

Who Failed On 9/11? Management Experts Critique Organizations' Response

Many of the failures of 9/11 remain uncorrected today, according to the reports of experts in the latest issue of the *International Public Management Journal* (Volume 8, Number 3). A special issue of the journal moves beyond the report of the government's 9/11 Commission to address the underlying weaknesses in our intelligence, disaster-response, and transportation agencies that leave Americans vulnerable nearly five years after the attacks.

“This symposium brings together some of the world's most distinguished organization scholars to discuss the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks from the perspective of organizational management,” says journal editor Steve Kelman of Harvard University.

Among the deeper problems identified by scholars in the special issue are:

- The paradoxical need for security organizations to create a stable, reliable way to respond to ever-changing threats;
- Conflicting demands for clear, hierarchical lines of command and control in a crisis but also for horizontal integration across organizations at all levels;
- An almost complete lack of understanding of the enemy; and
- Political pressure to reward short-sighted goals such as delaying airport security upgrades.

“The U.S. government had organizations in place before September 11th whose mission was preventing such attacks. A massive terrorist attack nonetheless occurred,” says Kelman. “It is fair to ask whether these organizations might reasonably have been expected to stop the attack, and how they might do a better job in the future.”

Scholars in this special issue draw on theories of organizational behavior to outline the barriers to information-sharing, cooperation, and prediction of “predictable surprises.” They critique established organizations such as the FBI and the CIA as well

as new organizations formed after 9/11 such as the Department of Homeland Security and the National Counterterrorism Center.

Published quarterly beginning in 2006, the *International Public Management Journal* is a forum for high-quality empirical and theoretical work on managing large organizations, particularly public organizations. The editors seek work from scholars around the world who conduct research in the areas of public management and government reform, comparative public administration, organizational theory, and organizational behavior. They also welcome scholarship growing out of the disciplines of political science, social psychology, sociology, economics, and public law.

“The journal seeks to provide a bridge between those conducting research on public management and public administration on the one hand, and those working in the areas of organizational behavior and organization theory on the other,” says Kelman.

The special 9/11 issue marks the beginning of Steven Kelman’s tenure as journal editor. Kelman is the Albert J. Weatherhead III and Richard W. Weatherhead Professor of Public Management at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. From 1993 to 1997, he was the Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, where he was a leading figure in reinventing government efforts.

“I would like the journal to retain and strengthen its orientation towards prescriptive research that identifies ways to improve public-sector performance,” Kelman says. “Such research should be rigorous, not hortatory, but it should be willing to ask hard questions about how we can improve public performance and not content itself with only explanation.”

Subscription information for the *International Public Management Journal* or a sample copy can be obtained from the address below. The journal can be viewed online at:

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/10967494.asp>.

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