

Benghazi on the Record: Asked and Answered

Compendium of Investigative Resources

Prepared at the request of
Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member
The Select Committee on Benghazi
U.S. House of Representatives

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democrats.benghazi.house.gov

[EXECUTIVE SUMMARY](#)

On September 11 and 12, 2012, the U.S. Special Mission Compound in Benghazi, Libya and a nearby annex were attacked, killing four Americans—Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, Sean Smith, Glen Doherty, and Tyrone Woods. Several others were seriously wounded, while others were successfully evacuated to safety.

On May 8, 2014, the House of Representatives adopted H. Res. 567, establishing the Select Committee on Benghazi. House Speaker John Boehner explained that a Select Committee was needed because “there are so many unanswered questions” about the attacks. Specifically, he said there were “three areas” the Select Committee would investigate:

- “The events leading up to 9/11, 2012, the requests—the number of requests for more security and why it was not provided.”
- “The events of the night of September 11, 2012, what happened, why there was no response.”
- “Thirdly, why did the White House describe this in a way, I believe, they knew was false.”

Similarly, Rep. Trey Gowdy, who was appointed by Speaker Boehner as the Chairman of the new Select Committee, identified the top questions he believed the Select Committee should answer:

- “If you ask me personally what’s number one to me, I would like to know why we, number one, were still in Benghazi when everyone else had pulled out.”
- “Number two, why was our security footprint so light despite the repeated requests for more security.”

These and many other questions have already been answered. An independent Accountability Review Board and seven different congressional committees interviewed dozens of witnesses, reviewed tens of thousands of pages of documents, conducted numerous interviews and briefings, and held multiple hearings. These investigative bodies have issued nine separate classified and unclassified reports.

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[Benghazi on the Record](#) was prepared at the request of Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, the Ranking Member of the Select Committee on Benghazi, to collect—in one place—as much information as possible regarding questions that have already been asked and answered about the attacks in Benghazi.

It includes an interactive [Asked and Answered Database](#) of more than 150 questions and statements by Members of Congress that have been addressed in previous investigative reports,

interviews, and hearings. This database includes links to original sources, and it is searchable by keyword, date, and Member of Congress.

It also includes this detailed [*Compendium of Investigative Resources*](#) that addresses each question in greater detail based on the wide range of already public investigative resources, including reports, interview transcripts, and hearing testimony.

For example, on the specific questions posed by Speaker Boehner and Chairman Gowdy, this compendium includes the following investigative resources:

- [*Inadequate Security in Benghazi*](#): On December 18, 2012, the independent Accountability Review Board chaired by Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Admiral Michael Mullen, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concluded that inadequate security in Benghazi resulted from “[s]ystemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department.” The report concluded: “Staffing was at times woefully insufficient considering post’s security posture and high risk, high threat environment. ... As it became clear that DS [Diplomatic Security] would not provide a steady complement of five TDY [temporary duty assignment] DS agents to Benghazi, expectations on the ground were lowered by the daunting task of gaining approvals and the reality of an ever-shifting DS personnel platform.” *For more detailed information on this topic, see the sections starting on pages 18 and 21.*
- [*The Military Response*](#): In February 2014, the Republican Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee issued a staff report concluding that, on the night of the attacks, the Department of Defense began “allocating various forces to the crisis” based on assets that “were available and could readily be brought to bear on the situation as it was understood by senior leaders.” The report stated that Republican Committee Members “believe the regional and global force posture assumed by the military on September 11, 2012 limited the response. Majority members recognize, of course, that it is impossible for the Department of Defense to have adequate forces prepared to respond immediately to every conceivable global contingency. Ensuring that preparations exist for some likely possibilities is not to be confused with the ability to anticipate all prospective circumstances, especially in highly volatile regions.” *For more detailed information on this topic, see the sections starting on pages 53 and 59.*
- [*The Talking Points*](#): On July 31, 2014, both Republicans and Democrats on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence adopted a classified report that addressed the intelligence available to the Administration relating to the attacks. According to the Committee’s Ranking Member: “The House Intelligence Committee spent nearly two years looking at every aspect of the Intelligence Community’s activities before, during and after the attacks of September 11, 2012, in Benghazi Libya. The result is a bipartisan, factual, definitive report on what the Intelligence Community did and did not do. ... The report also shows that the process used to develop the talking points was flawed, but that the talking points reflected the conflicting intelligence assessments in the days immediately following the crisis.” *For more detailed information on this topic, see the sections starting on pages 79, 86, and 95.*

- [*The “Last Flag Flying”*](#): On January 15, 2014, both Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issued a report finding that the United States was not, in fact, the “last flag flying” in Benghazi: “Some nations closed their diplomatic facilities in Benghazi as the security conditions deteriorated during the summer of 2012, but other nations stayed along with the United States, contrary to some public reports and statements that the U.S. was the last country represented in Benghazi.” *For more detailed information on this topic, see page 6.*

In addition to the questions above, the compendium includes a host of information on additional questions, such as where the President was on the night of the attacks and what actions he took (page 115), whether former Secretary Hillary Clinton personally signed a cable reducing security in Benghazi (page 18), and whether military or intelligence officials were ordered to “stand down” (pages 34, 38, and 43).

* * *

[*Benghazi on the Record*](#) does not answer every conceivable question, but it answers many of the primary questions that have been raised about the attacks. This resource is intended to be used as a tool for Members of Congress and the American people.

In addition, with its budget of \$3.3 million for 2014, it is critical that the Select Committee make full use of the extensive investigations that have already been completed—which are compiled here—to define its scope, avoid duplication, and conserve taxpayer dollars to help improve the security of U.S. facilities and personnel around the world.

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

2	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
6	QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
6	Why was the U.S. the “last flag flying” in Benghazi?
18	Did Secretary Clinton personally authorize cables that reduced State Department security?
21	Why was security in Benghazi inadequate despite repeated requests?
34	Did Secretary of State Clinton order Secretary of Defense Panetta to “stand down?”
38	Was the CIA security team improperly prevented from departing for the Benghazi diplomatic compound?
43	Did the Pentagon order four military personnel in Tripoli to “stand down?”
53	Did the Pentagon fail to deploy military assets that could have saved lives on the night of the attacks?
59	Did the Pentagon fail to deploy F-16s that would have saved lives?
77	Did the U.S. engage in illegal gunrunning from Libya to arm rebels in Syria?
79	Did Ambassador Rice intentionally misrepresent the facts on Sunday talk shows after the attacks?
86	Did CIA Deputy Director Morell alter the talking points for political reasons?
95	What is the origin of the idea that a video motivated the attacks?
115	Where was the President and what did he do on the night of the attacks?
122	LIST OF RESOURCES

QUESTION:

Why was the U.S. the “last flag flying” in Benghazi?

Rep. Trey Gowdy: “Why were we still in Benghazi? The British Ambassador was almost assassinated. Our facility was attacked twice. There were multiple episodes of violence. We were the last flag flying in Benghazi, and I would like to know why.”

Source: *Fox News Sunday*, Fox News (May 11, 2014) (online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB38YKLSvyc).

ANSWER:

The bipartisan report adopted by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found that the U.S. was not the “last flag flying” in Benghazi. The U.S. presence—alongside the United Nations and the European Union—reflected Ambassador Stevens’ view that Benghazi was “critically important,” and he received significant deference as “one of, if not the premier expert” on Libyan matters, according to his colleagues. PolitiFact rated this claim as “False.”

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

Some nations closed their diplomatic facilities in Benghazi as the security conditions deteriorated during the summer of 2012, but other nations stayed along with the United States, contrary to some public reports and statements that the U.S. was the last country represented in Benghazi.

...

Although some countries and international organizations had reduced their presence in Benghazi, the United States maintained a diplomatic presence there similar to the UN, the European Union, and other Western countries such as Italy, France, Turkey, and Malta.¹

PolitiFact:

On May 16, 2014, the PolitiFact “Truth-O-Meter” issued a report finding that this assertion was “False”:

When we checked with Gowdy’s staff, they pointed us to testimony given by Lt. Col. Andrew Wood, who was stationed in Libya as a site security team commander in Libya

¹ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=27).

from February 2012 to August 2012. He testified before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee when it was investigating the Benghazi attack in October 2012.

Wood’s testimony appears to be the source of the vivid phrase “last flag flying in Benghazi.”

...

Wood said that when he used the phrase “last flag flying in Benghazi,” he was specifically referring to the three western institutions mentioned in the threats on Facebook—the British and United States diplomatic complexes and the Red Cross facility.

In other words, Wood didn’t literally mean there was no other western presence in Benghazi—rather, he was referring to the United States as the last of the three specifically cited targets to be attacked.

...

Our ruling

Gowdy said the United States had “the last flag flying in Benghazi.” Some nations, such as the United Kingdom, had abandoned Benghazi or limited their footprint prior to the attack on the United States complex. But like a game of telephone, the meaning of the phrase Gowdy used shifted from its original meaning as politicians embraced it as an evocative talking point.

In his testimony, Wood used the phrase more rhetorically than literally, explaining that the United States was the last of three western institutions that had been mentioned in a terrorist threat to be attacked. In fact, there’s clear evidence that several other western nations had a presence in Benghazi immediately before and well after the attack on the U.S. compound. We rate the claim False.²

[House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Democratic Staff Report:](#)

According to multiple witnesses, Ambassador Stevens was “one of, if not the premier expert” on Libya and strongly believed that having a U.S. post in Benghazi was “critically important” to “indicate that the United States was going to stay involved,” “to have a window into the Islamist extremism that was developing primarily in the east,” and “to have a window into the tribal dynamics, which are very important.” As one

² *Trey Gowdy Said the United States Was ‘The Last Flag Flying in Benghazi,’* PolitiFact, Tampa Bay Times (May 16, 2014) (online at www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2014/may/16/trey-gowdy/trey-gowdy-says-we-were-last-flag-flying-benghazi/).

official said, “nobody knew Libya better than Chris,” and “Chris strongly recommended that we maintain a presence in Benghazi.”³

...

Special Envoy Stevens served in Benghazi from April 2011 until November 17, 2011, when he departed Libya. As a leading expert on Libya, he returned to Tripoli in May 26, 2012, as the U.S. Ambassador. Meanwhile, the Special Mission in Benghazi continued to operate, but with limited, temporary-duty staff.

Numerous State Department officials interviewed by Committee staff acknowledged that Ambassador Stevens championed the U.S. presence in Benghazi and had successfully built a consensus that the U.S. should maintain its presence in eastern Libya. The former Office Director for Maghreb Affairs stated that “there was widespread ... consensus that the mission in Benghazi was very important.” This State Department official emphasized that Ambassador Stevens was a primary advocate of maintaining a presence in the eastern region:

He thought that Benghazi was a critically important—and the east in general, were critically important components to understanding Libya. ... And he felt it was important on a symbolic level to indicate that the United States was going to stay involved not only in Libya writ large but also in Benghazi and in the east. And then for the other reasons that I mentioned: to have a window into the Islamist extremism that was developing primarily in the east but in other parts of Libya, to have a window into the tribal dynamics, which are very important, more so in the east than in the west.⁴

On September 6, 2011, Ambassador Stevens wrote an e-mail to senior State Department officials articulating the reasons the State Department should continue to maintain a temporary presence in Benghazi while Embassy Tripoli re-opened. In describing the importance of the region, Ambassador Stevens noted that “the revolution began in eastern Libya and the views of these 2 million inhabitants will certainly influence events going forward.” He also noted that eastern Libya would continue to play an important role in Libyan governance and politics because “some [Libyan] government agencies may have their headquarters in Benghazi. ... Other government agencies/corporations already have their HQ’s here.” He relayed comments that the U.S. presence in eastern Libya “has a salutary ‘calming’ effect on easterners who are fearful that the new focus on Tripoli could once again lead to their neglect and exclusion from reconstruction and wealth distribution.” He provided an overview of the Benghazi Special Mission Compound and

³ Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Status Update on Investigation of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi* (Sept. 19, 2013) (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=3).

⁴ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=38).

discussed ongoing upgrades and staffing plans. Finally, he recommended a small, continuing presence in Benghazi.⁵

In the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary explained that the opinion of Ambassador Stevens, who she referred to as “one of, if not the premier expert” on Libyan matters, carried significant weight in Washington:

A: Chris Stevens’ views weighed heavily into the bureau’s decision to request an extension of the mission. Chris argued very eloquently that it was important for the United States to keep in contact with people in the eastern part of Libya, which had been the cradle of the revolution. And given that the leadership of the interim government was primarily from the east and was traveling back and forth between Tripoli and Benghazi and other parts of the east, he felt it was important to maintain those contacts.

Q: And who would have listened to him in the State Department? Would he have had—

A: Everybody.

Q: Everybody? And why is that?

A: And not just in the State Department, in the interagency. You know, the national security staff was very interested in hearing what Chris’s views were because he was recognized as one of, if not the premier expert on the current situation in Libya, having served there previously as DCM charge and then having been sent back as envoy during the revolution. And then the intent, which is what happened, was that we were going to nominate him as Ambassador to replace Ambassador Cretz.

Q: And I think you said his opinions carried significant weight.

A: Yes, they did.

Q: And so he thought it was very important to be in eastern Libya, Benghazi specifically, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: And did that ever change? Did he ever say, you know, I think it’s time that we no longer have a presence in—

A: No, not that I’m aware of.

⁵ *Id.*

Q: So the reasons for being in eastern Libya, Benghazi, in 2011, it's your view that those would have just carried forward.

A: Yes.⁶

Defense Attaché at Embassy Tripoli:

On January 31, 2014, staff from House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the House Committee on Armed Services conducted a transcribed interview of the Defense Attaché at Embassy Tripoli:

Q: And then as a member or participant on the country team, obviously you worked closely with the Ambassador. Is that an accurate statement?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Can you maybe just tell us, in your opinion, was Ambassador Stevens, how knowledgeable he was about Libya?

A: He was very knowledgeable about Libya, to put it succinctly. I think this was his third or fourth tour, to include his time as a special envoy—that title may not be accurate—in Benghazi to the NTC. But even prior to that, he had served as the deputy chief of mission, possibly the pol officer at one point.

So, yeah, I don't know, but my presumption would be that he had to be one of the foremost experts on Libya in particular.

Q: Okay.

A: For instance, he would tell stories about having been at meetings with Qadhafi, give insight into that strange personality that was Qadhafi. And he would take time to mentor country team members. So, like, if I would come back from a meeting completely frustrated, for instance, he would say, wait, what did they say? He is like, that's old regime. He is like, I know what that is, don't worry about that, they will come around, and it's going to—something I appreciated from a leader and a mentor. And I felt that Ambassador Stevens did that with all the members of the country team.

Q: So you, yourself, considered him to be a mentor with respect to Libyan matters or—

A: Absolutely. He had just time on the ground experience and he could provide insight.

⁶ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=39).

- Q: Did he have specific knowledge about Benghazi, to your knowledge?
- A: He certainly had specific knowledge about Benghazi. Again, I think prior to, but specifically during his months in working with the NTC, I believe pre- and post—pardon me—post-revolution, as that transpired.
- Q: And for the record that NTC is?
- A: Sorry, this is the Libyan body which before the elections, National Transition Council. I believe that's what the acronym stands for. I may be off.
- Q: Okay.
- A: But essentially the opposition government.
- Q: Sure. Would you say that his—as a member of the country team again—were his decisions accorded deference, great deference?
- A: Like any chief of mission, yes, certainly, his decisions were treated with deference. There was different types of deference, right? There was deference potentially out of intimidation, but no, he was given deference because we knew where he was coming from, he had good leadership traits in my estimation, and yes, and he knew more than anyone in the room about most topics.
- Q: Okay. Was that latter, that last statement you made about his knowledge, in particular about Libya and Benghazi, to your knowledge, was that generally shared by your military colleagues in AFRICOM and elsewhere?
- A: I don't think you can replicate the experience and knowledge that Ambassador Stevens had per se. So it would be difficult to do a one-to-one correlation. But what I can say is, both in AFRICOM and DIA, there have been a number of capable people, officers, civilians, who have been working Libya writ large, obviously tied to the NATO piece and our involvement in it. But it's difficult to make up for time on the ground, spending time drinking tea with Libyans, which is unfortunately something a lot of your staff just don't have the opportunity to do.
- Q: Excuse me, but I don't think that was the question. I think the question was did your military colleagues share your estimation of Ambassador Stevens?
- A: Oh. Yeah. I apologize. Then I did misunderstand the question.
- Q: That's okay.
- A: No, by and large, I don't know of anyone who didn't, if that—there was no one in my—

- Q: To include personnel back at AFRICOM and General Ham?
- A: Right. No, he—I mean Ambassador Stevens had a very strong reputation everywhere I went as I was doing my office calls.
- Q: Okay. Were you aware at all of Ambassador Stevens' views on the U.S. presence in eastern Libya?
- A: I can't speak specifically to the U.S. presence, but if anyone understood the importance of eastern Libya to the totality of Libya it was Ambassador Stevens. So in my opinion, he felt it was important to have an American presence there just because of the significance not only of Benghazi, but of the east in general.
- Q: What was the significance of the eastern part of the country? Why was that important? And what were his views on that?
- A: Yeah. So let's just take Benghazi, for instance. Benghazi is seen in the eyes of the majority of the Libyans, particularly those in the east, as much more the cultural center, the social center, the business center of Libya. So it's also, if you look—I mean there is oil infrastructure everywhere, but predominantly in the eastern side you have significant oil there.
- I think it better defines for Libyans the character of the country. And what you saw in Benghazi, which you didn't necessarily see in other cities in the country, was there was an aspect of assimilation and a cosmopolitan aspect to Benghazi where different tribal factions all came together and made Benghazi what Benghazi was.
- Q: Would it be fair to say that then this views would be if you were going to be successful in Libya you really also wanted to have a presence or focus on the eastern part of the country?
- A: I feel that's a fair characterization, yes.⁷

Accountability Review Board Report:

The Board found that Ambassador Stevens made the decision to travel to Benghazi independently of Washington, per standard practice. Timing for his trip was driven in part by commitments in Tripoli, as well as a staffing gap between principal officers in Benghazi. Plans for the Ambassador's trip provided for minimal close protection security support and were not shared thoroughly with the Embassy's country team, who were not fully aware of planned movements off compound. The Ambassador did not see

⁷ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Defense Attaché at Embassy Tripoli (Jan. 31, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/1r%20-%20January%2031%2C%202014%20LTC%2C%20Defense%20Attache.pdf#page=55>).

a direct threat of an attack of this nature and scale on the U.S. Mission in the overall negative trendline of security incidents from spring to summer 2012. His status as the leading U.S. government advocate on Libya policy, and his expertise on Benghazi in particular, caused Washington to give unusual deference to his judgments.⁸

...

Ambassador Chris Stevens arrived in Benghazi, Libya on September 10, 2012, accompanied by two temporary duty (TDY) Assistant Regional Security Officers (ARSOs) from Tripoli. ... Ambassador Stevens was scheduled to remain in Benghazi until September 14, and his visit was timed in part to fill the staffing gaps between TDY principal officers as well as to open an American Corner at a local school and to reconnect with local contacts.⁹

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton:

On January 23, 2013, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified at a hearing before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs:

Q: Regarding the security professionals, is there anybody now in existence in the Department who is responsible for reviewing the itineraries of Ambassadors in advance in order to determine whether there is an undue threat to their safety?

A: The general answer to that is no. Ambassadors are given what is called “chief of mission authority.” Ambassadors, especially those who we ask to go to dangerous posts, are pretty independent folks. Some them might say, well, what do you think about this or that? But most of them make their own decisions.

Chris Stevens did not ask anyone for permission to go to Benghazi; I don’t think it would have crossed his mind.

...

Q: Well, with regard to Ambassador Stevens, certainly it was brave of him to go to Benghazi on the date that he did. I have to ask you honestly, though, was there anything in his itinerary on the 10th or the 11th that actually specifically required his personal presence?

A: Well, he certainly thought so, Congressman. And he did, of course, discuss this with his own security people. Remember, we do have regional security officers in these posts. They are the ones that an Ambassador will turn to.

⁸ Accountability Review Board, *Report on the Attacks in Benghazi, Libya, September 2012* (Dec. 18, 2012) (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=6).

⁹ *Id.* (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=18).

He believed that it was important for him to go to Benghazi. There were a number of meetings that he was holding and some public events that he had on his schedule. And, you know, he was someone who really believed strongly he had to get out there. And I think, as the ARB has pointed out, he was given great deference by the rest of the government.¹⁰

Accountability Review Board Chairman Ambassador Thomas Pickering:

On June 4, 2013, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a deposition of Ambassador Thomas Pickering, Chairman of the independent Accountability Review Board:

Q: I think we covered to some extent this previously, but it says here, and I'm quoting, "Timing for his trip was driven in part by commitments in Tripoli, as well as the staffing gap between principal officers in Benghazi."

A: Yes.

Q: Where did that information come from?

A: It came from the testimony we received from, I believe, one of the principal officers, perhaps by Mr. Hicks, but it's somewhere in that nexus.

Q: So from some of the people who were discussing it with Mr.—with Ambassador Stevens before he left?

A: Yes.

Q: And did anyone tell you at the time that he was leaving to go to Benghazi on that date, the September 2012, September 11th date—

A: He left on September 10th to go to Benghazi.

Q: Yes, sir.

Did anyone tell you that he left on December 10th [sic] [September 10, 2012] to take that particular trip at the Secretary's urging?

A: No.

Q: Did anybody raise to you that his trip was related to some need to make the special mission permanent?

¹⁰ House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearing on the Terrorist Attack in Benghazi: The Secretary of State's View* (Jan. 23, 2013) (online at <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20130123/100170/HHRG-113-FA00-20130123-SD003.pdf#page=39>).

A: It was clear that one of the subjects that was under discussion and one that I believe there is evidence that played a role in his decision to go to Benghazi, not at any particular time, but to go, was to provide suggestions, ideas or recommendations to the State Department, and that before that Hicks and Stevens had prepared what I can only describe as a kind of strawman memo recommending a permanent facility at Benghazi perhaps to be still a U.S. mission or a branch office of the embassy, but that it was also thinking out of some of the record in conversations that Stevens had with others, which was the subject of written communication, that he had also begun to recruit a new principal officer for the autumn with the idea in mind that he might be the last principal officer in Benghazi. So it was clear that Stevens was having thoughts about the future of Benghazi that were not yet fully settled, and that's as far as I can take it.

Q: But nothing specifically related to him going on September 10th?

A: No. The—it appears as if the date had been scheduled earlier. There were other obligations in Tripoli, and that, as a result made, the date, that one, that the principal officer in Tripoli, who was in—in Benghazi, who was assigned in Tripoli, had to leave the morning of Ambassador Stevens' arrival, I believe, to go back to Tripoli for other reasons.¹¹

...

Q: And—and just still on page 6 at the bottom of that paragraph, it discusses that the Ambassador, and I'm reading here, did not see a direct threat of an attack of this nature and scale on the U.S. mission in the overall negative trendline of security incidents from spring to summer of 2012.

A: The bottom of page 6?

Q: No. I'm sorry. It's the bottom of that same paragraph we were on on page 6.

A: Okay. Uh-huh.

Q: So not quite the bottom.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: How did the ARB learn that information about the Ambassador, that he wasn't seeing this direct threat?

A: From what he was writing and saying.

¹¹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Deposition of Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering (June 4, 2014) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Pickering-transcript.pdf#page=159>).

Q: And the ARB goes on to describe this, and what—what the report calls Washington giving an unusual deference to his judgments, to Ambassador Stevens’ judgments. Can you explain what—what you meant by that?

A: Yes. He had been in Benghazi for a considerable period of time; knew many, if not most, of the leaders; was seen to be well thought of in Benghazi; and had—if not adulation, he had a status of high favorable profile in Benghazi. And it was the combination of his background and experience and his knowledge of Benghazi, which exceeded that of many others in the State Department at least, that had people turn to him for advice and counsel on Benghazi.

Q: And I guess who in D.C., who in Washington, D.C., was giving him this deference to his judgments on—on Benghazi?

A: Well, I think that his reporting that came in and things of that sort carried weight because they were from him.

Q: I see.

A: This is also in the context of the opening sentence of the paragraph, his decision to travel, which was his decision alone to make.¹²

...

Q: On page 16 the [ARB] report also says this, and I’ll quote: “The longer a post is exposed to continuing high levels of violence, the more it comes to consider security incidents, which might otherwise provoke a reaction, as normal, thus raising the threshold for an incident to cause a reassessment of risk and mission continuation.”

Is that what happened in Libya?

A: We found that there was a process of rationalization that went on, that each of the incidents—and you will see them catalogued in the main on page 15 and 16—was explained in terms that in effect made it one-off, unlikely to happen again, not part of a buildup of activity, and treated as basically, if it affected us, we could cure that, but it didn’t really mean that us—the threat against us had increased or was serious.

And we found that a failing on the intelligence side, and we found it a failing on the perceptual side, that you get used to hard times, worse times make hard times look like picnics. So we were concerned about that, and we were concerned in the fact that people got caught up in this kind of an environment, and with

¹² *Id.* (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Pickering-transcript.pdf#page=162>).

busy, heavily hectic days, they tended to lose sight of the responsibility they had both to alert and then get the decisions made and then to follow up.

Q: And so how would the Board's recommendations on tripwires prevent that?

A: We would tell the State Department, you have got to put a process with tripwires, that once a tripwire is passed, it has to be notified, that the central system people in Washington and the field people are required to say, what are they going to do about this?¹³

¹³ *Id.* (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Pickering-transcript.pdf#page=67>).

QUESTION:

Did Secretary Clinton personally authorize cables that reduced State Department security?

Rep. Darrell Issa: “The Secretary of State was just wrong. She said she did not participate in this, and yet only a few months before the attack she outright denied security in her signature in a cable, April 2012.”

Source: *Fox and Friends*, Fox News (Apr. 24, 2013) (online at <http://video.foxnews.com/v/2323454879001/benghazi-report-takes-aim-at-state-department>).

