

RPTR MCCONNELL

EDTR HOFSTAD

SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-205,
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 10:10 a.m.

Present: Representatives Brooks and Westmoreland.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

SARA BARRINEAU, INVESTIGATOR

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For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

Ms. Jackson. Good morning.

This is a transcribed interview of [REDACTED] conducted by the House Select Committee on Benghazi. The interview is being conducted voluntarily as part of the committee's investigation into the attacks on the U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, and related matters pursuant to House Resolution 567 of the 113th Congress and House Resolution 5 of the 114th Congress.

Sir, would you give us your full name, please?

Mr. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED].

Ms. Jackson. And would you spell your last name for the record?

Mr. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED].

Ms. Jackson. Agent [REDACTED], we appreciate your appearance here before the committee today.

Again, my name is Sharon Jackson, and I am with the committee's majority staff. And we will just have -- we have introduced ourselves already, but we will do it again.

You are accompanied by Austin Evers of the State Department's counsel's office; is that correct?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

Representative Westmoreland.

Mr. Westmoreland. From Georgia.

Mr. Desai. Ronak Desai with the minority staff.

Mr. Woolfork. Brent Woolfork with the minority staff.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I'm Susanne Sachsman Grooms with the

minority.

Ms. Barrineau. I'm Sara Barrineau with the majority staff.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

And Dana Chipman, who you met, is with the majority staff. He stepped outside. We think we will be joined by Representative Susan Brooks at some point this morning, too.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

Let me just give you the ground rules. I was a Federal prosecutor for a lot of years, and so I'm used to talking to agents about the ground rules of grand jury testimony and trial testimony and things like that, and I'm sure you've heard them in your past career also. But I would just like to take a few minutes and talk about how this interview will proceed.

In this committee, the questions will be asked by a member of the majority staff first, and that will be me. And I will ask questions for up to 1 hour, and then we will take a break. And I will turn it over to the minority, and they will ask questions for up to 1 hour. And we will go back and forth until each side has exhausted all of the questions that they have of you regarding your time in Benghazi, Libya, and related matters.

Questions can only be asked by a member of the committee, such as Representative Westmoreland, or a member of the staff. And we will strictly adhere to that 1-hour rule on each side.

Unlike testimony, grand jury testimony, trial testimony, or a

deposition that you may have given in Federal or State court, we are not bound by the rules of evidence. And so anything like hearsay or things like that don't apply in a committee.

The only thing that we do recognize and may recognize is an objection for privilege. And that would then be reviewed by the chairman of the committee, Trey Gowdy, and he would make a decision as to whether to honor that privilege objection or not. So Members and members of the staff cannot raise objections. Only you and/or your counsel can raise an objection for privilege. It is not an issue that we have encountered, but I just wanted to flag it for your attention.

We also are starting here in an unclassified setting. So if any question that is answered from you calls for an answer that you would have to give that would be a classified matter, just let us know, and we will either withdraw the question or hold it for a classified setting. And we can go into a classified setting, but we are intending to start and get as much information as we can in an unclassified setting this morning.

You came with Mr. Evers this morning, as the agency's counsel, and you are welcome to confer with him at any time. If at any time you want to step outside or have a private moment with him, just let us know, and we will give you whatever time you need to confer with Mr. Evers this morning.

I'm sure he's talked to you about his role this morning, that he is here as the agency's counsel and not your personal counsel. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

We also have a court reporter with us, or an official transcriber with us. Sorry, that is back to my days of court reporters. But the official reporter is, like in a court of law, taking down everything that is said. So the rules, like being in court, is all answers have to be out loud and verbal and that we should refrain from talking over each other. It is very difficult; I do it myself all the time. But if we can make an effort to wait until a question is finished before giving an answer, and I will do my very best to wait until your answer is finished before I go on with my next question.

We will take a break whenever you want. If you would like a break before the hour is finished, just let us know, and we will break.

We have water available, we have coffee available, so just let us know. We are trying to make you as comfortable as possible this morning.

As with any investigation that you're in, you're required to give truthful testimony here today. And we ask that you give us your best recollection. We understand that we are going back 4 or more years in time to a short TDY detail that you had in Benghazi, so we understand that memories fade over time. But we do ask that you reach back in there, get the cobwebs away, and give us your best recollection.

If you can't answer a question but you think there was another person who was present, you know, you can always give us the name of someone else who might have that piece of information. But if you

honestly don't remember the answer to a question, just tell us. It's just perfectly human nature not to remember everything in vivid detail.

If at any time you don't understand a question or missed part of it because your mind was racing ahead, as mine often does, just ask us to repeat or rephrase the question in any way, because we want to make sure that you understand what we're asking before you give us your answer.

Do you have any questions about the process that we're going to follow today?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

Do you understand that you are required to answer questions from Congress truthfully?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. And that includes members of the staff of this committee, that you're required to give truthful answers.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

And as a Federal law enforcement agent, I'm sure you understand that providing false testimony could subject you to penalties of perjury or making a false statement. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I understand.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

Is there any reason that you know of, as you sit here today, that you would not be able to answer the questions truthfully today?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

All right. Well, that's the end of the ground rules. It's 10:18, I think.

Does the minority have anything they would like to add?

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. No.

Thank you for coming.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

And I'd like to introduce Representative Susan Brooks from my home State of Indiana.

Mrs. Brooks. Good morning.

Ms. Jackson. And so, at this point, we'll start with the first hour of questioning by me, okay?

EXAMINATION

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Agent [REDACTED], how long have you been with Diplomatic Security?

A I've been with Diplomatic Security a little over 15 years.

Q And did you have any military or law enforcement background before you joined DS?

A Yes. I had a military background.

Q Okay. And would you tell us about that?

A Yes. I spent a total of 10 years on Active U.S. Army military duty in the Field Artillery Branch.

Q Okay.

And in what year did you join Diplomatic Security?

A I joined back in 1999, [REDACTED].

Q It would have been easier if it was [REDACTED] of '98, but you missed it by a year.

Can you give us a summary of your various assignments within DS over the past 15 years?

A Yes. I have been assigned to our resident office in [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. That was 2 years.

From there, I was assigned as an assistant regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in [REDACTED]. From there -- oh, I was there for 1 year.

From there, I went to the U.S. consulate general in [REDACTED] [REDACTED], and I served as the regional security officer for 3 years.

After that assignment, I was the regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in [REDACTED], for 2 years.

And after that assignment, I returned to the U.S. as the resident agent in charge of the resident office, DS resident office, in [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I did that for 2 years.

From there, I transferred to the [REDACTED] field office, Diplomatic Security, and served 3 years.

Q And --

A After that --

Q Okay. Go ahead.

A After that, I served 1 year at the U.S. Embassy in [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

Q And you're getting ready to go to [REDACTED] ?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And will that be this summer?

A It could be within the next couple of weeks. I'm currently going through Arabic training at the Foreign Service Institute.

Q Uh-huh.

A I'm just waiting for orders.

Q Okay. How's that training going?

A Great.

Q It's a challenging language.

A It is.

Q Yes. Yes.

While you were assigned to the [REDACTED] field office, is that when you took the temporary duty assignment in Benghazi, Libya?

A Yes.

Q Okay. How did that come about?

A At the time, we were getting tasked -- our office was getting tasked to send agents to both Tripoli, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, Libya, and also to the U.S. Mission in Benghazi. So I was scheduled to go to Benghazi in June of 2011.

Q Uh-huh.

A But I couldn't go because I needed [REDACTED].

Q That's kind of a drastic measure to undergo to get out of going to Benghazi.

A Right.

Q But you ended up having to go after [REDACTED] ?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And when did you go then?

A It was later on that year. I departed for Benghazi on October 24, 2011.

Q And do you recall when you arrived in Benghazi?

A It took 2 days to arrive in Benghazi because I overnighted in Istanbul, Turkey.

Q And how long were you in Benghazi?

A I was there approximately 53 days on the ground.

Q Now, you said that your [REDACTED] field office was being tasked. So was there some directive from on high that came down and said X number of spots have to be filled out of the [REDACTED] field office? Or what do you recall about that?

A That I don't recall. I just recall being asked to go by the assistant special agent in charge of the [REDACTED] field office.

Q Did you have to draw straws?

A No.

Q No? Okay.

A No. I was just one of four supervisory special agents at the time, and they were looking for somebody to fill in as the acting regional security officer in Benghazi.

Q So they wanted someone of a supervisory level.

A Correct.

Q Okay. Was there any other specialized training that you

had had that was a requirement to go over to Benghazi?

A Yes. I went to a high-threat training earlier that year. I believe it was February of 2011.

Q Okay. And that was a requirement, that you had to be high-threat-trained to go to Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And were you specifically requested to go to Benghazi versus Tripoli?

A Yes. I knew from the beginning that it was going to be Benghazi.

