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WELCOME TO TERRORLAND -- MOHAMED ATTA & THE 9-11 COVER-UP IN FLORIDA

INTRODUCTION

One day while fumbling through my morning routine two years ago, I happened to glance at the Today Show **while** making coffee, and watched a Boeing 767 cross the sky, right over Katie Couric's shoulder in the monitor above the news desk, and explode into the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

It was the most surreal event ever seen on this planet. Minutes later, I was among the untold millions worldwide watching human beings hanging out of 100th story windows.

And then they began to jump.

Tiny human figures, barely visible, wavered **through** the smoke on the upper floors. They were specks against the gleaming superstructure as they fell, bathed in the light of a late summer **morning** in New York.

U.S. networks soon cut away -- on the pretext that it was just too horrible to air -- as the figures began dropping in groups of two's and three's from their perches and falling into the canyons below. But you only needed to see **one** body fall to feel a gut-wrenching anguish tear at your stomach.

Many, we learned later, jumped holding hands. And all I remember thinking was: "Those poor people."

Given the rate of falling bodies, something like 125 miles per hour, someone calculated that before they hit the pavement they had been falling for eight or nine seconds.

It must have seemed an eternity. Minutes earlier, some of them had been stirring 'sweet and lo' and 'non-dairy coffee whitener' into their mugs before heading to their desks.

And now this.

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CHAPTER TWO: THE ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE GEORGE W BUSH

Two hours before terrorist hijackers began crashing airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, four Arab men in a white van pulled up to the guard gate of the hotel where **George W Bush** was spending the night, the Colony Beach Resort Hotel on Longboat Key in Sarasota, Florida, and launched an **attempt** to **assassinate** the President of the United States.

The attempted assassination had very likely been coordinated by terrorist ringleader Mohamed Atta, just then passing through airport security 1000 miles away in Portland, Maine.

Several days before **Bush's** arrival in Sarasota, according to eye-witnesses, Atta had been meeting with co-conspirators at a Holiday Inn barely **two** miles down the beach from the hotel where **Bush** would be staying.

Two hours before the assassination **attempt** was launched, Secret Service agents guarding the President in Sarasota received a dramatic pre-dawn warning of an imminent threat.

That **two** years later Americans have been told nothing about these events illustrates both how seriously U.S. officials took the **attempt**, and how far they have been willing to go to keep a tight rein on information. Whoever said "the first casualty of war is the truth," said a mouthful.

We discovered the assassination **attempt** while sifting through local news coverage in the aftermath of the attack, acting on a friend's cynical dictum that the only real news you get when something big happens is in the first 24 hours, before the cover up is put in place.

We had been scrutinizing news accounts from the confusing early hours and days following the 9/11 attack. We were looking for big news stories that inexplicably and immediately died, without explanation or follow up.

It's called 'suppressed news,' and we hoped to discover a few nuggets. But we didn't just find nuggets. We found boulders.