ANSWER:

The suggestion that Secretary Clinton personally signed a State Department cable denying security requests prior to the attacks was awarded “Four Pinocchios” by the Washington Post Fact Checker—its highest rating for inaccurate statements—on two separate occasions. Instead, the cable at issue included a pro forma stamp with the Secretary of State’s name, similar to millions of other Department cables.

Washington Post Fact Checker:

On April 26, 2013, the Washington Post Fact Checker awarded Rep. Darrell Issa “Four Pinocchios”:

[E]very cable from an embassy bears the “signature” of the ambassador—and every cable from Washington bears the “signature” of the secretary of state.

...

Issa has no basis or evidence to show that Clinton had anything to do with this cable—any more than she personally approved a cable on proper e-mail etiquette. The odds are extremely long that Clinton ever saw or approved this memo, giving us confidence that his inflammatory and reckless language qualifies as a “whopper.”¹⁴

During a subsequent interview on March 2, 2014, Rep. Issa disputed the Fact Checker’s rating, claiming that he was merely “quoting something that was in somebody else’s report.” On March 3, 2014, the Fact Checker issued a second report reaffirming its award and noting that the report Rep. Issa referred to in his interview was issued under his name: “It is especially strange that he

¹⁴ *Issa’s Absurd Claim That Clinton’s ‘Signature’ Means She Personally Approved It*, Washington Post Fact Checker (Apr. 26, 2013) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/issas-absurd-claim-that-clintons-signature-means-she-personally-approved-it/2013/04/25/58c2f5b4-adf8-11e2-a986-eec837b1888b_blog.html).

would refer to a report he signed—and touted at the time as his own—as ‘someone else’s report’.”¹⁵

Chief of Staff to Former Secretary Powell:

Larry Wilkerson, who served as Chief of Staff to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, was interviewed by the Washington Post Fact Checker:

I can say that from being there with one secretary and reviewing the work of many other secretaries in my academic research, there are many, many cables the secretary never sees.¹⁶

Under Secretary for Political Affairs to Former Secretary Rice:

R. Nicholas Burns, who served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs under former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, was interviewed by the Washington Post Fact Checker:

“A very small fraction would be seen by the secretary of state,” said R. Nicholas Burns, a career diplomat who was undersecretary of state for political affairs under Rice.

Burns said he would only show a cable to Rice if it had very sensitive instructions for an ambassador and he wanted to be sure she agreed with his draft language. But generally he said the secretary is much too busy and would never see the cables. He added that sometimes even assistant secretaries would not view cables that are sent out under the secretary’s “signature.”

Burns noted that the confusion over “signature” is a common misunderstanding about State Department cables. He frequently has to correct historians from overseas who mistakenly believe the secretary’s name at the bottom of the cable has much meaning.¹⁷

Accountability Review Board Member and Former State Department Official:

On April 25, 2013, Richard Shinnick, a member of the independent Accountability Review Board and a former official at the Department of State, stated during an interview:

It just doesn’t make any sense to anybody who understands the State Department. ...

¹⁵ *Rep. Darrell Issa Disputes His Four Pinocchio Ratings*, Washington Post Fact Checker (Mar. 3, 2014) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/03/03/rep-darrell-issa-disputes-his-four-pinocchio-ratings/).

¹⁶ *Issa’s Absurd Claim That Clinton’s ‘Signature’ Means She Personally Approved It*, Washington Post Fact Checker (Apr. 26, 2013) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/issas-absurd-claim-that-clintons-signature-means-she-personally-approved-it/2013/04/25/58c2f5b4-adf8-11e2-a986-eec837b1888b_blog.html).

¹⁷ *Id.*

Every single cable going out is signed “Clinton,” it is the normal procedure. ...

Millions of cables come into the operation center every year, not thousands, millions. And they are all addressed Hillary Clinton.

So you can make a story that Hillary saw a cable and didn’t act on it or sent a cable out; it’s all bullsh*t, it’s all total bullsh*t.¹⁸

State Department Foreign Affairs Handbook:

Domestic telegrams originated within the Washington metropolitan area and transmitted through the 5th Floor Communications Center will bear the signature name of the Secretary at the end of the telegram.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Benghazi Review Panel Member: Fox-Promoted GOP Claims Against Clinton Are “Total Bullsh*t,”* Media Matters for America (Apr. 25, 2013) (online at <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2013/04/25/benghazi-review-panel-member-fox-promoted-gop-c/193773>).

¹⁹ Department of State, *Foreign Affairs Handbook, Preparing Telegrams in the Department* (Dec. 17, 2009) (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/89317.pdf#page=15).

QUESTION:

Why was security in Benghazi inadequate despite repeated requests?

Rep. Trey Gowdy: “Why was our security footprint so light despite the repeated requests for more security?”

Source: *Charlie Rose*, PBS (May 6, 2014) (online at www.charlierose.com/watch/60387043).

ANSWER:

The independent Accountability Review Board concluded that the Special Mission in Benghazi had inadequate security because of “[s]ystemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department.” The Board found several factors that led to support gaps, including a misplaced reliance on local security forces, short-term staffing challenges, and the temporary nature of the facility. Multiple Congressional investigations have confirmed these findings.

Accountability Review Board Report:

Systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department (the “Department”) resulted in a Special Mission security posture that was inadequate for Benghazi and grossly inadequate to deal with the attack that took place.

Security in Benghazi was not recognized and implemented as a “shared responsibility” by the bureaus in Washington charged with supporting the post, resulting in stove-piped discussions and decisions on policy and security. That said, Embassy Tripoli did not demonstrate strong and sustained advocacy with Washington for increased security for Special Mission Benghazi.

The short-term, transitory nature of Special Mission Benghazi’s staffing, with talented and committed, but relatively inexperienced, American personnel often on temporary assignments of 40 days or less, resulted in diminished institutional knowledge, continuity, and mission capacity.²⁰

...

Special Mission Benghazi’s uncertain future after 2012 and its “non-status” as a temporary, residential facility made allocation of resources for security and personnel

²⁰ Accountability Review Board, *Report on the Attacks in Benghazi, Libya, September 2012* (Dec. 18, 2012) (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=4).

more difficult, and left responsibility to meet security standards to the working-level in the field, with very limited resources.²¹

...

At the same time, the SMC's [Special Mission Compound] dependence on the armed but poorly skilled Libyan February 17 Martyrs' Brigade (February 17) militia members and unarmed, locally contracted Blue Mountain Libya (BML) guards for security support was misplaced.²²

...

Among various Department bureaus and personnel in the field, there appeared to be very real confusion over who, ultimately, was responsible and empowered to make decisions based on both policy and security considerations.²³

...

Simply put, in the months leading up to September 11, 2012, security in Benghazi was not recognized and implemented as a "shared responsibility" in Washington, resulting in stove-piped discussions and decisions on policy and security.²⁴

...

The DS [Diplomatic Security] Bureau showed a lack of proactive senior leadership with respect to Benghazi, failing to ensure that the priority security needs of a high risk, high threat post were met. At the same time, with attention in late 2011 shifting to growing crises in Egypt and Syria, the NEA [Near Eastern Affairs] Bureau's front office showed a lack of ownership of Benghazi's security issues, and a tendency to rely totally on DS for the latter. The Board also found that Embassy Tripoli leadership, saddled with their own staffing and security challenges, did not single out a special need for increased security for Benghazi.²⁵

...

The unique circumstances surrounding the creation of the mission in Benghazi as a temporary mission outside the realm of permanent diplomatic posts resulted in significant disconnects and support gaps.²⁶

²¹ *Id.* (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=5).

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.* (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=6).

²⁴ *Id.* (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=29).

²⁵ *Id.* (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=30).

²⁶ *Id.* (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=31).

...

The Board found the short-term, transitory nature of Benghazi's staffing to be another primary driver behind the inadequate security platform in Benghazi. Staffing was at times woefully insufficient considering post's security posture and high risk, high threat environment.²⁷

...

As it became clear that DS [Diplomatic Security] would not provide a steady complement of five TDY [temporary duty assignment] DS agents to Benghazi, expectations on the ground were lowered by the daunting task of gaining approvals and the reality of an ever-shifting DS personnel platform.²⁸

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Bipartisan Report:

The Department of State did not adequately support security requests from its own security personnel in Benghazi.²⁹

...

In the Department's late 2011 plan describing a transition to "locally staffed operations," one of the reasons given for that transition was that "DS does not have sufficient resources to sustain the current level of the security assets in Libya." [Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Charlene] Lamb commented on this issue in her interview with the Committee, stating that it was hard to sustain large numbers of DS agents on short-term tours because there is not a floating pool of agents so that to fill a gap in Libya she needed to create a gap elsewhere.³⁰

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

[T]he uncertain future of the Mission facility, due to its one-year expiration in December 2012, contributed to a lack of continuity for security staff and constrained decision-makers in Washington regarding the allocation of security enhancements to that facility.³¹

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Flashing Red: A Special Report on the Terrorist Attack at Benghazi* (Dec. 30, 2012) (online at www.collins.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/81d5e2d9-cc8d-45af-aa8b-b937c55c7208/Flashing-Red-HSGAC-Special-Report-final.pdf#page=19).

³⁰ *Id.* (online at http://www.collins.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/81d5e2d9-cc8d-45af-aa8b-b937c55c7208/Flashing%20Red-HSGAC%20Special%20Report%20final.pdf#page=20).

³¹ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=18).

...

Although the cable following the August 15 Emergency Action Committee [interagency security meeting held in Benghazi] stated that requests “for additional physical security upgrades and staffing needs” would be submitted separately to the Embassy in Tripoli, the Committee has not seen any evidence that those requests were passed on by the Embassy, including by the Ambassador, to State Department headquarters before the September 11 attacks in Benghazi.³²

...

State Department headquarters made the decision not to request an extension of the SST’s mission in August 2012, approximately one month prior to the attacks, because State believed that many of the duties of the SST could be accomplished by local security forces, DS agents, or other State Department capabilities.³³

...

DoD confirmed to the Committee that Ambassador Stevens declined two specific offers from General Carter Ham, then the head of AFRICOM, to sustain the SST in the weeks before the terrorist attacks.³⁴

House Oversight and Government Reform Democratic Committee Staff Report:

Benghazi lacked adequate security in part because it was a temporary post.³⁵

...

Witnesses confirmed that Benghazi, as a temporary post, was “excepted from office facility standards” and “was not eligible” for security upgrades from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, a key finding of the ARB report.³⁶

...

³² *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=20).

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=21).

³⁵ Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Status Update on Investigation of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi* (Sept. 19, 2013) (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status%20Update%20Report%2009-18-13.pdf#page=3).

³⁶ *Id.*

Individuals interviewed by Committee staff agreed that temporary deployments and personnel turnover were an ongoing challenge. The Diplomatic Security Desk Officer for Libya, for example, stated that the post could only take volunteers for security deployments, and that “everything that was provided to it had to come from somewhere else, someplace that something was already allotted to essentially.” He said:

A: As a temporary mission, there was no allotted agents or a pool of agents which just—there were no full-time positions we could send to Benghazi. So we had to draw from a pool of resources. We sent only high-threat-qualified agents. That pool was also being utilized in other areas of the world, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen. During this time frame, it was the backdrop of what was the Arab Spring, which was, you know, in recent history, at least, it’s an unprecedented time of political upheaval, which has caused numerous posts within NEA to actually go close, order departures, and have numerous security issues.

Q: So was this then a fairly shallow pool from which you could pull these resources at that point in time?

A: Yes. Relatively speaking. I mean, compared to all the agents that work with DS, it’s a much smaller pool. Less than half.

Q: So resources were an issue then?

A: Yes, I would say so.³⁷

...

State Department officials told Committee staff that, despite these requests, Charlene Lamb, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Programs within the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, decided in February 2012 to provide only three Diplomatic Security Agents to Benghazi. According to the Diplomatic Security Desk Officer, Deputy Assistant Secretary Lamb reportedly made this decision because she felt that Diplomatic Security Agents were being inappropriately used as drivers, a role that local staff could fill:

Q: Let me ask a question regarding that February period where DAS Lamb discovers that there are two DS agents being used as a driver as opposed to I guess conducting themselves as DS agents for movements or whatever their duties would require. I think you had mentioned that—at that point in time sets the number of five down to three? Is that what you said, something along those lines?

³⁷ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status%20Update%20Report%2009-18-13.pdf#page=45).

- A: That's correct. In conversations with—I don't recall exactly. It was around that time frame. But I definitely remember the meeting with DCM Polaschik, where it was set as three as far as, you know, DAS Lamb was my superior and my boss' superior. So when she said it was three, that's the number we tried to attain. And it was more of a program management is what we traditionally do in DS/IP, vice, hard skills, such as driving, which we would do doing protection but not overseas.
- Q: And did you ask her why three? Or did you query her further about, okay, we thought it was going to be five or they're asking for five, but now you are saying three. Why three? Did you query her about that?
- A: It was very clear to me that—from the conversations we had, that the prime reason that was made evident to me was the driving issue. And that is standard practice through the vast majority of the world is that LES or FSNs provide the drivers for the mission.
- Q: But DAS Lamb then said, okay, so now we're only going to provide three?
- A: She told me the number to provide was three.
- Q: And how far into the future does that directive carry her?
- A: That carried her right until I received word otherwise, which I never did. So three was the number that I always tried to obtain officially. As far as I was concerned, three.
- Q: So, from your perspective, it was your marching orders given to you by DAS Lamb that three was the number of agents that you were to try to supply—
- A: Yes.
- Q: —to post.
- A: Clearly, around the February 15, 16 time frame, that was made evidently clear to me.
- Q: And when you say “evidently clear,” she had a conversation with you?
- A: Yes. We spoke about it, not just with me directly but with my supervisor as well.
- Q: Was she emphatic about it?
- A: That was the number she wanted, yes.
- Q: And what about once post got LES drivers?

A: Which they did eventually. I believe in April, they started to get drivers. One TDY driver, for sure, went to Benghazi. And I know they hired two. At one point, I think one ended up leaving or something. But it remained at three, like I said, from February 15 until September 11.

Following a series of attacks against Western interests in June 2012, the Regional Security Officer in Libya, Diplomatic Security Desk Officer, and the Diplomatic Security Regional Director drafted and submitted a memorandum requesting five Diplomatic Security Agents for Benghazi, but Deputy Assistant Secretary Lamb did not approve the request. The Desk Officer described the process:

A: It was approved by my direct supervisors, and then it was upstairs for a while. And we didn't hear anything. We felt it urgent enough, my supervisor scheduled a meeting with DAS Lamb, and in the meeting with DAS Lamb, essentially the long and short of it, the memo was denied for additional resources, personnel-wise.

Q: Can you walk us through that in a little more detail? How long was it upstairs? So your immediate supervisor, that would be Mr. Bacigalupo?

A: At that time it was James Bacigalupo, correct.

Q: So he approved this action memorandum, and then it would go to Charlene Lamb. Is that correct?

A: It went to—I know it was in—I don't know where it went in between. Probably to her staff assistants or the deputy prior to her. But it definitely made it to her because that's who we had the meeting with.

Q: And how long was it up there before the meeting?

A: I think the memo actually didn't get sent up until after the incident with the UK protective detail, so it was probably mid-June, June 15th, I believe, the date on the memo. So I think it was late that week. Maybe June 18th. I can't recall it specifically.

Q: Okay. And what is your recollection of that meeting? Or why was it denied?

A: Well, I mean, by the memo, I thought it was pretty clear. I had outlined the anti-Western attacks. My feelings, along with the RSO's—and both RSOs opposed, and my superiors, we tried to advocate for additional security resources. It was denied. It wasn't outright denied. It was—she wanted to know specifically what programs that the additional agents would be working on.

Q: And so what was the response to that when she—was there an effort to justify the additional agents or—

A: Yes.

Q: And can you explain?

A: Certainly. I reached back to the RSO in Benghazi, and I told them the response that we had received from DAS Lamb and asked them to come up with what he would be doing, you know, what these agents would be—what programs they would be running. So he generated a list of items. The focus turned toward—after that, the focus turned toward physical security measures that could be implemented to help ease the workload of the agents that were already out there.

Q: I'm sorry. But given that there has been an attack on the consul, on the post, did you find it odd that the response from the requests—the recommendations for more agents—that the response back was, one of the programs—I mean, at least from my perspective, one of the programs, we would be protecting the compound. I mean, did you have any thoughts about that?

A: Obviously, I thought it should have been accepted. That's why I wrote it and sent it up.

Q: Sure.

A: I mean, I stand by the memo as it's written.³⁸

Deputy Assistant Secretary Charlene Lamb:

On Oct. 10, 2012, Charlene Lamb, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Programs, testified at a hearing before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform that “we had the correct number of assets in Benghazi at the time of 9/11 for what had been agreed upon.”³⁹

She also had this exchange:

Q: Now, Agent Lamb, how do you respond to concerns that you failed to respond to requests for additional special agents in Benghazi? You know, that is a serious charge there.

³⁸ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status%20Update%20Report%2009-18-13.pdf#page=47).

³⁹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Hearing on The Security Failures of Benghazi* (Oct. 10, 2012) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2012-10-10-Ser-No-112-193-FC-The-Security-Failures-of-Benghazi.pdf#page=57>).

A: Yes, sir. And we have evaluated that; I have evaluated it both with Eric Nordstrom and with a senior RSO that spent TDY time there, as well. I asked them to do a serious assessment of the numbers that were needed there.

When Mr. Nordstrom and I discussed the duties of the agents out in Benghazi, they were using one agent to drive the vehicle, and they were using another agent to watch classified communications equipment 24/7. So these are not normally duties that are assigned to DS agents.

So I just—I asked Eric to review that. And when Renee Crowningshield, another RSO, went to Benghazi, was also asked to review the numbers.

And Eric worked closely with post management, asked them to hire a driver, and we hired a driver, trained a driver. And then the driver took the place of what the DS agent was doing. And then they came up, through technical security means, a way around the need to have the 24/7 coverage.⁴⁰

Accountability Review Board Vice Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen:

On June 19, 2013, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Admiral Michael Mullen, Vice Chairman of the Accountability Review Board:

That then all goes back, from my perspective, on to Mr. Boswell [Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security] and Ms. Lamb's lap in terms of making sure security is all right, and yet it was, in fact, over the next many months that she fought it, didn't resource it, bureaucratically didn't answer, made it incredibly difficult on those who were trying to improve the security to achieve any kind of outcome they deemed favorable, and she just beat them down over time.⁴¹

...

In the end it's my view that Ms. Lamb won that debate, didn't want to extend it [DOD Site Security Team], wanted to—to quote her at one point in time—didn't want to be embarrassed by having DOD continue to provide security.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Id.* (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2012-10-10-Ser-No-112-193-FC-The-Security-Failures-of-Benghazi.pdf#page=58>).

⁴¹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Admiral Michael Mullen (June 19, 2013) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=136>).

⁴² *Id.* (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=100>).

Accountability Review Board Chairman Ambassador Thomas Pickering:

On June 4, 2013, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a deposition with Ambassador Thomas Pickering:

Q: And I wanted to talk to you about those repeated requests for more security staffing. Who did the ARB find was making those requests?

A: They came from generally DS, Diplomatic Security, personnel in Benghazi through Tripoli.

Q: And—

A: There also is reference here to Tripoli requests for additional staffing.

Q: And were those all on the DS side as in the RSO sending up requests for more security, or were there some requests coming also from the chief of mission?

A: Look, I'm not sure. It's conceivable that in the normal practice would be for one hand to support the other.

Q: Do you know who was sort of receiving the requests and not acting on them?

A: They went to Charlene Lamb, who had the responsibility for making the decisions.

Q: And what was happening at that point? Why was she not providing that additional security?

A: She explained—and I think it's available in the classified report, but if not, she explained that she felt that it was important to build up local staff; that the ratio of security personnel to substantive personnel in Benghazi was extremely out of sync; that the people who were assigned as security officers were doing jobs which local staff could have done, drivers, and they could have arranged a workaround for taking care of classified communications devices that they had to look after.

And so it was a combination of advice on ways to make better use of the people they had and/or to supplement those with local hires, all of which had been done in other places. On the other hand, it was clearly extremely very difficult to get reliable local hires in a place like Benghazi.

Q: And is that what you were talking about before when you were describing the sort of normalization term?

A: I would not use “normalization” or “new normal.”

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But as I understood it, new normal related to the situation where the local—the foreign government was not able to provide or would not provide the protection required, and therefore you had to seek other ways of providing that protection. And this would have fitted into the category, because it was clear the local government was unable to provide the protection required in Benghazi for our facility.

Q: And when Ms. Lamb was making those decisions, was that based on a policy that she was getting from above her or direction she was getting from above her?

A: No. She said on several occasions it was related to her feel for the situation.

Q: So you didn't find that that new normal policy was sort of coming down on high to Ms. Lamb?

A: No. If you're asking about factors that may have played a role, on one occasion there was a memorandum that I believe she authored saying to a regional bureau, if you want more people, you fund them. On another occasion she referred in discussion to 20 percent cuts in the DS budget.

To some extent we attempted to take this into account in a broader discussion in the report where we talk about the State Department having a serious attitude—nothing wrong with it—of being very careful about how it spends its money, in large measure because it has such a hard time getting it. And so there was this tension between funding and money and providing security, which was one of another set of tensions. We discussed earlier the tensions between dangers and mission. And we were aware of that and reflected it in the report.

Q: So I appreciate that you brought that up, because Ms. Lamb, when she came before the committee, was asked about the role of funding in her decisions not to provide additional security. And my recollection of that is that she said that there was no role for funding in those decisions. Can you elaborate further on what the ARB found?

A: Well, I gave you two examples of Mrs. Lamb's own statements that seem at least to be inconsistent with the broader point she made. Someone would have to ask her what they meant. I don't want to speculate.

Q: Despite the repeated requests for more security, and I want to call your attention to page 4 of the report, in the second paragraph under the second finding, the report explains that Embassy Tripoli did not demonstrate strong and sustained advocacy with Washington for increased security for Special Mission Benghazi. Do you see that?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Can you explain how the findings fit together; that there were repeated requests coming, but it was not strong and sustained advocacy?

A: Yes. The requests almost always originated in Benghazi. And because Benghazi was, since February 2011, considered a constituent post of the embassy at Tripoli, subordinate to it and dependent upon it, they were forwarded through either DS channels or open channel, regular channels from Benghazi to Tripoli to Washington. And there were cases, more than one, we believed, where Tripoli was not effective in following up and not strong in pushing forward the Benghazi concerns that it received from Benghazi.

Q: And who was it in Tripoli then who wasn't moving it forward? Was that someone on the DS side or the—

A: I think that principally on the DS side, but there was personnel churn. So the “who” relates to multiple personalities, and possibly the fact that there was such churn that past recommendations were not followed up well because the new people were not necessarily clued into the past recommendations or aware of the fact that they had to be followed up.⁴³

AFRICOM Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

On March 20, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Vice Admiral Charles “Joe” Leidig, Jr., the Deputy Commander for Military Operations at Africa Command.

In response to a question about why the Site Security Team (SST) was not extended, he responded:

My understanding was is [sic] that the situation had improved in Libya, and the Ambassador was comfortable with getting security from local Libyan sources, and he no longer needed the SST.⁴⁴

Commander of Special Operations Command Africa:

On March 14, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services Committee and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Rear Admiral Brian Losey, former Commander of Special Operations Command Africa.

⁴³ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Deposition of Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering (June 4, 2013) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Pickering-transcript.pdf#page=132>).

⁴⁴ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Vice Admiral Charles J. “Joe” Leidig, Jr. (Mar. 20, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8r%20-%20March%2020%2C%202014%20-%20Vice%20Admiral%20Charles%20Leidig%20Jr..pdf#page=12>).

In response to a question about Ambassador Stevens declining offers to extend the SST, Rear Admiral Losey stated:

I have no idea, but I do know this: The State Department was in control of whether they were going to have an SST or not. And it's because—the State Department made the decision on declining the SST. If Ambassador Stevens wanted to reinstate the SST, he could have so stated. There is no ambiguity on the notion that he wanted a reduction in the footprint.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Rear Admiral Brian Losey (Mar. 14, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/6r%20-%20March%2014%2C%202014%20-%20Rear%20Admiral%20Brian%20Losey.pdf#page=20>).

QUESTION:

Did Secretary of State Clinton order Secretary of Defense Panetta to “stand down?”

Rep. Darrell Issa: “We need to have an answer of when the Secretary of Defense had assets that he could have begun spinning up. Why there was not one order given to turn on one Department of Defense asset? I have my suspicions, which is Secretary Clinton told Leon to stand down, and we all heard about the stand down order for two military personnel. That order is undeniable.”

Source: Republican Party of New Hampshire, Concord GOP Committee and Merrimack County GOP Committee, *Lincoln-Reagan Dinner w/Rep. Darrell Issa* (Feb. 17, 2014) (online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZEoEiAn_CQ).

ANSWER:

None of the nine congressional and independent investigations identified any evidence to support this assertion. AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham and other senior military officials directly refuted it, and the Washington Post Fact Checker gave it “Four Pinocchios”—its highest rating for inaccurate statements—on two separate occasions.

Washington Post Fact Checker:

On February 21, 2014, the Washington Post Fact Checker awarded Rep. Darrell Issa “Four Pinocchios” for his claim:

It is correct that Issa poses a series of questions, but his repeated use of the phrase “stand down” and his personalizing of the alleged actions (“Secretary Clinton;” “Leon”) leave a distinct impression that either Clinton or Obama delivered some sort of instruction to Panetta to not act as forcefully as possible. He even incorrectly asserts that not a single order was given to use any DOD asset. One could argue the response was slow, bungled or poorly handled. But Issa is crossing a line when he suggests there was no response—or a deliberate effort to hinder it. Four Pinocchios.⁴⁶

During a subsequent television appearance, Chairman Issa disputed the Fact Checker’s rating, claiming that he was not using the term “stand down” in “some sort of explicit way.” On March

⁴⁶ *Issa’s ‘Suspicions’ That Hillary Clinton Told Panetta to ‘Stand Down’ on Benghazi*, Washington Post Fact Checker (Feb. 21, 2014) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/02/21/issas-suspicions-that-hillary-clinton-told-panetta-to-stand-down-on-benghazi/).