Q And did you know that you were going to be essentially the acting agent in charge or the agent in charge once you got to Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And, initially, did you know you were going to be there for 53 days?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were you to be there a longer period of time?

A They asked me to extend.

Q And your answer was?

A My answer was no because I already had plans [REDACTED] for Christmas.

Q Okay. Was that request made to you after you got there or before you left?

A After.

Q After. Okay.

So when you went into Benghazi, what did you understand was going to be the length and the scope of your assignment?

A Let me see if I recall.

I know that it was going to be 45 days, the length in Benghazi --

Q Okay.

A -- at the time, yes.

Q So you extended a little bit but not --

A I had to extend due to the fact that they were looking for another supervisory special agent to send and it was a difficult time in the year, during the Christmas vacation.

Q Nobody wants to depart between Thanksgiving and Christmas and the new year.

A Right.

Q Okay.

A So I ended up extending for about a week.

Q Okay.

And what did you understand you would be doing on a day-to-day basis once you arrived in Benghazi?

A I was going to function as their regional security officer, providing security for, you know, the classified equipment that we had -- it was limited -- also, the facility and the Americans that were there at the time.

Q Okay.

Mr. Westmoreland. Susan, could you find out what facility that

they're talking --

Ms. Jackson. When he got there?

Mr. Westmoreland. Yeah, when he got there.

Ms. Jackson. Uh-huh. Yes. I absolutely can.

Mrs. Brooks. You called her Susan. That's Sharon.

Mr. Westmoreland. I mean Sharon.

Ms. Jackson. That's all right. We've been interchangeable for years.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q When you arrived in Benghazi, where were the American personnel, the State Department personnel, physically located?

A It was called the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi. And it was approximately 24 kilometers from the airport.

Q Okay. And what was the physical layout? Were you in a hotel? Were you in a compound? Can you describe the physical layout of this U.S. Special Mission?

A Yes. It was a compound comprised of three separate villas.

Q Did you name them something? Were they villas 1, 2, 3? A, B, C?

A Yes, we named them. We had them named Villa A, Villa B, and Villa C.

And in between Villa A and Villa C, we had openings through the concrete wall so that we could drive through, you know, at least from Villa A to Villa B. We couldn't drive to Villa C because we only had a pedestrian walkthrough. But, you know, we had external gates that

went into Villa C.

Q So, as I understand it, each of the villas was separately walled. They had a wall around --

A Right.

Q -- each of the -- Villa A had a concrete wall all the way around it, as did Villa B and as did Villa C.

A Correct.

Q And they were all contiguous?

A I'm sorry?

Q They were all adjacent to one another?

A Yes.

Q There were no villas in between --

A No.

Q -- or open in between --

A They were all adjacent.

Mr. Westmoreland. Sharon?

Ms. Jackson. Yes?

Mr. Westmoreland. How big would you say that area was? Each of these walled areas, what did they encompass? Two acres? An acre? A half-acre? Do you have any idea?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I have no idea.

Mr. Westmoreland. A football field?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Villa C was about a little over a football field. The same thing -- Villa B, which was in the center, was about a football field or a little bit less. And Villa A was the smaller of the three.

Mr. Westmoreland. Smaller.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. So -- okay.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q And, as I understand it, there was an opening between Villa A and Villa B where vehicles could drive through freely?

A Yes.

Q Okay. But only a pedestrian egress or ingress or whatever you might want to call it between B and C.

A Yes.

Q Okay. And each of the villas then had its own vehicle entrance?

A Each villa had -- okay, let's go back. Villa A had two vehicle entrances.

Q Uh-huh.

A Villa C had two vehicle entrances. And Villa B had only one vehicle entrance.

Q Okay.

And approximately what was the height of the walls of each of the villas?

Mr. Evers. If you remember.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't remember.

Ms. Jackson. Taller than you?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Twice as tall as you?

Mr. Evers. Do you want to ask the witness how tall he is?

Ms. Jackson. That's a valid question.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't recall, but I know they were higher than me.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Okay. And you're somewhere between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]?

A [REDACTED].

Q [REDACTED]. Okay. So would you say they were at least 6' tall?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

When you arrived in Benghazi, what did the Diplomatic Security team look like? How many agents were there? What was their experience level? Had they been in Benghazi before? Did they arrive with you? If you could describe the Diplomatic Security team that you assumed leadership of in Benghazi.

A Right.

When I arrived, I met with the acting regional security officer, [REDACTED], who was departing as the person that I was going to replace. And then there were several other junior agents in different stages of the temporary duty. So when I arrived, there were five agents on the ground, and I was the sixth agent.

Q And, of the five, one of them was [REDACTED]?

A Well, [REDACTED] was the sixth agent, but he --

Q Okay.

A -- ended up overlapping with me 1 day, and then he left the

following day.

Q Okay. So, once Agent [REDACTED] left, there were six total agents, including yourself.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were you the most senior of experience of the agents?

A Yes.

Q Okay. What was the level of experience of the other five? If you can recall, you know, ranges from -- were they all under 5 years? Five to 10 years? To the best of your recollection.

A I don't recall.

Q Varying levels of experience?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were they all high-threat-trained?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Had any of them worked as an ARSO or RSO before?

A I don't recall.

Q Do you recall if any of them had?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. All right.

Mrs. Brooks. I have a quick question, Sharon.

Ms. Jackson. Yes?

Mrs. Brooks. Had you ever done -- had you done a TDY before in your previous assignments?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mrs. Brooks. But you indicated that you had just finished

high-threat training prior to this --

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay. Yes.

Mrs. Brooks. -- training; is that right?

Mr. [REDACTED]. That's correct.

Mrs. Brooks. So none of your TDYs previously had required the high-threat training?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Right. That is correct.

Mrs. Brooks. Okay. Okay.

Thank you.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Of the agents that were in your team, were any of them from the MSD, or Mobile Security Detachment?

A No.

Q Okay.

Were there any Department of Defense assets either in Benghazi or in Tripoli?

A When I arrived in Benghazi, there was a Marine Corps colonel, an O-6, that was in Benghazi for about a week. He stayed in Benghazi for about a week after I arrived and then went back to Tripoli.

Q Okay. He was assigned in Tripoli?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't know.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Okay. He just went back to Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q Okay. What was he doing in Benghazi?

A He was having some meetings. I don't recall the folks that he was meeting with. But, normally, he would have his meetings on the outside or go with the Envoy to joint meetings.

Q At the time that you went in, the Tripoli Embassy had reopened; is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And that had occurred in September of 2011?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. It was open when you got there in late October?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Mr. Westmoreland. Could I --

Ms. Jackson. Yes?

Mr. Westmoreland. This particular colonel -- did you say he was a colonel, a Marine?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. -- and the Envoy, who provided security for them when they went to these meetings?

Mr. [REDACTED]. It was part of my team.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. So you just don't remember where they went or who they met with, because, I mean, you all furnished the security for them to go somewhere.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I would stay behind at the Special Mission in our Tactical Operations Center, and I would monitor. The younger agents would provide the security for both Envoy Chris Stevens and the Marine Corps colonel.

Mr. Westmoreland. But, typically, you would've known where your agents were going.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes. I knew all the time due to the fact that they were carrying a [REDACTED], and I had a display on my TOC where, you know, it pinpointed where each [REDACTED] was within the city.

Mr. Westmoreland. So you knew where they were at; you just didn't know who they were meeting with.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Evers. Do you mind if I just clarify?

Did you know at the time who they were meeting with and you just don't remember today?

Sorry. I wasn't sure -- I think that was a slightly different question.

Ms. Jackson. That was going to be my followup question.

Mr. Evers. Okay. Well, and it's your interview. I just thought it was a little bit different.

Ms. Jackson. Right.

Mr. [REDACTED]. No, I never -- I don't recall.

Ms. Jackson. Right.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q But you would have known what building they were going to go to and there would have been an advance team that went out before they made a movement?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

You talked about the [REDACTED] that the Envoy had. Did everyone have one of those?

A No, the Envoy didn't have one. The agents in the security team had one each, and then we had one in the vehicle.

Q Okay. And so you could monitor the movements because of that.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Could those movements have been monitored back at DS Command Center also?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. Could they be monitored in Tripoli?

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

Going back for a moment, was there an RSO in Tripoli when you were in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Who was that?

A [REDACTED] -- I don't recall his last name. [REDACTED].

Q Does the last name of [REDACTED] sound correct?

A [REDACTED], yes.

Q Okay. Recognition is so much better than recall.

A Yes.

Q I had a judge tell me that years ago.

Did you report to the RSO in Tripoli, or did you report directly to someone in Diplomatic Security back at main State?

A I reported back to Diplomatic Security.

Q And who in particular did you report to?

A The desk officer mainly, [REDACTED].

Q [REDACTED]?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And tell me a little bit about his role as the desk officer. Help us understand what a desk officer does.

