read some of those reports. As I then watched several documentaries challenging the findings of the NIST investigation, I quickly became furious. First, I was furious with myself. How could I have worked at NIST all those years and not have noticed this before? Second, I was furious with NIST. The NIST I knew was intellectually open, non-defensive, and willing to consider competing explanations.

The more I investigated, the more apparent it became that NIST had reached a predetermined conclusion by ignoring, dismissing, and denying the evidence. Among the most egregious examples is the explanation for the collapse of WTC 7 as an elaborate sequence of unlikely events culminating in the almost symmetrical total collapse of a steel-frame building into its own footprint at free-fall acceleration.

I could list all the reasons why the NIST WTC reports don't add up, but others have already done so in extensive detail and there is little that I could add. What I can do, however, is share some thoughts based on common sense and experience from my fourteen years at NIST.

First, if NIST truly believes in the veracity of its WTC investigation, then it should openly share all evidence, data, models, computations, and other relevant information unless specific and compelling reasons are otherwise provided. For example, would the release of all files and calculations associated with the ANSYS collapse initiation model jeopardize public safety to an extent that outweighs the competing need for accountability?

Second, in its reports, NIST makes a great show of details leading to collapse initiation and then stops short just when it becomes interesting. The remainder of the explanation is a perfunctory statement that total collapse is inevitable and obvious. It is easy to see through this tactic as avoidance of inconvenient evidence. In response to any challenges, NIST has provided curt explanations from its Public Affairs Office. There were many contributors to the NIST WTC investigation: Why not let them openly answer questions in their own voice with the depth of knowledge and level of detail that follows from the nuts and bolts of their research?

Lastly, awareness is growing of the disconnect between the NIST WTC reports and logical reasoning. The level of interest in "15 years later" is a good example. Due to the nature of communication in today's world, that awareness may increase approximately exponentially. Why not NIST blow the whistle on itself now while there is still time?

Truth is where our healing lies.

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