3, 2014, the Fact Checker issued another report, concluding that “Issa’s new explanations do not pass scrutiny” and reaffirming its award of “Four Pinocchios.”⁴⁷

House Armed Services Committee Republican Staff Report:

“[A]s to specifics” of the U.S. reaction, Secretary Panetta testified to the Senate that the President “left that up to us.” Secretary Panetta said the President was “well informed” about events and worried about American lives. He and General Dempsey also testified they had no further contact with the President, nor did Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ever communicate with them that evening. ...

General Dempsey answered “no” when asked by the House Armed Services Committee if he had “any restrictions placed on whatever it is that you thought needed to get done to respond to ... Benghazi.”⁴⁸

AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham:

On April 9, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview with General Carter Ham, AFRICOM’s Commander:

Q: On the night of the attacks, did you or to your knowledge anyone in your command receive any order from then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to stand down?

A: No, and we would not receive direct communications from the Secretary of State.⁴⁹

AFRICOM Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

On March 20, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview with Vice Admiral Charles J. Leidig, AFRICOM’s Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

⁴⁷ *Rep. Darrell Issa Disputes His Four-Pinocchio Ratings*, Washington Post Fact Checker (Mar. 3, 2014) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/03/03/rep-darrell-issa-disputes-his-four-pinocchio-ratings/).

⁴⁸ House Committee on Armed Services, *Majority Interim Report: Benghazi Investigation Update* (Feb. 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C4E16543-8F99-430C-BEBA-0045A6433426#page=15).

⁴⁹ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Interview of General Carter Ham* (Apr. 9, 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9r%20-%20April%209%2C%202014%20-%20General%20Carter%20Ham.pdf#page=127).

Q: And just to follow up on that point, there have been some statements to this effect, and I would just like to ask for your comment on them, but on the night of the attacks, did you or to your knowledge anyone in your command receive any order from then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to stand down?

A: I never received any orders from the Secretary of State or heard of any orders from the Secretary of State.⁵⁰

AFRICOM Director of Operations and Cyber:

On March 18, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview with Rear Admiral Richard Landolt, AFRICOM's Director of Operations and Cyber:

Q: This will be our final question, but there have been some public statements about some of the events or discussions, perhaps, in the interagency on the night of the attacks, and we would just like to ask you on the night of the attacks, did you or, to your knowledge, anyone in your command receive any order from then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to stand down?

A: Not at all. We did not.⁵¹

Department of State Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Policy Planning:

On September 12, 2013, staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview with Jake Sullivan, the Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, who described Secretary of State Clinton's actions on the night of the attacks:

She was deeply engaged. She not only was receiving regular reports and updates, but she was proactively reaching out. She spoke with Director David Petraeus. She spoke with the national security adviser on more than one occasion. She participated in the SVTS, and she made other phone calls that night, and from the time she first learned of it, this was the only thing that she was focused on.⁵²

⁵⁰ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Vice Admiral Charles J. "Joe" Leidig, Jr. (Mar. 20, 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8r%20-%20March%2020%2C%202014%20-%20Vice%20Admiral%20Charles%20Leidig%20Jr..pdf#page=54).

⁵¹ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Rear Admiral Richard B. Landolt (Mar. 18, 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/7r%20-%20March%2018%2C%202014%20-%20Rear%20Admiral%20Richard%20Landolt.pdf#page=64).

⁵² House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Jake Sullivan, Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Policy Planning, Department of State (Sept. 12, 2013) (referenced in Letter from Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings to Chairman Darrell E. Issa, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Feb. 21, 2014) (online at

He also explained:

She provided very clear guidance that whether it was the diplomatic security service, or it was our diplomats in Washington and out in Tripoli that no effort be spared to respond to this as effectively as possible. She communicated that same message to all of the interagency colleagues with whom she spoke that night.⁵³

www.democrats.oversight.house.gov/press-releases/cummings-to-issa-apologize-and-withdraw-baseless-accusation-that-clinton-personally-ordered-panetta-to-standdown-in-benghazi/)).

⁵³ *Id.*

QUESTION:

Was the CIA security team improperly prevented from departing for the Benghazi diplomatic compound?

Rep. Christopher Smith: “Why was the CIA security team repeatedly ordered to stand down after the attack began, and who made that decision?”

Source: House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearing on Benghazi: Where is the State Department Accountability* (Sept. 18, 2013) (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg82842/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg82842.pdf#page=45).

ANSWER:

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence interviewed not only the CIA security team members on the ground that night, but also their supervisors. According to the House Intelligence Committee’s Ranking Member, Republicans and Democrats agreed that although “some security officers voiced a greater urgency to depart for the compound,” senior officers “were concerned they might be sending their security team into an ambush so they tried to obtain better intelligence and heavy weapons before dispatching the team.”

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman:

On September 9, 2014, Rep. Mike Rogers, the Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, stated during an interview:

We interviewed everybody in that chain of command, including the individual that they’re calling “Bob” [their supervisor] on the compound, including the station chief who was in Tripoli at the time.

So what I think they’re referring to is these guys grouped up and they had an unofficial relationship with the mission force, meaning that there was no—there was not their responsibility to go and rescue them, right? Their job was to protect the annex, because it was a sizable annex, a lot of people there. Their job was to provide security there. But they had this unofficial relationship. Why? Because when they went to talk to the State Department agents, they realized then that they were not in a position to protect themselves.

So these guys are heroes from the word go. I hope their book sells a million copies.

The problem is, what happened was, the commander on the ground, this guy they’re calling “Bob,” when these folks came up, they got in the vehicle and said, “Hey, we made a promise, we’re going.” He said, “Wait a minute, I need to figure out (a) what’s going

on, and (b) if I can get you any better weapons and maybe even some help to go. We don't know if there is 5 people attacking the place or 500.”

And so that dispute ended up—it wasn't even a dispute—it was the commander on the ground making a decision. I think it took 23 minutes before they all, including that commander by the way, got in a car and went over and rescued those individuals.⁵⁴

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Ranking Member:

On September 5, 2014, Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, issued a statement:

The bipartisan, unanimously adopted report by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) found that, prior to the CIA security team departing for the Temporary Mission Facility (TMF), the Annex leadership deliberated thoughtfully, reasonably, and quickly about whether further security could be provided to the team. Although some security officers voiced a greater urgency to depart for the compound, no evidence was ever found by the Committee that CIA personnel were ever told to stand down. This finding is consistent with the Senate's report on Benghazi, as well.

The security officers and contractors told HPSCI about the roughly 25 minutes between the time that the Temporary Mission Facility alerted the Annex to being under attack and the time that the Annex team departed for the TMF to provide security support. The team said they were prepped and ready to go within minutes, but the senior CIA officers responsible for the welfare of all Annex personnel were concerned they might be sending their security team into an ambush so they tried to obtain better intelligence and heavy weapons before dispatching the team. In fact, a high ranking CIA official told the Committee that, had things had turned out differently and those sent to rescue the personnel at the TMF were killed on arrival, he knew he would be responding to criticism about why additional rescue plan options were not more thoroughly evaluated, and therefore, he would not second guess leadership decisions made on the ground that night.

After interviewing these individuals, including those writing the book, and all of the others on the ground that night, both Republicans and Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that there was not, in fact, an order to stand down and no evidence was found to support such a claim.

The Chief and the team should be praised for their heroic efforts in the middle of a crisis, not second-guessed or criticized two years after the fact.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Fox & Friends*, Fox News (Sept. 9, 2014) (online at <http://video.foxnews.com/v/3775239942001/isis-update-what-does-rep-rogers-want-to-hear-from-obama/#sp=show-clips>).

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Ranking Member:

On September 8, 2014, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence issued a statement:

As Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, I was intimately involved in our committee's extensive investigation into what went on during the tragedy on September 11, 2012 that cost Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans their lives.

The committee spent thousands of hours examining a wide variety of documentation and conducted hours upon hours of interviews with eyewitnesses and intelligence officials, including the same individuals stating that their annex chief issued a "stand down" order.

I strongly disagree with their characterization of the situation. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence unanimously approved its bipartisan report that conclusively lays this and other issues to rest once and for all. The committee found no evidence that a "stand down" order was issued.

Instead, what occurred that September night was a series of decisions and judgment calls made by individuals trying desperately to save American lives. The committee found that our personnel in Benghazi reacted to the attack in a heroic manner as they worked to take control of the situation. We rely on our personnel stationed abroad each and every day to make tough decisions in dangerous, stressful, and often life-threatening circumstances. The September 2012 attack in Benghazi was one of these cases. Throughout our exhaustive investigation, we found no evidence whatsoever that the decisions made on the ground that night cost American lives, or that different decisions would have achieved a better result. I have full confidence in the actions taken by the annex chief during this attack and I am certain he did whatever he could to meet the challenges of the situation.⁵⁶

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Senior Member:

On September 5, 2014, Rep. Adam Schiff, a Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Select Committee on Benghazi, issued a statement:

⁵⁵ *Statement by Ranking Member Dutch Ruppersberger, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (Sept. 5, 2014) (online at <http://democrats.benghazi.house.gov/news/press-releases/cummings-issues-statement-on-latest-benghazi-allegations>).*

⁵⁶ *Statement by Rep. Jan Schakowsky, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (Sept. 8, 2014) (online at www.schakowsky.house.gov/press-releases/schakowsky-statement-on-renewed-allegations-of-a-supposed-stand-down-order-in-benghazi-libya/).*

These so-called new allegations were examined in detail by both the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, which concluded that there was no ‘stand down’ order. Instead, we found that our personnel acted heroically and appropriately in trying to secure local assistance and avoid ambush. Nor did we find any evidence that a different course of action would have saved—rather than jeopardized—more lives. To second guess these decisions made in the fog of battle is both unfair to the brave personnel involved and highly irresponsible.⁵⁷

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Republican Update:

In January 2014, Republicans on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence issued an “Update on Benghazi”:

The Annex response team acted heroically to evacuate Americans at the Temporary Mission Facility (TMF).

- The team responded to a call for help and almost certainly saved lives despite putting the Annex at increased risk and not being a part of the TMF’s formal security plan.
- The Annex team had necessary authority to depart for the TMF. Once prepared, officers engaged in a tactical discussion about the threat they faced at the TMF, and what weapons and external support to bring to TMF. During the discussion, there was a delay as the tactical situation was discussed, but HPSCI found no evidence that the team was ordered or directed to stand down.⁵⁸

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

Two armored vehicles were prepared so the security team could respond from the Annex. Approximately 20-25 minutes after the first call came into the Annex that the Temporary Mission Facility was under attack, a security team left the Annex for the Mission compound. In footage taken from the Annex’s security cameras, the security team can be observed departing the CIA Annex at 10:03 p.m. Benghazi time. During the period between approximately 9:40 p.m. and 10:03 p.m. Benghazi time, the Chief of Base and security team members attempted to secure assistance and heavy weapons (such as .50 caliber truck-mounted machine guns) from the 17th February Brigade and other militias that had been assisting the United States. Then, the team drove to the Mission facility and made their way onto the Mission compound in the face of enemy fire, arriving in the vicinity of the compound at approximately 10:10 p.m. Benghazi time. The Committee

⁵⁷ *Statement by Rep. Adam Schiff*, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (Sept. 5, 2014) (online at www.schiff.house.gov/press-releases/rep-adam-schiff-responds-to-new-benghazi-allegations/).

⁵⁸ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *HPSCI January 2014 Update on Benghazi* (Jan. 2014) (online at www.intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/HPSCIBenghaziUpdateJan2014.pdf).

explored claims that there was a “stand down” order given to the security team at the Annex. Although some members of the security team expressed frustration that they were unable to respond more quickly to the Mission compound, the Committee found no evidence of intentional delay or obstruction by the Chief of Base or any other party.⁵⁹

...

According to informal notes obtained from the CIA, the security team left for the Annex without the formal approval of the Chief of Base, *see* attachments to e-mail from CIA staff [REDACTED] to CIA staff [REDACTED], September 23, 2012. However, a Memorandum for the Record prepared by the Deputy Chief of Base specifically states that the Chief “authorized the move” and the Chief told the Committee: “We launched our QRF [Quick Reaction Force] as soon as possible down to the State [Department] compound.”⁶⁰

Accountability Review Board Report:

Just prior to receiving the TDY RSO’s distress call shortly after 2142 local, the head of Annex security heard multiple explosions coming from the north in the direction of the SMC. The Annex security head immediately began to organize his team’s departure and notified his superiors, who began to contact local security elements to request support. The Annex response team departed its compound in two vehicles at approximately 2205 local. The departure of the Annex team was not delayed by orders from superiors; the team leader decided on his own to depart the Annex compound once it was apparent, despite a brief delay to permit their continuing efforts, that rapid support from local security elements was not forthcoming.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=5).

⁶⁰ *Id.* at fn. 13 (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=6).

⁶¹ Accountability Review Board, *Report on the Attacks in Benghazi, Libya, September 2012* (Dec. 18, 2012) (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=23).

QUESTION:

Did the Pentagon order four military personnel in Tripoli to “stand down?”

Rep. Jason Chaffetz: “We had proximity, we had capability, we had four individuals in Libya armed, ready to go, dressed, about to get into the car to go to the airport to go help their fellow countrymen who were dying and being killed and under attack in Benghazi and they were told to stand down. ... [T]hat’s as sickening and depressing and disgusting as anything I have seen. That is not the American way. We had people that were getting killed, we had people who are willing to risk their lives to go save them and somebody told them to stand down.”

Source: *Hannity*, Fox News (May 6, 2013) (online at www.foxnews.com/on-air/hannity/transcript/2013/05/07/president-obamas-benghazi-lies-unravel).

ANSWER:

Multiple bipartisan investigations have determined that no “stand down” order was issued to military personnel in Tripoli on the night of the attacks. U.S. military officials throughout the chain of command report that an order was issued “to remain in place” in Tripoli to provide security and medical assistance, which saved the lives of wounded evacuees.

House Armed Services Committee Republican Staff Report:

There was no “stand down” order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi. However, because official reviews after the attack were not sufficiently comprehensive, there was confusion about the roles and responsibilities of these individuals.⁶²

Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chair:

On June 27, 2013, Rep. Martha Roby, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services and a Member of the Select Committee on Benghazi, stated during an interview:

We also learned that Commander Gibson was not ordered to “stand down” by higher command authorities in response to an understandable desire to lead Special Forces group

⁶² House Committee on Armed Services, *Majority Interim Report: Benghazi Investigation Update* (Feb. 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C4E16543-8F99-430C-BEBA-0045A6433426#page=3).

to Benghazi in the wake of the attack. Rather, he was ordered to remain in Tripoli to defend Americans in anticipation of further attacks. Commander Gibson acknowledged that had he deployed to Benghazi, not only would Americans in Tripoli have been left defenseless, but his forces could not have arrived in Benghazi soon enough to make a difference. These are important facts to clarify because there have been rumors and reports to the contrary.⁶³

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

The Committee has reviewed the allegations that U.S. personnel, including in the IC or DoD, prevented the mounting of any military relief effort during the attacks, but the Committee has not found any of these allegations to be substantiated.⁶⁴

Commander of Special Operations Command Africa:

On June 26, 2013, Rear Admiral Brian Losey, Commander of Special Operations Command Africa, provided a transcribed briefing to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services:

There was never any order from Commander Special Operations Command Africa, myself, nor Commander Joint Special Operations Task Force Trans-Sahara to any elements in Libya to, quote, “stand down from responding to Americans under attack.” The team deployed to Libya and had the inherent authority, direction, approvals, and rules of engagement to protect Americans and American interests.⁶⁵

On March 14, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted another transcribed interview of Rear Admiral Losey:

There was never an order to stand down. The order, as I communicated it to the director of operations, was to remain in place and continue to provide security in Tripoli because of the uncertain environment. That’s piece number one.

...

⁶³ *Roby Provides Update on Benghazi Investigation*, Website of Rep. Martha Roby (June 27, 2013) (online at www.robby.house.gov/press-release/roby-provides-update-benghazi-investigation).

⁶⁴ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=30).

⁶⁵ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Briefing on AFRICOM and SOCAFRICA and the Terrorist Attacks in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012* (June 26, 2013) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=ACD8F08D-39B9-4FD8-B98C-210BF9D11CD9#page=105).

So Colonel [REDACTED] had the latitude to move with the initial element that responded to the attacks had he chosen to do so. He chose to remain in place because of the security situation in Tripoli, the uncertainties, and the possibility of a cascading effect or plans that we didn't know about.

I think the second piece—and you mentioned Americans under attack. And I note that, even as DCM Hicks recounted that evening's events, he said specifically that that four-man element would have moved forward to provide airfield security, which was our understanding at the time that we said, remain in Tripoli.

Because, at that point, our understanding was that the Americans had been consolidated. ... Coordination for aircraft to bring back the wounded were already in effect. And the aircraft that was to take Colonel [REDACTED] back to Benghazi could not go wheels-up until sunrise. And that sunrise time was 0649 in Tripoli.

If you count in before morning nautical twilight, which I think is 15 minutes or so, and an hour-and-a-half transit for 416 miles at 300 knots, you're looking at not getting there until well after Americans had consolidated.

And still the primary concern, uncertainties of the security situation in Tripoli. The only four Americans, military, that were providing situational awareness on what was happening in Tripoli: the medic that was there, and, again, DCM Hicks specifically mentioned his nurse, Jackie, that stayed on station there. Ryan Self was later awarded for his actions in saving some lives down there on the ground.

So we didn't see a lot of benefit; we saw a significant tradeoff. Four guys could've—could have—added some measure to the airfield in Benghazi, but it was Colonel [REDACTED] and his communicator and a medic and a weapons operator, a weapons NCO with a broken foot or a foot in a cast. And our calculus was, you know, the tactical value of that as opposed to the situational awareness they were already providing for us in Tripoli and the uncertainties there were part of what drove our decision.⁶⁶

Commander of Special Operations Team in Tripoli:

On June 26, 2013, the Commander of the four-man Special Operations Team in Tripoli on the night of the attacks, provided a transcribed briefing to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services:

Q: At the May 8 hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Gregory Hicks, who was the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy

⁶⁶ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Rear Admiral Brian Losey (Mar. 14, 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/6%20-%20March%2014%2C%202014%20-%20Rear%20Admiral%20Brian%20Losey.pdf#page=48).

in Tripoli that you have referred to, on the day of Benghazi attacks, he was asked by a Member, and I quote, “You believed help was needed in Benghazi, and there was a SOF unit, Special Operations unit, ordered to stand down, correct?” And Mr. Hicks replied “yes” to this question.

Do you agree that you and your team were ordered to, quote, “stand down”?

A: Madam Chairman, I was not ordered to stand down. I was ordered to remain in place. “Stand down” implies that we cease all operations, cease all activities. We continued to support the team that was in Tripoli. We continued to maintain visibility of the events as they unfolded.

Q: And, in hindsight, which we have tried in asking a lot of these questions to make sure that we are looking at this situation based on what you knew at the time, and, of course, looking back on what we know now, should you and your team have gone to Benghazi?

A: Madam Chairman, if we would have went to Benghazi, it could have had catastrophic—are you talking about the first plane or the second plane, Madam Chairman?

Q: The second plane, when you were told not to go.

A: The Special Forces medic was instrumental in providing the support to the wounded that returned. We would not have been in Tripoli in order to provide that support if we would have got on the plane. The decision by my higher headquarters to not get on that plane was the correct decision, in hindsight.⁶⁷

On March 5, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of the Commander of the four-man Special Operations Team:

Q: [C]an you elaborate a bit more on what the Special Forces medic did at the airport and why he was so valuable to that effort?

A: I can’t speak to specifics, sir, because I sent the team to the airport. But the report that I got from the guys on the team whenever they got back is he provided aid in transportation along with the U.S. embassy nurse for the two that were wounded. One was severely wounded. As I recall, he had three—he had wounds on three of his extremities, one arm, two legs. And he was—quite honestly, that right there is a catastrophic wound.

⁶⁷ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Briefing on AFRICOM and SOCAFRICA and the Terrorist Attacks in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012* (June 26, 2013) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=ACD8F08D-39B9-4FD8-B98C-210BF9D11CD9#page=87).

He was able to stabilize him and get him to the hospital until they could get Medivac out. And I guess once they got him stabilized, they then went back and received the remains of Ambassador Stevens and the other that were killed, murdered, and was able to secure those remains and keep them away from the Libyan authorities, that at the time it's my understanding they wanted to provide an autopsy on the Americans that were killed. And the medic is—he's an imposing man. And so he was able to dissuade them from doing that.

Q: And when you say that he provided invaluable medical assistance, is it possible—possible he saved that individual's life?

A: Not being a—not being a doctor, that's my assessment. And everything that I heard is that, yes, he was instrumental in that.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

A: And for those actions, sir, if you will read later on in my testimony, he was recommended for the Bronze Star for those actions.⁶⁸

On April 9, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of General Carter Ham, Commander of Africa Command:

Q: Is it still an accurate reflection, that you weren't in direct contact with Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED]—

A: That is correct.

Q: —on the night of the attacks?

General Ham, you then continued to state this—or the exchange continues [from June 26, 2013 briefing before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations], and I quote, “Mr. Conaway: Whose decision was that?”

“General Ham: Rear Admiral Losey, as the commander of the Special Operations Command Africa.

“Mr. Conaway: Okay. Did you agree with that decision, I guess?”

“General Ham: I didn't know of it at the time. I certainly agree with it now,” close quote.

⁶⁸ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Commander of Special Operations Team in Tripoli (Mar. 5, 2014) (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/3%20-%20March%205%2C%202014%20-%20LTC%2C%20Military%20Trainer.pdf#page=41).

General, I'd just like to ask, do you still agree that the order given by Admiral Losey was—do you still agree with that decision? And if so, why?

A: I do agree with Admiral Losey's decision. At the time, the situation in Tripoli was very uncertain. There was a real concern, significant concern on the part of the Embassy that the Embassy and its personnel in Tripoli might be threatened. And so there was a necessity to make sure there was adequate security there.

And Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] and his team were among the only security elements that could have played out—or could have contributed to security. And they did. It's my understanding after the fact that they were very significantly involved in securing the movement of U.S. personnel from one facility to consolidate in a single facility.

And, importantly, Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] had with him a medical person, well-trained, that was necessary. And I think, if I remember the timeline right, had Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] and team moved to Benghazi, then by the time the people from Benghazi actually got to Tripoli, there would not have been a medical person in Tripoli.

So it is very, very understandable to me why Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] wanted to go to Benghazi. Had I been in his shoes, I believe I would have wanted to do the same thing. But I believe the decision to say, no, you have a valid mission in Tripoli, unknown threat, I think, was a sound military decision.⁶⁹

Later in the interview, he explained:

Q: Turning back again, General, to Exhibit 4, the June 26, 2013, transcript, I would like to draw your attention to an exchange on—at the bottom of page 36, the top of page 37.

This is an exchange between you and the chairman, and the chairman states, and I quote, "Sure, this might be a good time to ask. At some point, you know, in the months that have gone by, the intervening time, I heard that you made the statement that you were prepared to go to their aid, and somebody told you no, and you said, We are going anyway. Is that all some supposition that comes from some reporter?"

"General Ham: Yes, sir, no one ever told me no," close quote.

General, did anyone on the night of the attacks ever instruct you to stand down or not go to the aid of Americans in Benghazi?

⁶⁹ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of General Carter Ham (Apr. 9, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9 - April 9%2C 2014 - General Carter Ham.pdf#page=71>).

A: They did not.⁷⁰

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey:

On June 12, 2013, General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified at a hearing before the Senate Committee on the Budget:

Q: I wanted to ask Chairman Dempsey, in follow-up to what Senator Johnson just asked you about the attack on the consulate in Benghazi, something that I have wanted to know an answer to, which is that on February 7th you testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, and you were asked a question by Senator Graham, and he asked you whether General Ham had issued a stand-down order to the military personnel in Tripoli or elsewhere who were preparing to go to assist those in Benghazi.

Then we heard before the House Oversight Committee that Mr. Hicks, who was the former Deputy Chief of Mission, said that Colonel Gibson, who was on the ground in Tripoli, did receive a stand-down order, and so, General Dempsey, I have not had an opportunity to follow up with you based on the February 7th testimony. Mr. Hicks testified that he believed this stand-down order came from AFRICOM or Special Operations Command in Africa.

General Dempsey, can you help me understand who issued the stand-down order and what happened there, why the special forces that wanted to go with, I understand it, under Colonel Gibson in Tripoli were told not to go and who gave them that order, from there they wanted to go and help in Benghazi on that night?

A: Yes, thanks, Senator. Based on that testimony I went back and—

Q: I had a feeling you would. That is why I wanted to—

A: Yes, of course. And there were two different groups of—there were six people, not all working for the same command. Two of them were working with Joint Special Operations Command. They were collocated with another agency of Government in Tripoli. And four were working under the direct line of authority of Special Operations Command Europe—or AFRICOM, AFSOC. And it was the four you are speaking about. The other two went. The other four, by the time they contacted their command center in Stuttgart, they were told that the individuals in Benghazi were on the way back and that they would be better used at the Tripoli airport because one of them was a medic, that they would be better used to receive the casualties coming back from Benghazi, and that if they had gone, they would have simply passed each other in the air. And that is the answer I received.

⁷⁰ *Id.* (online at www.armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9%20-%20April%209%2C%202014%20-%20General%20Carter%20Ham.pdf#page=126).

Q: Okay. So—

A: So they were not told to stand down. A stand-down means do not do anything. They were told to—that the mission they were asked to perform was not in Benghazi but was at Tripoli airport.

Q: Can I ask you, General, they had requested to go, though.

A: That is correct.

Q: They asked to go to support what was happening in Benghazi from Tripoli, correct?

A: That is correct.