A Originally, that was the first person that I contacted once I knew I was going to go to Benghazi. And he started, you know, telling me a little bit about the Special Mission, and, also, he put me in contact with the acting RSO, [REDACTED]. And [REDACTED] started to send me, or started to copy me on, you know, the issues that he was working on during the time.

Q Did you get any type of briefing or materials to look at or emails back and forth with [REDACTED] regarding the security situation in Benghazi and Libya generally?

A I did, but basically what I got from him was the issues that he was having and, you know, what he was requesting in terms of security upgrades.

Q Okay. What were some of the issues that you were going to

walk into as the head security guy at the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi?

Mr. Evers. Do you understand the question?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No.

Can you be more specific?

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Were there specific issues or particular security risks that Mr. [REDACTED] or others advised you of? Basically, what did you think you were getting into?

A Is this in terms of, you know, the danger --

Q Yes.

A -- in Benghazi at the time?

Q Yes.

A No.

Q Okay. So what was your general understanding of the safety and security of Benghazi before going in?

A That it was -- it wasn't as dangerous, you know, during the time that I was about to go over there.

Q So it had stabilized a bit?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Mr. Westmoreland. Had there been any tripwires that you were notified of or any probes that they were concerned about -- or felt like that there may have been some probes or what they would've called a tripwire, I guess, that would have made them sit down and reevaluate?

Were you aware of any of those things?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I was not aware of any of them before I arrived in Benghazi.

Mr. Westmoreland. So you were not aware of them, but, once you got there, were you made aware of them? Or was there just none that you remember?

Mr. [REDACTED]. There were none after I arrived --

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]. -- and during the time that I was there.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q There were none tripped? Or there were no tripwires?

A I do not recall seeing any tripwires while I was there.

Q Did you have tripwires at other posts you have been assigned to?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Did you have any Emergency Action Committee meetings while you were in Benghazi?

A The Action Committee meetings were at the U.S. Embassy. We had smaller meetings between the Americans that were at the time in Benghazi. Yes, we did have one.

Q One formal EAC or semiformal EAC?

A Semiformal, yes.

Q Okay. But when you would have these smaller group

meetings, would you then report to Tripoli or to main State?

A To Tripoli.

Q To Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And why did you have this one EAC that you recall?

A This EAC was about the safety of the airport in Benghazi, because none of the other Americans that were in Benghazi had used, you know, the airlines to fly into the airport in Benghazi. It was a special flag from Souda Bay, Greece, to Benghazi on a chartered airplane.

Q And so the Emergency Action Committee meeting was about whether American citizens would be allowed to use the Benghazi airport?

A First of all, I had to go to the airport and assess the security of the -- the security apparatus in the airport.

Q And did you do that personally or assign it to any of the agents who were working for you?

A I assigned it to one of the agents.

Q Okay. And then did you review that security report?

A Yes, I did.

Q Okay. And did you concur with the findings?

A I concurred, yes.

Q Okay. And what was the general assessment of the Benghazi airport?

A That the security was good. They looked at the equipment to make sure that it was functional -- walkthrough metal detectors,

x-ray machines -- and that, you know, the employees running them knew what they were doing.

Mr. Westmoreland. Can I just ask, Sharon?

Ms. Jackson. Uh-huh.

Mr. Westmoreland. Who was providing the security for the airport?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Can you be more specific? Are you asking --

Mr. Westmoreland. Was this some unit, some paramilitary unit? Was it Blue Mountain? Was it the 17th Brigade? Or was it Qadhafi military? Or was it just a local police force?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't recall. They weren't wearing military uniforms. But I don't recall exactly what part of the government was providing security at the airport at the time.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. But was the government still semi-functioning at the airports?

Mr. [REDACTED]. The employees at the airport were functioning, and they were functioning efficiently at the time.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Do you recall approximately when it was in your 53 days in Benghazi when you did this? Was it at the beginning or was it closer to the end or in the middle, if you recall?

A I think it was towards the beginning.

Q Okay.

Do you recall that the Benghazi airport was closed on or around November 5 due to armed protests occurring there?

A What date was that?

Q On or around November 5.

A Around November 5.

Q Or let me ask more generally.

A Sure.

Q Do you remember the airport being closed due to armed protests during the time that you were in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A I do remember that.

Q All right. And what can you tell us about that?

A I know that, you know, when we heard about the armed protest at the airport, we stayed away from the airport during that time until, you know, the situation got better.

Q And, then, do you recall whether your security survey of the airport occurred before or after this incident with the armed protest at the airport?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay.

Can you describe for us generally the internal security that was in and around Benghazi? Such as, was there any type of local police force? Was there anything that would be maybe the equivalent of a national guard? Was there Libyan military? What, if any, security apparatus or forces existed in Benghazi when you were there?

A The times that I went out with my security team, I remember

seeing police at most of the intersections. I know we had five armed security from the -- what was it -- the February 17th Brigade that was staying in our compound at the time.

Q Did you have any other local guard force other than the Feb 17 Brigade?

A Yes, we did.

Q Okay. And describe -- were they from a company? Or how did they get hired, if you know?

A I remember having two shifts of unarmed guards to --

Q Unarmed guards?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A -- you know, to man the entry points to the Special Mission, to the compound, and also the walkways and also to patrol throughout the entire compound.

We had two shifts. There was a dayshift and there was a nightshift comprised of approximately 12 guards in each shift. And the contract was run by -- I know that it was a contract, but I don't know the particulars of, you know, who was running the contract.

Q Okay. While you were there, were there problems with this local guard force?

A Yes. The main problem was that a lot of them wanted to return to school, to the university, so I was having a constant turnover, and sometimes, you know, we had less folks than we were supposed to have.

Q Did you have problems with people showing up late, leaving early?

A I had a couple of people that showed up late, didn't show up at all. And when that happened, I had to try to hire more people.

Q And did you have hiring authority, or did that work through the contractor?

A I didn't have hiring authority. What I did was I conducted the interviews.

Q So whoever had the contract would bring you a prospective candidate and you would interview that person?

A I don't recall.

Q Let me ask this. What was your assessment of the level of training? Sort of, what skills did they bring? Were you satisfied with their skill set or not satisfied?

A I wasn't satisfied with a lot of them because they didn't have the skill set.

Q Okay. Can you tell us what -- can you elaborate on that?

A A lot of them had been unemployed for years or were students at the time so they didn't have any experience in that line of work.

Q Did you and the other agents attempt to do any training with them, or was that the responsibility of their boss?

A During the time that I was there, we conducted classes on the different -- you know, how to work the walkthrough metal detectors and so forth. Yes, we conducted some classes after they were hired.

Q Is that typical for a post?

A No, it's not.

Q Just to make sure I understand, it's typical that whoever the contractor brings in would have the requisite skills to do their job?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Or that the contractor would do the training?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And so this was atypical.

A Atypical.

Q At any point, did you or any of the other Diplomatic Security agents recommend that the contract be terminated?

A I don't recall. It's --

Q Been a while.

A Yeah.

Mr. Westmoreland. May I?

Ms. Jackson. Sure. Go right ahead.

Mr. Westmoreland. This 17 February Brigade, you mentioned that there was five armed members of the brigade?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes. Living in the compound?

Mr. Westmoreland. Living in the compound.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. So they were armed?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Now, the 12 was not armed; is that correct?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Right. The local guard force.

Mr. Westmoreland. The local guard force.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Now, where were the five from? Were they from the 17th Brigade also?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. So they had better training. At least they were able to carry their weapon --

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. -- and knew which end was the bad end, I guess.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I'm sorry?

Mr. Westmoreland. I said they knew which end of the gun was the bad end --

Mr. [REDACTED]. Oh, yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. -- or the one to use.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Did you ever see any technicals, what people call technicals, that the 17th -- that that brigade may have had, as far as something mounted in the back of a pickup or heavier weaponry?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No, I did not.

Mr. Westmoreland. So, since there were 12 there, you know -- and I guess there was 12 on the dayshift and 12 on the nightshift?

Mr. [REDACTED]. You're talking about local guard forces, right --

Mr. Westmoreland. Yes.

Mr. [REDACTED]. -- manning the gates and --

Mr. Westmoreland. Yes.

Mr. [REDACTED]. -- doing the patrols?

Mr. Westmoreland. Yes.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. So, with the number of gates, that was approximately two per gate that you had for the three villas?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't recall how many per gate.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]. But I remember that there were different stations that they needed to man.

Mr. Westmoreland. Were there any alarm buttons at these gates, or was the area small enough that you could have seen it, or was there any alarm notice? Or were these guys -- I mean, how were they going to contact you if there was something that was going on that they felt like you needed to know about?

Mr. [REDACTED]. First of all, we had a closed-circuit camera in the Tactical Operations Center, and whenever they needed to contact us, they would use a handheld radio.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. But those guys were unarmed?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Right.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

And was there a commander or somebody that was over each shift there, or was that your responsibility?

