Why Hasn't Anybody Been Fired?

June 12, 2002

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Now we are told, belatedly, that the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center could have been detected beforehand. FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III has admitted that mistakes were made, the "dots should have been connected," situations should have been handled differently, and "different actions should have been taken."
In response to these mea culpas, we are told that the Bureau will be "overhauled," that we will have "a redesigned and refocused FBI," and that 400 agents will be reassigned. Of course, to do all this, we are told that the FBI needs "more resources" (even though immediate past Director Louis Freeh added 5,000 agents and 4,000 technicians).

But why hasn't anybody been fired? Where's the accountability? FBI policy is clearly to "circle the wagons," as whistleblower Coleen Rowley labeled it in her now-famous 15-page letter on May 21.

The warnings that could have alerted the FBI prior to 9/11 came both from agent Kenneth Williams of the Phoenix office on July 10, and in August from the Minneapolis FBI office which wanted to do a thorough investigation of a suspicious character named Zacarias Moussaoui. Incidentally, his case proves that racial/religious profiling works; he was arrested not because he paid $8,000 in cash for flight lessons or wanted to learn to fly a jumbo jet, but because his profile of a young Arab Muslim male who didn't speak good English alerted the flight school. (Hear that, Norman Mineta!)

When the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) mailed to a Florida flight school approvals of student visas for hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Al-Shehhi, six months after they died in the 9/11 World Trade Towers attack, President Bush said he was angry. Wouldn't you think that, within hours after the 9/11 tragedy, the FBI would have collected whatever information INS had about the 19 hijackers, all of whom entered the United States legally with a government-issued visa?

The inspector general of the Justice Department reported in May that at least two of the hijackers should have been denied visas because they were on a watch list of suspected terrorists.

INS's response to this embarrassment was to reassign several mid- level INS bureaucrats, leaving the open-borders senior officials in tighter control than ever. This gives new meaning to the cliche about moving deck chairs around on the deck of the Titanic.

President Bush said in his State of the Union Address: "Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning." Why hasn't anybody been fired for letting some of these characters into the United States, and then for failing to track them?

The most shocking of the FBI's scandals was its failure to discover the 21-year espionage of its own agent Robert Hanssen, despite numerous telltale signs. Hanssen gave 6,000 pages of documents and dozens of computer disks to the Russians, including "extraordinarily sensitive intelligence operations."

In 1992, an FBI sharpshooter shot and killed Vicki Weaver as she stood in her own cabin at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, holding her 10-month-old baby in her arms. Compounding that outrage (for which the government paid $3 million in damages to her husband) were the FBI's coverup and allowing some implicated FBIers to retire on generous pensions.

Timothy McVeigh's execution had to be delayed when the FBI suddenly discovered that it had failed to turn over to the defense and prosecution more than 3,000 pages of documents relating to the Oklahoma City bombing, as the law requires. Attorney General John Ashcroft called this "human error," but no human paid any price for this concealment of information from the jurors and the public.

Who in the FBI is responsible for the refusal even to look at the considerable evidence about a Middle East connection to the Oklahoma City bombing? And who is responsible for the notorious unprofessionalism in the FBI's crime lab?

The FBI's failure to protect our most sensitive military secrets from Chinese espionage was exacerbated by its total bungling of the Wen Ho Lee case. FBI misbehavior reached new heights of arrogance with its unfair targeting of security guard Richard Jewell at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Another "terrible mistake" (Bill Clinton's words) was the incineration of 80 Branch Davidians, including 20 children, most of them younger than 10, at Waco in April 1993. Even if we accept the government's story that David Koresh started the fire (which is highly debatable), the government was clearly negligent in using military tanks against civilians while failing to protect the children.

Don't ever forget that the FBI turned over hundreds of secret files to the White House in 1993, enabling Bill and Hillary Clinton to go after their adversaries. The FBI has allocated enormous resources to political, environmental and regulatory investigations and prosecutions while displaying a peculiar lack of interest in foreign- backed terrorism.

Again and again, the public is brushed off with the comment that "mistakes" were made (note the passive tense), and a demand to give the FBI increased powers and a bigger budget. We want to know who were the mistake-makers and when they are going to be fired.