

The Last War Crime

Written by

The Pen

[Opening Sequence]

FADE IN ON:

EXT. SKY - MORNING

Shot of beautiful blue expanse filled with fluffy bright white clouds, which change slowly in shape by gentle stop action.

GEORGE W. BUSH (V.O.)

Now, there are some who would like to rewrite history . . . revisionist historians is what I like to call them . . . The true history of my administration will be written 50 years from now, and you and I will not be around to see it . . . History. We don't know. We'll all be dead.

A distant speck of an airplane moves into the lower corner of our view, rapidly getting larger as it flies towards us, and as the sound of its jet engines grows louder. It is an American Airlines 767, Flight 11. The plane hesitates slightly in its forward motion as it fills the screen and then accelerates again roaring past us out of the screen.

INT. FAA AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER [8:13 AM]

In a brightly lit underground bunker an air traffic controller, wearing a phone operator's headset, sits in front of a console dominated by a large high tech graphic radar display, flanked on both sides by other computer screens. The positions of planes are displayed along with numbers indicating their altitude and transponder numbers.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

AAL 11 turn 20 degrees right.

PILOT (V.O.)

20 right AAL 11.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

AAL 11 now climb maintain FL350 . . . (No response)
. . . AAL 11 climb maintain 35,000 feet . . . (Still no response) . . . American Airlines 11, how do you read?

INT. WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

The Vice President at his desk speaking to David Addington, his legal counsel, seated in front of him, along with

Scooter Libby, nodding, a man-size safe overshadowing them from the side.

DICK CHENEY

So we're going to have to assert ourselves in the Iraq situation sooner or later.

(Twists up the corner of his mouth
with a slight humorous smirk)
Sooner . . . if we have the opportunity.

DAVID ADDINGTON

Opportunities come to those who create them.

They all smile.

INT. FANCY HOTEL DINING ROOM

The CIA director is sitting over a sumptuous breakfast, speaking across the table to his companion. As he speaks he animates with his hands.

GEORGE TENET

They're coming. I can't say exactly when, I just know they're coming here.

INT. FAA AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER [8:20 AM]

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

American, one, one, if you hear Boston center, ident please or acknowledge.

SUPERVISOR

(walking over)
What's up?

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

American 11 has turned off their transponder . . . trying the emergency frequency too. Still no radio.

HIJACKER (V.O.)

We have some planes. Just stay quiet, and you'll be O.K. We are returning to the airport.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

And, uh, who's trying to call me here? AAL 11?
(aside to the Supervisor)
Sounds like a hijacking.

SUPERVISOR

(picking up a red phone on console)
We better alert NORAD immediately.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

And they just took a sharp left turn, headed for New York City.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY

Condoleezza Rice, smartly and stylishly dressed from head to toe as always, is walking past a full length mirror. She pauses for second to look herself up and down and admire the way she looks.

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER

The NORAD command center is filled with large black screens with neon green text and graphics. Individual workstations with their own brightly colored displays are as if spot lit, separated by more shadowed areas.

SENIOR TECHNICIAN

(in green drab uniform, on phone,
blase,)
OK, maybe we ought to get some fighters scrambled.
May just be part of the readiness exercise going on
. . . OK, OK.
(starts waving his hand in the air
for someone else to come over)

INT. AIRPLANE [8:21 AM]

A stewardess crouches behind a seat near the rear of the plane, using the AirFone from the seat back.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(excited, breathless)
Two flight attendants have been stabbed, one is on oxygen. They have tear gas or something.
(her eyes are burning and she is
having trouble breathing)
A passenger had his throat slashed in first class, he looks dead, and they're in the cockpit.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM

A teacher stands up in front of a wall of posters and drawings. There is an empty plastic chair to her left waiting for their illustrious guest.

SCHOOL TEACHER

(exaggerates to make it sound like something real big)

Alright class, we have the President of the United States coming to see how well you're doing learning to read.

(more mechanical sounding now)

So let's all practice one more time. Everybody put your fingers under the title . . . ready . . .

EXT. LIMOUSINE IN FRONT OF RESORT HOTEL

The president is about to get into his black limousine, with two small American flags sticking up from the front fenders. Karl Rove stands there as they open the door for him.

