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## 11/9, a conspiracy?

A documentary, *Loose Change*, alleges that the US government staged the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon — and it is a runaway success. **Turna Ray** reports



September 11 was a “failure of imagination” for the US government, 9/11 Commission vice-chair Lee Hamilton concluded after investigating the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But a documentary by first-time director Dylan Avery maintains that it’s the American public that failed to consider the possibility of the US government’s involvement in September 11.



Produced with \$6000 and on a laptop, Avery’s *Loose Change* alleges — far-fetched though it may seem — that the US government staged the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. “People want to believe that our government didn’t have a hand in 9/11, but once you see the film you realise that the government’s involvement goes a lot deeper,” Avery, 22, said.

Five years after the September 2001 attacks in the US, numerous books have rapped the US government for its failings, scores of websites debate the clues and discuss the inconsistencies in policy makers’ explanations, and a sizeable collection of like-minded groups, researchers and academics who don’t believe the official explanation of 9/11 have gained steam as the 9/11 Truth Movement.

ZOOM IN: Poster of the film; executive producer Korey Rowe and (below) director Dylan Avery

The fast-moving film’s main assertions are:

The damage to the Pentagon suggests that American Airlines Flight 77, a Boeing 757, did not crash into the building, but a smaller military plane did.

World Trade Centers 1, 2 and 7 collapsed not as a result of plane crashes and burning fuel but because of a “controlled demolition” from pre-set bombs that went off before the buildings came down.

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- United Airlines Flight 93 did not plummet in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, but landed at Cleveland Hopkins Airport where it was evacuated by government officials into an unused NASA research center.

- With more than 25 million viewings, the freely downloadable Internet film was the number one video in Google's "Top 100" until mid-2006. According to executive producer Korey Rowe, [www.loosechange911.com](http://www.loosechange911.com) gets approximately 30,000 hits a day.

- Avery attributes the "groundswell of public support" for *Loose Change* to Americans' growing disapproval of the Bush Administration's war in Iraq, the lack of federal support in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the National Security Agency wiretapping controversy. "All this mishandling has made it hard for the public to trust the administration," Avery said.

Compiled mostly from media reports, the movie, however, provides no conclusive evidence. If nothing else, Avery's punchy voice-overs and a catchy hip hop soundtrack make for an engaging 80 minutes.

Be it a counter-reaction to the Bush Administration's inabilities or just a cultural fascination with conspiracy theories, more Americans are openly questioning the official explanations of 9/11. According to a recent poll conducted by Zogby International, 42 per cent of Americans believe the US government and the 9/11 Commission "concealed or refused to investigate evidence that contradicts their official story".

Alex Jones, considered the godfather of 9/11 conspiracy theorists, describes two types of 9/11 conspiracies: (1) the government "let it happen on purpose," LIHOP, or (2) they "made it happen on purpose," MIHOP. The government's own recently released footage has given the public reason to pause and pay attention to the 9/11 truth seekers' seemingly wild and often dismissed accusations. In May, following a Freedom of Information Act request by Judicial Watch, the US Department of Justice released two videos of Flight 77 crashing into the Pentagon. The grainy footage, available at [www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/index.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/index.html), did not convince 9/11 Truth activists.

"The jig is up," Jones said with the gruff excitability of pit bull. "As the government carries out more attacks, they'll get exposed. We're close to neutralising them...It takes time for a grassroots movement to expose a crime."

Conspiracy theories about September 11 have been brewing since the day of the attacks. Until recently, anyone who paid heed to such claims was relegated to the fringes of the public's consciousness. Academia rarely acknowledges the ideas and papers authored by Scholars for 9/11 Truth, a group of more than 300 university faculty members and students who argue, for instance, that the "controlled demolition" theory of the World Trade Center's collapse has scientific underpinnings.

However, the runaway success of *Loose Change* has garnered the mainstream press' attention and has begun to influence how the public perceives the entire 9/11 Truth Movement.

The documentary received its most positive coverage in the mainstream press with a feature in the August issue of *Vanity Fair*, executive producer Rowe admitted. Whether you believe the movie's claims or not, "one thing seems for sure: *Loose Change* has

struck a nerve,” the article states. Nancy Jo Sales, the *Vanity Fair* reporter who wrote the story on *Loose Change*, acknowledged that the American media have not fulfilled their role as the fourth estate with regard to 9/11.

“I was always taught that journalists were supposed to ask questions,” Sales said. “The American media had a lot of questions for Bill Clinton about what he was doing in a certain bathroom in the White House; but they have no questions for, for example, secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld about what he was doing on the morning of September 11...when Rumsfeld’s whereabouts could not be accounted for 30 full minutes, according to the 9/11 Commission Report.”

If not blatantly asking the questions themselves, the US media are slowly and carefully providing a platform to those who have been demanding the government provide answers for the last five years. *The New York Times*, in its coverage of the 9/11 Truth Movement’s convention in June acknowledged: “Whatever one thinks of the claim that the state would plan, then execute, a scheme to murder thousands of its own, there was something to the fact that more than 500 people — from Italy to Northern California — gathered for the weekend at a major chain hotel near the runways of [Chicago’s] ‘Hare International.’”

CNN was deluged by viewer emails lauding its coverage in March of actor Charlie Sheen’s comments that 9/11 was an inside job. Sheen, famous for his roles in *Platoon* and *Wall Street*, made the statements while on Jones’s syndicated radio show.

Despite its recent popularity, *Loose Change* also has numerous detractors. A *Popular Mechanics* article, “9/11, Debunking the Myth,” discussed many of the hotly debated issues in the documentary. Anti-Loose Changers have even formed a blog ([screwloosechange.blogspot.com](http://screwloosechange.blogspot.com)) solely “dedicated to exposing the lies, distortions and myths in the movie.”

According to Avery, the forthcoming final edition of *Loose Change* will address many of the more controversial points in the documentary, such as the claim that Flight 93 didn’t crash in Shanksville. The director is also currently in discussion with two Hollywood studios about screening *Loose Change* at the Sundance Film Festival next year.



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