

# Wolf Renews Call To Create Select Committee On Benghazi, Notes Possible Connection To Syrian Conflict

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## **WOLF RENEWS CALL TO CREATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI, NOTES POSSIBLE CONNECTION TO SYRIAN CONFLICT**

*Nine Members Signed Onto Resolution Since the House Recessed in August; Total is Now 171*

Washington, D.C. (September 9, 2013) – Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) today renewed his call for the creation of a House Select Committee to investigate the Benghazi attack, which happened a year ago this week.

In a panel discussion hosted today by Judicial Watch, Wolf said outside groups like Judicial Watch deserve more credit than Congress during the past year for working to uncover the details about what happened the night of the Benghazi attack.

Wolf said there are three reasons to create a Select Committee: The obligation the Congress has to the families of the victims to investigate, the need to renew confidence in our government among the American people, and the need to uncover how the Benghazi attack of last year is connected to the current U.S. policy towards the civil war in Syria.

Wolf also raised the issue of the \$400 million the U.S. government reportedly sent to Libya to secure and disable weapons and ammunition, a ten-fold increase in the amount disclosed by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in February 2012, according to the *Washington Examiner*. A list of questions pertaining to this was included in letters to [President Obama](#) and [Secretary of State John Kerry](#), which Wolf sent today.

Wolf's measure to create a Select Committee, H. Res. 36, currently has 171 cosponsors, which is nearly three-fourths of the Republican majority in the House (**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This number doesn't reflect what is currently on the web because cosponsors can only be added when the House is in session. Six members added their names in August, and three were added just today).

The resolution has been endorsed by the family members of the victims, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, the Special Operations community and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, which represents the Diplomatic Security agents who were at the consulate in Benghazi.

For a full list of endorsements, click [here](#).

For more on Wolf's work on Benghazi, click [here](#).

The full text of Wolf's remarks is below.

*I want to thank Judicial Watch for hosting today's event as we mark the one year anniversary this week of the terrorist attack against the U.S. consulate and CIA annex in Benghazi—attacks which were themselves launched on the eleven year anniversary of 9/11.*

*Judicial Watch has done such important work – along with a number of groups I have had the privilege of working with – to advance the investigation into the Benghazi attacks.*

*Frankly, these outside groups are doing the work that Congress has failed to do to uncover what really happened that night. That is why I have been pushing for a House Select Committee for the last 10 months to dedicate the time and resources to a robust Congressional investigation.*

*Over the course of the three weeks leading up to the August recess, I went down to the House floor nearly every day to raise a series of questions that remained unanswered despite nearly a year of siloed investigations by five separate House committees. These 12 floor statements are available on my Web site at [wolf.house.gov/Benghazi](http://wolf.house.gov/Benghazi).*

*When you look at the list of unanswered questions, it is startling how little progress has been made in this investigation over the past year.*

*It also demonstrates the failure of the Congress to fulfill its oversight responsibilities.*

*Some may ask why the continued focus on Benghazi a year later, especially when there are so many new issues facing the Congress.*

*I believe there are three key reasons to continue to push for a Select Committee to hold public hearings, to issue subpoenas and to report the truth about what happened to the American people.*

*The first is our obligation to the families of those killed and the seriously wounded survivors who fought alongside Ty Woods and Glen Doherty to save so many American lives that night. A grave injustice was committed against them when the determination was made not to send any aid or assistance over an eight-hour period of fighting. That injustice is only magnified when their sacrifice is not acknowledged and their story is not told.*

*To date we only know the name of one of these brave survivors: Diplomatic Security agent Dave Ubben who has spent the last year undergoing multiple surgeries at Walter Reed hospital. But he is not alone. Others were wounded.*

*The story of how a handful of brave Americans fought off hundreds of armed terrorists has yet to fully come out. Do we not owe it to these men to credit them for their heroic acts?*

*The second reason is that Benghazi embodies why the American people are losing confidence in their government – both in the Executive Branch's failure to assist those under fire that night as well as in the Legislative Branch's failure to obtain answers or hold individuals accountable.*

*The third is that it is increasingly apparent that U.S. actions in Benghazi since 2011 have a strong connection with U.S. policy toward assisting the Syrian rebels. Many of these rebels are now believed to be al Qaeda connected affiliates, including those that may have participated in the attack on the consulate and CIA annex in Benghazi.*

*In light of the evidence that has emerged following the attacks, I firmly believe that whatever the State Department and CIA were doing in Benghazi had a direct connection to U.S. policy in Syria—a policy that to date has not been fully revealed to the American people or Congress.*

*While troubling in isolation it is all the more so in light of the president's request to Congress this week to authorize military intervention Syria. How can this conversation advance in a responsible manner without clarity about what transpired that night in Benghazi?*