GEORGE W. BUSH

How did you ever book me for this one, Karl . . . reading with 6th graders?

KARL ROVE

Their parents are all voters, sir.

Bush rolls his eyes and gives Rove an aggravated look.

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER BATTLE CAB

A female Lt. Colonel runs up a short flight of stairs into a glassed in office overlooking the floor, like a low slung balcony.

LT. COLONEL

(breathless)

There's been a hijacking!

COMMANDER

Is this just part of Vigilant Guardian drill this week?

LT. COLONEL

Seriously, this is no kidding for real.

COMMANDER

Hell . . .

(picking up his telephone)
Get me Otis Air Force Base, fast, we need some
planes in the air, for real.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT

Five hijackers, two in the pilot seats, are crowded together in the cockpit, looking out the front windows as the Manhattan skyline rushes towards them and by them. They are singing together a capella in unison.

HIJACKERS

Alahu Akbar! Alahu Akbar!

INT. AIRPLANE

Still in the back of the plane the flight attendant continues reporting their status.

RESERVATIONS AGENT (V.O.)

Can you recognize where you are?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I see the water. I see the buildings. I see
buildings . . . Oh, my God!"

EXT. STREET - MANHATTAN [8:46 AM]

A man and a woman stand in the street in front of a sleek office building next to the World Trade Center. We hear the sound of jet engines approaching like a freight train as they look up.

MAN

That plane sounds awfully loud.

WOMAN

(alarmed)

Why is it flying so low?

MAN

(shouting)

Look out, it's going to hit the building!

Looking up at an extreme angle at the pristine twin towers gleaming in the morning light, a plane suddenly flies in from the side, exploding out all sides of the north tower

around the 96th floor, spewing huge chunks of debris, thick billows of light tan smoke and an orange fireball. We hear panicked screams and people running in the street below.

INT. FANCY HOTEL DINING ROOM

An aide approaches Tenet with a cell phone open and hands it to him.

AIDE

(grimly)

The World Trade Center has been attacked by an airplane.

GEORGE TENET

(phone to ear, listens for a second)

So they put the plane into the building itself?

(extreme closeup of face then zooming in to his forehead)

I wonder if this has something to do with that guy we got who was training for a pilot's license . . .

DISSOLVE INTO:

A series of TELESCOPING FLASHBACKS

A shot of a powerpoint briefing page on Zacarias Moussaoui, outlining how came to U.S. to learn to fly 747, paid for training in cash, etc.

Zoom out to see that it is sheet that has just come out of a printer, and zooming further out to reveal a CIA staffer picking the document up and handing it to an aide.

CIA STAFFER

Make sure the Director sees this as soon as possible. The FBI field agent in Minnesota called in person and was really quite frantic about it all.

Again zooming in on the CIA staffer's forehead and dissolving into

FBI FIELD AGENT

(talking into phone, passionately)

The Radical Fundamentalist Unit at FBI Headquarters won't even let us apply for a search warrant to see what's on Moussaoui's laptop! This is a guy who might fly something into the World Trade Center!

Once again zooming in on the face of the FBI Field Agent and dissolving into a shot of FBI Supervisor also talking on phone as the last words of the FBI Field Agent crossfade into a voice over.

FBI SUPERVISING AGENT

(angrily)

You will not question the unit chief and you will not question me! An act of terrorism is not imminent in this case.

And finally dissolving to and zooming back out from Tenet's face where we started the sequence.

GEORGE TENET

You know, this has bin Laden's fingerprints all over it.

INT. FAA AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER [8:52 AM]

SUPERVISOR

(on red phone again, air traffic controller sitting by looking helpless)

Another hijacking. We just lost United 175's transponder. And they've deviated from their assigned flight path

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER

LT. COLONEL

(leaning over the console where the Senior Technician is transfixed on his display)

We can't pick them out on our radar anymore. What's their new heading?

INT. FAA AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER

SUPERVISOR

Last check, in the direction of New York City. Where are the fighters, why aren't there any fighters?

EXT. SKY

Against a background of the Manhattan skyline and the smoke rising from the first crash, Flight 175 blasts from apparently over our heads into the screen, headed straight for the unimpacted tower.