Mr. [REDACTED]. There was a shift supervisor with each shift.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q I want to show you what I've marked as deposition Exhibit 1 and ask if you would take just a few minutes to review that.

For the record, this is a two-page document that is marked with a document number C05390964. It's an email chain at the top from -- the first name at the top is from [REDACTED]. And the date is November 15, 2011, at 10:06 a.m.

And I'd ask you to just take a moment to review that, and then I'm going to ask you a few questions about this document.

Now, you're not an author of any of the emails in this document; is that correct?

A Right.

Q Okay. Are you familiar with the people who are mentioned --

A Yes.

Q -- in this?

Going to the bottom of the first page of this exhibit, it's to a [REDACTED]. Who was [REDACTED]?

A [REDACTED] was one of the agents there at the time. And he was assigned -- I believe he was assigned by [REDACTED] because he was there before my arrival. And he was working with the local guard force.

Q That was one of his responsibilities as one of the DS agents there?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And then it's from an individual whose first name I'm only going to use as [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. And if you know how to pronounce the last name, I would welcome you to do so.

A I had problems also, so yeah. But he was one of the junior agents that was already in Benghazi when I arrived, and he was also working in training the local guard force.

Q Okay.

A He was getting ready to depart Benghazi, and then he turned it over to [REDACTED], who was going to stay there a little bit longer.

Q Okay.

So [REDACTED] sends this email to [REDACTED], what I would describe as outlining issues with the local guard force; is that correct?

A Yes.

Q As you have reviewed essentially all of page 2, would you say that [REDACTED] has done an accurate synopsis of the issues with the local guard force?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were these issues that were discussed with you?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And did you concur in the recommendations that were made? On page 2, there's a series of recommendations.

A Yes.

Q I also noticed under "Issues" and number 1, when they are

writing about not being able to be at full staff, that it says -- and I'm quoting from part of subparagraph 1 -- "It is a security concern for me because it leaves sections of the 13-acre compound unmanned."

Do you see that there?

A Yes.

Q Would that be an accurate assessment of how large the compound was?

A Actually, I don't know how big it was, but I know it was big.

Q Okay. Okay.

All right. And so was this, in many respects, a transition document from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

Ms. Jackson. Or meant to be a transition document?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't know.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

Mr. Westmoreland. Could I --

Ms. Jackson. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. If both of these -- and this is just curiosity -- if both of these agents were in Benghazi, why do you think one was emailing the other one rather than just talking to him, I mean, and writing these out and saying, you know, "[REDACTED], here, this is what is going on"? I mean, surely you all had a meeting every morning or at least once a week or something where you would sit down and talk

to people.

And I'm just curious, I mean, if you have a junior agent, it just seems to me that he would have copied the RSO on something that he was sending to another agent that had to do with the guard service.

Does that seem weird to you, that he wouldn't have just discussed this or that he wouldn't have copied the RSO on the email?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't know.

I don't recall when [REDACTED] left Benghazi, but -- yeah, I don't recall if this was after the fact, after he had left Benghazi, and sent [REDACTED] this information. I just don't recall.

Mr. Westmoreland. Well, I'm just saying, it just says, "Since I have taken over the LGF" -- I'm assuming that stands for "local guard force"?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay -- "program." So it sounds like he's still there and he's just passing on his concerns to [REDACTED], copying [REDACTED], but you're not in the chain there is what just -- I mean, you know. And neither is [REDACTED]. That just seems a little weird to me, but --

Mr. [REDACTED]. Well, [REDACTED] was already gone by this time.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

RPTR KERR

EDTR CRYSTAL

[11:10 a.m.]

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q If I can direct your attention to the bottom third of the first page, where it is from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], and the date is Tuesday, November 15, 2011, at 3:58 a.m. I'm assuming that's 3:58 a.m. D.C. time as opposed to Benghazi time. But in that short paragraph it says, "[REDACTED], Thought you would want to know what's going on with the LGF, if we can still call it that. We feel powerless to do anything about this, as the perception is that Washington is holding the strings, but they also want Benghazi to go away."

Do you have a -- can you tell us what that means? If you know?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. All right. Do you recall any sentiments discussed with the agents that you were with that you were powerless in any respect to deal with the local guard force?

A I don't recall, no.

Q Okay. Before I turn to another topic, I have about 10 minutes left, so I'm going to ask Representative Brooks or Westmoreland if they have any questions they would like to ask in our remaining time of this session.

Mrs. Brooks. I have a question with respect to Exhibit 1. What was [REDACTED] position?

Mr. [REDACTED]. He was the desk officer in --

Mrs. Brooks. Libya?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No. In Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Brooks. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. Was he like your lifeline?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mrs. Brooks. Do you have any idea how long he'd been the desk officer for this assignment.

Mr. [REDACTED]. No.

Mrs. Brooks. Okay.

Mr. Westmoreland. Who was [REDACTED]?

Mr. Evers. [REDACTED]?

Mr. Westmoreland. Huh?

Mr. Evers. [REDACTED]?

Mr. Westmoreland. [REDACTED], I'm sorry.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't know.

Mr. Westmoreland. You don't have any idea who it is?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No.

Mrs. Brooks. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I cannot discuss it in this -- in this forum.

Mrs. Brooks. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]. But I would be able to --

Mrs. Brooks. -- to discuss it in a classified setting?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mrs. Brooks. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. [REDACTED]? If you know?

Okay. We will reserve that question for later. I don't want to go into a whole nother topic area.

Mrs. Brooks. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. So at this time, why don't we take a break. It is 11:12, and let's take a 10-, 15-minute break. There is water here. Would you like a cup of coffee or tea or anything like that?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No, just water.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

[Recess.]

Mr. Woolfork. We can go back on the record. The time is currently 11:27.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Mr. [REDACTED], my name is Frank Woolfork. I'm minority staff. I'm joined by Susan Sachsman Grooms and my other colleague, Ronak Desai, from minority staff.

Again, thank you very much for appearing before us today. We certainly understand that appearing before Congress would be daunting, so we'll try to make this process as simple and straightforward as possible. And certainly understand that it's been a number of years since you were actually in Benghazi, so we certainly understand that it might be hard to recall some of these questions.

But I just wanted to go back to actually when you were in the Army.

What was the decision to join DS? Did you -- had thought about that while you were in the Army to join DS or did you do something in the meantime?

A That's a good question. At the time I was stationed with the U.S. Mil Group in Caracas, Venezuela, and my job was as a -- I was an exchange instructor. I was an artillery instructor at the schoolhouse at Fort Sill, and they -- they sent me to Venezuela in an exchange program, and they sent a Venezuelan major to Fort Sill, and they had been doing this for many years. So my job over there was to teach fire support to the newly commissioned Venezuelan Army lieutenants.

Q How long were you there for?

A I was there for 2 years.

Q Two years. Okay.

A And that's how I came to know Diplomatic Security. [REDACTED] worked in the Embassy, the U.S. Embassy in [REDACTED], and she worked for the RSO, the regional security officer, and that's how I learned about Diplomatic Security.

Q So you have [REDACTED] to thank in terms of your career now?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. And I'm sure many other professions.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q No, I just want to ask you kind of a broad question in terms of kind of the environment in which the State Department currently

operates. You mentioned earlier that you're going to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is one of 275 posts around the world. A lot of them are dangerous, including [REDACTED]. And for those of us that are not as familiar with kind of the global threats that we're facing, could you, in a broad sense, kind of give us a sense of some of the things that you've encountered in your experience overseas?

A The thing is that, you know, Benghazi was my first high threat post, and that wasn't like a typical deployment or, you know -- you know, when -- a tour of duty. In the -- in the other places that I had been, like [REDACTED] mainly, [REDACTED], I really didn't encounter any problems. [REDACTED] was a little bit difficult due to the fact that the infrastructure was not there. I was assigned to [REDACTED] about a couple of years after, you know, the cessation of, you know, the conflict, and there had been conflict in [REDACTED] for the last 15 years.

Q Right.

A So infrastructure was pretty -- pretty -- pretty bad, no electricity, no running water in the city. The police wasn't up to speed. So mainly I dealt with a lot of crime in [REDACTED].

Q And during your time in [REDACTED] and other places, would you say that your job, whether as an ARSO or an RSO, was to basically manage risk at those particular posts?

A Right. Our job is to protect classified, the institution or the building, and the personnel.

Q Okay. But certainly it's not possible to eliminate all those risks. It's a job of managing those risks. Is that right?

A Right.

Q Okay. Now, just shifting now to Benghazi, we had talked about some of the different activities that you did while you were there. But I was wondering if you could give us a sense of what a typical day was like for you during your 53 days in country, if there was such a thing.