*Two weeks ago, respected national security reporter Bill Gertz wrote in the Washington Free Beacon that "U.S. intelligence agencies earlier this month uncovered new evidence that al Qaeda-linked terrorists in Benghazi are training foreign jihadists to fight with Syria's Islamist rebels, according to U.S. officials.*

*Ansar al-Sharia, the al Qaeda-linked militia that U.S. officials say orchestrated the Sept. 11 attacks on the U.S. diplomatic compound and a CIA facility in Benghazi, is running several training camps for jihadists in Benghazi and nearby Damah, another port city further east, said officials."*

*The article went on to say, "At the time of their arrest, the Tunisians stated that they were trained in small arms use and were on their way to join Syria rebels by traveling first to Benghazi, then Istanbul, and over land across Turkey into northern Syria."*

*It also noted that "U.S. intelligence agencies believe Libya has produced more jihadist rebels for the Syrian conflict than any other outside nation.*

*"Some 20 percent of foreign jihadists in Syria came from Libya and several hundred are currently in the country.*

*"Over 100 Libyans were reported killed in Syria fighting for such rebel groups as Al-Nusra Front, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Umma Brigade, Muhajirin Brigade, and Ahrar al-Sham, an Al-Nusra offshoot."*

*U.S. involvement in weapons collection in Benghazi goes back even further.*

*The National Journal reported back in 2011 that the "U.S. is also planning to ramp up spending to help Libya's interim government secure and destroy the shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles and weapons looted from Qaddafi's stockpiles. A senior State Department official said Clinton will tell Libyan leaders that the U.S. contribution to these efforts will go up to \$40 million."*

*The same article noted that, "The U.S. has already spent nearly \$6 million on its conventional weapons disposal efforts, sending a quick reaction force of weapons experts to Libya," by October 2011.*

*It is particularly noteworthy that during the same time period that the U.S. is engaged in "collecting" weapons in Libya, respected national security reporter Mark Hosenball on August 1, 2012 wrote that, "President Barack Obama has signed a secret order authorizing U.S. support for rebels seeking to depose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his government, U.S. sources familiar with the matter said. Obama's order, approved earlier this year and known as an intelligence 'finding,' broadly permits the CIA and other U.S. agencies to provide support that could help the rebels oust Assad."*

*The article continued, "The White House is for now apparently stopping short of giving the rebels lethal weapons, even as some U.S. allies do just that," and "Precisely when Obama signed the secret intelligence authorization, an action not previously reported, could not be determined."*

*However, Hosenball also reported this important information: "A U.S. government source acknowledged that under provisions of the presidential finding, the United States was collaborating with a secret command center operated*

*by Turkey and its allies,” and “NBC said the shoulder-fired missiles, also known as MANPADs, had been delivered to the rebels via Turkey.”*

*Is it possible that the president’s intelligence finding included an authorization for the weapons collected in Libya to be transferred to Syrian rebels?*

*Was the CIA annex in Benghazi being used to facilitate these transfers?*

*I believe there is now enough evidence suggesting this that it demands a clear explanation.*

*Last month, the Washington Examiner’s Susan Crabtree reported on comments made by an attorney for one of the Benghazi whistleblowers suggesting that as many as 400 surface to air missiles were stolen by terrorists in the attack on the U.S. facilities in Benghazi last year.*

*Crabtree also noted that although State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf would not comment on the matter of the stolen weapons, “Harf said the U.S. has devoted \$400 million to assist the government of Libya in ‘securing and disabling stockpiles of at-risk conventional weapons and ammunition.’”*

*I think most everyone would agree that \$400 million is a sizable amount of money. As a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee who serves on the subcommittee that funds the State Department and other foreign assistance programs, I sent a letter today to both the president and the secretary of state asking the following questions:*

1. What is the total amount of appropriated funding spent on weapons collection, transfer and destruction since 2011? Under what authority was this funding used?
2. Did the State Department and/or the CIA award contracts to any U.S. or foreign contractor for assistance with the collection, storage, transportation or removal of the collected weapons? If so, what are the names of the contractor(s) and what is the total value of the contract?
3. Did the U.S. work with any foreign governments or agencies in collecting and disposing of these weapons? If so, which foreign governments or agencies were involved and what was their role in the collections process?
4. Were the collected weapons ever held or stored at either the U.S. consulate or CIA annex in Benghazi during the collection process?
5. Did the collected weapons remain in warehouses in Libya or were they transferred to the U.S. or another country for disposal? If so, whose custody were the weapons ultimately transferred to for storage or destruction?
6. How does the State Department confirm the destruction of these collected weapons? Is a certification provided to the department?
7. Most importantly, at any point in time were these collected weapons transferred to Syria and/or ever obtained by opposition fighters, including jihadist fighters?

