

# **EXHIBIT 94**

Fact Checker • Analysis

# Trump's outrageous claim that 'thousands' of New Jersey Muslims celebrated the 9/11 attacks

By Glenn Kessler November 22, 2015

**GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS:** *You raised some eyebrows yesterday with comments you made at your latest rally. I want to show them, relating to 9/11.*

**VIDEO CLIP OF DONALD TRUMP, IN WHICH HE SAYS:** *"Hey, I watched when the World Trade Center came tumbling down. And I watched in Jersey City, New Jersey, where thousands and thousands of people were cheering as that building was coming down. Thousands of people were cheering."*

**STEPHANOPOULOS:** *"You know, the police say that didn't happen and all those rumors have been on the Internet for some time. So did you misspeak yesterday?"*

**TRUMP:** *"It did happen. I saw it."*

**STEPHANOPOULOS:** *"You saw that..."*

**TRUMP:** *It was on television. I saw it.*

**STEPHANOPOULOS:** *"...with your own eyes?"*

**TRUMP:** *"George, it did happen."*

**STEPHANOPOULOS:** *"Police say it didn't happen."*

**TRUMP:** *"There were people that were cheering on the other side of New Jersey, where you have large Arab populations. They were cheering as the World Trade Center came down. I know it might be not politically correct for you to talk about it, but there were people cheering as that building came down — as those buildings came down. And that tells you something. It was well covered at the time, George. Now, I know they don't like to talk about it, but it was well covered at the time. There*

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 were people over in New Jersey that were watching it, a heavy Arab population, that were cheering as the buildings came down. Not good.”

**STEPHANOPOULOS:** “As I said, the police have said it didn’t happen.”

— Exchange on ABC’s “This Week,” Nov. 22, 2015

*This column has been updated.*

This exchange demonstrates the folly of trying to fact-check Donald Trump. Even when confronted with contrary information — “police say it didn’t happen” — he insists that with his own eyes he saw “thousands and thousands” of cheering Arabs in New Jersey celebrating as the World Trade Center collapsed during the Sept. 11 attacks.

Trump has already earned more Four-Pinocchio ratings than any other candidate this year. He is about to earn another one.

## The Facts

This is a bit like writing about the hole in the doughnut — how can you write about nothing?

Trump says that he saw this with his own eyes on television and that it was well covered. But an extensive examination of news clips from that period turns up nothing. There were some [reports of celebrations overseas](#), in Muslim countries, but nothing that we can find involving the Arab populations of New Jersey except for unconfirmed reports. (Some conspiracy Web sites cite [a column by controversial blogger and commentator Debbie Schlüssel, who is highly critical of Muslims](#), that makes a reference to an MTV broadcast of protests and riots in Paterson, N.J.; this claim has never been authenticated.) As the Newark Star-Ledger put it in an article on Sept. 18, 2001, “rumors of rooftop celebrations of the attack by Muslims here proved unfounded.”

Neither can we find any examples of Trump previously talking about this. Here, for example, is [an article](#) in the New York Post interviewing Trump just eight days after the attack; he makes no mention of having witnessed the alleged celebrations. And in a foreword for a book titled “[Where Were You On 9/11?](#),” Trump makes no mention of this: “I was in my apartment in the Trump Tower [on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001]. I knew what was happening because I can see downtown to the Financial district.”

The mayor of Jersey City, which has 15,000 Muslims, quickly tweeted that Trump’s comments were false:

Fulop, who is a possible Democratic candidate for governor in 2017, said in a statement that Trump was “shamefully politicizing an emotionally charged issue.” He added: “No one in Jersey City cheered on Sept. 11. We were actually among the first to provide responders to help in lower Manhattan.”

George Pataki, the governor of New York at the time and another GOP presidential hopeful, also tweeted this response to Trump’s remarks on ABC:

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who is also seeking the GOP nomination, [told reporters](#) that he also did not recall seeing what Trump claimed. “I do not remember that, and so it’s not something that was part of my recollection,” he said. “I think if it had happened, I would remember it, but, you know, there could be things I forget, too.”

Since Trump on ABC News suggested that celebrations might have happened elsewhere in New Jersey, we also contacted Jerry Speziale, the police commissioner of Paterson, which has the second-largest Muslim population in the United States — numbering nearly 30,000. He minced few words, even using a barnyard epithet, while giving his response.

“That is totally false. That is patently false,” Speziale said. “That never happened. There were no flags burning, no one was dancing. That is [barnyard epithet].” He said the main concern after the attacks was that the U.S. Muslim population would face retaliation, and so law enforcement officials worked with the community to ensure that did not happen. “They’ve been very helpful and law-abiding.”