A Sure. Typical day, I would arrive in our office space, I call it the -- or we used to call it the TOC, or the Tactical Operation Center. And basically we had some computers, we had monitors, we had our weapons stored in the -- in the TOC. And my morning would start with, you know, looking at the unclassified emails and answer any questions from the desk officer, [REDACTED]. And if I had any issues, that's when I dealt with all the issues.

For my team, I was there with five other agents. My team was divided. Part of it stayed on compound to provide the security for the compound and to provide training to the local guard force, while the other team provided security for the envoy whenever he had a meeting on the outside or if any of the other officers had a meeting on the outside.

Q Okay.

A A lot of times we dedicated more time to the Envoy's meetings. Because we were short, we couldn't -- we couldn't take folks, you know, to different meetings at the same time due to the fact that we were only six agents on the ground.

Q And due to those, I guess what you say, limited resource

in terms of agents, you had to make a decision to limit movements --

A Yes.

Q -- at particular times?

A Yes. The Envoy would get the priority.

Q Okay. Now, you mentioned in the morning that you looked at unclassified mail in addition to emails from [REDACTED] who you earlier said was the desk officer.

A Here in Washington, D.C., correct, yes.

Q Okay. Now, how often during the course of a day would you review those unclassified versus other sort, other sorts --

A Throughout the day, yes.

Q Okay. And through the review of those -- that information, were you able to kind of get a good sense in your -- in your mind of kind of what the security environment was at a particular time?

A Well, remember, [REDACTED] was here.

Q Right.

A I was in Benghazi.

Q Uh-huh.

A So, you know, I was able to get a sense of the security situation based on, you know, the outings that my agents had, and they came back and reported back to me.

Q Okay.

A At the time Benghazi was pretty quiet.

Q Okay. Now, when you arrived it was late October, is that right?

A Yes. I started my journey from [REDACTED] on 24 October. I think it took 2 days to get to Benghazi.

Q Now, previously you had said there had been, I believe, six agents on the ground, including yourself. Is that right?

A Right. When I -- when I got there, the acting regional security officer, [REDACTED], was there, and we were able to overlap for 1 day.

Q Okay.

A And then, you know, the other agents were at different stages throughout their TDY.

Q Okay. And how many total people were on the compound in addition to the DS agents initially?

A Of course, it fluctuated --

Q Of course.

A -- it fluctuated every week. But I'd say that it was the Envoy, the six special agents, the management, slash, information management officer. There was a Marine Corps colonel there for first week that I was there. And there -- let me see -- there was a USAID officer at the time.

Q Okay. And you had said that during the course of your 53 days there the number of personnel fluctuated, right?

A Yes.

Q During your time as RSO were there any discussions on, I guess, the size of the mission decreasing in terms of the number of personnel there?

A You mean were there any discussions about drawing down?

Q Correct. Part of this relates, I think, to what we discussed earlier in terms of --

A Right.

Q -- Embassy Tripoli reopening in September of 2011 and whether or not there had been a shifting of resources. So I was wondering whether or not any resources, while you were [inaudible], in terms of personnel were moving to Tripoli?

A Okay. So your question is?

Q Was there any discussion on the number of personnel in Benghazi lowering as they were being shifted to Tripoli since the Embassy reopened?

A There was no discussion of that with me during the time that I was there.

Q Okay. In terms of the facility itself, do you remember any discussions about perhaps closing the facility in terms of the Special Mission opening?

A Not directly with me.

Q Okay. And then I'm just going to enter as Exhibit No. 1 an email -- I'm sorry -- an email, Exhibit No. 2, from you, Mr. [REDACTED], to [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Evers. We need a sticker on this thing. We will get it for you in a second. We should swap that one out for this one.

I'm actually -- I apologize. I'm going to object on the basis of classification to the use of this document in this setting. Although the header of the document says "sensitive but unclassified," I believe there's indication that it was sent from a classified account, the last line of the email. I suppose I'd ask the witness to review it to see if he thinks the information in here is classified.

Mr. Woolfork. So take a -- take a few moments to take a look at that.

Mr. Evers. And to be clear for the record, Mr. [REDACTED], if you believe the information in this email is not classified and you can discuss it in this setting, you are absolutely free to do so.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay.

Mr. Evers. All right. For the record, I've conferred with the witness. He does not believe that the content of this email is classified. I will just clarify for the record that the indication that I have that it may have been was the last line of the email indicating that it was sent from a high side, a Classnet account, which is a potential indicia of classification, but it's the information itself that controls. I'll go back to the State Department after the interview to confirm that whatever questions follow can remain unclassified, but for now we can proceed. Is everyone comfortable with that?

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Sure. For the record, the document stamped "sensitive but unclassified" on the top and the document number from the Department of State is C05392833. We'll continue to ask

questions on this and we'll leave it in the record if you are comfortable with discussing it. Are you comfortable with discussing this in an unclassified setting, Mr. [REDACTED]?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Okay.

Mr. Evers. Thank you, everybody.

Mr. Woolfork. Thank you.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Mr. [REDACTED], I present this email to you in order to refresh your memory, so it's a copy of a November 1, 2011, email from you to [REDACTED] entitled, "Short" -- quote, "Short Term DS staffing requirements for Benghazi." It is marked "sensitive but unclassified."

A Yes.

Q And, again, for the record, who is [REDACTED]?

A He is the desk officer in Washington, D.C.

Q Now, you know, about halfway down this page you write, quote, "On a separate note, yesterday I had a meeting with the Envoy who indicated that a decision has to be made soon about maintaining a long term presence in Benghazi through the end of FY12," end quote. Do you recall that meeting?

A Right now I don't remember about the meeting.

Q Okay. Well, a little bit on in that email you summarize what you believe is the contents of that meeting, and according to that email Special Envoy Stevens had only two options. The first option

called for a slimmed-down compound, that would come to seven personnel. There's a little space for temporary deployments through September 30, 2012. And the second option was zero out the U.S. presence altogether in favor of a, quote, "virtual presence." Is that correct, your understanding of the email?

A Yes, I understand.

Q Okay. And aside from this meeting, do you recall this topic being discussed in other settings with other individuals or with the Envoy on a separate occasion?

A I believe that in addition to discussing it with the Envoy, we also -- we also talked to the acting management officer. At the time it was [REDACTED].

Q He was acting officer in Benghazi at the time?

A Yes, acting management officer and the IMO, information management officer.

Q Do you remember either from Mr. [REDACTED] comments or from the Ambassador's comments of why they were supportive of these options at the time? Sir, I'd just point your attention to another part.

Mr. Evers. Do you remember the question?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No, I don't.

Mr. Evers. Could you re-ask the question?

Mr. Woolfork. We're just wondering whether or not you recall any of the -- any discussions on why people were supportive of what is said in the email as option A, which was the consolidation or the slimmed-down compound.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I believe it had to do with the -- the termination of -- or the -- that the lease nearing its end. So they were looking at options. At the time, most of the newly formed government had transferred to Tripoli and there was only one or two agencies left in Benghazi, and that was the reason why they wanted to keep the Special Mission open.

Mr. Woolfork. Okay.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I'm sorry. What was the reason why they wanted to keep the Special Mission open versus just closing it and having a virtual presence?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Because not the entire new government that -- Liberian -- Libyan Government that was formed had transferred to Tripoli. I believe the Ministry of Defense had remained in Benghazi, and that was the reason for extending the presence in Benghazi.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Now, I understand this was obviously early on in your tenure as the RSO, it is dated November 1.

A Okay. Yes.

Q Do you recall any subsequent conversations about these options or other options that were discussed while you were there?

A I know that other options were discussed further down the line.

Q Okay. Could you outline what some of those other options were?

A Well, not in this setting.

Q Okay.

A But I could -- I could -- I could discuss it further in a classified setting.

Q Thank you for that. Now, in the past hour we had talked about the one, you had discussed was a semiformal EAC regarding operations at the airport. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And could you talk about just what happened during the course of that ESC -- EAC -- what decisions were made coming out of that?

A Okay. Based on our assessment of the airport security, we decided that the airport in Benghazi had sufficient security -- sufficient -- or a good security apparatus to start using the different airlines to fly Americans into Benghazi.

Q And while you were there, were there any other informal discussions or any other semiformal EACs that occurred, to your recollection?

A Not that I can recall. I think that was the only one.

Q And when you reported the results of the EAC, how was that information sent through the channels? Was it through Tripoli or through D.C.?

A It had -- first, we had our little meeting with the Envoy and the other several Americans that were in Benghazi, and the document was sent to Tripoli for them to review and hold their own EAC. And

they were supposed to be the ultimate decision makers as to if we were going to let folks use the airport or the airlines coming into Benghazi.

Q So in terms of the process, you would make a recommendation out of the EAC meeting in Benghazi. That would then -- that recommendation would then be forwarded to Tripoli?

A Tripoli, yes.

Q Would Tripoli then hold its own EAC?

A Yes.

Q And then make recommendations based on your input. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And at times you had earlier said that you reported also to D.C. directly through [REDACTED]. I guess in what circumstances would you report to [REDACTED] versus reporting through Tripoli?