INT. WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT [9:03 AM]

Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, and Mary Matalin are watching a TV showing news reports of the first World Trade Center tower burning, when suddenly there is another huge explosion as the second tower is struck.

MARY MATALIN

Another plane just hit the other tower!

Condoleezza Rice gasps slightly with her mouth open. Cheney is completely impassive.

Close up shot of Rice's forehead dissolves into

INT. HALLWAY IN WHITE HOUSE

Richard Clarke calls out and catches up to Rice.

RICHARD CLARKE

(agitated)

Condi, When are we going to have a Principals' meeting on Al Qaeda? My hair has been on fire for months about this!

CONDOLEEZZA RICE

(indifferently dismissive)

What does this really have to do with foreign policy, Dick?

RICHARD CLARKE

(exasperated)

Al Qaeda plans MAJOR acts of terrorism against the United States. We're going to wake up some morning and there will be people dead in one of our major cities.

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER BATTLE CAB

The Lt. Colonel is back up in the balcony area, bursting in again with escalating bad news.

LT. COLONEL

Third hijack confirmed, and there may be others. American 77 just made a U-Turn over northeastern Kentucky, and is headed right back to Washington, DC!

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM [9:06 AM]

George Bush is seated in the classroom, the teacher just off to the right of the screen. He is holding a book in his lap.

SCHOOL TEACHER

Now get your readers from under your seats.

The children all duck down in synchronization to do so, while from the left of the screen, Andy Card walks briskly over to where the President is seated in front of the children, and leans down to whisper in his ear as we cut to a close up of this.

ANDY CARD

A second plane has hit the World Trade Center. America is under attack.

Bush is overcome with a look of befuddlement. We cut to an extreme close up of his forehead which dissolves into a close up of a page of the Presidential Daily Briefing of August 6, 2001, centered on scanning the words

. . .consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks . . .

We pull back from the paper as Bush turns back over to the title page which reads

Bin Laden determined to strike in US

EXT. CRAWFORD TEXAS RESIDENCE

And then continuing to pull back we see the CIA briefer standing in front of Bush as he lounges on the patio of his ranch house in his cowboy outfit.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(handing the briefing papers back dismissively)

Alright, you've covered your ass, now . . .

(turning to an aide and starts to get
up)
Let's go fishing.

The voice over of the teacher snaps Bush back to present day reality.

SCHOOL TEACHER (V.O.)

And open your book up to lesson 60, on page 153.

Bush cracks open his own book, quickly notices it is UPSIDE DOWN, and then flips it upright with a sheepish expression on his face.

SCHOOL TEACHER

Everybody put your fingers under the title . . .

INT. WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT [9:10 AM]

Two secret service agents rush into the office.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

We've got to get you out of here, Mr. Vice President.

The two of them they literally pick him up by his arms and belt lifting him out of his chair, like you would pick up a couch potato.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

Everybody into the bunker, NOW!

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM

CHILDREN

(droning monotone together, as they read the teacher is beating her own book with a pen after each word like pounding the rhythm of the oars of a slave ship)

But - the - goat - did - some - things - that - made
- the - girl's - dad - mad.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Really good readers, whew! ... These must be sixth-graders!

In the back of the room, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer

catches Bush's eye and holds up a pad of paper for him to read, with "DON'T SAY ANYTHING YET" written on it in big block letters.

INT. FAA AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

All American Airlines flights. Your hub is directing that all new takeoffs are canceled. Remain at or return to your gates. Repeat, remain on the ground.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER [9:20 AM]

Cheney is now gathered with his wife Lynne, Rice, Matalin, Addington, Scooter Libby, Karen Hughes, and various other aides in the underground bunker, a claustrophobic room barely large enough to contain a large conference table they sit around, Cheney in the center back to the wall, a large presidential seal hung there over his shoulder. At the far end of the room are banks of TV monitors at tuned to various news channels which have the sole attention of everyone in the room except Cheney who speaks quietly on a white phone.

DICK CHENEY

Mr. President, we've been hit twice already. My recommendation is that you authorize the military to shoot down any plane under control of hijackers.

GEORGE W. BUSH (V.O.)

