

Government under fire

Later that year "intelligence agencies received further information concerning a Bin Laden plot involving aircraft in the New York and Washington DC areas," she added.

And just a month before the 11 September attacks, US intelligence agencies learned of a possible plot by Bin Laden to fly a plane into the US embassy in Kenya.

Ms Hill's statement came in the first public hearings held by the joint House of Representatives and Senate Intelligence Committee in its examination of 11 September.



Ms Hill's staff studied 400,000 pages of documents

The US Government has always said it could never have predicted the 11 September attacks.

But the BBC's Rob Watson in Washington says the report casts serious and dramatic doubts on those claims.

Weight of evidence

Ms Hill said that much of the information was vague in nature - lacking specific data on targets, operatives or dates - and often it was buried under a deluge of intelligence collected by 14 government agencies.

She also said that some of the sources providing the intelligence had been questionable.

But nonetheless "the totality of the information... clearly reiterated a consistent and critically important theme: Osama Bin Laden's intent to launch terrorist attacks inside the United States".

Ms Hill's report says that despite all of this information, the US "intelligence community did not produce any specific assessments of the likelihood that terrorists would use airplanes as weapons".

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The committee also heard strong criticism from Kristen Breitweiser, who represents the 11 September victims and whose own husband was killed in the World Trade Center.

"My husband and the approximately 3,000 others like him went to work that morning and never came home," she said.

"But were any of our governmental agencies doing their job on that fateful morning? Perhaps the carnage and devastation of 11 September speaks for itself in answering this question."

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