A On a -- on a daily basis I would -- I would -- would communicate with [REDACTED] in terms of sending agents, you know, whenever, you know, we were nearing, you know, an agent's -- the end of his TDY, whenever, you know, I went down in numbers, because not -- throughout my time in Benghazi it fluctuated, the number of agents that were there, and those are the things that I discussed with [REDACTED].

Q Okay.

BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

Q But in terms of security issues like an EAC meeting, those

kinds of issues flowed through Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So if there had been a security incident, would that have flowed through Tripoli, a security incident that required an EAC, and then a decision about what to do next, would that have flowed through Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q And not through D.C.?

A D.C. would have been informed.

Q Okay. But the decision would have been made in Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q And who would have made the decision in Tripoli?

A The Ambassador.

Q Okay. Oh, because at the time there was an Ambassador in Tripoli?

A Yes.

Mr. Woolfork. At that time would have been Ambassador Cretz?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Or the Ambassador -- or the Emergency Action Committee, which is, you know, comprised of different agencies within the -- within the Embassy.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. But somebody on the ground in Libya would make a decision about security changes?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q From the Accountability Review Board and from other

investigations, we know that the lack of police presence, host nation support became an issue over time in Benghazi. We had talked about this in the past hour, in terms of the host nation support. Who comprised the end force, to refresh our memories, of the TNC?

A I'm sorry, the --

Q Who did the TNC provide as the local security at the Special Mission Compound? That would be the Transitional National Council.

A To help support with the security?

Q That's right.

A The 17th February Brigade.

Q Okay. And at the time, were they the only local force that you worked with? Were there other options for you to work with, other groups within Benghazi?

A That was the only -- the only group that we worked with.

Q Okay. On November 11, 2011, there was an incident that occurred, and I want to enter as an Exhibit No. 3 a Diplomatic Security spot report which you sent on November 12 with the subject, quote, "Shooting Incident Near Annex Compound." It is marked "sensitive but unclassified."

[██████████ Exhibit No. 3

Was marked for identification.]

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. So I'm looking at this again, and it does appear to have a "Classnet" thing on the bottom. So just review it and tell us if it's okay to discuss in an unclassified setting. It has no classification marked at the bottom of document number -- State

Department document number C05394484.

Mr. Evers. I'm seeing it without the page break. This may just have been the footer in your email, Mr. [REDACTED]. So just review it, and if you can talk about it in an unclassified setting, then do so.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Sir, do you recall this incident in this particular report?

A Yes, I do.

Q Okay. Generally speaking, could you just tell us what happened in that particular incident?

A There was a shooting incident that dealt with Americans. But in order to elaborate, we have to do it in another setting.

Q Understood. And once you heard of this incident, who did you report it to?

A The 17th Brigade -- 17th February Brigade.

Q Okay.

A Which immediately dispatched a group of soldiers.

Q And is it correct -- I guess, who wrote the report, this spot report?

A This spot report, I did.

Q Okay. The report also says, towards the bottom of the page of the TNC force, quote, "They did an outstanding job providing support," end quote. And in your particular view, why did they do an outstanding job?

A Because they were able to immediately call for support from

their brigade, and they were there in less than, I'd say, 15 minutes.

Q And overall, how would you rate the February 17th responsiveness if there were other incidents?

A During the time that I was there, it was outstanding.

Q And there's any sense of perhaps how many incidents they responded to that you thought they were outstanding?

A I recall three different incidents --

Q Okay.

A -- during the time that I was there.

Q In all three incidents they responded quickly, in your opinion?

A Yes.

Q Okay. I wanted to ask you about Diplomatic Security staffing at the missions. We touched on this a little bit previously in terms of the reduction in staff. And the reason I wanted to talk about it, you talked about the ebbs and flows of the TDY agents that were there in terms of having sufficient numbers.

Sir, I'm going to ask you to go back quickly to the incident on November 11.

A Yes.

Q And so following this, was there any sort of EAC held, following this particular incident?

A No.

Q And then in terms of this incident, and you said you reported it to -- you contacted February 17th. Were there other discussions

with the principal officer at the time regarding this incident?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And who was the principal officer at the time?

A I believe it was John Christopher Stevens.

Q Okay. And instead of having an EAC, you had the discussion with Ambassador Stevens. Was there any particular why you had --

A He wasn't Ambassador at the time.

Q Correct. With then Special Envoy Stevens. Was there any particular reason you would have a discussion with him rather than hold an EAC?

A We were a Special Mission in Benghazi. We didn't -- what we did was we held, you know, small meetings.

Q Uh-huh.

A The EACs are held back at the Embassy, in Tripoli.

Q Okay.

A You could call it a mini-EAC.

Q Okay.

A But, yes, he was informed, and we talked about it, yes.

Q And what was your discussion regarding this particular incident with Special Envoy Stevens regarding the November 11 incident?

A Can you be more specific?

Q Were there -- in terms of were there possibilities of perhaps restricting movement that came as a result of your discussions with the Special Envoy or restricting movements to certain areas? Was there any action that was taken following your discussion with the

Envoy?

A Yes, I did have a meeting with -- with the Special Envoy about this particular incident. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We weren't the targets. So what I was instructed to do was I was instructed to send the spot report up to Washington, D.C.

Q Okay.

A And we did not -- we did not restrict any movements because of this incident. This was an isolated incident that didn't have anything to do with us.

BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

Q Did you agree with the analysis of the Special Envoy that this was an isolated incident that had nothing to do with you?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And that's why you didn't take any next steps to change your security profile?

A Right. I did discuss, you know, this in detail, but in a different setting.

Q Understood.

A Okay.

Q You had explained that there were, it sounds like, three different incidents that happened when you were in Benghazi before. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And you had also explained, I think in your previous discussion, that you thought that the security was, and I believe you said, pretty quiet?

A Yes.

Q So can you explain how there were sort of three different incidents but you still considered the security to be pretty quiet, can you just explain that for us?

A Sure.

Q Sorry. You can just wait.

Ms. Jackson. We don't need to evacuate.

BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

Q For the record, those were just bells from the -- congressional bells.

A During my short TDY to Benghazi, I talked to the RSO in Tripoli, and they were having a lot of issues with -- with the militias. They were having internal fights or, you know, fights between militias to, you know. And we didn't have any of that in Benghazi. These were three separate and isolated events that happened.

Q Okay. So it was your analysis from your experience that the three separate events which -- without going into detail about what they are in an unclassified setting --

A Yes.

Q -- but that they were separate and isolated. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And is it fair to say that they were separate, isolated,

and not designed, in your view, to show animosity towards the American Special Mission Compound?

A Yes.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q So, Mr. [REDACTED], I wanted to discuss again on the issue of the Diplomatic Security agents and the ebbs and flows of the TDY agents. Was that an issue while you were RSO, for DS agents to be on short TDYs?

A Can you be more specific?

Q Sure.

A I mean, are you referring to -- I mean, did I have any shortages? Did I have, you know, the numbers were less than, you know, I originally had when I arrived? Yes. A couple of times during my 50-some days in Benghazi the numbers dropped down below 6, and I was concerned about that, and I, of course, reached out to the desk officer several times to see what was going on and when can we get, you know, other agents to go to Benghazi.

Q So when you -- so when you reached out to [REDACTED], who was the desk officer -- is that right?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q What was the response to your request?

A He was having problems getting TDYers to come out.

Q Is it correct that earlier you had said that you had extended your time in Benghazi by about a week due to the difficulty of finding someone senior enough to replace you? Is that right?

A Yes, because it was -- it was close to Christmas.

Q Okay. Let me enter as Exhibit No. 4 the report of the Accountability Review Board for Benghazi, which leads this report on -- in December 2012.

[██████████ Exhibit No. 4
Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Evers. Is this the entire unclassified report?

Mr. Woolfork. No. It's a portion of the unclassified report.

Mr. Evers. Okay.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Looks like somebody marked it, hopefully, for you, two paragraphs, is that correct, that he is going to ask you about.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Please take a few moments to look through those.

A On page 30, there's an acronym there. Can you tell me what "SMC" means?

Q Yes. I believe that's referring to the Special Mission Compound.

A Okay. Got it.

Q So before we talk about the specifics, have you previously looked at that Benghazi ARB report?

A Negative.

Q Okay.

Ms. Jackson. I'm sorry, was that answer "never"?

Mr. ██████████. Negative.

Ms. Jackson. Negative.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I have never looked at it before today.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Okay. I just wanted to ask you about on the section starting on page 29 in the middle of the last paragraph. Quote, "Key decisions, such as the extension of the State Department presence in Benghazi until December 2012, or nondecisions in Washington, such as the failure to establish standards for Benghazi and to meet them, or the lack of a cohesive staffing plan, essentially set up Benghazi as a floating TDY platform," end quote.