*Questions about these weapons are especially timely in light of a Wall Street Journal article on August 25 further*

*detailing covert U.S. cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Jordan to arm and train Syrian rebels.*

*According to the article, “Not everyone in the Obama administration is comfortable with the new U.S. partnership with the Saudis on Syria. Some officials said they fear it carries the same risk of spinning out of control as an earlier project in which Prince Bandar was involved – the 1980s CIA programs of secretly financing the Contras in Nicaragua against a leftist government. The covert program led to criminal convictions for U.S. operatives and international rebukes. ‘This program has the potential to go badly,’ one former official said, citing the risk weapons will end up in the hands of violent anti-Western Islamists.”*

*The article notes that the program was begun in mid-2012 – which is prior to the Benghazi attacks – by former CIA Director David Petraeus and has been continued by his successor, John Brennan.*

*Were these rebels being armed with weapons collected in Benghazi?*

*Again, there is reason to believe this may be the case and a clear explanation is warranted.*

*That is why I am calling for the Congress to hold a public hearing with both former Director Petraeus and current Director Brennan to determine what was going on at the CIA annex in Benghazi and what role it played in the collection and disbursement of weapons collected in Libya, specifically with the focus of trying to understand how the annex may have supported CIA efforts to arm and train Syrian rebels.*

*This hearing would preferably be held by a Select Committee, but there’s no reason the House Intelligence Committee could not hold a public hearing with these two men immediately.*

*Given the pending request for authorization to use military force in Syria, it is more important than ever that the Congress understand U.S. support and assistance to Syrian rebels and whether groups responsible for the American deaths in Benghazi may have been at the same time benefitting from U.S. assistance in Syria.*

*Before Congress can make an informed decision about military intervention in Syria, Benghazi should be more fully understood as the two are intimately related and may a direct bearing on U.S. national security.*

*Unfortunately, transparency has not been the order of the day.*

*The Obama Administration has reportedly applied tremendous pressure to silence these survivors, along with others who witnessed what happened that night in Benghazi.*

*As many of you know, on August 1 CNN reported that “the CIA is involved in what one source calls an unprecedented attempt to keep the spy agency’s Benghazi secrets from ever leaking out.*

*“Since January, some CIA operatives involved in the agency’s missions in Libya, have been subjected to frequent, even monthly polygraph examinations, according to a source with deep inside knowledge of the agency’s workings.*

*“The goal of the questioning, according to sources, is to find out if anyone is talking to the media or Congress. It is being described as pure intimidation, with the threat that any unauthorized CIA employee who leaks information could face the end of his or her career.”*

*Additionally, according to trusted sources that have contacted my office, many, if not all, of the survivors of the*

*Benghazi attacks – along with others at the Department of Defense and CIA – have been asked or directed to sign additional Non-Disclosure Agreements about their involvement in the Benghazi attacks. Some of these “new” NDAs, as they call them, I have been told, were signed as recently as this summer.*

*Fox News subsequently confirmed these reports in an August 2 article, stating: “Fox News has learned that at least five CIA employees were forced to sign additional nondisclosure agreements this past spring in the wake of the Benghazi attack. These employees had already signed such agreements before the attack but were made to sign new agreements aimed at discouraging survivors from leaking their stories to the media or anyone else.”*

*Given the tremendous pressure being brought to keep these people silent, one must ask just what the administration is afraid of? What will the survivors disclose to the American people if given the opportunity to speak?*

*Shortly after I delivered the series of floor statements raising unanswered questions about Benghazi, my office received a call from a man saying that he knew a CIA employee who has retained legal counsel because he has refused to sign an additional NDA regarding the September 11, 2012 events in Benghazi.*

*I called the law firm and spoke with CIA employee’s attorney who confirmed that her client is having an issue with the Agency and the firm is trying to address it. Based on my past experiences with the CIA, which is headquartered in my congressional district, I am not at all confident that these efforts will be successful.*

*Finally, on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the attacks, I would like to comment on the state of the FBI investigation. It is very telling that despite the full resources of the U.S. intelligence, defense and law enforcement agencies, we have yet to locate, apprehend and bring to justice any of the suspected terrorists.*

*As the chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that funds the FBI from 2001-2006 and again since 2011, I have been one of the bureau’s strongest supporters in Congress. However, I am deeply disappointed in both the bureau’s failure to make progress and the manner in which this investigation has been used as cover or an excuse by Obama Administration officials to refuse to comment on what happened that night.*

*Consider that in May, the Associated Press reported that “The U.S. has identified five men who might be responsible for the attack on the diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, last year, and has enough evidence to justify seizing them by military force as suspected terrorists, officials say. But there isn’t enough proof to try them in a U.S. civilian court as the Obama administration prefers. The men remain at large while the FBI gathers evidence.”*

