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11/30/2005

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MARPLE - Still wearing his makeup from an appearance on CNN's "Lou Dobbs Tonight," U.S. Rep. Curt Weldon, R-7, of Thornbury, told a packed house at the township library Tuesday evening about his concerns regarding the 9/11 Commission.

The congressman said the military intelligence unit Able Danger identified four Sept. 11 hijackers in 2000, more than a year before the attacks. He said the commission, charged with investigating intelligence failures, deliberately excluded the input from its July 2004 final report. Members of the commission have repeatedly denied the claims.

"I am convinced this is a bigger cover-up than Watergate," said Weldon. "More than 3,000 people were slaughtered and it deliberately kept the story from being part of its report because it would have embarrassed some of its members."

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Weldon, vice-chairman of the House Armed Services and Homeland Security committees, outlined the details in his latest book, "Countdown to Terror." The volume tells of a series of meetings with "Ali," an Iranian who correctly predicted five incidents before particulars about them were made public.

"The CIA thought he got the information from open sources, but I gave them the details one week to three months before the events happened," said Weldon. "The information was not made public by any source in the world before I gave it to the CIA."

Earlier this month, Weldon also sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld requesting he allow former participants in Able Danger to testify in open congressional hearings. The correspondence had 246 bipartisan signatures, including those of senior members and leadership on both sides of the aisle.

In August, Army Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer and Navy Capt. Scott Phillpott publicly stated Able Danger had identified lead hijacker Mohammed Atta. Weldon said the information, combined with other details gathered by the program, could have prevented or reduced the scale of the attacks and the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen.

"In America, I should not have to resort to writing a book to get the intelligence agencies to do their jobs," said Weldon. "That is a government out of control."

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