You bet.

DICK CHENEY

And I know I share your feelings when I say we are going to hunt these people down.

INT. SCHOOL WAITING ROOM

Bush is seated at a bare table with a just a multi-line phone and some papers spread in front of him, editing a short address he is about to give to the nation. Aides watch TV in the background which his back is turned to. As Cheney speaks Bush is taking notes and crossing things out.

DICK CHENEY (V.O.)

This will not stand.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Cheney motions to a young Military Aide to lean down and he says something in his ear we do not hear. The aide rushes out. As he is leaving, Secretary Mineta arrives.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL

A podium has been set up with a presidential seal on it. Bush has a collection of teachers and other people standing behind him.

BUSH

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a difficult moment for America . . .

INT. PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER [9:27 AM]

The young Military Aide comes back into the conference room.

MILITARY AIDE

The plane is 50 miles out.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL

BUSH

. . . in an apparent terrorist attack on our country. I have spoken to the Vice President . . .

INT. PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

MILITARY AIDE

The plane is 30 miles out.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL

BUSH

. . . to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act. Terrorism against our nation will not stand.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

MILITARY AIDE

The plane is 10 miles out. Do the orders still stand?

Cheney whips his neck around toward the Military Aide.

CHENEY

Of course the orders still stand. Have you heard anything to the contrary?

INT. OFFICE OF DONALD RUMSFELD [9:37 AM]

Rumsfeld is on his feet at his stand up desk, receiving visitors as they are also watching TV news reports on the WTC attack.

DONALD RUMSFELD

Let me tell ya, I've been around the block with terrorism a few times. There's going to be another attack, and it could be us.

Moments later there is the sound of a huge explosion and the Pentagon building shakes noticeably.

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER BATTLE CAB

COMMANDER

The damn terrorists are batting three for three! I want an F-15 with heat seekers on the tail of that Pennsylvania plane and I want it there now!!

EXT. SKY OVERHEAD

Shot of jet streaking past and a sonic boom as it breaks the sound barrier.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE, PARKED ON AIRPORT TARMAC

Bush sits alone in his limousine on the secure phone with Cheney.

DICK CHENEY (V.O.)

With the attack now on the Pentagon, the consensus here, with which I concur, is that there must be some state sponsor behind all this somewhere, probably Saddam Hussein.

BUSH

My dad should have taken him out the first time.

DICK CHENEY (V.O.)

Well, we all know how he tried to kill your dad. And now he's coming after you, Mr. President. Under the circumstances, it would be wise for the moment to divert you from coming back to Washington immediately.

Bush nods compliantly.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER [9:59 AM]

Cheney hangs up the phone. On a video teleconference screen Richard Clark is speaking, the sound coming out of a speaker phone.

RICHARD CLARKE

Two, the White House is also requesting fighter escort of Air Force One. Three and this applies to all agencies, we are instituting Continuity of Government.

Everyone is still glued to the TV screens when the south World Trade Center tower dramatically starts to collapse. The structural supports of the building seem to explode out from underneath it, pulverizing and blowing out vast clouds of chalky dust.

LYNNE CHENEY

Oh, my God! It's collapsing. The whole building just collapsed!

Lynne Cheney turns down the sound of the speaker phone so she can hear CNN.

RICHARD CLARKE

(partially muted)

Please activate your alternate command centers and move staff to them immediately.

There are sympathetic shrieks of horror from everyone in the bunker EXCEPT Dick Cheney, who remains visibly impassive, an island of disconnectivity in the midst of an ocean of turmoil. We cut to a close up of his forehead which dissolves into a sheet of paper on which we scan the words.

Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event--like a new Pearl Harbor.

We zoom in especially on the words, "a new Pearl Harbor", and then dissolve back quickly to Cheney's face, where one might detect the hint of a smirk in the corner of his mouth.

INT. TV SCREEN

We watch the dust from the collapse of the first trade center tower blanketing all of lower Manhattan as we zoom in on the TV screen until we become lost in nothing but smoke.

PETER JENNINGS (V.O.)

Anyone who has ever watched a building being demolished on purpose knows that if you're going to do this you have to get at the under-infrastructure of the building to bring it down.

FADE OUT