Q: And they were told, from what you are saying, not to go because of the timing—

A: Because of timing and that they would be—they would contribute more by going to the Tripoli airport to meet the casualties upon return.⁷¹

Accountability Review Board Vice Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen:

On June 19, 2013, staff and Members from the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Admiral Michael Mullen, Vice Chairman of the independent Accountability Review Board and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

A: In fact, when I heard Mr. Hicks' testimony, I went—I specifically went to look at that aspect of what had happened. And in fact the direction that was given, I think it's Colonel Gibson, Lieutenant Colonel Gibson, I think—I know the direction that was given him, after he and his forces had helped Mr. Hicks redeploy, if you will, the Americans from the embassy compounds to the annex, after he had helped do that.

Attorney: Just to clarify, that's in Tripoli.

A: This is in Tripoli.

He checked in with his command, which was SOCAFRICA. And he was given direction to hold in place.

There was never direction given to him to stand down. He was then remissioned consistent with what General Dempsey said in his testimony the other day.

⁷¹ Senate Committee on the Budget, *Hearing on The President's Fiscal Year 2014 Defense Budget* (June 12, 2013) (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113shrg85718/pdf/CHRG-113shrg85718.pdf#page=348).

...

Q: The four-person team that we've talked about staying behind in Tripoli, you had mentioned something along the lines of this was Mr. Hicks' only security left or something along those lines. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but can you repeat what you were saying?

A: Well, he has got—he used these individuals most of the night to reposition people out to the Annex, the Annex in Tripoli, and they were the only military members left that could provide any kind of security capability and capacity, and so from my perspective—and what doesn't get much discussion in all this is sort of the backdrop of Tripoli which everybody was concerned about before Benghazi, the Benghazi incident, during it, and after.

So from a commander's perspective there's some wisdom in telling him to hold in place until we can kind of sort this out, combined with the fact that by every indication it was over out east and everybody was coming back.

Q: And that was going to be my follow-up question. Was it known that Tripoli wouldn't experience an attack that night?

A: No.

Q: So that was a possibility?

A: Absolutely.⁷²

...

Had Gibson and the other three gotten on an airplane, they would have flown past the plane bringing those who—out of Benghazi, some of whom were wounded. And an untold story here is the heroic efforts of the medic actually on that airport coming from Benghazi to Tripoli, which there are those that believe kept a couple of those wounded alive to get them to Tripoli, which would then allow continued triage to put them on a C-17 pretty rapidly and get them up to Landstuhl. So I say that because the focus of the medical aspect on this and the medic who remained in Tripoli was absolutely critical. That's where the focus was at that time.⁷³

⁷² House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Admiral Michael Mullen (June 19, 2013) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=56>).

⁷³ *Id.* (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=57>).

PolitiFact Rated Claim as “False”:

On May 6, 2013, PolitiFact’s “Truth-O-Meter” issued the following “ruling” regarding this claim:

Our ruling

Chaffetz told Fox News that “we had people that were getting killed, we had people who are willing to risk their lives to go save them and somebody told them to stand down.”

But it’s clear from Hicks’ testimony that four Americans “getting killed” in Benghazi were already dead when the decision was made to keep the Special Forces team in Tripoli. The mortar attack was over. A Defense Department drone watched overhead in Benghazi as Libyan militia members helped Americans get to the airport.

Chaffetz, however, says the team was available to go save “people that were getting killed,” calling the order to stand down “sickening and depressing and disgusting.” His office clarifies he meant that the team might have prevented additional casualties if attacks had continued—an explanation utterly missing from his national TV appearance. We rate the claim False.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ *Jason Chaffetz Says Americans Ready to Save Men ‘Getting Killed’ in Benghazi Were Told to Stand Down*, PolitiFact, Tampa Bay Times (May 6, 2013) (online at www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2013/may/14/jason-chaffetz/rep-jason-chaffetz-says-special-forces-ready-save-/).

QUESTION:

Did the Pentagon fail to deploy military assets that could have saved lives on the night of the attacks?

Rep. Trey Gowdy: “Well, Greta, your viewers would still have the same unanswered questions that we have ... why we didn’t have any assets moving during the siege itself?”

Source: *On the Record*, Fox News (May 6, 2014) (online at www.youtube.com/embed/KqsogIdiEOg?rel=0&showinfo=0&autohide=1).

ANSWER:

Interviews with nine military officials in the chain of command, numerous congressional reports, and the independent Accountability Review Board have all examined the military response. Each investigation has concluded that although the military allocated and mobilized various assets to address the crisis, their response was limited by the availability of resources and the status of forces on the night of the attacks.

AFRICOM Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

On March 20, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, conducted a transcribed interview of Charles J. Leidig, who served as Deputy Commander for Military Operations at Africa Command:

From my perspective, being in the AFRICOM Command Center, we were given access to every capability that was available and as quickly as it could move. I never saw at any moment during the evening where whatever we needed people weren’t doing their absolute best effort to get us that capability.⁷⁵

House Armed Services Committee Republican Staff Report:

When the Department of State learned the SMC was being assaulted on September 11, officials notified DOD’s National Military Command Center at the Pentagon. Thus began a chain of events that involved DOD allocating various forces to the crisis. The response decisions were based upon what forces were available and could readily be brought to bear on the situation as it was understood by senior leaders.

⁷⁵ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Vice Admiral Charles J. “Joe” Leidig, Jr. (Mar. 20, 2014) (online at [http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8 - March 20%2C 2014 - Vice Admiral Charles Leidig Jr..pdf#page=45](http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8-March%202014-Vice%20Admiral%20Charles%20Leidig%20Jr..pdf#page=45)).

The first step DOD took upon learning of the attack involved a U.S. drone that was overflying Darnah, a city in northeastern Libya. AFRICOM's operations officer immediately redirected the unarmed Predator to Benghazi, which was about an hour's flight time away. Separately, following the meeting in the White House, Secretary Panetta (in consultation with General Ham, General Dempsey, and others) verbally authorized three specific actions. First, two Marine FAST platoons in Rota, Spain were ordered to prepare to deploy; one bound for Benghazi and one destined for Tripoli. Second, a special operations unit assigned to the European Command, known as a Commander's In-Extremis Force (CIF), which was training in Croatia was ordered to move to a U.S. Naval Air Station in Sigonella, Italy and await further instructions. Third, a special operations unit in the United States was also dispatched to the region. These orders were issued approximately two to four hours after the initial attack on the SMC.⁷⁶

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon:

On April 10, 2014, Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, Chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services, stated during an interview:

I think I've pretty well been satisfied that given where the troops were, how quickly the thing all happened and how quickly it dissipated, we probably couldn't have done more than we did.⁷⁷

On May 1, 2014, Chairman McKeon issued a press release responding to allegations raised by Brigadier General Robert Lovell at a hearing before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:

BG Lovell did not serve in a capacity that gave him reliable insight into operational options available to commanders during the attack, nor did he offer specific courses of action not taken. The Armed Services Committee has interviewed more than a dozen witnesses in the operational chain of command that night, yielding thousands of pages of transcripts, e-mails, and other documents. We have no evidence that Department of State officials delayed the decision to deploy what few resources DoD had available to respond.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ House Committee on Armed Services, *Majority Interim Report: Benghazi Investigation Update* (Feb. 2014) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C4E16543-8F99-430C-BEBA-0045A6433426#page=17).

⁷⁷ *Chairman Satisfied With Military on Benghazi*, Associated Press (Apr. 10, 2014) (online at <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/chairman-satisfied-military-benghazi>).

⁷⁸ *McKeon Responds to Oversight and Government Reform Committee Witness on Benghazi*, House Committee on Armed Services (May 1, 2014) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/press-releases?ContentRecord_id=1E08C96C-27D0-495C-AC8D-9773E3ED76DB).

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

The Committee has reviewed the allegations that U.S. personnel, including in the IC or DoD, prevented the mounting of any military relief effort during the attacks, but the Committee has not found any of these allegations to be substantiated.⁷⁹

Independent Accountability Review Board Report:

The interagency response was timely and appropriate, but there simply was not enough time given the speed of the attacks for armed U.S. military assets to have made a difference. Senior-level interagency discussions were underway soon after Washington received initial word of the attacks and continued through the night. The Board found no evidence of any undue delays in decision making or denial of support from Washington or from the military combatant commanders. Quite the contrary: the safe evacuation of all U.S. government personnel from Benghazi twelve hours after the initial attack and subsequently to Ramstein Air Force Base was the result of exceptional U.S. government coordination and military response and helped save the lives of two severely wounded Americans. In addition, at the State Department's request, the Department of Defense also provided a Marine FAST (Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team) as additional security support for Embassy Tripoli on September 12.⁸⁰

Accountability Review Board Vice Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen:

On June 19, 2013, staff from the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Admiral Michael Mullen, Vice Chairman of the independent Accountability Review Board and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

A: I personally reviewed, and as the only military member of the ARB, I personally reviewed all of the military assets that were in theater and available. ...

And we walked through the force posture in Europe, notionally, and looked at every single U.S. military asset that was there, and what it possibly could have done, whether it could have moved or not.

And it was in that interaction that I concluded, after a detailed understanding of what had happened that night, that from outside Libya, that we'd done everything possible that we could.

Q: Okay. And did you have access to all of the information you needed to address this question, both paper, videotapes, any hard material that you needed as well as individuals?

⁷⁹ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=30).

⁸⁰ Accountability Review Board, *Report on the Attacks in Benghazi, Libya, September 2012* (Dec. 18, 2012) (online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf#page=37).

A: Yes.

...

Q: So your conclusion based on your experience, 40 years of experience, is that the military and the U.S. Government did everything that they could to respond to the attacks?

A: Yes.

...

Q: And you were able to essentially take the night of the attacks and almost work backwards and say, show me where all the assets were in theater or in that region or around the world, and you were able to look at the time components and sort of the logistics of what it would take to move from point A to B, and this includes naval, aviation, ground forces, all components of the military?

A: I did that twice.

Q: And you were satisfied?

A: I am.

...

[I]t does not seem to be, at least from a public standpoint, widely understood, we moved a lot of forces that night. They don't move instantly. But we had a significant force that was deployed doing other things, Special Operations Force in Europe, in Croatia, which was redeployed to a base in Southern Europe. We had a significant force from the United States which was deployed to a base in Southern Europe. So there were a lot of forces moving. And you make those packages, if you will, as robust as possible because you don't know when it's going to end and you don't know exactly what's going to happen next. And I'm very confident that was done.

All of that, while you're trying to put together the picture as rapidly as possible, moving a drone over—a UAV, unarmed UAV over Benghazi as rapidly as possible to give your—give yourself better situational awareness. That was done. You're pulling every single spring you possibly can to find out what's going on, including those forces that are—and this isn't just the Pentagon. This is—I certainly saw this in the State Department. I saw this in the intelligence community. From my review if you will.

And you're piecing all that together to try to put together a plan to take whatever the next step is going to be, and it's all happening simultaneously, and from what I could see, it certainly was that night.⁸¹

AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham:

On April 9, 2014, staff and Members from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of General Carter Ham, who at the time of the attacks was the Commander of Africa Command:

Q: General Ham, do you agree with Admiral Mullen's findings that the military did everything it could on the night of the attacks?

A: I do.

Q: And do you believe that Admiral Mullen has the capacity to evaluate the military movements and issues on the night of the Benghazi attacks?

A: I do.⁸²

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey:

On October 10, 2013, General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, provided a transcribed briefing to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services:

Soon after I received the initial reports of the Benghazi attack, I discussed the situation with the Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, and with President Obama in a meeting that we had already scheduled that day on another topic.

The President instructed us to use all available assets to respond to the attacks to ensure the safety of U.S. personnel in Libya and to protect U.S. personnel and interests throughout the region. Because threat streams increased in a number of locations simultaneously, we postured our forces to respond regionally as well as specifically to the events in Libya.

In response to events in Benghazi, we deployed a Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Security team, or FAS, team as you probably know it. Prepared a second FAS platoon to deploy and moved the special operations force that was training in Croatia to a staging base in

⁸¹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Admiral Michael Mullen (June 19, 2013) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=53>).

⁸² House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of General Carter Ham (Apr. 9, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9 - April 9%2C 2014 - General Carter Ham.pdf#page=47>).

Italy. We also deployed a special operations force from the continental United States to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.⁸³

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates:

On May 12, 2013, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated during an interview:

I listened to the testimony of—both Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey. And—and frankly had I been in the job at the time, I think my decisions would have been just as theirs were. We don't have a ready force standing by in the Middle East. Despite all the turmoil that's going on, with planes on strip alert, troops ready to deploy at a moment's notice. And so getting somebody there in a timely way—would have been very difficult, if not impossible.

And frankly, I've heard "Well, why didn't you just fly a fighter jet over and try and scare 'em with the noise or something?" Well, given the number of surface to air missiles that have disappeared from Qaddafi's arsenals, I would not have approved sending an aircraft, a single aircraft, over Benghazi under those circumstances.

...

[W]ith respect to—sending in special forces or a small group of people to try and provide help, based on everything I have read, people really didn't know what was going on in Benghazi contemporaneously. And to send some small number of special forces or other troops in without knowing what the environment is, without knowing what the threat is, without having any intelligence in terms of what is actually going on the ground, I think, would have been very dangerous.

And personally, I would not have approved that because we just don't it's sort of a cartoonish impression of military capabilities and military forces. The one thing that our forces are noted for is planning and preparation before we send people in harm's way. And there just wasn't time to do that.⁸⁴

⁸³ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Briefing on the Defense Department's Force Posture in Anticipation of September 12, 2012* (Oct. 10, 2013) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C628BC78-60B3-4E44-B6BC-D4A0920E57E5#page=6).

⁸⁴ *Face the Nation*, CBS News (May 12, 2013) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/gates-some-benghazi-critics-have-cartoonish-view-of-military-capability/).

QUESTION:

Did the Pentagon fail to deploy F-16s that would have saved lives?

Senator John McCain: “[T]here are a number of questions still unanswered, like, why couldn’t we get a—at least an F-16 to fly over at low altitude while this attack was going on. Believe me, that scares people.”

Source: *Your World Cavuto*, Fox News (May 8, 2013) (online at www.foxnews.com/on-air/your-world-cavuto/2013/05/09/mccain-saddened-not-surprised-benghazi).

ANSWER:

The House Armed Services Committee, the independent Accountability Review Board, and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence determined that no F-16s or other strike aircraft could have responded in time to save lives. AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and other military experts all explained that F-16s were not the appropriate military response given the posture of the forces and the risks involved.

House Armed Services Committee Republican Staff Report:

The Department of Defense had no armed drones or manned aircraft prepared for combat readily available and nearby on September 11. Secretary Panetta told the Senate in February 2013 that armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), AC-130 ground attack gunships, or other similar planes “were not in the vicinity.” Mr. Reid echoed this to the House Armed Services Committee in May 2013 when he declared “[g]iven the time and distance factors involved, dispatching an armed aircraft to Benghazi was not an option available to us at the time.”

As the result of a specific request from the committee, DOD accounted for the location of each of its AC-130 aircraft in the military’s inventory. DOD reported to the committee that no AC-130s were in the region in the days before the Benghazi attack, including for maintenance, crew rest, or merely transiting through the area. However, DOD also reported to the committee that some of these planes were deployed to “southern Europe” on September 14, in order “to support operations in North Africa.”

Similarly, the U.S. Air Force F-16 fighters stationed at Aviano, Italy at the time were configured for training flights. None were on combat alert. Furthermore, unlike typical preparations during the Cold War, NATO allies also had no planes on war-fighting status. This meant other nations could not offer combat aircraft to respond on behalf of the United States.

In considering possible threats in the AFRICOM region before the Benghazi attack, General Ham told the committee he personally dismissed the prospect of requesting a higher alert status or repositioning some U.S. F-16s. This is because he doubted their utility to any threat his command might face on September 11. Even after the attack started, General Ham and others in the Department discounted the possibility of beginning the process to arm and dispatch one or more of these fighters. Officials also worried about the presence of shoulder-fired Surface-to-Air missiles in Libya, the difficulty of vectoring any planes safely over the desired location, and the challenge of distinguishing friend from foe on the ground.

Military leaders apparently believed that in the time needed to recall aircrews, and reconfigure planes from training to combat status, the events in Benghazi would have subsided. As Major General Roberson explained in a briefing to the U.S. Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence, sending a plane from Aviano would have required assembling munitions for the aircraft and then the military would need to "load weapons, get tankers to support it, and get [the fighter] there [to Benghazi]. There was no way that we were going to be able to do that."

As General Roberson described, it would have taken a long time to prepare aircraft and make aerial fueling arrangements so planes would have sufficient range to fly to Benghazi, loiter overhead, and then return to base. From their other responsibilities in overseeing DOD and from consultations with a recently-retired fighter pilot well acquainted with such matters, majority members are aware of many other complex elements that must have been considered before deciding (or not) to deploy planes for combat. For example, they must be equipped with countermeasures to defend against anti-aircraft weapons and radar-equipped control aircraft (commonly known as AWACS), and search and rescue crews also typically need to be positioned in the area. Furthermore, it is necessary to have communications with friendly forces on the ground to ensure proper targeting.⁸⁵

...

Although the committee will continue to gather and assess information on this topic, it seems that had the risks been deemed acceptable and one or more unarmed fighter aircraft were flown over Benghazi, the effort would probably have been ineffective. Even if such planes could have been dispatched in a timely manner, it would have been extraordinarily difficult for pilots (even with night vision capability) to identify and overfly attackers in very low light. Furthermore, to minimize the anti-aircraft threat, an overflight would probably taken place at a relatively high altitude and this would have lessened the putative deterrent effect on enemy forces arrayed far below. This is especially the case because the Benghazi attackers demonstrated that they were the sort of experienced fighters that Major General Roberson warned might be less fearful of an

⁸⁵ House Committee on Armed Services, *Majority Interim Report: Benghazi Investigation Update* (Feb. 2014) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C4E16543-8F99-430C-BEBA-0045A6433426#page=19).

unarmed overflight. Those who struck the U.S. facilities seemed to have carefully planned their actions, scouted the scene beforehand, and were able to skillfully and accurately employ mortar fire.

Nonetheless, some have suggested that dispatching unarmed aircraft should have been considered, at least as an interim step before more about the attack and potential response became known. In this reading, had one or more jets been launched, a recall order could have been issued before arriving over Benghazi if problems arose with refueling or overflight permissions, or if a preferable alternative was developed in the meantime. But, in light of all these factors, majority members believe the use of unarmed aircraft, with no countermeasure capability, refueling arrangements, or targeting assistance, amidst a dangerous anti-aircraft environment, would have offered only a small likelihood of benefitting those under attack. It makes sense that this remote option was apparently not more actively contemplated.⁸⁶

[Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:](#)

There were no U.S. military resources in position to intervene in short order in Benghazi to help defend the Temporary Mission Facility and its Annex on September 11 and 12, 2012.⁸⁷ ...

According to Major General Darryl Roberson, Vice Director of Operations for the Joint Staff:

There were no ships available to provide any support that were anywhere close to the facility at Benghazi. The assets that we had available were Strike Eagles loaded with live weapons that could have responded, but they were located in Djibouti, which is the equivalent of the distance between here [Washington D.C.] and Los Angeles. The other fighters that might have been available were located in Aviano, Italy. They were not loaded with weapons. They were not on an alert status. We would've had to build weapons, load weapons, get tankers to support it, and get it there. There was no way that we were going to be able to do that. Unfortunately, there was not a carrier in the Mediterranean that could have been able to support; the assets that we mobilized immediately were the only assets we had available to try to support.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Id.* (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C4E16543-8F99-430C-BEBA-0045A6433426#page=22).

⁸⁷ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=29).

⁸⁸ *Id.*

Accountability Review Board Vice Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen:

On September 19, 2013, Admiral Michael Mullen, Vice Chair of the independent Accountability Review Board and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:

[T]here has been great discussion given to fast movers: Could you get a jet over Benghazi because there are jets in Europe? We have—our readiness condition at that—on that particular night, there were no planes sitting at the ready. So it is 2:00 in the morning. There are no planes on alert. It is 2 and a half to 3 hours to fly there. Tanker support is 4 hours away. You need host nation support for where they are to get permission to fly, particularly combat-ready jets, out of that country. You have got to go get the bomb racks. You have got to set the munitions together. You have got to plan the mission. There are a tremendous number of details that have to go on. You have to bring the pilots in, pre-brief them, et cetera. Takes hours and hours and hours to do if you are not sitting at the ready when this happened.⁸⁹

His testimony continued with this exchange:

Q: You said that no planes were at the ready. That was your testimony in Cairo, Admiral, with all due respect—

A: At the time of the attack, Mr. Chaffetz, the readiness status there were no strip alert aircraft ready to go.

...

Q: Europe actually had more assets that were closer than Djibouti, correct?

A: They were not in a readiness condition to respond.

Q: And that's what we fundamentally do not understand. Did you talk to anybody who did want to move forward? Was there anybody that you came across that did want to engage—

A: Everybody in the military wanted to move forward. Everybody in the military wanted to do as much they can. There were plenty of assets moving. It became a physics problem, and it's a time and distance problem. Certainly that is who we are, to try to help when someone is in harm's way.

Q: And the fundamental problem is they didn't. They didn't get there in time. ... There were other people that wanted to go. Like Lieutenant Colonel Gibson I wish you or the ARB had spoken to them, because it is an embarrassment to the

⁸⁹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Hearing on the Reviews of the Benghazi Attacks and Unanswered Questions* (Sept. 19, 2013) (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hrg85095/pdf/CHRG-113hrg85095.pdf#page=40).

United States of America that we could not get those assets there in time to help those people. We didn't even try, we didn't ask for permission, we didn't ask for flight clearances, we didn't even stand up the assets we had in Europe. We didn't even try.

A: I disagree with what you're saying, Mr. Chairman.

Q: You just told me that they did not even get to the ready. They were never asked. You presided as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs when we bombed Libya for months we did so in connection with our NATO partners and you never asked those NATO partners to help and engage that night.

A: I actually commanded NATO forces, and the likelihood that NATO could respond in a situation like that was absolutely zero.⁹⁰

On June 19, 2013, staff and Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Admiral Mullen:

Q: [D]id you investigate whether the military could have sent fast-mover assets, such as F-16s, to Benghazi on the night of the attack? And, if so, what did you conclude?

A: We did—we did investigate that. And consistent with what I said previously, it was not realistic to think that we could task fast movers, jets, notionally in Aviano, Italy, 2 to 3 hours' flying time away, without tankers, which were a minimum of 4 hours away in the middle of the night with no previous tasking. So General Dempsey's testimony in February, and I think consistent with what Secretary Panetta said in terms of being able to move forces more rapidly, which we all wanted to do. I am particularly sympathetic to Mr. Hicks' frustration with what he was going through, can we get help now. There's no one I've ever met in the military that wouldn't want to get help there instantly. The physics of it, the reality of it, it just wasn't going to happen for 12 to 20 hours. And I validated that in my review when I went to the Pentagon to look at every single asset that was postured in theater, including those jets in Aviano.⁹¹

[Wing Commander of the 31st Fighter Wing at Aviano Air Base in Italy:](#)

On March 12, 2014, staff of the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee conducted a transcribed interview of Brigadier General Scott Zobrist, who at the time was the Wing Commander of the 31st Fighter Wing at Aviano Air Base in Italy:

⁹⁰ *Id.* (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhr85095/pdf/CHRG-113hhr85095.pdf#page=56).

⁹¹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Admiral Michael Mullen (June 19, 2013) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=58>).

Q: The idea that you could send an unarmed, naked aircraft as rapidly as possible to Libya to do some sort of flyover the minute somebody heard that something was going on, do all the same limitations apply? And, if so, could you just sort of walk through that?

A: Yes, sir. Yes, the same limitations apply and even more so. I was, quite honestly, surprised that that had been insinuated as a viable option for a variety of reasons. First of all—

Q: I'm sorry. When you say "insinuated"—

A: In the press. I'm sorry. Thank you for clarifying.

When I read the press that there were individuals that had suggested that that should have been considered and, in fact, done, I won't take issue with considering—we should consider all options, because we have a flexible force. But the risks that would have been assumed by the military, by the United States of America, by the wing commander of the 31st Fighter Wing, and my airmen and their family would have been incredible.

And I don't think I would have been able to explain, should we have executed something like that, I could not have explained to that airman's spouse, when I handed him or her the flag, why I was doing this. And why we had done that.

There are some situations that, in my professional military opinion, there are some situations that—that warrant extremis types of military operations. But almost all of those situations involve a certain level of posturing. We have in extremis CAS, Close Air Support, in the desert that we are prepared to execute. That said, when it is executed, it's done very carefully, and they train to it and talk about it and it has been thought through.

To my knowledge, no United States military aircraft has ever taken off on no-notice or short-notice from a foreign country and overflowed, unarmed, another foreign country with no resources, no support.

I did read a retired military officer said that you could have flown down there and punched off your fuel tanks and flown over and landed somewhere else. That would have been almost impossible to do. It's a thousand miles away. While this individual said they had flown at Aviano, I'm not sure that the same range is applied to the platform they were flying. Be very challenging to do.

And I think it's also worth noting, since you bring it up, that the concept of a show of force is—certainly not a new concept. And the concept of a show of force, the majority of people who think about it and talk about it have an understanding formed in Afghanistan and Iraq where there are certain conditions, I think, that would suggest a show of force may have the potential to be effective.

The definition of “effective” probably in this case being whether or not the hostile activity ceases after you overfly it.

And I would differentiate between Afghanistan and Iraq and the situation in Benghazi or something similar in the new normal where the hostile entities on the ground have to be conditioned so that they take some action when aircraft flies over. Why do they do that in Afghanistan or Iraq? Because for years, after the airplane flew over the first time, the next time the bomb blew somebody up. And so they understood that the noise meant that there was a threat.

There are also certain conditions. Daytime, it tended to be more effective because you could—we had multiple sources of seeing non urban environment, because they know we’re not going to drop bombs in an urban environment.

So that the situation that developed in Benghazi was, even if you could have had airplanes overhead in an Afghanistan-style scenario, orbiting for many days on end, ready to go do that, it still would have been questionable whether or not the conditions were right for a show of force like that.