We asked Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks whether she could provide any evidence for Trump’s claim. As usual, she did not respond.

**Update:** Some readers have tweeted to The Fact Checker [a Washington Post article](#) from Sept. 18, 2001, as evidence of Trump’s claim. The article, which appeared on page 6, described FBI probes in northern New Jersey after the attacks, saying in the 15th paragraph that “law enforcement authorities detained and questioned a number of people who were allegedly seen celebrating the attacks and holding tailgate-style parties on rooftops while they watched the devastation on the other side of the river.”

Of course, “a number of people” obviously does not equal “thousands” — and “allegedly” indicates there is no video footage or other proof that celebrations actually took place. Recall that Trump claimed he saw this on television — and that it was “well covered at the time.” This newspaper article appeared days later.

The reporters who wrote the story do not recall whether the allegations were ever confirmed. “I certainly do not remember anyone saying that thousands or even hundreds of people were celebrating,” said Serge Kovaleski, one of the reporters. “That was not the case, as best as I can remember.”

Fredrick Kunkle, the other reporter, added: “I specifically visited the Jersey City building and neighborhood where the celebrations were purported to have happened. But I could never verify that report.”

(The right-leaning Powerline blog made [a big deal about this sentence](#)—as [did Trump later](#)—but as the reporters’ comments make clear, there is no evidence the alleged celebration ever took place.)

Irfan Khawaja, an assistant professor of philosophy at Felician College in New Jersey, [extensively attempted to trace the rumors of celebrations](#) by Muslims in New Jersey and after months of inquiry (in an article with Gary Fine) came up with only the possibility that “a few Arab-American adolescents briefly relieved their political frustration in front of a library in South Paterson, a way that might be defined as celebrating.”

In an interview, Khawaja said that after extensive research, it was possible that maybe six to 12 teenagers had something akin to a celebration on the morning of 9/11 in Paterson, but they quickly dispersed. But even that is doubtful. “The evidence is very, very sparse that anything took place,” he said. “The bottom line is that Donald Trump is lying, if you look at what he said.”

Khawaja elaborated on his findings in [a blog post](#). In the comment section, he specifically addresses how Powerline used his writings to come up with the wrong conclusion: “Contrary to what Powerline would have its readers believe, I should not be construed as saying that *celebrations* were confirmed by the JCPD. They were *not* confirmed.” (You can also read a [Q&A he had with the Newark Star-Ledger](#) about his research.)

**Further Update:** We heard from many readers who are convinced they saw this on television but from their description they are referring to reports (linked above) of Palestinians celebrating on the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Here is the video again:

As you can see, this is *not* in New Jersey. No one disputes that there were some scenes of celebration overseas. A former aide to a New Jersey senator at the time wrote The Fact Checker to say most letters the office received concerning alleged celebrations by Muslims were traced to this particular clip.

We also heard from some readers who claim to have heard this story from neighbors or friends or, in a handful of cases, said they personally saw some some people celebrating. (Matthew H. Rudd, an attorney, said he left the courthouse in Paterson midday three days after the attacks and saw “half a dozen cars full of young Arabic-looking men drove by blaring Arabic music and cheering loudly. I do not have any recordings or photos, but I can tell you that it was a very disturbing and unsettling sight.”) These accounts are of course only anecdotal, do not involve thousands of people and were not filmed. In the case of Rudd’s description, this did not take place on 9/11 but a few days later.

We also heard from many other readers who were in New Jersey at the time and said nothing happened on the day of the attacks. One man who said he walked up and down through Jersey City on 9/11 wrote: “At no time did I see anyone celebrating. It did not happen. Not thousands — not hundreds — not dozens — not one. At no time did I meet anyone who claimed to have seen any celebrations. It’s also worth noting that I saw no TV-news vans who might have shot footage of celebrations. They did not show up until the next day.”

**Yet another update, Nov. 25:** Jim Dwyer of The New York Times [interviewed](#) John J. Farmer Jr., at the time the New Jersey attorney general and the state’s chief law enforcement officer, and he emphatically said Trump was wrong. He said at the time he was worried about possible riots, especially because of a rumor that Muslims were dancing on the rooftops and in the streets of Jersey City and Paterson, but none of the tips turned out. “The word came back quickly from Jersey City, later from Paterson,” he said. “False report. Never happened.”

But [Walter Zalisko](#), a former police officer in Jersey City, contacted The Fact Checker to say Farmer was wrong. He says he heard on the radio dispatch at the time that officers had found Middle Easterners “clapping and laughing” on a number of rooftops, even in one case knocking down a cardboard version of the Twin Towers. But he does not think a police report was filed. “It was at most a hundred people doing this,” he said, saying Trump’s description of “thousands and thousands” was an exaggeration. As for Farmer’s account, Zalisko said: “John was holed up in his office and he didn’t know what was going on.”