Do you agree with the ARB that Benghazi was a, quote, "floating TDY platform"?

A Yes.

Q You touched on this earlier, but can you just walk us through what you saw some of the impact of the series of TDY staffers on the ability of DS to carry out its work in terms of whether the durations were too short? We're just trying to get a sense of the challenges faced by having agents in place for shorter periods of time.

A My biggest problem with the agents was that, you know, they were arriving in Benghazi at different times. Therefore, you know, they were either asked to extend because they couldn't find any suitable replacements to send. Remember that Benghazi was considered a high-threat post and everybody that was sent to Benghazi had to have

high-threat training.

So I -- there was -- there was a big problem with, you know, trying to locate suitable agents to replace the agents that were already in Benghazi and that had to leave, you know, because they had been there, you know, for what they were asked to -- to be. So that created a problem and the desk officer was having problems finding replacements throughout my TDY.

Q Okay. And addressing this issue, I wanted to point you to page 10, which is right before that.

A Okay.

Q It's recommendation number 13.

A Okay.

Q I'll let you take a look at that.

Mr. Evers. Have you had a chance to read it?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Evers. We are ready to go.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q The recommendation reads, number 13, "The Department should assign key policy, program, and security personnel at high risk, high threat posts for a minimum of one year. For less critical personnel, the temporary duty length should be no less than 120 days."

In your experience, is it beneficial to have agents at a post for a longer duration?

A Are you asking my opinion?

Q Yes, sir.

Mr. Evers. If you have one.

Mr. [REDACTED]. This was one of the findings from the ARB, am I correct?

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q Yes, sir, one of the recommendations.

A One of the recommendations.

Q Yes, sir.

A And I -- I already specified that I was having problems with the number of agents throughout my TDY in Benghazi. So this looks like -- like a good recommendation, yes.

Q Okay. Then I wanted to actually go back to the -- what we marked as Exhibit 2, which was the email from November 1 from you to [REDACTED].

A Yes.

Q And in this, you know, obviously right now, unclassified setting, is there anything you can discuss about the eventual resolution to this issue as far as you know from your time in Benghazi?

A What exactly, what -- what issue are we talking about?

Q This is in terms of the various options that were presented for the location and the size of the Special Mission Compound?

A Okay. During the time in Benghazi, I was -- and it -- it followed this email. I was told that I needed to look at several properties, and we were looking at different options just in case, you know, the Special Mission drew down to minimal numbers.

Q And can you discuss what those different properties were?

A Not in this setting.

Q Okay. Without talking about the classified part in terms of which properties were examined, do you know just generally whether or not the issue was resolved? Was there a conclusion or a decision made on the facility?

A Yes. There were three options, and we -- we looked at the different options, and I -- I was able to look at the security issues that every property had. And my conclusion, based on the best property, which afforded the best security, was to stay where we currently were, with the exception of giving up or getting rid of Villa A.

Q And is it correct, when you first came to Benghazi, there were three different villas. Is that right?

A Yes, A, B, and C.

Q Okay. And your recommendation was to keep Villas --

A B and C.

Q B and C, okay.

A And because they -- they had sufficient setback, that the buildings themselves had sufficient setbacks. I had a problem with Villa A where the building, the house -- the house itself was too close to one of the walls, the external walls.

Q And is it your understanding, based on the recommendation that you made, that the State Department follow that recommendation to maintain Villas C and B and drop Villa A?

A Yes.

BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

Q That was the safest of the options?

A Out of the three options that we looked at.

Q And at the time, were you comfortable with that decision?

A Yes.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. So we are running close to out of time for our hour. We have got a couple of minutes left. I just want to note on the record some discussions that have occurred off the record.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I understand that you have expressed willingness repeatedly during the interview to discuss things more fully in a classified setting.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. And that the State Department has previously made a request that this interview and other interviews be conducted in a classified setting. The Democrats, that's our side, the minority, have been supportive of that request.

From our opinion, it would be most productive to conduct these interviews in a classified setting, starting in a classified setting. As I understand it, it's easier on the witness, they don't have to make decisions about classification on the fly, and it would allow the committee to receive more fulsome answers to our questions in real time and would also prevent us from having to sort of close up shop here and go to another room or to bring witnesses back multiple times, which we would like to avoid because that's extremely inconvenient to the

witnesses.

During our break, before we started today, Congressman Westmoreland expressed his interest --

Ms. Jackson. I'm going to ask if the minority is affirmatively requesting that we go into classified session this afternoon. If that's what your request is -- I mean, we're here for an interview. We're here to ask this witness questions as opposed to making statements on the record.

So if your request is -- if you are making an affirmative request that we conduct a classified session this afternoon or when we break for lunch, we'll make those arrangements.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I appreciate that. I'm going to continue making my statement during my hour.

During -- before the meeting started and our interview started, these concerns were once again raised by the State Department. Congressman Westmoreland expressed his interest in starting these interviews and conducting these interviews in a classified setting and asked why we were not doing that. I can let the Republican staff explain why they explained to him that we were not doing that.

I'm going to note -- I'm noting this on the record because I think that it's important that we all understand, as we're looking back at this transcript, that you were entirely willing this entire time to go into a classified setting and that we have previously requested that we, in fact, conduct the interview in a classified setting, as had the State Department, and so that nobody looks back and thinks that you

weren't willing to answer any questions.

I will at this time say that, yes, I think that we should move to a classified setting for this interview. We had made this request before, so I didn't think that that would be a new request for you. But, yes, if you want us to make a formal request, my formal request is that we conduct this interview in a classified setting for the rest of the interview -- as you could see, he could not answer some of our questions in an unclassified setting -- and that we conduct all of the other interviews, when the witness requests to conduct it in a classified setting, that we do so in a classified setting.

Mrs. Brooks. And for the record before I leave, I would like to -- I have now been here about 2 hours, and there have been maybe three questions that the agent has requested speaking in a classified manner. The other 2 hours of question and answer have been in an open, unclassified setting, and I appreciate and look forward to those questions that you were uncomfortable with answering in a classified -- in an unclassified setting moving to a classified setting. But I thank you for your candor and your willingness to answer so many questions in an unclassified setting.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I would note for the record that, while I thank the Congresswoman for her analysis, that you weren't here for the entire time and that we can go through the different things that he was unable to answer. But they were a substantial amount of things that are extremely relevant to the time period that he was -- that he was in Benghazi. Okay. At this -- I'm sorry.

Mr. Evers. And for the record, I will -- I will only add that the State Department's commitment is to cooperate with this committee, to give it the information that it needs. The witness is here voluntarily. And as we have made clear in correspondence, on the phone, the preference for a classified setting is for a free exchange of information. It is the committee's prerogative to start in an unclassified setting, but we do appreciate the ability to move to a classified setting if the committee wishes to get access to the information that the witness has. That's all.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Okay. We'll go off the record now.

[Whereupon, the interview proceeded in classified session.]

RPTR MCCONNELL

EDTR HOFSTAD

[2:50 p.m.]

[The interview resumed in unclassified session.]

Ms. Jackson. We will go back on the record. We have returned to HVC-205, where we're continuing the interview of [REDACTED]. And the time now is 2:50.

Again, it is Sharon Jackson. And I am going to take up to the next hour, and hopefully not near that amount of time, for the next round of questioning.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 5
Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Agent [REDACTED], you have before you what has been marked as Exhibit 5, an email that bears document number C05456024.

At the top, it is said it is from you, [REDACTED]. The date is November 26, 2011, at 5:13 in the a.m., and the subject line is "Mission Benghazi Relocation Options."

Do you have that document in front of you?

A Yes.

Q And have you had an opportunity to review that document?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And do you recall the contents of that document?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And it discusses the pros and cons of various

relocation sites for the Special Mission in Benghazi?

A Yes. But something that doesn't reflect on this email is the security portion --

Q Okay.

A -- of the pros and cons.

Q Okay.

In the discussions that were had about the various locations apart from security, is this document, Exhibit 5, an accurate reflection of the pros and cons other than security?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then you've previously talked to us about the security concerns of various locations; is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So that's yet another factor to be added to this document; is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Given what you've told us before about the security concerns of the various locations, plus this document, would that then be an accurate synopsis of the pros and cons of each of the locations?

A Yes.

Q Okay. That's all the questions I have regarding this document.

I want to return to a topic that we've touched on a few times earlier, and that is the number of Diplomatic Security agents that were assigned in Benghazi. Okay?

Let me first ask, were all six of you Diplomatic Security agents, or were there some individuals who were known as SPS, or Special Protective Service I believe that stands for?

A Yes. Those are limited career appointees. There was one. He wasn't a special agent.

Q Okay. So, of the six of you, one was not a special agent.

A Yes.

Q Okay. And does that person have the same training that a Diplomatic Security agent has? If you know.

