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Ground Zero Debacle Demands Return of Twin Towers

07/08/2008

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In olden days, Americans needed just 13 and a half months to erect the Empire State Building, four and a half years to build Hoover Dam, and six years, four months to install the Transcontinental Railroad. And yet this Independence Day, six years, nine months, and three weeks have elapsed since September 11, and Ground Zero remains an 80-foot-deep international embarrassment for the United States.

The government functionaries who fathered this fiasco should yield immediately and assign private developer Larry Silverstein to arrange what already should have occurred: the Twin Towers' return to America's skyline.

The wholesale lethargy at Ground Zero became painfully clear in Tuesday's report on the 16-acre site where al-Qaeda murdered 2,750 innocents.

*Overall construction costs and schedules cannot be determined due to 15 pending "essential decisions." Until then, "we are not going to set new dates until we know exactly where this project stands," said the report's author, executive director Chris Ward of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the public agency that controls the site.

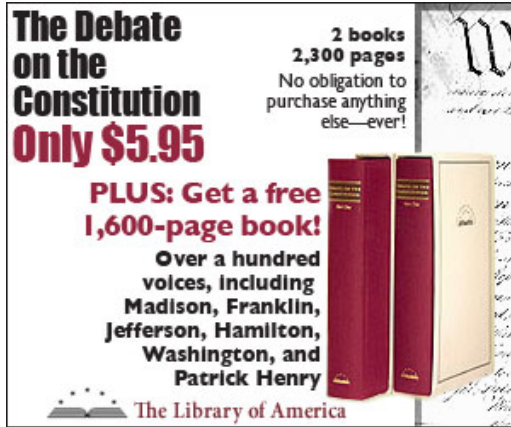
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*Signature elements such as the Freedom Tower and September 11 memorial will be incomplete 10 years after the 9-11 attacks.

*Reported cost overruns are at least \$1.23 billion, and rising rapidly.

Having floundered under the hapless "leadership" of former New York governor George Elmer Pataki and his clearly distracted successor, Eliot Spitzer, Ground Zero still lacks an effective administrative structure, Ward said. "This has led to indecision that has resulted in significant schedule delays and cost escalation." He added: "If a project of this size and complexity were being managed by a single owner, with overall control of the design and construction processes, it would be a much simpler story altogether."

Right across Vesey Street from this shambles, veteran real-estate magnate Larry Silverstein produced 7 World Trade Center, an elegant, 52-story high-rise that glistens by day and glows by night. Opened just four years and eight months after 9-11, and now 75 percent full, it is this lugubrious spot's only sign of hope. Silverstein's skyscraper never hints that it stands where twisted debris smoldered for months.

The difference? Silverstein manages this project with limited government interference. Conversely, 19 bureaucracies -- from Manhattan to Albany to Trenton to Washington -- wrestle him at Ground Zero.

"For years, every public official yelled and screamed that no private developer should or could build on 'sacred ground' -- that the Port Authority could do it more quickly and cheaply. Well, look how that turned out," a Manhattan real-estate executive close to the Ground Zero saga told me. "With 55 years' experience, Silverstein knows how to build, and how to find tenants. If Larry had been allowed to do what builders do,

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the site would be completed by now."

Silverstein signed a 99-year lease on the WTC just seven weeks before Islamofascists demolished it. Nevertheless, politicians and pen pushers boss him around. So, they should make him this deal:

*You bought it. You build it. You earn the rent from your tenants. We collect property taxes from you and commercial and sales taxes from them.

*If you beat a mutually agreeable deadline, we pay you a bonus that increases the sooner you finish. Miss it, and you pay a penalty that grows the longer you delay.

*Finally, restore the Twin Towers. Public enthusiasm for this effort will propel its completion. And it's the right thing to do.

Such blueprints already exist. Twin Towers II -- proposed by

structural designer Kenneth Gardner and the late Herbert Belton, an original WTC architect -- mirrors the sorely missed high rises. Its buildings comprise a 300-room hotel, 800 condominiums, 2 million square feet of retail, and 8 million square feet of offices. These 1,450-foot, safety-enhanced structures fit around the Freedom Towers' foundation and feature 121 floors -- 11 more than in their 1,360-foot predecessors. (Visit [this website](#) for more information.)

"This is what people have asked for from the beginning," Gardner notes. "Construction could be underway in six months, if we summon the will."

The gaping chasm that is Ground Zero screams national paralysis. Nothing more convincingly would signal to friends and foes alike the defiance of our Founding Fathers than to see the Twin Towers back where they belong -- taller, stronger, and prouder than ever.

Mr. Murdock, a New York-based commentator to HUMAN EVENTS, is a columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service and a media fellow with the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University.

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Deroy: I support what you say 100%! What really baffles me is WHY we didn't start rebuilding the day the site was cleared to do so?? Nothing would show the world, and our own people our resiliency and resoluteness than to erect 2 new towers. Take that Bin Laden and any other crazies who think they can beat or bully us into submission. I have thought almost since the day the originals went down that we should rebuild, rather than put up memorials and so forth. Let the memorials be part of the new towers--but by all means let's get to work and build those babies nice and high again!! And to hell with every Islamofascist who doesn't like it.

Mike Ruzza, Doha, Qatar

Jul 08, 2008 @ 07:10 AM

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Mike, well said.
It would be worth it alone to rebuild those towers as an in-your-face insult to the Muslim vermin who wish us all dead.

Rowdy, VA

Jul 08, 2008 @ 09:05 AM

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Amen and Amen. The more we tarry the more satisfaction we give the terrorists. It's time to take politics, and politicians, out of this fiasco and let American entrepreneurship take over. After all, American entrepreneurship made this country the greatest in the world and created the first Twin Towers.

Melody, Miami, FL

Jul 08, 2008 @ 09:19 AM

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The ONLY thing to do is rebuild the towers again. ten percent taller, stronger, and with antiaircraft batteries on the roof. Anything else and the terrorists have won. No other memorial to the victims of 9/11 would be appropriate.

Alan, AZ

Jul 08, 2008 @ 10:12 AM

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"Right across Vesey Street from this shambles, veteran real-estate magnate Larry Silverstein produced 7 World Trade Center, an elegant, 52-story high-rise that glistens by day and glows by night."

Since you mentioned it, let's talk about (the original) Tower 7 and why it fell (without being hit by a plane) in the first place, and whether Silverstein ordered it "pulled."

John, Alexandria, VA

Jul 08, 2008 @ 10:47 AM

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John, Alexandria, VA

I admit it. I blew up Tower 7. I was in the middle of an ugly divorce and my soon to be ex was bleeding me to death in divorce court. I knew she was in New York September 11 and in Tower 7. When the planes hit I knew I had the perfect opportunity to strike. I went to my favorite arms dealer in lower Manhattan and bought 5 cases of dynamite; slipped into the tower unnoticed with all the confusion; placed the charges and blew the building down thus ending my travails in divorce court.

Whoops is my sarcasm showing?

Is the concept of debris falling onto the roof setting it on fire too hard for you to get your little brain around? Good grief.

jeffersonian liberal, Kansas

Jul 08, 2008 @ 12:23 PM