Would I allow—would I have allowed my airmen to take off? Certainly not single ship. But even as a two ship, in the middle of the night, with no guidance on where to go, if they could even get airborne, with the lack of flight plan, et cetera, I’m not sure that I would even, in my good military judgment, if I could let them do that. Nor do I think my commanders would ask me to do that because of the limitations, the probability of success would be so low and the risk would be so high, and we would actually make—potentially make the situation worse by having – now having to deal with a downed airman or a crash scenario. Or perhaps something else along those lines, a combat search and rescue. So it would have been very challenging to do that.⁹²

He also stated:

I personally would have a hard time sending an airman out the door without a decent awareness of the battlefield or the airspace in which they are going to go fly. And that night, I will just say that there was certainly a lot of confusion, and it was a rapidly changing environment, and we did not have a machine in place to handle this—the pop-up event. And so I believe that, again, I don’t put words in the chairman’s mouth but from an F-16 pilot’s perspective, based on my experience, in F-16; or F-15E or any of our other fighter aircraft, would have limited effectiveness in dispersing a crowd or in an urban environment, especially with very little awareness.⁹³

⁹² House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Brigadier General Scott Zobrist (Mar. 12, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/5r%20-%20March%2012%2C%202014%20-%20Brigadier%20General%20Scott%20Zobrist.pdf#page=104>).

⁹³ *Id* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/5r - March 12%2C 2014 - Brigadier General Scott Zobrist.pdf#page=59>).

He also stated:

The distances involved to the north part of Africa from the north part of Italy where we operated from was roughly 1,009 miles. The distance from D.C. to Kansas City. D.C. to KC is the way I think about it.

That would require roughly two air refuelings. Again, a significant amount of planning goes into, if you are planning on the gas station being there when you are down below an eighth of a tank, it had better be there when you are driving a car, and the same goes for forward combat operations.

So a significant amount of planning would need to go into getting a tanker in that area as well.⁹⁴

AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham:

On June 26, 2013, General Carter Ham, who at the time of the attacks was the Commander of U.S. Africa Command, provided a transcribed briefing to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services:

And as I look back on the events of that night and say—and think in my own mind would air have made a difference? And in my military judgment, I believe the answer is no. It was a very uncertain situation in an environment which we know we had an unknown surface-to-air threat with the proliferation particularly of shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, many of which remain unaccounted for. But mostly it was a lack of understanding of the environment, and hence the need for the Predator to try to gain an understanding of what was going on.

So again, I understand that others may disagree with this, but it was my judgment that close air support was not the right tool for that environment.⁹⁵

On April 9, 2014, staff and Members of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee conducted a transcribed briefing with General Ham:

Q: General, you touch on some examples here, but can you just maybe explain for us more what you mean when you say that the attack of fighter aircraft was, quote, “not the right tool for the environment,” close quote?

⁹⁴ *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/5r> - March 12%2C 2014 - Brigadier General Scott Zobrist.pdf#page=49).

⁹⁵ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Briefing on AFRICOM and SOCAFRICA and the Terrorist Attacks in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012* (June 26, 2013) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=ACD8F08D-39B9-4FD8-B98C-210BF9D11CD9#page=46).

A: In the days and weeks leading up to September 11th across the Africa Command area of responsibility, we had a lot of focus on what intelligence, is there intelligence that would indicate that an attack against U.S. persons or facilities or interests is imminent, how ought we best posture our force, and what's the nature of the type of attacks that we could, we might anticipate, and so, in that time, my assessment was with lots of input, obviously, from the staff and from the service component commanders of Africa, saying Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Special Operations, the view was if there is going, if there is going to be an attack on September 11th, to the best of my knowledge, there hadn't been an attack, a significant attack on the anniversary of September 11th prior, but if there was going to be an attack, it was likely to be an improvised explosive device or a car bomb or a sniper or a kidnapping, some mission like that or an attack like that against American persons or facilities or interests. If those were, and I thought they were, the more likely types of attacks that we could anticipate, then how ought we be best postured to militarily respond to that, to those kind of attacks? And in that consideration I considered, and the staff, we had obviously, it wasn't just a single person, but the staff helping me through this, I came to the conclusion that close air support was not a militarily appropriate response to the types of events that we envisioned, at least that I envisioned that might occur on September 11th. So based upon that, I could have but chose not to direct the air component commander to place strike aircraft on heightened alert because, again, in my assessment, that wasn't the nature of the response that we would need.

Q: And was there anything, did those circumstances change on the night of the attack? In other words, was there any information that would have caused you to revise or reassess that decision?

A: Again, as I look back to how the events were unfolding in real time, the staff I'm sure had, the Africa Command staff I'm sure had a more exhaustive conversation with the Air Component Command, but I did consider one of the responses that we did talk about, that I did talk about with my staff was, is there an air response to this? We looked at the posture of aircraft, but overriding that to me was, again, not the right military instrument to respond in this circumstance, and then, again, I will go back to my general overview that says, in my recollection, about an hour after the attack began, it largely subsided, and the team from the Annex had moved all the Americans, less the Ambassador, back to the Annex. Again, the fighting significantly subsided. It didn't appear that there was any specific significant military action directed against U.S. personnel in Benghazi at that point, and so, again, just in my mind reaffirmed my decision that air was not a good response and, at this point, not needed because the attack had largely subsided.

Q: Thank you, General, that's very helpful. So, on the night of, it does sound to us like you gave at least that option some sort of serious thought or you or at the Joint Staff level rather than something that was just quickly considered and dismissed, is that a fair assessment?

A: Yes. Again, when an incident like this occurs, the staff, the operations and intelligence staff at the Command is now again first trying to gain situational understanding and secondly, what are the best methods? You know, how ought we be prepared to respond? What are the options that we want to lay out? And certainly an air response was one of those considerations. Ultimately, it was my decision that said no, not the right response in this circumstance.

Q: General, many military experts have also added to this conversation and stated that not only the considerations that you just mentioned but that it would have also been impractical to deploy either attack or strike aircraft on the night of the attacks. For instance, Admiral Mullen, General Dempsey, they both publicly testified that some sort of fast mover in the region would have taken 20 hours to spool up and deploy. Was that fact generally well understood within AFRICOM, that it would take a significant amount of time to, given the alert status at the time, to prep an aircraft?

A: Yes. So there was—again, as the events were unfolding, one of the things the operations center does is make sure it has open lines of communication with the component. So the air component, which was headquartered in Ramstein, to have a clear understanding of what the capabilities would be. So I think there was a very clear understanding of the timelines that might be required for the deployment of air forces, and again as the attacks subsided, significantly subsided in Benghazi, it appeared that again that was perhaps the wrong instrument.

The other challenge, of course, I think, is a very uncertain environment. We knew there was a proliferation particularly of manned portable air defense systems, and—

Q: How serious was that threat?

A: Well, it was unknown. We knew there were manned portable systems since the collapse of the Qadhafi regime that were unaccounted for and certainly some large number of them in my view, and I think the intelligence would support this under, you know, under control of either militia or violent extremist organizations in Libya, so it was a very unclear situation there, and I think this applies generally with the whole idea of hypotheticals or, you know, what if. We don't really know what had happened, had I made a different decision, had strike aircraft deployed, we don't really know what the outcome would have been. Maybe it would have been positive, but maybe it would have got shot down. Maybe it would have killed civilians. I mean, there's so many unknowns if we go down the hypothetical path that I'm reluctant to do so.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of General Carter Ham (Apr. 9, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9r%20-%20April%209%2C%202014%20-%20General%20Carter%20Ham.pdf#page=66>).

General Ham also had this exchange:

Q: Is it accurate that you had assets that could have responded, but they did not because the request wasn't made of you?

A: I think it, again, depends on one's perspective. There certainly were strike aircraft in Europe, and in some people's views, those strike aircraft were available to respond. In my military judgment, they were not the right instrument to apply in this particular circumstance. So, again, I think it probably depends on your point of view as to whether there were assets available that were not employed.

As the combatant commander, again, I would say that any force that I requested of the Secretary of Defense, forces that I needed his approval to move, the Commander's In-Extremis Force, the Fleet Antiterrorism Support Team, [REDACTED] in each circumstance the Secretary of Defense, with the advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave verbal approval when I asked and then followed that up with written execution orders to deploy those forces.

Q: But, again, with respect to the aviation assets, for instance, the reason you didn't deploy those was not because nobody asked you to but, rather, because you had reached some sort of independent determination or participated in some sort of consultative process, is that—

A: I had. In the lead up to September 11th, the staff and I and the Air Component Commander considered heightening the alert status of strike aircraft. I chose not to do that because I did not feel that those assets were the right tool in response to the likely types of attacks that might occur or incidents that might occur on September 11th, and on the night of September 11th and 12th, again, I didn't think that, given the uncertainty of the situation, given the complexity of a large urban environment, and the fact that the first attack subsided pretty significantly about an hour or so after it began, that it was my military judgment that strike aircraft, close air support were not the appropriate tool.⁹⁷

General Ham also had this exchange:

Q: To talk just briefly about the fighter aircraft, the Aviano fighter wing, you've explained why that was an inappropriate tool to posture differently that day, on that day. I understand that explanation.

Just for the record, I want to establish that, on the night of the attack, just as you considered fighter aircrafts at Aviano an inappropriate tool, in your mind, to use at the issue under way, presumably you considered NATO attack aircraft equally inapplicable to the scene, to the events in Benghazi?

⁹⁷ *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9r - April 9%2C 2014 - General Carter Ham.pdf#page=125>).

A: My thought wasn't specific to Aviano. It was more a discussion of our strike aircraft; is close air support an appropriate tool to use in this circumstance. And my military judgment was, no, it was not.

Q: So—

A: I do not recall that we had a conversation that said, okay, you don't want to use American aircraft, would you use—I think it was—once I had made a decision and said, I don't think close air support is the right tool, I don't think there was a further discussion.⁹⁸

AFRICOM Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

On March 20, 2014, staff of the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Vice Admiral Charles J. Leidig, who served as Africa Command's Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

Q: Sir, this exhibit is some testimony that was given before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 7 of 2013. And it involves a discussion between a Senator and Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dempsey. And it's involving the F-16 issue, and about why F-16s from Aviano couldn't have been used. And if I can just draw your attention to page 30 at the bottom.

A: All right.

Q: And the question was, why couldn't these F-16s be used? And one of the answers was because, you know, it was going to take a considerable amount of time; in this case, he says, 20 hours to get them there. Do you generally agree with that assessment that it would have taken a—

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And then the other answer that he provides is he says it was the wrong tool for the job. And I am just wondering if you can opine on your expertise of this platform and whether or not it was in fact the wrong tool for the job, even assuming you could have gotten them there.

A: I mean, I think it's a hypothetical question from my perspective. I mean that my best answer is I was dealing with reality. They weren't available. And so that's not a tool that I have available in my tool kit. And so I wasn't able to use it in any way. I considered options for employment of F-16s, but in this case, since they weren't available, I didn't use them.

⁹⁸ *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/9r - April 9%2C 2014 - General Carter Ham.pdf#page=159>).

Q: So you looked, they weren't available?

A: I looked at—what we specifically did is we asked what the military options are. Having fighter aircraft fly to Benghazi is an option. How would we employ them? We looked at options on how they might be employed. But then when you apply the final test is, is it an executable mission? The answer is it was not. They would not be available. For a guy dealing—for a guy like me commanding the crisis, it doesn't—it isn't worth my effort to spend much more time thinking about what to do with F-16s when they are not going to be available for, as the Chairman said, at least 20 hours.⁹⁹

Admiral Leidig also stated:

When I got a brief report and examined the availability of fighters, it was completely infeasible to have fighters available that night. There were no crews. There was no weapons. There was no pre-brief. They were on, the ones in Aviano are on an Italian airfield, and maybe you've heard all this before, and they can't get to Benghazi and back. They don't have enough gas to get there, so then you have to have tankers. The tankers are all in Europe or in northern—or in England or Northern Europe. Same thing, you have to call crews in, get them briefed, get them up, flight time, get them down there.

Reconstruction that I recall after the event was that it would have taken at least 24 hours to get a fighter over to Benghazi, but we were looking into it, but there was no way we were going to get any aircraft there that night. So we were relying on the UAV; I believe it was a Predator that was up and overhead looking, but again, we weren't getting much information.¹⁰⁰

AFRICOM Director of Operations and Cyber:

On March 18, 2014, staff of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Rear Admiral Richard Landolt, Africa Command's Director of Operations and Cyber:

Q: And you and your team that were sitting in the room at this time throwing up options about fighter aircraft or the FAST, who was the final decision making authority in the room? Was there any heated debate about any of these topics where someone had to make a decision on—

A: There were no heated debates that evening. There were discussions, and Vice Admiral Leidig would take what we considered to General Ham, and I remember

⁹⁹ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Vice Admiral Charles J. "Joe" Leidig, Jr. (Mar. 20, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8r - March 20%2C 2014 - Vice Admiral Charles Leidig Jr..pdf#page=59>).

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8r - March 20%2C 2014 - Vice Admiral Charles Leidig Jr..pdf#page=29>).

at some point General Ham said with regard to getting attack aircraft, that we considered it and then said, I don't see a need for this.

Q: So that decision went all the way up to General Ham who—

A: It did.

Q: —ultimately decided against it.

A: I recall a Tandberg [teleconference] where this was discussed, and we said just said no. I think—I think now that was before 4 o'clock, before the second attack, kind of what we discussed what do we need to do here, so and then I remember N Plus 16 was given us by the Air Force folks, which means really you're not going to get anything there within 24 hours.

Q: Sorry, you mean for the FAST moving attack?

A: That's correct, out of Aviano.¹⁰¹

He also had this exchange:

Q: I think you said that you and Admiral Leidig and maybe General Ham had a discussion about the possibility of dispatching F-16s from Aviano. And did I understand you to say that in those discussions you decided that you could have or would have used the F-16s had we had them available?

A: Yeah. It gets back to the N+16. I mean, the N+16 immediately tells me they are not available this evening.

Q: So am I to understand then that had calls been made or word came back that F-16s are available, that would have been a tool that you would have considered utilizing that evening?

A: Well, sure. And, say, if I had an aircraft carrier off the coast or in the Med, you know, that would have been in the mix. I'm almost positive that Admiral Leidig talked to Lieutenant General Franklin, who is Air Force Africa commander, and once we heard N+16, you know, that's not helpful. And then I think Admiral Leidig had a conversation with General Ham saying, you want us to press and go ahead and get the F-16s, and he said no. I'm pretty sure General Ham said no on

¹⁰¹ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Rear Admiral Richard B. Landolt (Mar. 18, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/7r%20-%20March%2018%2C%202014%20-%20Rear%20Admiral%20Richard%20Landolt.pdf#page=34>).

F-16s knowing that N+16 doesn't give you anything, because it's a little too late.¹⁰²

U.S. Army Lt. Colonel at Embassy Tripoli:

On February 28, 2014, staff of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview with a Lieutenant Colonel serving in the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli on the night of the attacks:

Q: Did you ever have discussions about the possibility of ground troops of some sort arriving in Tripoli?

A: No, we did not discuss that.

Q: How about an AC-130?

A: Well, we didn't talk specific platforms. You are asking for a capability. Do you want a strike capability or do you want an evac, you know, a lift capability. We were focused on the lift capability. I know there was some discussion about having a strike capability, whatever that might be, whether—again, I don't get into the specific platforms, whether it is an F-15 or a C-130J gunship.

No, we didn't talk about those, but we also recognized up front we were primarily focused on evacuation, because if we didn't have a good picture on the ground, we weren't sure what a kinetic capability would be used for since we didn't have enough eyes forward to kind of determine what a target would be.

Q: So bear with me for just a second. So, in the strike capability, you had brief conversations about that, an extended conversation, a cursory conversation?

A: A brief conversation.

Q: And the upshot of those brief conversations was that such strike capability was not possible? Applicable?

A: At the time, we didn't think it was applicable, and the piece was, you know, I worked as a battle captain for Odyssey Dawn. I knew where the battle aircraft were located. I also kind of had—you know, I understand that they are probably coming out of Aviano at best. And just by doing the simple math in my head, knowing by the time they even got there, those aircraft would not be able to return. We still wouldn't know whether there were strikes. There was still no fuelers that were in the area. That I knew. So what I thought was focus on the

¹⁰² *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/7r%20-%20March%2018%2C%202014%20-%20Rear%20Admiral%20Richard%20Landolt.pdf#page=66>).

evacuation capability because it was unlikely that a strike capability would be available.

Q: And in the strike capability aspect, speaking to that now, did you convey that to the others that you were working with within the TOC?

A: [REDACTED] and I had briefly talked about it saying what would be the pros and cons to it. Again, since we weren't sure what we had on the ground, we weren't sure that it could cause greater problems; it could cause the local indigenous forces to turn. You know, we had gone through all those options in our head. We figured, at the time, the best option was just to focus, get the evacuation assets as best we could.

Q: And did you have any indication for you personally to convey those impressions of the strike options to the deputy chief of mission?

A: I do not know. If that occurred, that occurred between [REDACTED] and the chief of mission. All I focused on again was I told him – he asked about fast movers.

Q: Who is “he”?

A: I am sorry, Greg Hicks, the DCM. At the time, we said not sure that could arrive any faster than the evacuation aircraft. We are working all options. All I know that the planners back at AFRICOM were also looking at all options. But that capability was kind of understood not to be readily available any faster than an evacuation capability.¹⁰³

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey:

On February 7, 2013, General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified at a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee:

First, is that in order to deploy them it requires the—this was the middle of the night, now. These were not aircraft on strip alert. They're there as part of our commitment to NATO and Europe. So as we looked at the timeline, it was pretty clear that it would take up to 20 hours or so to get them there. Second, Senator, importantly, it was the wrong tool for the job.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Embassy Tripoli (Feb. 28, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/2r%20-%20February%2028%2C%202014%20-%20LTC%2C%20Office%20of%20Security%20Cooperation.pdf#page=53>).

¹⁰⁴ Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearing on Department of Defense's Response to the Attack on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya and the Findings of Its Internal Review Following the Attack* (Feb. 7, 2013) (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113shrg86489/pdf/CHRG-113shrg86489.pdf#page=42).

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta:

On February 7, 2013, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta testified at a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee:

Some have asked why other types of armed aircraft were not dispatched to Benghazi. The reason is because armed UAVs, AC-130 gunships, or fixed-wing fighters with the associated tanking—you've got to provide air refueling abilities—armaments—you've got to arm all the weapons before you put them on the planes—targeting and support facilities were not in the vicinity of Libya. And because of the distance, it would have taken at least 9 to 12 hours, if not more, to deploy these forces to Benghazi.

This was, pure and simple, in the absence, as I said, of any kind of advance warning, a problem of distance and time. Frankly, even if we were able to get the F-16s or the AC-130s over the target in time, the mission still depends on accurate information about what targets they're supposed to hit, and we had no forward air controllers there. We had ... no communications with U.S. personnel on the ground. And as a matter of fact, we had no idea where the Ambassador was at that point to be able to kind of conduct any kind of attacks on the ground.¹⁰⁵

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates:

On May 12, 2013, Robert Gates, who served as Secretary of Defense during both the Bush and Obama Administrations, stated during an interview:

I listened to the testimony of—both Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey. And—and frankly had I been in the job at the time—I think my decisions would have been just as theirs were. We don't have a ready force standing by in the Middle East. Despite all the turmoil that's going on, with planes on strip alert, troops ready to deploy at a moment's notice. And so getting somebody there in a timely way—would have been very difficult, if not impossible. And frankly, I've heard "Well, why didn't you just fly a fighter jet over and try and scare 'em with the noise or something?" Well, given the number of surface to air missiles that have disappeared from Qaddafi's arsenals, I would not have approved sending an aircraft, a single aircraft—over Benghazi under those circumstances.¹⁰⁶

Vice Director for Operations at the Department of Defense Joint Staff:

On May 21, 2013, Major General Darryl Roberson, Vice Director for Operations at the Joint Staff at the Department of Defense, provided a transcribed briefing to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services:

¹⁰⁵ *Id.* (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113shrg86489/pdf/CHRG-113shrg86489.pdf#page=16).

¹⁰⁶ *Face the Nation*, CBS News (May 12, 2013) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/face-the-nation-transcripts-may-12-2013-gates-pickering-ayotte-durbin-and-angelou/4/).

They [American personnel] ended up moving to the annex. There was a long period in there where there was no activity. And so, again, the mentality of everybody was, it doesn't make sense to launch an F-16 now, given what we know about the situation. Now, in hindsight, 20/20, we know that there was another attack at 5:15 in the morning. But again, given the environment, the circumstances, what these systems are designed to do, the F-16s are not on a mission to respond. It is not like a fire station. We don't have assets to respond like a fire call, jump down the pole and respond for any American that is under fire anywhere in the world. That is not DOD's role. Our role is to support the State Department, whose primary responsibility is for security of their mission.¹⁰⁷

He also had this exchange:

Q: How many years have been involved with the F-16 fleet?

A: Sir, I have been in the Air Force 30 years, and I have been associated with the F-16 most of that.

Q: Is there any operation or mission involving an F-16 you haven't done personally?

A: Sir, there probably is, but I have done most of them, yes.

Q: In your best military judgment, was the use of F-16s appropriate, given the state of knowledge and the state of affairs in Libyan time late in the evening September 11th, 2012?

A: Sir, in my personal opinion, it was absolutely not.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Briefing on Benghazi Update* (May 21, 2013) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=A5BE5DFD-FAA6-4485-9D40-BA30B550907C#page=34).

¹⁰⁸ *Id.* (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=A5BE5DFD-FAA6-4485-9D40-BA30B550907C#page=79).

QUESTION:

Did the U.S. engage in illegal gunrunning from Libya to arm rebels in Syria?

Sen. Rand Paul: “It’s been in news reports that ships have been leaving from Libya and that they may have weapons. And what I would like to know is the annex that was close by, were they involved with procuring, buying, selling, obtaining weapons, and were any of these weapons being transferred to other countries? Any countries, Turkey included?”

Source: Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearing on Benghazi: The Attacks and The Lessons Learned* (Jan. 23, 2013) (online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jriU_cPU9Vk).

ANSWER:

Republicans and Democrats on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence determined that the United States did not use the mission in Benghazi to facilitate illegal arms transfers to Syria. The Committee adopted a bipartisan report finding that there was “no illegal activity or illegal arms sales occurring at U.S. facilities in Benghazi,” according to the Committee’s Ranking Member.

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

In January 2014, Republicans on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence issued an “Update on Benghazi”:

All CIA activities in Benghazi were legal and authorized. On-the-record testimony establishes that CIA was **not** sending weapons (including MANPADS) from Libya to Syria, or facilitating other organizations or states that were transferring weapons from Libya to Syria.¹⁰⁹

On July 31, 2014, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence adopted a bipartisan report after two years of investigation, and the Committee’s Ranking Member, Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, issued this statement:

The House Intelligence Committee spent nearly two years looking at every aspect of the Intelligence Community’s activities before, during and after the attacks of September 11, 2012, in Benghazi Libya. The Committee spent thousands of hours in the course of the

¹⁰⁹ House Permanent Select Committee in Intelligence, *HPSCI January 2014 Update on Benghazi* (Jan. 2014) (online at <http://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/HPSCIBenghaziUpdateJan2014.pdf>) (emphasis in original).

investigation, which included poring over pages of intelligence assessments, cables, notes and emails. The Committee held twenty briefings and hearings and conducted detailed interviews with senior intelligence officials and eyewitnesses to the attacks, including eight security personnel on the ground in Benghazi that night. The result is a bipartisan, factual, definitive report on what the Intelligence Community did and did not do.

...

[T]he report demonstrates that there was no illegal activity or illegal arms sales occurring at U.S. facilities in Benghazi.¹¹⁰

Official State Department Response to Allegation:

On January 23, 2013, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. In response to a question from Committee Member Senator Rand Paul, she stated that she was unaware of this allegation.¹¹¹

On February 11, 2013, the State Department followed up with an official statement for the record, which stated: “The United States is not involved with any transfer of weapons from Libya to Turkey.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Statement on HSPCI Benghazi Report by Ranking Member Dutch Ruppersberger, House Permanent Select Committee in Intelligence (July 31, 2014) (online at <http://democrats.intelligence.house.gov/press-release/rm-ruppersberger-statement-hspci-benghazi-report>).*

¹¹¹ Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearing on Benghazi: The Attacks and The Lessons Learned* (Jan. 23, 2013) (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113shrg86780/pdf/CHRG-113shrg86780.pdf#page=47).

¹¹² *Id.*

QUESTION:

Did Ambassador Rice intentionally misrepresent the facts on the Sunday talk shows after the attacks?

Rep. Trey Gowdy: “[W]hy in the world would Susan Rice go on five Sunday talk shows and perpetuate a demonstrably false narrative?”

Source: House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Hearing on Benghazi: Exposing Failure and Recognizing Courage* (May 8, 2013) (online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct_PHtLkgWw).

ANSWER:

Bipartisan investigations have identified conflicting intelligence in the hours and days after the attacks, including questions about whether there was a demonstration, who carried out the attacks, and what motivated the attackers. Because of this lack of clarity, the Intelligence Community provided an inaccurate intelligence assessment to Ambassador Rice and to Congress. Ambassador Rice repeatedly cautioned that her information was preliminary.

United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice:

On September 16, 2012, Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, appeared on several Sunday talk shows:

- On ABC’s *This Week*, Ambassador Rice stated that she was relying “on the information that we have at present” and the “current best assessment.” She stated that “there’s an FBI investigation that has begun and will take some time to be completed. That will tell us with certainty what transpired.” She continued: “We’ll wait to see exactly what the investigation finally confirms, but that’s the best information we have at present.”¹¹³
- On NBC’s *Meet the Press*, she stated that she was relying on “the best information we have at present. First of all, there’s an FBI investigation which is ongoing. And we look to that investigation to give us the definitive word as to what transpired.” She continued: “[T]hat’s our best judgment now. We’ll await the results of the investigation.”¹¹⁴

¹¹³ *This Week*, ABC News (Sept. 16, 2012) (online at <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/week-transcript-us-ambassador-united-nations-susan-rice/story?id=17240933>).