But Zalisko did not personally witness any of this.

Farmer expanded on [his version of events—a firm nothing happened—in an opinion article](#) for the Newark Star-Ledger.

**Update, Dec. 2:** The Trump campaign posted snippets of video clips from a local CBS New York City newscast at the time that reported on the arrest of “eight men”—not “thousands and thousands”—who were reported by neighbors as having celebrated the attack. One snippet mentions they had a model of the Twin Towers, as Zalisko had recalled. But while the newscast quotes an investigator as allegedly saying these men knew about the attack in advance, it is unclear if any charges were ever brought—or if the claims of celebrations were ever proven. As Farmer said, investigators looked into many such reports—and found them to be groundless. So this appears to be yet another unconfirmed report.

Indeed, Pablo Guzmán, the reporter in the newscast, later tweeted that his reports did not back up Trump’s claim of “thousands” cheering on the roofs. (“Rahman” refers to Omar Abdel-Rahman, the Muslim leader convicted in connection with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.)

CBS News [reported](#) that “the [full television news report](#) never showed any footage of New Jersey residents celebrating on the roof. And Guzmán said only that a source reported ‘cheering’ and that police were called to a building in Jersey City to find ‘eight men celebrating’ — far fewer than the thousands Trump claimed to see.”

**Update, Dec. 4:** ABC News [reported](#) that an extensive search of its video archives found no evidence for Trump’s claim. “An extensive search of ABC News transcript and video archives shows that no footage of celebrations in New Jersey aired on ABC News on Sept. 11 or on the following day’s special report coverage of the attacks,” ABC News said. “Instead, there are repeated mentions on ABC News of celebrations on Sept. 11 among a group of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, 5,700 miles away from New Jersey.”

**Update: Dec. 21:** The Newark Star-Ledger [conducted an exhaustive inquiry](#) and while it found scattered reports of celebrations, it determined that “Trump’s broad assertion that thousands of people cheered to be baseless.”

**Note:** We originally linked to a conspiracy Web site about the MTV claim but then updated with a direct link to Schlüssel’s column. She objected to the suggestion she is conspiracy-minded and on Nov. 23 [posted an update](#) citing some examples of Muslims in the United States applauding the attacks, such as four Ford factory workers in Dearborn, Mich.

“MTV did do a story on it,” she wrote in an e-mail. “I’m not saying MTV is the most credible source in the world, but it is a liberal source.” She says she no longer has a copy of an MTV broadcast, and it cannot be found online. “It’s strange that there is no record of it online, but as I always say, just because it is not online, doesn’t mean it didn’t happen.” We asked MTV and Viacom, owner of MTV, for comment.

(The movie in question appears to be a November 2001 MTV News documentary titled “Fight for Your Rights: Aftermath of Terror.” It is not available in digital. IMBD [says](#) it “follows the lives of some young adults in Paterson, NJ in the months following the attacks of 9/11. Paterson NJ is a multicultural community, home to a large Muslim community, and also to friends and family of 9/11 victims.”)

**Update, Nov. 26:** MTV found the video and posted [an excerpt](#) on YouTube. This further undercuts Trump's case (and Schlüssel's). One person, a then-high school senior named Emily Acevedo, was quoted as saying she had seen a group of kids acting up in front of the Paterson courthouse, banging on trash cans and shouting. She does not say they were Middle Eastern or Arab. Her recollections are intercut with comments from others, including a reporter on a newscast, saying nothing happened. MTV News [interviewed Acevedo 14 years later](#) and she said what she "saw that night [was] not anything any different than would've happened on any other summer night, on any other day where school was let out early." So this demonstrates once again there is no evidence of mass demonstrations. At best, there were only some kids acting up—who may or may not have been Arab.

Below is the MTV excerpt:

## The Pinocchio Test

This appears to be another case of Trump's overactive imagination, much like his baseless claim that the George W. Bush White House tried to "silence" his Iraq war opposition in 2003. We looked and looked — and [could find absolutely no evidence to support his claim](#).

But that was merely a matter of self-aggrandizement, whereas now Trump has defamed the Muslim communities of New Jersey. He cannot simply assert something so damning; he must provide some real evidence or else issue an apology.

**Update:** Despite Trump's efforts to throw up a lot of smoke, such as snippets from news clips, he continues to fail to demonstrate that his claim that he saw "thousands and thousands" of Muslims cheering on TV has any basis in reality. The Four Pinocchios continue to stand.

## Four Pinocchios

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