

THE WOMAN LEFT THE COMMISSION

James Fallows repeats a fascinating story Gary Hart and Lee Hamilton told him about the Hart-Rudman Commission.

Early in 2001, the commission presented a report to the incoming G.W. Bush administration warning that terrorism would be the nation's greatest national security problem, and saying that unless the United States took proper protective measures a terrorist attack was likely within its borders. **Neither the president nor the vice president nor any other senior official from the new administration took time to meet with the commission members or hear about their findings.**

The commission had 14 members, split 7-7, Republican and Democrat, as is de rigeur for bodies of this type. Today Hart told me that in the first few meetings, commission members would go around the room and volunteer their ideas about the nation's greatest vulnerabilities, most urgent needs, and so on.

At the first meeting, one Republican woman on the commission said that the overwhelming threat was from China. Sooner or later the U.S. would end up in a military showdown with the Chinese Communists. There was no avoiding it, and we would only make ourselves weaker by waiting. No one else spoke up in support.

The same thing happened at the second meeting – discussion from other commissioners about terrorism, nuclear proliferation, anarchy of failed states, etc, and then this one woman warning about the looming Chinese menace. And the

third meeting too. Perhaps more.

Finally, in frustration, this woman left the commission.

"Her name was Lynne Cheney," Hart said. "I am convinced that if it had not been for 9/11, we would be in a military showdown with China today." Not because of what China was doing, threatening, or intending, he made clear, but because of the assumptions the Administration brought with it when taking office. (My impression is that Chinese leaders know this too, which is why there are relatively few complaints from China about the Iraq war. They know that it got the U.S. off China's back!) [my emphasis]

The story deserves wide exposure for two reasons. First, Bush and Cheney refused to meet with the Commission because they didn't want a warning that would distract them from their mission: preventing China from ostensibly accruing as much power as the United States. (In other words, remaining the dominant empire in the world.) I never realized, though, that Lynne Cheney was sitting in on the early meetings. How does Bush get to claim plausible deniability about Hart-Rudman when Cheney's wife was part of the Commission? Lynne was in the bunker on 9/11, after all—she's the one who could have alerted the Administration to their myopia, and instead she shirked her duty.

But it's also a testament to the way Emperor and Empress Fourth Branch work. As I pointed out after Cheney shot an old man in the face, his idea of a nice hunting weekend is to get together with the families that run the big contractors and oil companies, and plot world domination.

The manager of a ranch in neighboring Brooks County attended a quail lunch at the Armstrong Ranch headquarters midday

Sunday with Cheney. Lavoyger Durham,
manager of El Tule Ranch, said the
luncheon talk was of "North Korea, India,
China, Taiwan."

It doesn't matter if you've just shot a friend
or if you're supposed to be assessing the threat
of terrorism. These guys are focused on their
larger plan.

And that plan includes—but doesn't stop at—Iran.