¹¹⁴ *Meet the Press*, NBC News (Sept. 16, 2012) (online at www.nbcnews.com/id/49051097/ns/meet_the_press-transcripts/t/september-benjamin-netanyahu-susan-rice-keith-ellison-peter-king-bob-woodward-jeffrey-goldberg-andrea-mitchell/#.VA27F2PvnNF).

- On Fox News Sunday, she stated: “[W]e will wait for the results of the investigation and we don’t want to jump to conclusions before then. But I do think it’s important for the American people to know our best current assessment.”¹¹⁵
- On CBS’s Face the Nation, Ambassador Rice said that her statements were “based on the best information we have to date.” In response to a question about whether al-Qaeda participated in the attacks, she stated: “Well, we’ll have to find out that out. I mean I think it’s clear that there were extremist elements that joined in and escalated the violence. Whether they were al-Qaeda affiliates, whether they were Libyan-based extremists or al-Qaeda itself I think is one of the things we’ll have to determine.”¹¹⁶

On October 4, 2012, Ambassador Rice wrote a letter to Senator Kelly Ayotte:

In my September 16 Sunday show appearances, I was asked to provide the Administration’s latest understanding of what had transpired in Benghazi. In answering, I relied solely and squarely on the information the intelligence community provided to me and other senior U.S. officials, including through the daily intelligence briefings that present the latest reporting and analysis to policymakers. This information represented the intelligence community’s best, current assessment as of the date of my television appearances, and I went out of my way to ensure that it was consistent with the information that was being given to Congress.¹¹⁷

On November 21, 2012, Ambassador Rice stated during a news conference at the United Nations:

When discussing the attacks against our facilities in Benghazi, I relied solely and squarely on the information provided to me by the intelligence community. I made clear that the information was preliminary and that our investigations would give us the definitive answers. Everyone, particularly the intelligence community, has worked in good faith to provide the best assessment based on the information available.¹¹⁸

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

¹¹⁵ *Fox News Sunday*, Fox News (Sept. 16, 2012) (online at www.foxnews.com/on-air/fox-news-sunday-chris-wallace/2012/09/16/amb-susan-rice-rep-mike-rogers-discuss-violence-against-americans-middle-east#p/v/1843960658001).

¹¹⁶ *Face the Nation*, CBS News (Sept. 16, 2012) (online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/face-the-nation-transcripts-september-16-2012-libyan-pres-magariaf-amb-rice-and-sen-mccain/>).

¹¹⁷ Letter from Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, to Senator Kelly A. Ayotte (Oct. 4, 2012) (online at www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/121005_Letter to Senator Ayotte-1.pdf).

¹¹⁸ U.S. Mission to the United Nations, *Remarks as Delivered by United Nations Ambassador Susan E. Rice at the Security Council Stakeout* (Nov. 21, 2012) (online at <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/200968.htm>).

A dearth of clear and definitive HUMINT [human intelligence] or eyewitness reporting led IC analysts to rely on open press reports and limited SIGINT [signals intelligence] reporting that incorrectly attributed the origins of the Benghazi attacks to “protests,” over first-hand accounts from U.S. officials on the ground. CIA’s January 4, 2013, Analytic Line Review found that “[a]pproximately a dozen reports that included press accounts, public statements by AAS [Ansar al-Sharia] members, HUMINT reporting, DOD [Department of Defense] reporting, and signals intelligence all stated or strongly suggested that a protest occurred outside of the Mission facility just prior to the attacks.”

Of the 11 reports cited by the CIA’s Analytic Line Review, six were press articles, two were the public statements of Ansar al-Sharia, and the three others were intelligence reports. Specific open source reports and intelligence on which analysts appear to have based their judgments include the public statements by Ansar al-Sharia that the attacks were a “spontaneous and popular uprising.” Also, there was protest activity in Egypt and approximately 40 other cities around the world and violent attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities in Tunisia, Yemen, and Egypt from September 11-20, 2012. In addition, there were intelligence reports in the days following the Benghazi attacks that al-Qa’ida-associated terrorists hoped to take advantage of global protests for further attacks.¹¹⁹

The report also stated:

According to a January 4, 2013, letter from the Acting Director of the CIA, Michael Morell, “[t]he nature of the attacks suggested they did not involve significant pre-planning.” Although it may never be known with complete certainty, it is possible that the individuals and groups involved in the attacks had not planned on conducting those attacks until that day, meaning that specific tactical warning would have been highly unlikely. ... [T]he collective assessment of the IC remains that the attacks “were deliberate and organized, but that their lethality and efficacy did not necessarily indicate extensive planning.”¹²⁰

...

Individuals affiliated with terrorist groups, including AQIM [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb], Ansar al-Sharia, AQAP [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula], and the Mohammad Jamal Network, participated in the September 11, 2012, attacks. Intelligence suggests that the attack was not a highly coordinated plot, but was opportunistic; however, well-armed attackers easily overwhelmed the Libyan security guards and the five U.S. Diplomatic Security agents present at the Temporary Mission Facility. It remains unclear if any group or person exercised overall command and control of the attacks or whether extremist group leaders directed their members to participate. Some

¹¹⁹ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan.15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=35).

¹²⁰ *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=25).

intelligence suggests the attacks were likely put together in short order, following that day's violent protests in Cairo against an inflammatory video, suggesting that these and other terrorist groups could conduct similar attacks with little advance warning.¹²¹

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

On July 31, 2014, Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, issued the following statement regarding his Committee's classified report, which was adopted on a bipartisan basis:

The report also shows that the process used to develop the talking points was flawed, but that the talking points reflected the conflicting intelligence assessments in the days immediately following the crisis. ... And there was absolutely no evidence, in documents or testimony, that the Intelligence Community's assessments were politically motivated in any way.¹²²

Director of National Intelligence Spokesperson:

On September 28, 2012, Shawn Turner, the spokesperson for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, issued the following statement:

In the immediate aftermath, there was information that led us to assess that the attack began spontaneously following protests earlier that day at our embassy in Cairo. We provided that initial assessment to Executive Branch officials and members of Congress, who used that information to discuss the attack publicly and provide updates as they became available. Throughout our investigation we continued to emphasize that information gathered was preliminary and evolving.¹²³

U.S. Army Lt. Colonel at Embassy Tripoli:

On February 28, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of a U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel who was working at Embassy Tripoli on the day of the attacks:

¹²¹ *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=41).

¹²² *Statement by Ranking Member Dutch Ruppersberger*, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (July 31, 2014) (online at <http://democrats.intelligence.house.gov/press-release/rm-ruppersberger-statement-hspci-benghazi-report>).

¹²³ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Statement by the Director of Public Affairs for ODNI, Shawn Turner, on the Intelligence Related to the Terrorist Attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya* (Sept. 28, 2012) (online at www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/96-press-releases-2012/731-statement-by-the-odni-s-director-of-public-affairs-on-intelligence-related-to-the-terrorist-attack-on-the-u-s-consulate-in-benghazi).

Q: You said that they—you were aware that there was an attack, and then you corrected yourself, and you said “an issue.” You weren’t clear there was an attack?

A: No. At the time I wasn’t clear there was an attack. During that time we weren’t sure what we had. We were aware of protests during that night. A lot of us thought—didn’t know what was going on, could be a protest. We were not aware of an attack, nor did we assume there was an attack right off the bat. I think, again, I’m talking revisionist, I’m looking back, but at the time we were not aware there was an attack. We knew that the embassy was being—we weren’t sure if the embassy was being looted, if it was being—

Q: Embassy?

A: The consulate. I’m sorry, the consulate in Benghazi was be [sic] looted, what was happening out there. All we knew was that the Ambassador mentioned that the consulate was under attack. We weren’t sure by what. And the term “attack” has a pretty broad meaning. It could be, you know, vandals are attacking. So we did not have a definition of what this was at the time.¹²⁴

...

Q: You had mentioned during the last hour that prior to the attack, prior to the events unfolding in Benghazi, that you were aware of protests occurring elsewhere in the Middle East.

A: Correct.

Q: Could you just maybe elaborate on that and help us understand what your understanding was of the events unfolding across the region and how you became aware of those events?

A: We were just simply watching the news. We were aware of what was going on. We were aware of, you know, the film. But at the time, we were kind of focused on—I was kind of focused on—I had ongoing activities with the security cooperation. So I didn’t get too involved in the understanding of what was going on regionally. At that time, again, I was focused on my engagement I had with the Libyan armed forces. So, again, it was broadly understand that based on what we were seeing in news reports and what we were generally talking about in the embassy was that this was going on, but I wasn’t privy to any other conversations beyond that.

Q: So these events were unfolding throughout the day?

¹²⁴ *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/2r> - February 28%2C 2014 - LTC%2C Office of Security Cooperation.pdf#page=31).

A: That is correct.

Q: And other embassy personnel or your military colleagues were also aware of the protests?

A: Correct.

Q: Can I just ask, were you watching television in the compound?

A: Yes.

Q: Is that how you first became aware of it?

A: We were all watching the televisions in our—we all had a home we were assigned to, so we were watching television.¹²⁵

AFRICOM Deputy Commander for Military Operations:

On March 20, 2014, staff from the House Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Vice Admiral Charles “Joe” Leidig, Jr., the Deputy Commander for Military Operations at Africa Command:

The initial report was that there were protesters at the Ambassador’s residence where he was staying in Benghazi, and that the protesters had overrun the facility he was in, and that he had went to a safe room with one other gentleman, and that they were fine in the safe room.¹²⁶

Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Elizabeth Jones:

On July 11, 2013, staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview with Elizabeth Jones, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. She explained that Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Hicks initially informed her that Ansar al-Sharia had publicly claimed responsibility for the attacks, but the group later withdrew its claim:

A: Greg said they took responsibility for the attack. I had no judgment on whether they had undertaken the attack. Taking responsibility and undertaking the attack are two different things.

¹²⁵ *Id.* (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/2r%20-%20February%2028%2C%202014%20-%20LTC%2C%20Office%20of%20Security%20Cooperation.pdf#page=58>).

¹²⁶ House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Vice Admiral Charles J. “Joe” Leidig, Jr. (Mar. 20, 2014) (online at <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/8r%20-%20March%2020%2C%202014%20-%20Vice%20Admiral%20Charles%20Leidig%20Jr..pdf#page=19>).

Q: Understood. I guess my question is, were you apprised of any information that changed your understanding of their claim of responsible—they had, in fact, claimed responsibility?

A: Yes. A couple of days later, I heard that they had withdrawn their claim of responsibility.¹²⁷

Before Ansar al-Sharia withdrew its claim, however, Acting Assistant Secretary Jones spoke with the Libyan Ambassador to the U.S. and conveyed that “the group that conducted the attacks—Ansar Al Sharia—is affiliated with Islamic extremists.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, Interview of Elizabeth Jones (July 11, 2013) (referenced in Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Fact v. Fiction: Top Ten Unfounded Allegations About the Attacks in Benghazi* (Sept. 16, 2013) (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Fact%20v%20Fiction%20Benghazi%2009-16-13.pdf#page=15)).

¹²⁸ E-mail from [REDACTED] to William Burns, et al., *RE: Libya Update from Beth Jones* (Sept. 12, 2012) (referenced in Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Fact v. Fiction: Top Ten Unfounded Allegations About the Attacks in Benghazi* (Sept. 16, 2013) (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Fact%20v%20Fiction%20Benghazi%2009-16-13.pdf#page=15)).

QUESTION:

Did CIA Deputy Director Morell alter the talking points for political reasons?

Rep. Trey Gowdy:

“A: Every single change that Mike Morell made was calculated to cast the administration in a more favorable light.

Q: He has said that he felt no political pressure. You’re saying you don’t believe him?

A: In a word, yes. I’m saying I don’t believe him, and I also think that his testimony has been something of an evolution.”

Source: *The Lead with Jake Tapper*, CNN (May 7, 2014) (online at <http://thelead.blogs.cnn.com/2014/05/07/rep-gowdy-cia-director-morell-wasnt-telling-the-truth-about-no-political-pressure-in-benghazi-hearing/>).

ANSWER:

Former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell has forcefully denied that he or anyone at the CIA altered the talking points for political reasons. According to the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the Committee’s classified, bipartisan report corroborates this testimony and concludes that “the process used to develop the talking points was flawed, but that the talking points reflected the conflicting intelligence assessments in the days immediately following the crisis.”

Director of National Intelligence Spokesperson:

On September 28, 2012, Shawn Turner, the spokesperson for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, issued the following statement:

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on U.S. personnel and facilities in Benghazi, Libya, the Intelligence Community launched a comprehensive effort to determine the circumstances surrounding the assault and to identify the perpetrators. We also reviewed all available intelligence to determine if there might be follow-on attacks against our people or facilities in Libya or elsewhere in the world.

As the Intelligence Community collects and analyzes more information related to the attack, our understanding of the event continues to evolve. In the immediate aftermath, there was information that led us to assess that the attack began spontaneously following protests earlier that day at our embassy in Cairo. We provided that initial assessment to Executive Branch officials and members of Congress, who used that information to discuss the attack publicly and provide updates as they became available. Throughout

our investigation we continued to emphasize that information gathered was preliminary and evolving.

As we learned more about the attack, we revised our initial assessment to reflect new information indicating that it was a deliberate and organized terrorist attack carried out by extremists. It remains unclear if any group or person exercised overall command and control of the attack, and if extremist group leaders directed their members to participate. However, we do assess that some of those involved were linked to groups affiliated with, or sympathetic to al-Qa'ida. We continue to make progress, but there remain many unanswered questions. As more information becomes available our analysis will continue to evolve and we will obtain a more complete understanding of the circumstances surrounding the terrorist attack.

We continue to support the ongoing FBI investigation and the State Department review of the Benghazi terrorist attack, providing the full capabilities and resources of the Intelligence Community to those efforts. We also will continue to meet our responsibility to keep Congress fully and currently informed. For its part, the Intelligence Community will continue to follow the information about the tragic events in Benghazi wherever it leads. The President demands and expects that we will do this, as do Congress and the American people. As the Intelligence Community, we owe nothing less than our best efforts in this regard, especially to the families of the four courageous Americans who lost their lives at Benghazi in service of their country.¹²⁹

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper:

On April 18, 2013, James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, testified at a hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services:

Q: You indicated here in your quick back and forth with Senator Ayotte that you thought that those talking points were right.

A: They were the best we could do at the time. And also in light of our concerns from both an intelligence and investigatory standpoint, that is as much as we should say at the time. That is illustrative of the dilemma of speaking in public about intelligence things, which is somewhat—can often be an oxymoron.

Q: But you believed that they were accurate at the time?

A: It was our—it was—well, it wasn't completely accurate because there were some things, particularly from a source and methods and because of investigatory

¹²⁹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Statement by the Director of Public Affairs for ODNI, Shawn Turner, on the Intelligence Related to the Terrorist Attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya* (Sept. 28, 2012) (online at www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/96-press-releases-2012/731-statement-by-the-odni-s-director-of-public-affairs-on-intelligence-related-to-the-terrorist-attack-on-the-u-s-consulate-in-benghazi).

concerns that the FBI had. No, it wasn't completely accurate. It's the best we could do at the time and still protect those equities.

...

Q: I know there's an issue now. I'm saying when they were written did you, whoever wrote them, believe they were accurate?

A: We believed them to be, as tempered by our concerns for intelligence and investigatory equities.

Q: Okay, I understand that. Given all that temperance, at the time that they were produced you believed that they were accurate?

A: That was my response to Senator Ayotte, yes.

Q: Is that your response?

A: Yes.

Q: Now, those were the same talking points that Secretary Rice followed, right?

A: Yes.

Q: And when she was highly criticized for following them, what was your feeling inside, your own personal belief? Did you think it was fair that she be criticized?

A: Well, I thought it was—I thought it was unfair because the hit she took, I didn't think that was appropriate. She was going on what we had given her, and that was our collective best judgment at the time as to what should have been said.¹³⁰

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report Majority Views:

The Majority concludes that the interagency coordination process on the talking points followed normal, but rushed coordination procedures and that there were no efforts by the White House or any other Executive Branch entities to “cover-up” facts or make alterations for political purposes. Indeed, former CIA Director David Petraeus testified to the Committee on November 16, 2012, “They went through the normal process that talking points—unclassified public talking points—go through.” In fact, the purpose of the National Security Council (NSC) is to coordinate the many national security agencies of the government, especially when information about a terrorist attack is flowing in and being analyzed quickly—and the NSC used this role appropriately in the case of the talking points coordination. Furthermore, such coordination processes were also

¹³⁰ Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Current and Future Worldwide Threats to the National Security of the United States* (Apr. 18, 2013) (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-24-4-18-13.pdf#page=34).

standardized, often at the urging of Congress, following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks with the explicit goal of reducing information “stovepipes” between and among agencies.¹³¹

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report Minority Views:

As the Committee began to receive intelligence relating to the attacks, it became clear that the narrative conveyed through the talking points and during the Sunday talk shows did not stand up to scrutiny. We now know that the talking points, as originally drafted by the CIA, included the words “al-Qa’ida,” “Ansar al-Sharia,” and “attacks,” and spoke of other attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi. There was no mention of a protest gone awry outside the Temporary Mission Facility. Yet, through an “interagency process” that specifically included coordination with and by the White House, the message was recast to downplay or eliminate these references and minimize any potential embarrassment to the State Department for its failure to heed earlier security warnings.¹³²

CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell:

On April 2, 2014, several months after the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issued its report, Deputy Director Morell testified at a hearing before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. In his written statement, he explained:

I am deeply troubled by allegations—made by several members of Congress as well as by certain media outlets—that I inappropriately altered and influenced CIA’s classified analysis and its unclassified talking points about what happened in Benghazi, Libya in September 2012 and that I covered up those actions. These allegations accuse me of taking these actions for the political benefit of President Obama and then Secretary of State Clinton. These allegations are false.

I am very appreciative that the Committee decided to conduct this hearing in open session. As the Committee is aware, I have testified three previous times on Benghazi in classified sessions—twice before this Committee and once before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI). Today, I appreciate the opportunity to speak directly to the American people about the facts on what really happened.¹³³

...

¹³¹ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Majority Views) (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=64).

¹³² *Id.* (Minority Views) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=71).

¹³³ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Written Statement of Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA, *Hearing on the Benghazi Talking Points and Michael J. Morell’s Role in Shaping the Administration’s Narrative* (Apr. 2, 2014) (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=1>).

[L]et me emphasize again: there is no truth to the allegations that the CIA or I “cooked the books” with regard to what happened in Benghazi and then tried to cover this up after the fact. Indeed, the facts show that the CIA and I faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship. And, any allegation or insinuation to the contrary is just plain wrong.¹³⁴

...

[T]he analysts’ initial assessment regarding the particular issue of the presence of a protest was shown by subsequent information to have been incorrect. But, in my view, given the information the analysts had at the time, there was no other conclusion they could have come to other than that there was protest ongoing before the attacks. The analysts made this judgment because of the information that they had available to them when it was published—not because of any political pressure or interference. Indeed, there is not a shred of evidence to support the latter allegation.¹³⁵

...

The first allegation is that I knew that there had not been a protest when I edited the talking points on 15 September. This allegation flows from an email sent by our Chief of Station (COS) in Tripoli to my staff—and to a number of other officials at CIA—on the morning of 15 September. The email was the latest in a series of daily reports updating the security situation in Libya (these had been requested by HQS and other COSs were doing the same). Near the end of the email was a reference to the COS’s assessment that the Benghazi attack was “not/not an escalation of protests.” I read the email as part of my morning reading on 15 September.

The COS’ view on the issue of the protest jumped out at me immediately. Why? Because it contradicted what the analysts believed at that time and what they had written just two days before for senior policymakers. Because of this, I asked my Executive Assistant to request that the COS provide supporting information and logic for his view that there was no protest. My Executive Assistant sent this request at roughly 10:40 am on 15 September.

The COS’ view was significant to me for two reasons. First, I took the views of any COS seriously because Chiefs of Station are the Agency’s senior officers on the ground. They are closest to the action. And, secondly, I had a lot of confidence in COS Tripoli. I had worked closely with him when he worked at headquarters prior to his field assignment, and I found him to be an outstanding intelligence officer in every respect.

¹³⁴ *Id.* (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=2>).

¹³⁵ *Id.* (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=8>).

In his initial email, the COS provided two data points as to why he thought there was no protest, but neither seemed convincing to me. His first point was that local press reports said there was no protest (this was not compelling because there were other press reports saying that there was a protest). His second point was that the CIA security officers who responded to the call for help from the State Department facility from the separate CIA base on the night of the attacks did not see a protest when they arrived (again, this was not compelling because these officers did not arrive until almost an hour after the attack started and the protesters could have dispersed by then). Also, in my mind at the time, was the fact that Tripoli Station—just the day before—disseminated an intelligence report indicating that there was a protest. In any case, I felt the analysts needed more from the COS if they were going to refine their judgment regarding a protest.

I want to be clear that I read the email from the COS before I edited the talking points. To guide my editing, I used what the analysts assessed at the time—that the attack in Benghazi evolved spontaneously from a protest. The revised talking points were signed off on by D/OTA as being an accurate depiction of what her analysts thought at that time. Operations officers at CIA headquarters—those officers in Washington who work most closely with a COS—also signed off on the revised talking points.¹³⁶

...

The second allegation I want to address is that I deliberately lied to Senators Graham, McCain, and Ayotte in a meeting with them regarding Benghazi in late November 2012. The issue is over whether or not I was aware of the truth when I told them that the FBI had removed the reference to al-Qa’ida in the talking points when in fact the CIA had done so. I strongly regret that left the Senators with the impression that I deliberately misled them. I did not—nor did I intend to—do so.

Here are the facts. One of the three Senators asked me “Who removed al-Qa’ida from the talking points?” I made an error and said “the FBI.” I made this error because I had not personally removed the language and because I was thinking about the change the FBI did make to the talking points—the one I mentioned earlier about the FBI not wanting to be too definitive about Islamic extremists having conducted the attack because the Bureau’s investigation was just beginning—and I simply got the two changes mixed up. There was no deliberate attempt to mislead.

What was important was correcting the mistake. On the ride from Capitol Hill to CIA HQS, my Director of Congressional Affairs—who was with me in the meeting with the Senators—told me that he thought I had made a mistake. I responded immediately “Let’s figure that out, and if I did make a mistake, let’s correct the record.” This work was completed very quickly, and my Director of Congressional Affairs informed Congressional Staff just a few hours after I made the error, much shorter than the 24

¹³⁶ *Id.* (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=17>).

hours that some have alleged. Some have also said that I only corrected the record after the FBI called me to complain about my error. No one from the FBI ever called me to express displeasure.”¹³⁷

In addition to his written statement, Deputy Director Morrell also testified publicly at the hearing:

Mr. Chairman, I want both the Committee and the American people to know that I take very seriously the allegations about how the CIA in general and about how I in particular handled the analysis and the talking points. As this Committee knows, the ethical code under which intelligence officers carry out their responsibilities calls for total objectivity. To call it like you see it. No matter what the audience wants to hear, no matter the implications for policy, and no matter the political consequences. In short, speak truth to power.

I served the Central Intelligence Agency for 33 years and I always abided by that code. I served six presidents, three Republicans and three Democrats. I served as President George W. Bush’s first daily intelligence briefer and I served as President Obama’s Deputy Director and Acting Director of the CIA. During this entire service, I never allowed politics to influence what I said or did, never.

I believe the facts in my written statement make clear that neither I nor anyone else at the CIA worked to alter the analysis or the talking points in a way that compromised our responsibility to the American people. We did not deliberately down play the role of terrorists in the Benghazi attack in our analysis or in the talking points. And neither I nor anyone else at the agency deliberately misled anyone in Congress about any aspect of the tragedy in Benghazi.

Mr. Chairman, none of what I just said should be interpreted to mean that we at the CIA did everything right. No organization ever does. There are things we should have done differently. There are areas where the CIA’s performance and my own performance could have been better. But none of our actions were the result of political influence in the intelligence process, none.

Let me touch on three specific issues. One, the CIA analysts, the most talented and highly trained analysts in our government concluded less than 24 hours after the attack that a protest had preceded the assault on the State Department’s facility in Benghazi. They arrived at this initial judgment with good reason and without any input from the White House, the State Department, or the CIA leadership. Their judgment was coordinated across the Intelligence Community which meant that it was a judgment of the entire community, not just the CIA.

¹³⁷ *Id.* (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=19>).

As you know, subsequent information revealed this judgment to be incorrect. But, and let me emphasize this, our analysts reached their initial judgment because that is where the best available information at the time led them, not because of politics.

Indeed, our analysts did what they are trained to do, make a judgment based on the best information at hand, make clear that judgment might change as new information becomes available, and then adjust the judgment as necessary. That is what I expected of them, it is what you expect of them and it is what the American people expect of them and it is exactly what they did.

Two, the CIA's then most senior analyst on terrorism and outstanding officer whom this committee knows well wrote the first draft of the unclassified talking points. Neither the White House, the State Department nor I did so, as some have alleged. After our top analysts had the first draft, many changes were made to the talking points over a period of time including some by agency officers, some by other agencies and some by me.

The process inside the CIA to produce the talking points could have been better in several respects and I discussed this in detail at my written testimony. But, to be very clear, the White House did not make any substantive changes to the talking points, nor did they ask me to make any substantive changes to the talking points. And while the talking points could have been better, the judgment that the attacks evolved from a protest was fully consistent with the Intelligence Community's classified analysis at the time.¹³⁸

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

On July 31, 2014, Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, issued a statement regarding the Committee's report, which was adopted on a bipartisan basis and approved for declassification review:

The House Intelligence Committee spent nearly two years looking at every aspect of the Intelligence Community's activities before, during and after the attacks of September 11, 2012, in Benghazi Libya. The Committee spent thousands of hours in the course of the investigation, which included poring over pages of intelligence assessments, cables, notes and emails. The Committee held twenty briefings and hearings and conducted detailed interviews with senior intelligence officials and eyewitnesses to the attacks, including eight security personnel on the ground in Benghazi that night. The result is a bipartisan, factual, definitive report on what the Intelligence Community did and did not do.

