

Unanswered Questions on Benghazi Attack

Apr 9, 2014

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) today held a press conference regarding unanswered questions still surrounding the September 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. Mission in Benghazi, Libya, some of which are listed below:

- We do not know why, on the anniversary of the worst terrorist attack in American history, after multiple attacks on U.S. and Western interests in Libya, and with rising insecurity in countries across the Middle East, U.S. military units and assets in the region were not ready, alert, and positioned to respond in a timely fashion to what should have been a foreseeable emergency.
- Outside of one call to the Israeli Prime Minister, we do not know what the President did or who else he was in contact with during the seven hours of the Benghazi attack.
- We do not know why the President did not reach out to Libyan President Magariaf to request assistance during that period of time.
- We do not know why the FBI reports and interviews of the U.S. personnel who were evacuated from Benghazi on September 12, 2012 - eyewitnesses who knew that there was never was a demonstration outside the U.S. Mission - were not shared in a timely way within the U.S. government.
- We do not know whether this failure reflects obstacles that still exist to the free sharing of information across executive branch agencies, which was a key concern of the 9/11 Commission.

- We do not know why the FBI has not released to Congress the FBI interviews of the Benghazi survivors.
- We do not know whether the President was made aware of the classified cable that, according to published media reports, Ambassador Chris Stevens sent on August, 16, 2012, stating that the U.S. Mission in Benghazi could not survive a sustained assault from one or more of the threatening militia groups that were operating in eastern Libya.
- We don't know why Secretary Clinton was never made aware of the August 16th cable.
- We do not know whether the President's national security staff made him aware of the attacks on the U.S. Mission in Benghazi that occurred in April and June of 2012 of the assassination attempt on the British Ambassador in June 2012.
- If the President was informed of these attacks, we do not know what actions, if any, he ordered to position the U.S. government more effectively for contingencies in Benghazi.
- We do not know why the Administration did not do more to support and assist the new Libyan government that took power after the fall of Qaddafi, including in the establishment of civilian-led national security forces that operate under central government control, a counterterrorism force that is trained and equipped to combat Al Qaeda and its affiliates, national justice and prison systems, and effective control over the immense stockpiles of weapons and dangerous materials that exist across Libya. The result of this 'light footprint' approach was that Al-Qaeda, its affiliated groups, and local militias were able to establish sanctuaries almost uncontested in the ungoverned spaces of eastern Libya.
- We do not know why the State Department's Accountability Review Board (ARB)-which was under significant time pressure to complete its work, which issued a final report in just ten weeks, and which never conducted interviews with senior State Department officials, such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton or Deputy Secretaries Nides and Burns, who had direct responsibility for decisions related to the poor security posture in Benghazi-is touted as complete and final.
- We do not know why the ARB blamed systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies within two bureaus, but downplayed the importance of decisions made at senior levels of the Department.

- We do not know why repeated requests for additional security from Embassy Tripoli were ignored in Washington.
- We do not know why the Administration failed to listen to firsthand reports, accounts, and interviews of U.S. personnel on the ground in Libya during the attack in Benghazi, including the CIA Chief of Station, who stated clearly that there had never been a demonstration at the Special Mission Compound in Benghazi and that the events of September 11, 2012 constituted a terrorist attack, and instead took the word of CIA analysts thousands of miles away.
- We do not know why the State Department claims that the U.S. Special Mission Compound in Benghazi was only "temporary" when the Department, on July 8, 2012, renewed for one year the lease for Villa C of the compound and, on Jul 26, 2012, did the same for Villa B. We also do not know why the ARB failed to account for this in their report.
- We do not know why, even though on September 18, 2012, the FBI and CIA reviewed the closed circuit television video from the compound that showed there were no protests prior to the attacks, the Administration continued to insist that a protest preceded the terrorist attack.
- We do not know why, on September 25, 2012, President Obama, while on the television show "The View," continued to refuse to acknowledge the fact that the attack was an act of terrorism and instead answered, "We're still doing an investigation."
- We do not know why, 19 months following the attacks on our compounds in Benghazi, not a single person has been held accountable for the attacks.
- We do not know why CNN, Reuters, and the Times of London can interview the suspects of the attacks, but the most powerful country in the world cannot-or will not-do so or otherwise take actions to hold accountable those responsible for the attacks.

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