*The failure to detain these suspects a year later and nearly five months after they were supposedly identified represents a stunning abdication of responsibility on the part of this administration.*

*When will the FBI be able to gather enough evidence to use in a civilian trial against them if they are denied access by countries because the administration refuses to use the tools of American diplomacy to bring pressure to bear on those countries?*

*Any crime scene to which law enforcement officials are denied access for a day, much less three weeks, must be considered compromised.*

*There is one very telling example of this administration’s failure to bring diplomatic pressure on countries to*

*support the FBI investigation. Last fall, Tunisia detained the first suspect in the Benghazi terror attacks, Ali Harzi, after he was deported from Turkey in the weeks following the attack.*

*Tunisia, despite being the beneficiary of more than \$300 million in U.S. foreign aid, refused to allow the FBI access to this suspect for nearly five weeks. It was only after Congressional threats to cut off the aid that the government of Tunisia reconsidered its position.*

*Ultimately, the FBI interrogation team returned to Tunisia and was allowed just three hours to interview Harzi, with his lawyer and a Tunisian judge present. Not long after the FBI interview, Harzi was inexplicably released by Tunisian authorities, and his release was celebrated by Ansar al Sharia terrorists.*

*Consider that for a moment: The Tunisian government kept the FBI interrogation team waiting on the ground for weeks before the team ultimately left the country.*

*Only under threat from certain members of the U.S. Congress did Tunisia relent and allow the FBI team to return to interview this suspect for a mere three hours. Then, when the terrorist is released, Ansar al Sharia released a video celebrating Harzi. That is shameful.*

*Because of Tunisia's obstruction of the FBI's investigation, at my request, the House took the first step in July to send a signal to Tunisia and other countries harboring the terrorists responsible for the deaths of the four Americans in Benghazi when the State Foreign Operations appropriations bill carried language cutting aid to Tunisia.*

*This is an important and overdue step – overdue because the Obama Administration could have long ago suspended or terminated its payments to Tunisia or other countries that failed to cooperate with the FBI in this investigation.*

*Additionally, there is a larger question of whether it is even appropriate, if enough evidence is gathered, to bring the terrorists to the U.S. for civilian trial.*

*Benghazi was a battlefield, not a crime scene, and America lost. Those responsible should face justice as enemy combatants, not common criminals.*

*As we mark the one-year anniversary of the Benghazi attacks, can the Obama Administration or the Congress honestly say to the families of the victims or the wounded survivors that the U.S. has done everything it can to locate, capture and hold accountable those responsible?*

*In closing, just last week I had the opportunity to speak with a survivor of the Benghazi attacks. I wanted the opportunity to thank him for his service and to get a better sense of the pressure that has been brought against the survivors.*

*Because the full story about what happened that night has not been made public, people like the survivor I spoke with – who fought valiantly throughout the night to save scores of American lives – are not receiving the recognition their country owes them.*

*Instead, their government is intimidating them into silence, for reasons the Congress is failing to fully investigate. These men deserve better.*

*The lack of answers despite a year of investigation in five House committees is inexcusable.*

*It has been nearly six months since the “interim progress report” on the five committee investigations was released.*

*Will there ever be a final report and, if so, will it answer the questions I and others have raised?*

*Will subpoenas ever be issued to survivors and others in the chain of command to determine why no assistance was sent to Benghazi?*

*Will we ever learn the truth about whether weapons collected in Libya ultimately ended up in the hands of Syrian rebels?*

*After a year of the current approach, I think we all know that the answer is: no.*

*That is why the Speaker should use this anniversary of the Benghazi attacks and the impending vote on the use of military force in Syria to change course and create a House Select Committee which can at long last hold public hearings and issue subpoenas to get to the bottom of this.*

*It is the only way the American people will ever learn the truth, and the only way the survivors will ever receive the recognition they deserve for their heroic efforts that night.*

*My bill to create the Select Committee, H. Res. 36, has 170 Republican cosponsors – three-quarters of all House Republicans; a supermajority of the Majority. It’s worth noting that six of those members signed on in August, and two more cosponsored the measure just today.*

*It has been endorsed by family members of the Benghazi victims, the retired Special Operations community, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association – which represents the Diplomatic Security agents who were present in Benghazi that night – as well as the editorial page of the The Wall Street Journal, among many other endorsements.*

*I don’t know of any other bill that has such strong support from the House majority but is still opposed by the House leadership.*

*I have no doubt that if this bill came to the floor, it would receive near unanimous support from Republicans, and I venture that some Democrats would support it too.*

*The question before us today is whether the Speaker will seize the opportunity, after a year of failed or stalled committee investigations, to change course and create the Select Committee to ensure that the American people learn the truth.*

**Issues:** [Benghazi Select Committee](#)