...

The report also shows that the process used to develop the talking points was flawed, but that the talking points reflected the conflicting intelligence assessments in the days

¹³⁸ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Testimony of Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA, *Hearing on the Benghazi Talking Points and Michael J. Morell's Role in Shaping the Administration's Narrative* (Apr. 2, 2014) (online at www.c-span.org/video/?318648-1/benghazi-obama-administration).

immediately following the crisis. ... And there was absolutely no evidence, in documents or testimony, that the Intelligence Community's assessments were politically motivated in any way.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ *Statement on HSPCI Benghazi Report by Ranking Member Dutch Ruppersberger, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (July 31, 2014) (online at <http://democrats.intelligence.house.gov/press-release/rm-ruppersberger-statement-hspci-benghazi-report>).*

QUESTION:

What is the origin of the idea that a video motivated the attacks?

Rep. Trey Gowdy: “Do you know the origin of this mythology that it [the attack] was spawned as a spontaneous reaction to a video? Do you know where that started? Do you know how we got from no evidence of that to that being the official position of the Administration?”

Source: *Remarks at Republican Press Conference* (Oct. 30, 2013) (online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1jeJmeeMjs).

ANSWER:

The attacks in Benghazi occurred in the context of dozens of protests against U.S. facilities around the world in response to an inflammatory film. There was significant uncertainty about the motivation for the Benghazi attacks, but press reports, public statements by the purported attackers, and intelligence reports indicated that some attackers in Benghazi may have been inspired by the video or by violent protests elsewhere earlier that day.

Congressional Research Service:

On September 20, 2012, the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service issued a report documenting protests and violent attacks at U.S. facilities around the world sparked by an anti-Islamic film called “The Innocence of Muslims”:

Morocco: Hundreds of Salafist demonstrators reportedly gathered outside the U.S. consulate in Morocco’s commercial capital, Casablanca, on September 12, chanting slogans against the United States and burning a U.S. flag. The protests do not appear to have involved a direct attack on the U.S. facilities or any injuries of U.S. citizens. A heavy police presence was reported. News reports indicate that protests again occurred in the city of Tangiers and other urban centers on September 17, with total turnout estimated in the thousands. King Mohammed VI of Morocco publicly offered condolences to the American people and government following the attack in Benghazi, and also condemned “unacceptable provocations undermining the sacred values of Islam” in a phone call with Secretary of State Clinton. On September 13, in a public appearance in Washington, DC, marking the opening of a new U.S.-Morocco “Bilateral Strategic Dialogue,” Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Eddine al Othmani likewise expressed condolences and condemned the violence, stating that U.S. diplomats “should be protected.”

Algeria: Algerian security forces broke up a protest march of hundreds in the capital, Algiers, on September 14, and reportedly deployed preemptively throughout the city to deter such movements. On September 12, the U.S. Embassy in Algiers had warned of efforts by unspecified groups to organize demonstrations against “a range of issues” and

instructed Americans to avoid large gatherings and non-essential travel in and around official buildings. Among those arrested in connection with the demonstration was Ali Belhadj, the former deputy leader of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party. On September 16, the speaker of the Libyan parliament accused Algerian nationals of being among those responsible for the killing of the U.S. Ambassador to Libya.

Tunisia: Security forces dispersed protests outside the U.S. Embassy in Tunis on September 13. The following day, protesters breached the outer walls of the embassy compound, reportedly hanging a black flag associated with Islamist extremists and setting fire to cars in the compound parking lot. Unidentified assailants also sacked an American school facility located near the embassy. Tunisia's President Moncef Marzouki condemned the attacks and reportedly dispatched members of the presidential guard to protect the embassy following a phone call from Secretary of State Clinton; Marzouki also called for the international prosecution of those who made the offending video. Tunisia's Interior Minister, Ali Laraydh, a senior member of the ruling Islamist party Al Nahda, apologized to the United States on national television the same day for failing to protect the embassy; on September 15, the ruling party also released a written statement condemning both the violence and the video. Tunisia's National Assembly subsequently held a hearing on the incidents, at which members expressed a range of opinions as to who was responsible for the violence; some called for Laraydh's resignation while others contended the U.S. government was at fault. The State Department has warned U.S. citizens against all travel to Tunisia and urged Americans to leave the country via the airport, noting that it has ordered the departure of all non-emergency U.S. government personnel.

Libya: U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens and three other U.S. personnel were killed on September 11, 2012, during an assault by armed terrorists on two U.S. interim diplomatic office sites in Benghazi, Libya. U.S. officials have provided a preliminary account of the events that the ambassador and another officer died as a result of a fire started during an initial armed assault by several dozen attackers on the main office compound. A larger number of attackers subsequently assaulted a separate U.S. annex compound to which U.S. personnel had been evacuated, killing two more U.S. personnel and wounding several others. Ambassador Stevens' body was retrieved from a local hospital and remaining U.S. personnel were evacuated from the Benghazi airport. According to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "American and Libyan security personnel battled the attackers together." Additional U.S. personnel have been deployed to Libya to secure U.S. facilities. Joint Libyan and U.S. investigations are ongoing.

Sudan: Protesters set fire to the German Embassy in Khartoum, and at least two protesters were killed by police during demonstrations on September 14 outside the U.S. Embassy. Reports suggest several thousand people were involved in the protests, which occurred after Friday prayers. On the same day, the Foreign Ministry reportedly summoned U.S. and German diplomats to convey an official protest against the video. The Foreign Ministry also denounced German Chancellor Angela Merkel for giving a press freedom award in 2010 to the Danish cartoonist whose work had prompted protests in 2006. Vice President Joseph Biden called his counterpart to reaffirm the Sudanese government's responsibility to protect diplomatic facilities and ensure the protection of

diplomats. The government deployed additional police to provide security near the embassies, but rejected a U.S. plan to deploy Marines for increased security of the embassy facilities and personnel. Non-emergency U.S. diplomatic personnel and family members have been evacuated from Khartoum, given damage done to the outside of the embassy building, and the State Department is evaluating the security posture of the Sudanese security forces. Sudan blocked access to YouTube's website in the country after unsuccessfully requesting that Google remove the film.

Egypt: The "Innocence of Muslims" film appears to have first gained international attention in the Egyptian media, where it was debated by Coptic Christian and Salafist Muslim outlets. On September 11 thousands of predominantly Salafist Egyptians protested at the U.S. Embassy in downtown Cairo, scaling the walls and replacing the U.S. flag with a black one inscribed with the Islamic creed, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is the prophet of God." Embassy officials reportedly directed non-essential personnel to avoid the embassy in anticipation of the protest and no U.S. injuries were reported in Cairo nor during subsequent demonstrations by several hundred protestors at the consulate in Alexandria.

On September 12, President Mohammad Morsi asked the U.S. government to take legal action against the makers of the film that sparked the protests, drawing criticism from some U.S. observers. Comments by State Department officials suggest that a September 13 conversation between Presidents Obama and Morsi likely influenced a dramatic improvement in police and military efforts to secure the U.S. Embassy. President Obama's efforts and critiques by other U.S. officials also may have motivated the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists to alter a planned demonstration outside the embassy on September 14 and instead symbolically stage a rally of several thousand people in nearby Tahrir Square. Robust security operations cleared the area of most protestors over the weekend of September 15 and 16.

On September 13, President Morsi condemned the violent attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel during a meeting with the European Commission. In a separate series of short statements published by the Deputy Chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood Khairat al Shater, the Brotherhood stated the following:

Our condolences to the American people for the tragic loss of Ambassador Stevens, and three Embassy staff in Libya. Breach of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo is illegal under international law, and police failure to protect embassy has to be investigated. We are relieved none of the U.S. Embassy Cairo staff were harmed and hope US-Egypt relations will sustain turbulence of Tuesday's events.

Militants in the Sinai, who were already engaged with Egyptian military forces attempting to pacify the area, may have used the protests as an opportunity to launch new attacks against foreign peacekeepers stationed there. On September 14, press reports indicate that militants attacked a Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) facility in the Al Gura area of north Sinai, injuring four MFO staff. The MFO mission monitors the implementation of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty.

Israel/West Bank-Gaza: Generally nonviolent protests have taken place since September 11 in various parts of Israel among Arabs, particularly in northern cities such as Nazareth. These protests have reached the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. On September 14, hundreds of Arab Jerusalemites and Israeli Arabs marched from East Jerusalem following noontime prayers at the Al Aqsa Mosque and threw stones at Israeli riot police, in an unsuccessful probable attempt to approach the U.S. consulate. A smaller group assembled on September 15, presumably en route to the U.S. consulate, and Israeli police quickly dispersed the protest and arrested the organizer. Israeli reports indicated that most of the rallies have been called by the Israeli Arab Islamic movement. Reportedly, thousands of Palestinians protested in Gaza on September 14, and Palestinians in the West Bank have protested in Ramallah.

Lebanon: Violent protests by several hundred Sunni Arab extremists in the northern city of Tripoli resulted in property damage to two U.S. chain restaurants on Friday, September 14. Lebanese leaders have condemned the film and the resulting violence and have committed to protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah appeared in public to address thousands of supporters and denounce the film. Hezbollah has called for a week of protests. The group's reaction to the controversy may be an attempt to overcome setbacks the group has suffered as a result of sectarian divisions and its unpopular policy toward the conflict in Syria.

Turkey: Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, seen by U.S. leaders as a potentially important influence on regional opinion, responded to the violence against U.S. installations on September 14 by saying, "Insulting the Prophet cannot be justified as freedom of expression. It cannot be a reason for innocent people to be attacked or harmed.... No one can, in the name of Islam, carry out actions of the kind that happened in Libya with the attack on the U.S. mission [in Benghazi]." Small protests involving an Islamist organization and workers' party outside the U.S. Embassy in Ankara led to the burning of an American flag on September 16.

Yemen: On September 13 hundreds of mostly young men stormed the compound of the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, one of the most secure buildings in Yemen, causing destruction, looting, and setting fires. Up to 4 protestors were killed and 15 wounded in clashes with Yemeni security forces, 24 of whom were injured. President Abed Rabbo Mansour al Hadi apologized the same day and called for a swift investigation; on September 16 the Ministry of Interior announced it had made 13 arrests. Some videos of the incidents allegedly show security forces embracing fleeing protestors, possibly indicating collusion stemming from their allegiance to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Hadi had dismissed several pro-Saleh officials the night before the attack, and the government had announced the killing of a senior al Qaeda figure on September 11. Negotiations between U.S. and Yemeni officials resulted in the deployment of a platoon (50) of U.S. Marines to Yemen on September 14. On September 15, Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) called for more attacks, describing the video and related confrontations as "a new chapter in the crusades against Islam."

Qatar: An estimated 2,000 Qatari citizens and residents demonstrated in a peaceful gathering at the U.S. Embassy in Doha. In his September 14 sermon, Qatar-based cleric

Yusuf al Qaradawi condemned the film and said, “It’s unfair to accuse all the U.S. community of wrongdoing.” He added, “Expressing loyalty to the prophet does not mean that we should head out to foreign embassies to pelt them with stones or burn them, kill the ambassador and people accompanying him. We should not react this way.”

Bahrain: After Friday prayers on September 14, about 2,000 protesters in a Shiite district outside the capital of Manama burned American and Israeli flags to protest the video. The government, which has been attempting to suppress a Shiite uprising since February 2011, did not deploy security forces against the protest. However, the Interior Ministry reportedly ordered media regulators to attempt to block access to the video in Bahrain.

Kuwait: On September 13, hundreds of Kuwaitis, including several Islamist members of its elected National Assembly, demonstrated opposite the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City. The Islamist lawmakers had earlier called for the peaceful protest, but they reportedly left the demonstration when some protesters called for the storming of the embassy. Forewarned by the lawmakers’ call for the protest, Kuwaiti security forces were deployed to push protesters away from the embassy security perimeter, and they successfully prevented any breaching of the facility.

Iraq: Hundreds of Iraqis protested against the United States and the video on September 13, 2012, calling the video inflammatory and anti-Islamic. In Baghdad, the protests took place mainly in the Shiite Muslim district called “Sadr City,” home to many followers of hardline Shiite cleric Moqtada al Sadr. Similar protests took place in pro-Sadr neighborhoods of the predominantly Shiite cities of Najaf and Karbala. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki strongly condemned the video but also called on demonstrators not to commit violence in expressing their anger at the video.

Iran: On September 13, 2012, about 500 people conducted a peaceful protest near the Embassy of Switzerland, which is the protecting power for U.S. interests in Iran. The Iranian government deployed hundreds of security people to prevent the crowd from approaching the compound. Subsequently, several leading Iranian political figures, officials, parliamentarians, and security organizations (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) issued statements denouncing the video as an example of what they asserted is U.S. anti-Islam bias and U.S. efforts to sow discord among major religions, operating in the guise of protecting free speech.

Afghanistan: Following several days in which the Afghan government attempted to block distribution of the “Innocence of Muslims” video, on September 17, 2012, several hundred to several thousand Afghans demonstrated outside a U.S. training facility for the Afghan security forces (Camp Phoenix), just east of central Kabul. Afghan police were deployed to prevent the demonstrators from entering that and nearby facilities, leaving 40 Afghan police injured. A few days before the demonstration, the office of President Hamid Karzai released a statement denouncing the video as a “desecrating act,” but also saying that video’s producer represents a “small radical minority,” whose work should not be distributed in Afghanistan. Afghan clerics reportedly denounced the video but called for nonviolent responses in sermons on Friday, September 14. On September 18, a

young female suicide bomber targeted a vehicle in Kabul, killing 10 foreign workers in an attack claimed by Hezb-i-Islami “in response to the film insulting the Prophet Mohammed and Islam.”

Pakistan: In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan—home to about 170 million Muslims—early public demonstrations were unexpectedly muted, given large-scale rioting that had occurred in response to previous perceived offenses against Islam. Police there have taken robust action to block violent protesters and to protect American diplomatic facilities. The country’s legislative and executive branches both issued formal condemnations of the video clip. Yet many analysts see Islamabad’s acute interest in preventing the further deterioration of ties with Washington keeping it from stirring the pot or acceding to demands from Islamist leaders that the top U.S. diplomat be ejected from the country. However, beginning on September 16, some protests in major Pakistani cities involved arson and rock-throwing. One person was killed in protests outside the U.S. consulate in Karachi, and police in Lahore pushed back rioters near the U.S. consulate in that city. The next day, as the turbulence continued, the prime minister ordered a suspension of access to YouTube to prevent further dissemination of “blasphemous material.”

Evidence of public anger in Pakistan grew steadily in the week following the first protests. On September 19, a group of lawyers broke through the gate outside Islamabad’s diplomatic enclave, where they burned American flags and held a brief sit-in. On the same day, personnel at the U.S. consulate in Lahore were moved to a secure location as a precautionary measure. In a reflection of widespread and possibly growing anger, the government took the unusual step of declaring Friday, September 21 as an official “day of peaceful protest.”

India: A very small percentage of India’s roughly 180 million Muslims displayed public opposition and anger to the video; notable protests were found in only three cities and have involved only minor violence. Police there have effectively protected American diplomatic facilities. An Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesman called the clip “offensive material.” In Jammu and Kashmir—the country’s only Muslim-majority state—Islamist leaders called for a general strike and organized street protests comprised of thousands of angry Muslims chanting anti-American slogans. A smaller-scale protest in the city of Chennai included rocks being thrown at the U.S. consulate there. Peaceful protests were also seen in Hyderabad.

Bangladesh: Approximately 10,000 demonstrated on Friday, September 14 in Dhaka after prayers but were blocked from approaching the U.S. Embassy by elements of the Rapid Reaction Battalion with armored personnel carriers and water cannons. The demonstrators chanted anti-U.S. slogans, threatened to besiege the embassy, burned the U.S. flag, and demanded an apology from the United States. Bangladesh police and security forces had reportedly tightened security around the embassy in anticipation of the protests. The Bangladesh government condemned the film and reportedly blocked YouTube after the film was not taken off the website. Bangladesh, with a population of 153 million, is approximately 90% Muslim.

Sri Lanka: About 300 demonstrators gathered in Colombo to denounce the film near the U.S. Embassy. Some of the protestors called for those who created the film to be hanged. Sri Lanka, with a population of 21 million, is largely Buddhist (69%) with Muslim (8%), Hindu (7%), and Christian (6%) minorities.

Indonesia: Police reportedly fired tear gas and used water cannons after hundreds of protesters marched to the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta on September 16, burning American flags, hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails, and setting tires alight. Protests against the film began on September 13, and have been led by a number of groups, including Hizbat Tharir Indonesia, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), and the Islamic People's Forum (FUI). The situation could serve as a test of influence for both hardline and moderate Islamic groups in Indonesia. Moderate religious leaders, including the head of the country's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, have urged members not to react violently to the film. On September 16, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who has condemned both the film and the Benghazi attack, urged the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to issue edicts against religious defamation. Imprisoned extremist cleric Abu Bakar al Ba'asyir reportedly said in an interview from his cell that "What happened in Libya can be imitated. If it is defaming God and the Prophet [Muhammad], the punishment should be death. [There are] no other considerations."

Malaysia: Around 30 protesters gathered at the U.S. Embassy on September 13, and local groups have promised further protests this week. The events could affect the outcome of nationwide parliamentary elections that must be held by March 2013. Officials from both the United Malays National Organization (UNMO), the largest party in the ruling coalition, and the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), Malaysia's largest opposition party, have condemned the video.

Australia: Australia, with a population of approximately 23 million, has a Muslim population of about half a million that represents 2.2% of the population. On September 15, about 400 demonstrators carrying placards reading "Behead all those who insult the Prophet" gathered outside the U.S. consulate in Sydney before clashing with police. The police used dogs and chemical sprays to disperse the protestors. Six police officers were injured and eight protestors were arrested in the incident. Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, a self-described atheist, called on immigrants to leave old hatreds behind, learn English, and respect women while condemning the protests as extremism. A demonstration against the film had been called for September 23 in Melbourne, and some observers expressed concern that such a gathering could become violent. Organizers subsequently cancelled the protest, and the Islamic Council of Victoria welcomed the move. Despite this, police remain concerned that a protest may occur and become violent.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Congressional Research Service, *Recent Protests in Muslim Countries: Background and Issues for Congress* (Sept. 20, 2012) (online at www.hsdl.org/?view&did=723794#page=16).

Press Reports of Libyan Witnesses:

On December 28, 2013, the New York Times issued a report based in part on interviews with Libyan witnesses:

The violence, though, also had spontaneous elements. Anger at the video motivated the initial attack. Dozens of people joined in, some of them provoked by the video and others responding to fast-spreading false rumors that guards inside the American compound had shot Libyan protesters. Looters and arsonists, without any sign of a plan, were the ones who ravaged the compound after the initial attack, according to more than a dozen Libyan witnesses as well as many American officials who have viewed the footage from security cameras.¹⁴¹

...

[O]n Sept. 8, a popular Islamist preacher lit the fuse by screening a clip of the video on the ultraconservative Egyptian satellite channel El Nas. American diplomats in Cairo raised the alarm in Washington about a growing backlash, including calls for a protest outside their embassy.

No one mentioned it to the American diplomats in Libya. But Islamists in Benghazi were watching. Egyptian satellite networks like El Nas and El Rahma were widely available in Benghazi. "It is Friday morning viewing," popular on the day of prayer, said one young Benghazi Islamist who turned up at the compound during the attack, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

By Sept. 9, a popular eastern Libyan Facebook page had denounced the film. On the morning of Sept. 11, even some secular political activists were posting calls online for a protest that Friday, three days away.

Hussein Abu Hamida, the acting chief of Benghazi's informal police force, saw the growing furor and feared new violence against Western interests. He conferred with Abdul Salam Bargathi of the Preventive Security Brigade, an Islamist militia with a grandiose name, each recalled separately, and they increased security outside a United Nations office. But they said nothing to the Americans.¹⁴²

...

Around dusk, the Pan-Arab satellite networks began broadcasting footage of protesters breaching the walls of the American Embassy in Cairo, pulling down the American flag and running up the black banner of militant Islam. Young men around Benghazi began

¹⁴¹ *A Deadly Mix in Benghazi*, New York Times (Dec. 28, 2013) (online at www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/benghazi/#/?chapt=0).

¹⁴² *Id.* (online at www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/benghazi/#/?chapt=3).

calling one another with the news, several said, and many learned of the video for the first time.¹⁴³

...

There is no doubt that anger over the video motivated many attackers. A Libyan journalist working for The New York Times was blocked from entering by the sentries outside, and he learned of the film from the fighters who stopped him. Other Libyan witnesses, too, said they received lectures from the attackers about the evil of the film and the virtue of defending the prophet.¹⁴⁴

...

The leaders of Ansar al-Shariah, the hard-line Islamist group allied with Mr. Abu Khattala, declared in a statement read on television the morning after the attack that they had not participated in it. But they lauded the assault as a just response to the video. They, too, insisted that a “peaceful protest” had “escalated as a result of shooting that came from the consulate, which led to the ambassador’s death by suffocation.”¹⁴⁵

On September 17, 2012, the New York Times published a map documenting protests throughout the world.¹⁴⁶

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Bipartisan Report:

Individuals affiliated with terrorist groups, including AQIM, Ansar al-Sharia, AQAP, and the Mohammad Jamal Network, participated in the September 11, 2012, attacks. Intelligence suggests that the attack was not a highly coordinated plot, but was opportunistic; however, well-armed attackers easily overwhelmed the Libyan security guards and the five U.S. Diplomatic Security agents present at the Temporary Mission Facility. It remains unclear if any group or person exercised overall command and control of the attacks or whether extremist group leaders directed their members to participate. Some intelligence suggests the attacks were likely put together in short order, following that day’s violent protests in Cairo against an inflammatory video, suggesting that these and other terrorist groups could conduct similar attacks with little advance warning.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ *Id.* (online at www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/benghazi/#/?chapt=4).

¹⁴⁴ *Id.*

¹⁴⁵ *Id.* (online at www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/benghazi/#/?chapt=5).

¹⁴⁶ *Spread of Protests Sparked by Anti-Muslim Video*, New York Times (Sept. 17, 2012) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/13/world/middleeast/spread-of-protests-sparked-by-anti-muslim-video.html?_r=2&).

¹⁴⁷ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012* (Jan. 15, 2014) (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=41).

The report also found:

A dearth of clear and definitive HUMINT or eyewitness reporting led IC analysts to rely on open press reports and limited SIGINT reporting that incorrectly attributed the origins of the Benghazi attacks to “protests,” over first-hand accounts from U.S. officials on the ground. CIA’s January 4, 2013, Analytic Line Review found that “[a]pproximately a dozen reports that included press accounts, public statements by AAS members, HUMINT reporting, DOD reporting, and signals intelligence all stated or strongly suggested that a protest occurred outside of the Mission facility just prior to the attacks.”

Of the 11 reports cited by the CIA’s Analytic Line Review, six were press articles, two were the public statements of Ansar al-Sharia, and the three others were intelligence reports. Specific open source reports and intelligence on which analysts appear to have based their judgments include the public statements by Ansar al-Sharia that the attacks were a “spontaneous and popular uprising.” Also, there was protest activity in Egypt and approximately 40 other cities around the world and violent attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities in Tunisia, Yemen, and Egypt from September 11-20, 2012. In addition, there were intelligence reports in the days following the Benghazi attacks that al-Qa’ida-associated terrorists hoped to take advantage of global protests for further attacks.

As a result of evidence from closed circuit videos and other reports, the IC changed its assessment about a protest in classified intelligence reports on September 24, 2012, to state there were no demonstrations or protests at the Temporary Mission Facility prior to the attacks. This slow change in the official assessment affected the public statements of government officials, who continued to state in press interviews that there were protests outside the Mission compound. The IC continues to assess that although they do not think the first attack came out of protests, the lethality and efficacy of the attack “did not require significant amounts of preplanning.” The IC continues to review the amount and nature of any preplanning that went into the attacks.¹⁴⁸

The report also found:

According to a January 4, 2013, letter from the Acting Director of the CIA, Michael Morell, “[t]he nature of the attacks suggested they did not involve significant preplanning.” Although it may never be known with complete certainty, it is possible that the individuals and groups involved in the attacks had not planned on conducting those attacks until that day, meaning that specific tactical warning would have been highly unlikely. ... [T]he collective assessment of the IC remains that the attacks “were deliberate and organized, but that their lethality and efficacy did not necessarily indicate extensive planning.”¹⁴⁹

The report also found that the first version of the unclassified talking points prepared by Intelligence Community analysts stated:

¹⁴⁸ *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=35).

¹⁴⁹ *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=25).

We believe based on currently available information that the attacks in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the US Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a direct assault against the US Consulate and subsequently its annex.¹⁵⁰

[CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell:](#)

On April 2, 2014, Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA, testified at a hearing before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He stated in his written testimony:

The analysts' first thorough, fully coordinated, assessment of what happened in Benghazi was written on 12 September, less than 24 hours after the attacks, and disseminated to senior level policymakers and to the Congressional intelligence committees on 13 September. It was coordinated with analysts across the Intelligence Community. This means that the assessment represented the views of the Intelligence Community, not just CIA. It was approved for publication by a senior officer in CIA's Directorate of Intelligence and by a senior officer in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The piece made four key points:

- That the attack on the State Department facility in Benghazi was a spontaneous event that evolved from a protest in Benghazi. The title of the 13 September piece was: "Extremists Capitalized on Benghazi Protests." The key sentence read: "We assess the attacks on Tuesday against the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi began spontaneously"
- That the attackers were inspired by the breach of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo on 11 September. The first sentence of the piece said "...the attacks began spontaneously following the protests at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo...." There was no mention of the video defaming the Prophet Muhammad as a motivation for the attacks in Benghazi. In fact, there was no mention of the video at all.
- That al-Qa'ida linked individuals and other extremists were involved in the attacks. ...
- That the attacks did not involve significant pre-planning. The piece, in the first sentence, implied that the attackers decided to act after seeing events in Cairo several hours earlier but on the same day.¹⁵¹

...

¹⁵⁰ *Id.* (online at www.intelligence.senate.gov/benghazi2014/benghazi.pdf#page=46).

¹⁵¹ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Written Statement of Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA, *Hearing on the Benghazi Talking Points and Michael J. Morell's Role in Shaping the Administration's Narrative* (Apr. 2, 2014) (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=3>).

Let me make clear that we know that the analysts had an evidentiary basis to make the judgment that there was a protest ongoing at the time of the attack. All together, there were roughly a dozen or so reports indicating that this was the case. Some of this information arrived at CIA Headquarters (HQS) on 12 September and some arrived on 13 September. These included press accounts—including public statements by the Libyan Government and by extremists. And they included intelligence reports from CIA, the National Security Agency, and the Department of Defense—including a report from CIA’s Station in Tripoli that arrived at CIA HQS on 13 September.

Let me provide some examples from the open source reporting:

- The first Libyan Government statement about the incident said that a demonstration preceded the attack. In a press conference on 12 September, the Deputy Interior Minister for eastern Libya stated that the State Department facility was stormed after guards opened fire on a crowd gathered outside.
- An Ansar al-Sharia extremist uploaded a video to YouTube on 12 September praising the attack as a spontaneous, popular uprising.

It is important to note that, when the analysts wrote their assessment on 12 September, there was not a single piece of information in their possession denying there was a protest. The available evidence was expressly to the contrary. Indeed, for the analysts to have disregarded the reports indicating there was a protest would have required ignoring all of the information they had at that time. On what basis could the analysts possibly have done so? None that was apparent at the time.¹⁵²

...

[W]hile the initial judgment about the protest changed as more information became available, the other three key judgments in the analysis published on 13 September have held up. To this day, the analysts still believe that extremists with ties to al-Qa’ida participated in the attacks—that these were terrorist attacks—that the attacks were conducted with little preplanning, and that they were motivated by the success of attackers in Cairo and/or by Zawahiri’s call for revenge of the death of Abu Yayha al-Libi.¹⁵³

During his oral testimony, Deputy Director Morell had this exchange:

¹⁵² *Id.* (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=5>).

¹⁵³ *Id.* (online at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/MorellSFR04022014.pdf#page=8>).

Q: Do you recall whether there was any—whether the chief of station was willing at that time to ascribe this to Al-Qaeda per se?

A: So, in his detailed e-mail on the 16th, he said regarding motivation—he said we don't know what motivated the attackers, but he said I think there are three possibilities.

The first was an attack on the anniversary of 9/11, to use 9/11 as a—the 9/11 anniversary as a reason for the attack. The second reason—the second motivation was the call for revenge by Ayman Al-Zawahiri for the death of a senior Al-Qaeda leader in Pakistan named Abu Yehya Alibi just days before. The third motivation that he ascribed as a possible motivation was the YouTube video.

Q: So, in this detailed memorandum the station chief could not discount the possibility even then that the video played a role in the attacks on the facilities?

A: That is correct.¹⁵⁴

Department of State Office Director for Maghreb Affairs:

On August 5, 2013, staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of William Roebuck, the State Department's Office Director for Maghreb Affairs.

Q: After the statements made by Ambassador Rice, you had some visibility into the disagreements in the process leading up. What was your reaction to the statements that were ultimately made on the Sunday talk shows?

A: I think that the first week after 9/11 there was significant uncertainty about what had happened and disagreement among key people who shaped opinion. And I don't mean people with ideas. I mean people with information. There was a disagreement about what had happened.¹⁵⁵

...

Q: And so the attack in Cairo, would it be safe to say that it from a time perspective bleeds right into the Benghazi attack?

¹⁵⁴ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Testimony of Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA, *Hearing on the Benghazi Talking Points and Michael J. Morell's Role in Shaping the Administration's Narrative* (Apr. 2, 2014) (online at www.c-span.org/video/?318648-1/benghazi-obama-administration).

¹⁵⁵ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of William Roebuck (Aug. 5, 2013) (referenced in Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Status Update on Investigation of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi* (Sept. 19, 2013) (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=56)).

- A: Yes, it was in the same timeframe, and to a certain degree it colored in the initial few days, it colored how people looked at that attack.
- Q: And what do you mean colored?
- A: Because it was the first, and there was incomplete and sort of changing information about what had happened in Benghazi. You had this other thing that happened in Cairo, and there was some confusion about have you had—was this the same thing, were these two incidents the same, were they different? The interagency was trying to sort that out. They were also trying to sort out the conflicting information from Benghazi itself.
- Q: And immediately following the Benghazi incident, were there other incidents at other posts around the world?
- A: There were. There were incidents in Sudan, in Pakistan.
- Q: Can you give me some timeframes and dates? Was this months later or—
- A: No, no, this was in the same—this was the week. I'm talking about the week from September 11 through, you know, 18 or 19.
- Q: So all in the same week?
- A: Yeah.
- Q: And what was the basis for the other incidents at the other facilities?
- A: They were protesting this film, this anti-Islam film.
- Q: So would it be reasonable, then, if there are disagreements within the agency or within different departments or agencies at the U.S. Federal Government level that it would be hard to sort of tease out the root cause of one incident versus another?
- A: I think it made it more difficult, and it probably slowed our getting to ground truth on Benghazi, absolutely.¹⁵⁶
- ...
- Q: There was also a discussion about the night of the attacks, and you had made reference to the fact that there was some agency disagreement as to the basis or the predicate for those attacks. Is that correct?

¹⁵⁶ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=56).

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And how long did that last within the agency?

A: Six to 7 days.

Q: Okay. Would you characterize those disagreements as honest disagreements?

A: Yes.

Q: Were these people that you respected and are they generally well informed of global security or geopolitical issues?

A: Yes, they were the experts.

Q: And so if there was disagreement, in your opinion, that disagreement could be legitimate in that there was a basis for it?

A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Okay. Was there also disagreement within differing agencies as to the basis for the attacks?

A: Yes.¹⁵⁷

Department of State Assistant Secretary of Diplomatic Security:

On July 9, 2013, staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Eric Boswell, former Assistant Secretary of Diplomatic Security:

Q: In those immediate days when you were dealing with a lot of major issues going on, was there any specific understanding that what had happened in Benghazi was tied to the YouTube video or to what happened in Cairo?

A: I knew only what the press was—I had no other knowledge of what was going on. To this day I don't think the USG—and we'll know when the FBI finally comes out with its report and investigation—but to this day I don't think we have a good fix as the USG on what exactly caused that attack or was motivating that attack.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=58).

¹⁵⁸ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Eric Boswell (July 9, 2013) (referenced in Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Status Update on Investigation of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi* (Sept. 19, 2013) (online at

He also stated:

I had to get briefed on what was—on what had been happening, what the state of play was not only in Benghazi, but in Tripoli. We were very concerned about Tripoli. Tripoli is an embassy that in some ways is similar to Benghazi ... just like Benghazi. So we were very concerned about Tripoli.

But also things were starting to go haywire in other places. This was at the time, as you will recall, of what I call the odious video, the YouTube video, the blasphemous video that had led to—I believe had led to the original demonstration in Cairo where people came over the wall.

I think it was the day after I got back, we had an attack on our embassy in Sana'a, Yemen, where demonstrators penetrated the perimeter, did a great deal of damage, milled around inside the compound, and in subsequent days there were other such demonstrations. So I had my hands full.

We had a near invasion of a compound in Khartoum, Sudan, where very large—thousands of demonstrators—in each case there was thousands of demonstrators—saw thousands of demonstrators came up against the wall of this brand new mission, OSPB-compliant, SECCA-compliant, compliant-with-everything mission in Khartoum and tried very hard to get in. They did a lot of damage, but they didn't get in.

Similarly, and I can't tell you exactly the date, I'd have to come back to you on that, but it was very soon there was a similar attack by a mob on our embassy in Tunis, another brand new facility. A large number of demonstrators penetrated into the—into the facility, milled around, did a lot of damage. It was a very alarming time.

In the end, in all of those places, the systems that we had put in place to protect our people—and I want to underline this—the systems that we put in place to protect our people succeeded. It was a near-run thing, but it succeeded. There were no American casualties in any of those. They were very, very severe attacks on our missions.

I can add that there were also enormous demonstrations in Pakistan. I don't want to undersell Pakistan in any of this. It was an area of great concern. I've said in the past and to you that I thought Peshawar was our most difficult mission in the Foreign Service. There were major demonstrations by tens of thousands of people against consulates in Karachi, in Lahore, and our embassy in Islamabad. The Embassy—the demonstration against our embassy in Islamabad by one count was 80,000 people. That focuses the attention when that happens.¹⁵⁹

http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status%20Update%20Report%2009-18-13.pdf#page=59)).

¹⁵⁹ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=60)).

Diplomatic Security Desk Officer:

On August 8, 2013, staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Brian Papanu, the Diplomatic Security Desk Officer in the Command Center on the night of the attacks:

Q: A minute ago, you testified that it was unprecedented in scope. There were a lot of armed individuals. Was that something that was communicated to you the night of or is that something you have learned subsequently?

A: Not in the initial report. I don't think the RSO had the numbers or—I believe he used the term “attack,” which would indicate it is not a protest, people just climbing over the wall. He probably would have said so if that was the case. So, from my recollection, the RSO meant it as an attack. And then, obviously, as the night progressed and we started talking and getting more information, it appeared to be incredibly violent, and it was definitely not what we were seeing in Cairo, which was very malicious in nature. And to be honest with you, a breach of the compound perimeter is a serious security issue. But they weren't trying to break in. They didn't build battering rams or anything like that. It didn't look like they were there to hurt anybody from what we could tell. But in Benghazi, I mean, they went in initially and just started—one of the first reports I recall was they went in and instantly started lighting fires and also explosions and gunfire was heard at the onset of the attack like initially. So it appeared to be a terrorist attack.

Q: And there was nothing like that in Cairo, nothing like the fires?

A: No. No. But there were a lot of people in Cairo. A lot. I mean, it was unnerving to find out the numbers that that they had mobilized, I guess, would be the proper term.

Q: Do you remember when you first heard mention that the attacks in Benghazi might have been connected to a protest or a demonstration?

A: I don't. Probably the talking points that were put out. I mean, from my perspective, where I was, it was all meshing together as one. So we really didn't have time to analyze one in particular from another. It could have just—I mean, it's hard—everyone in Benghazi had guns. So who knows what their initial intent was or what their intent was. But the way they all—one of them right after another and then stopped, it seems to signify to me that they were related in some way, shape or form. And the only common thread that I can see is the video.

Q: So, in your opinion, at the time, Cairo was pretty clearly a demonstration or a protest that had become, you know, vandalism, some sort of hostility. But in your mind, it was clearly a protest in nature and might have had some connection to the

video. And because of the timing, the correlation with the Benghazi attack, you thought that there was a possibility that Benghazi was a similar event that had gotten even more violent, more dangerous?

A: I mean, that's part of it. I don't want to sit here and tell you exactly. I mean, I don't know. But some of the things I witnessed in Cairo, I mean, the protesters were doing a lot of tweeting. Are you familiar with what a flash mob is?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then when we were reacting or coordinating responses in the command center, the Twitter pages were going crazy. It was unbelievable to see how much Twitter traffic was transpiring during the attack. This is in Libya now. And it was amazing. I had never used Twitter. I don't use Facebook. I barely even use a computer, for that matter; emails are about it. But I was awestruck at the speed and the ability for them to communicate and then to get resources and people together where previously to that—at least historically, if you want to get a big demonstration together, you had to start making announcements, sending out flyers. If you are going to get a big turnout, you have to get the word out. And generally, we could pick up on those types of things. But with the Twitter and those things, then they can have a flash mob together very, very fast. And it's difficult for a host nation or us to respond. And there's no doubt in my mind that that was a strong part of it. The first phase of the attack on Benghazi, there was already Twitter stuff starting. In what I would call the second phase or the looting phase, that was all Twitter-fed. You could just tell. They are tweeting. And you know—it was—the mob—the number of tweets running up the screen. We had a huge screen, and it was just running. It was unbelievable.

Q: Do you remember how you found out that there was no demonstration in Benghazi prior to the attack?

A: I just relied on the conversations with my agents. They said they did not see one. They didn't know of one.

Q: Do you remember at what point you had those conversations? Was it the night of?

A: No, it was after the fact.

Q: How many days approximately?

A: I don't recall. I mean, they didn't even come back for several days. They were in Frankfurt, speaking with the FBI. So it was a week maybe. I don't know for sure.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Brian Papanu (Aug. 8, 2013) (referenced in Minority Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Government

...

Q: Since we are on this subject, can you walk through, starting with the Cairo attack, what DS was dealing with from Cairo to Benghazi and in the days of the additional incidents at other locations that you were responsible for?

A: Certainly. In Cairo, I believe that we had some prior notice of a demonstration in Cairo. I don't 100 percent recall. But I believe the post knew because they were already in—they weren't open for business, and it didn't appear—it appeared they were aware of it. It looked like they were ready for it. The demonstration began. And like I said, it lasted several hours. They breached the compound perimeter wall and were doing miscellaneous things, like I said, and that was going on for an extended period of time because the host nation wouldn't respond or couldn't respond to—

Q: Does DS at this point send something out to the other potentially affected posts that this is something you need to pay attention to?

A: Yes. It went out. I know for sure that Benghazi got that information.

Q: And what do you tell them?

A: I don't specifically remember the message going out. I didn't work on that aspect of it, but probably demonstrations in Cairo, breached perimeter, could be an ops alert or something to that effect.

Q: Okay. All right. And then Cairo bleeds into Benghazi?

A: Well, yes. For me it did. Like I said, it was going on for so long, we started to do shifts. So, at some point late in the morning, it started. And now we're talking late afternoon. And my shift had just ended down in the command center. So I was heading upstairs when the phone call came.

Q: And then what about the days after Benghazi, what's taking place?

A: I don't think—the day after Benghazi, I don't believe anything happened. It was the following day that the protests in Yemen occurred.

Q: And what was that like?

A: It was a very large demonstration. They breached the compound in Yemen and did a lot of significant damage to the—they didn't breach the chancery, but they did significant damage to the chancery grounds and our vehicles and—

Reform, *Status Update on Investigation of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi* (Sept. 19, 2013) (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status Update Report 09-18-13.pdf#page=62)).

Q: Was that serious?

A: —equipment there. Yes, I would say it was serious.

Q: And was Tunisia also one of the—

A: Yes. Tunisia occurred, I believe, the following day after Yemen. Tunisia and Khartoum were the same day. And once again, the protesters were able to gain access into the chancery compound. They weren't able to gain access into the chancery. And the same thing occurred there. They did a lot of physical damage. They started some fires. And they burned down an adjacent American school. It wasn't on our property, but it was across the street. So it was pretty significant there as well.

Q: Violent?

A: Yeah. Violent, yes. And destruction of property. And lighting fire.

Q: And you had mentioned that these were motivated by the videotape?

A: I mean, in my belief. I'm fairly certain that the Cairo, the Tunis, the Khartoum ones were—and Yemen were motivated by that tape. The Benghazi one was a little more—that's more conjecture on my part just because I don't think there was a direct link that I ever saw or heard.

Q: You said something to the effect of all events were related or that you still believe that they were related to the this tape?

A: I do.

Q: Why is that?

A: Well, the mere fact of the time frame of them together. It could have been a coincidence, of course. But now we are talking my perspective. And I believe, I read somewhere one of the local guards, contract guards that was in Benghazi, he was interviewed and said that when he was being beat up by the attackers that this was for making fun of Mohammed or something like that. And they made reference to it. So that's what I base my information on.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ *Id.* (online at http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/user_images/gt/Status%20Update%20Report%2009-18-13.pdf#page=64).

QUESTION:

**Where was the President and
what did he do on the night of the attacks?**

Speaker John Boehner: According to Politico, “Boehner will even press to know the president’s location on the night of the attacks. ... ‘I do think it matters,’ he said.”

Source: *John Boehner’s Shrinking Power*, Politico (May 27, 2013) (online at <http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=B0BB58AF-B4DC-4AB9-A6B8-597C988BDE17>).

ANSWER:

The President was in the White House in Washington D.C. on the night of the attacks. Senior officials, including the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have testified that they personally informed the President about the attacks, and the President immediately ordered the military to deploy all available assets to protect American lives. Military leaders report that the President was “well informed” and his staff was “in constant touch” with the Pentagon, which “is the way it would normally work.”

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta:

On February 7, 2013, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta testified at a hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services:

Soon after the initial reports about the attack in Benghazi were received, General Dempsey and I met with President Obama and he ordered all available DOD assets to respond to the attack in Libya and to protect U.S. personnel and interests in the region. It’s important to remember that, in addition to responding to the situation in Benghazi, we were also concerned about potential threats to U.S. personnel in Tunis, Tripoli, Cairo, Sanaa, and elsewhere that could potentially require a military response.

In consultation with General Dempsey and AFRICOM Commander General Ham, I directed several specific actions. First, we ordered a Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Secure Team, a FAST team, stationed in Spain to prepare to deploy to Benghazi. A second FAST platoon was ordered to prepare to deploy to the embassy in Tripoli. A Special Operations Force which was training in Central Europe was ordered to prepare to deploy to an intermediate staging base in Southern Europe, Sigonella, and a Special Operations

Force based in the United States was ordered to deploy to an intermediate staging base in Southern Europe as well at Sigonella.¹⁶²

He also testified:

This was one of our weekly meetings with the President. I should tell you that just before I went into that meeting I got an update that there had been the attack there. So it was something I introduced to the President.¹⁶³

He had this exchange with Senator Kelly Ayotte:

Q: Secretary Panetta, you said that you were in a briefing with the President of the United States.

A: Yes.

Q: I believe it was about 5 o'clock our time. And you had just learned about the incident on the consulate. What conversation did you have with the President? What did he ask you to do as a result of this attack? And throughout the night what communications were you having with him? Can you tell us on a time line as to who was calling the shots there; if it wasn't him, another member of the White House?

A: At the time, we were concerned about Cairo and demonstrations in Cairo. And then we had just picked up the information that something was happening, that there was an apparent attack going on in Benghazi. And I informed the President of that fact, and he at that point directed both myself and General Dempsey to do everything we needed to do to try to protect lives there.

Q: Did he ask you how long it would take to deploy assets, including armed aviation—

A: No.

Q: —to the area?

A: He basically said, do whatever you need to do to be able to protect our people there.

¹⁶² Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearing to Receive Testimony on Department of Defense's Response to the Attack on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, and the Findings of Its Internal Review Following the Attack* (Feb. 7, 2013) (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=9).

¹⁶³ *Id.* (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=16).

Q: Did you have any—so he didn't ask you what ability we had in the area and what we could do?

A: No, I think—I mean, he relied on both myself as Secretary and on General Dempsey's capabilities. He knows generally what we've deployed into the region. We've presented that to him in other briefings. So he knew generally what was deployed out there. But as to specifics about time, etcetera, etcetera, no, he just left that up to us.¹⁶⁴

He also had this exchange with Senator Lindsey Graham:

A: As a former chief of staff to the President of the United States, the purpose of staff is to be able to get that kind of information, and those staff were working with us.

Q: Do you think it's a typical response of the President of the United States to make one phone call, do what you can, and never call you back again to ask you, how is it going, by the way? Show any frustration we don't have any assets in there to help these people for over seven hours?

A: The President is well informed about what is going on. Make no mistake about it.¹⁶⁵

He also added in response to questioning from Chairman Carl Levin:

[O]bviously our staffs were in constant touch with the White House to alert them as to what was taking place and what information we had. So there—it's just the nature of the White House that Presidents of the United States make use of a broad sphere of staff that are involved with these issues to work these issues and continue to be in touch with him as to what's taking place.¹⁶⁶

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey:

On February 7, 2013, General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also testified at the hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services alongside Secretary Panetta. They had this exchange with Senator Lindsey Graham:

Q: Your testimony as I understand it, Secretary Panetta, is that you talked to the President of the United States one time?

¹⁶⁴ *Id.* (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=31).

¹⁶⁵ *Id.* (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=38).

¹⁶⁶ *Id.* (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=66).

Secretary Panetta: Talked to him on September 11 with regards to the fact that we were aware that this attack was taking place.

Q: One time?

A: Right.

Q: What time did you tell him that?

A: I think that was approximately about 5:00.

Gen. Dempsey: Yes, about 5:00.

Secretary Panetta: About 5 o'clock.

Q: General Dempsey, did you ever talk to the President of the United States at all?

A: I was with the Secretary when—at that same time.

Q: Did you talk to the President?

A: Yes.

Q: You talked to him how many times?

A: The same one time.

Q: How long did that conversation last?

A: We were there in the office for probably 30 minutes.

Q: So you talked to him for 30 minutes one time and you never talked to him again, either one of you?

A: Until afterwards.

Q: Until after the attack was over?

A: That's right.¹⁶⁷

General Dempsey also testified:

I would if I could just correct one thing. I wouldn't say there was no follow-up from the White House. There was no follow-up to my knowledge with the President, but his staff

¹⁶⁷ *Id.* (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=35).

was engaged with the National Military Command Center pretty constantly through the period, which is the way it would normally work.¹⁶⁸

On October 10, 2013, General Dempsey provided a briefing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Armed Services:

Soon after I received the initial reports of the Benghazi attack, I discussed the situation with the Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, and with President Obama in a meeting that we had already scheduled that day on another topic.

The President instructed us to use all available assets to respond to the attacks to ensure the safety of U.S. personnel in Libya and to protect U.S. personnel and interests throughout the region. Because threat streams increased in a number of locations simultaneously, we postured our forces to respond regionally as well as specifically to the events in Libya.¹⁶⁹

Accountability Review Board Vice Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen:

On June 19, 2013, staff and Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a transcribed interview of Admiral Michael Mullen, the Vice Chairman of the independent Accountability Review Board and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

I think it's important in my experience with two Presidents is that when something like this happens, the Presidents say do everything you possibly can do. And that's all the guidance I need to move forces and certainly with two Secretaries of Defense that I served with that's all the—all the guidance Secretary Gates and Secretary Panetta would need.

So we're—and in fact in this situation, it does not seem to be, at least from a public standpoint, widely understood, we moved a lot of forces that night. They don't move instantly. But we had a significant force that was deployed doing other things, Special Operations Force in Europe, in Croatia, which was redeployed to a base in Southern Europe. We had a significant force from the United States which was deployed to a base in Southern Europe. So there were a lot of forces moving. And you make those packages, if you will, as robust as possible because you don't know when it's going to end and you don't know exactly what's going to happen next. And I'm very confident that was done.

All of that, while you're trying to put together the picture as rapidly as possible, moving a drone over—a UAV, unarmed UAV over Benghazi as rapidly as possible to give your—

¹⁶⁸ *Id.* (online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-02-2-7-13.pdf#page=32).

¹⁶⁹ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Briefing on the Defense Department's Force Posture in Anticipation of September 12, 2012* (Oct. 10, 2013) (online at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=C628BC78-60B3-4E44-B6BC-D4A0920E57E5#page=6).

give yourself better situational awareness. That was done. You're pulling every single spring you possibly can to find out what's going on, including those forces that are—and this isn't just the Pentagon. This is—I certainly saw this in the State Department. I saw this in the intelligence community.¹⁷⁰

Secretary of State Clinton:

On January 23, 2013, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified at a hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations:

Regarding what I was doing on September 11, I was at the State Department all day and late into the night. During most of the day prior to getting notice of the attack on our compound at Benghazi, we were very focused on our Embassy in Cairo. That was under assault by a group of protesters.

We were assessing the security of our Embassy, which is, as those of you who have been there, certainly well defended. But there were crowds that were intent upon trying to scale the wall, and we were in close communication with our team in Cairo.

I was notified of the attack shortly after 4 p.m. Over the following hours, we were in continuous meetings and conversations, both within the Department, with our team in Tripoli, with the interagency, and internationally. I instructed our senior Department officials and our diplomatic security personnel to consider every option, to just break down the doors of the Libyan officials to get as much security support as we possibly could, to coordinate with them.

I spoke to the National Security Adviser, Tom Donilon, several times. I briefed him on developments. I sought all possible support from the White House, which they quickly provided. Tom was my first call.

I spoke with our chargé in Tripoli to get situation updates. I spoke with former CIA Director Petraeus to confer and coordinate, given the presence of his facility, which, of course, was not well known but was something that we knew and wanted to make sure we were closely lashed up together. I talked with the then-Libyan National Congress President to press him on greater support not only in Benghazi, but also in Tripoli.

I participated in a secure video conference of senior officials from the intelligence community, the White House, and DOD. We were going over every possible option, reviewing all that was available to us, any actions we could take. We were reaching out to everyone we could find to try to get an update about Ambassador Chris Stevens, also our information specialist, Sean Smith. So it was a constant, ongoing discussion and sets of meetings.

¹⁷⁰ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Interview of Admiral Michael Mullen (June 19, 2013) (online at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Mullen-transcript.pdf#page=65>).

I spoke with President Obama later in the evening to bring him up to date, to hear his perspective. Obviously, we kept talking with everyone during the night. Early in the morning on the 12th, I spoke with General Dempsey, again with Tom Donilon.¹⁷¹

White House Photo Showing President Being Briefed on September 11, 2012:



Caption: “Denis McDonough, Deputy National Security Advisor, left, updates the President and Vice President on the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. National Security Advisor Tom Donilon and Chief of Staff Jack Lew are at right.”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearing on Benghazi: The Attacks and the Lessons Learned* (Jan. 23, 2013) (online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113shrg86780/pdf/CHRG-113shrg86780.pdf#page=17).

¹⁷² Official White House Photo, Pete Souza (Sept. 11, 2012) (online at www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/8341829398/in/photostream).

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