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

All right, then let me ask this question. Was it ever brought to your attention that the Diplomatic Security section wanted to decrease the number of allotted agents in Benghazi from eight to a permanent six?

A To the best of my recollection, I believe so.

Q Okay.

A Yes. And that was even before I arrived in Benghazi.

Q Okay.

Let me back up and maybe ask a threshold question first.

A Okay.

Q Was it your understanding that there should have been eight agents in Benghazi when you arrived?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. There were six of you when you were there.

A Yes.

Q And you were supporting first the Envoy and then a principal officer; is that correct? I'll get to others, but at least either one envoy or a principal officer?

A Okay, it was six agents at the time that I was there at the beginning. It was a principal officer and then a special envoy. We had a political officer, and we had the acting management officer.

Q Was that the [REDACTED] ?

A Yes.

Q And that is [REDACTED] ?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then you had a USAID person?

A Yes. One USAID officer, yes.

Q Okay.

And you stated before that there were times when the political officer or the USAID person could not travel because the Envoy was traveling. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. How many agents did you need if everybody wanted to travel at once? What was the movement, footprint, or security profile that you used when you were in Benghazi?

A We were using two vehicles at the time, one being used as an advance and one for the limo where the U.S. Special Envoy traveled with two special agents.

Q Two special agents with him?

A Yes.

Q Is that in addition to a driver, or was one of them the driver?

A One of them was the driver.

Q Okay. And then in the advance vehicle, how many agents would be in that vehicle?

A I'm trying to recall. I think it was one agent and one of the armed guards.

Q One of the February 17th Brigade members?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So it would take four security personnel, three of which were Diplomatic Security agents, to do a movement with the Envoy. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And then you required certain protection forces back at the compound?

A Yes.

Q What was the minimum number you needed for that, whether you had it or not?

A Three.

Q And where would they be located?

A Two of them in the Tactical Operations Center and then one moving around.

Q Okay. And I believe you said you had five members of the

17 Brigade at any given time?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And they lived on the compound?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So if one was moving with the Envoy, that left four behind?

A Right.

Q Okay. And what were their duties and responsibilities? I mean, did they rove around? Were they manning guard shacks? What were they to do?

A They roved around, especially on the outside of the compound, while the local guard force roved and had positions on the inside of the compound.

Q If you were to have supported both movements of more than just the Envoy at the time, so, say, if the USAID officer wanted to go out, if he or she wanted to go out at the same time, how many additional personnel would you have needed to support two movements at once?

A I don't know because I never did that.

Q Let me ask this. When the USAID officer or employee went out, did he or she have the same number of people moving with them? Such as, did that individual have an advance car? Did it have a driver and an agent in the limo?

A It's been so long. I don't recall.

Q Okay. At a minimum, would they have had a driver and one

other person with them?

A Yes.

Q Okay. That would be the minimum number?

A Right.

Q Okay. So I don't want to put words in your mouth, but are you saying what you don't recall is whether they had an advance car?

A Right.

Q Okay. I just wanted to make sure I have accurately captured what you're telling me. Okay.

Was there anyone else who would have someone with them when they went out? I mean, did agents go out by themselves? Did they go off-compound by themselves?

A Yes, but never only one agent. He was accompanied by another agent.

Q So agents had to go in pairs.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Did they have to take a member of the February 17th Brigade with them?

A I believe so, because, you know, we needed them as translators. So, yes.

Q It was at least prudent to do.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Did you have any other type of translator on-compound?

A Not that I remember.

Q Okay.

Something you said earlier about Benghazi being an atypical location and different than what you experienced in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], can you expand upon those differences that you experienced while you were in Benghazi from especially [REDACTED], where you said they had some infrastructure problems and things like that? What was different about Benghazi?

A The security apparatus as a whole. I had a concrete wall where --

Q Concrete wall where?

A The external concrete wall.

Q In Benghazi or [REDACTED]?

A In [REDACTED].

Q Okay.

A Concrete wall with anti-ram gates and also Delta barriers.

Q And what's a Delta barrier?

A A Delta barrier is a barrier -- okay, you have the anti-ram gate that opens, and then on the inside, about a car length, you would have a Delta barrier. This is a metal barrier that comes up just in case somebody tries to drive in while the external gate is open. Once they hit that Delta barrier, they come to a complete stop. And it was anti-ram. You know, it could withstand big trucks.

Q Like a Suburban or a Tahoe or something like that?

A Bigger than that.

Q Bigger than that.

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Any other -- so you had those security measures in [REDACTED], but you did not have those in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Were there other security measures that you had in [REDACTED] that you did not have in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q What would those be?

A The concertina wire on top of the concrete wall.

Q Is that what I would know as razor wire?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A Triple-strength concertina wire on top of the wall. We would have the proper setback for the buildings away from the external wall. And --

Q Now, you've talked about setback. It's just you would have had a greater setback?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A And then, of course, the hardened buildings. We would have, you know, ballistic-resistant windows and doors.

Q And you didn't have those in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Anything else that comes to mind?

A The anti-ram planters on the outside of the concrete wall.

Q The big concrete things --

A Yes.

Q -- that you see all over the District of Columbia?

A Yes. That's exactly right.

Q Okay. What about security cameras or other types of monitoring devices or apparatus?

A We did have security cameras in Benghazi and also in my previous posts -- for example, [REDACTED].

Q Were they of the same quality, such as, you know, night-vision-capable and things like that?

A We don't have any cameras with night-vision capability.

Q Okay. In any post?

A In any post that I know of.

Q Was there any type of perimeter security lighting? I'm thinking, sort of, football fields, you know, you hit a switch, everything lights up, and you can see what's going on. Was there anything like that?

A Yes, mainly pointing outward, not --

Q Not inward?

A Not inward. Yeah.

Mr. Evers. Which facility are you talking about?

Mr. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED].

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Did you have that in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Any other differences from what you found in Benghazi to what you experienced in [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]?

A Yes. The walls weren't solid concrete. Some walls had ornamental blocks with a nice little -- it had holes.

Q Decorative cutouts?

A Decorative cutouts, yes. So --

Q Uh-huh.

I believe you said Benghazi was your first high-threat post. Was [REDACTED] a high-threat post or not?

A No.

Q No?

A I wasn't required to take the high-threat training.

Q Before you went there?

A Right.

Q Okay. Is it possible it was a high-threat post, they were just sending you there without the high-threat training?

A No.

Q Okay.

There's something that's also called FACT training, Foreign Affairs Counter-Terrorism training. Are you aware of that?

A No.

Q Okay.

Do you know whether the Envoy or any of the other Foreign Service officers who were assigned to Benghazi had any type of specialized

counterterrorism training or high-threat training prior to going there?

A No.

Q Okay. Did you conduct any training of them while you were there?

A No.

Q Okay. To your knowledge, had any other of the acting RSOs conducted any type of high-threat training with the Foreign Service officers who were serving there?

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

As I understand it, while you were there, Ambassador Susan Rice visited Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Do you remember when that was?

A Yes. During the time that I was there. Exactly? I don't know.

Q Had the Envoy left?

A I am not sure, but if you give me dates, I could tell you for sure.

Q I believe that Ambassador Rice came on November 22.

A Okay. That was well after the Special Envoy, Chris Stevens, left. He left November 17.

Q And I actually believe the principal officer, [REDACTED], arrived on the 21st.

A Yes.

Q Okay. And I believe Ambassador Rice then arrived the next day.

If you don't recall, that's fine.

A I don't recall, but it sounds about right.

Q Okay.

I anticipate that that caused some extra security work for you and your team.

A Yes.

Q Can you describe what advance work you had to do and what, if any, assistance you were provided for her visit?

A First of all, I was short agents. We were waiting for replacements to arrive. To the best of my knowledge, I only had three agents in Benghazi.

Q Is that three including yourself or three in addition to yourself?

A Three including myself.

Q Okay.

A And when I got word that we were going to have a special visitor, I said, "No way can I support this visit."

Q And who did you communicate that to?

A Both [REDACTED] and also [REDACTED] --

Q [REDACTED]?

A -- [REDACTED], the RSO in Tripoli.

Q Okay. What else?

A That I needed help if this was to take place.

Q How many were accompanying Ambassador Rice for her trip?

A How many staffers?

Q Yes.

A I believe that it was -- they wanted a total of 10 people, to include the U.S. Ambassador in Tripoli.

Q Were any of those 10 security personnel?

A Two of them.

Q Two of them?

A Yes.

Q Did you get any assistance from Tripoli or any other post?

A Yes, I did.

Q And what did you get?

A I got nine -- it was an MSD team, not a full MSD team, but I got a total of nine armed folks to go to Benghazi to support this trip. It was a combination between agents from the Mobile Security Deployments, one of the teams in Tripoli, and the military.

Q The SST?

A Yes.

Q Okay. But nine total from Tripoli came over.

A Nine total from Tripoli.

Q Okay. And did they come before Ambassador Rice came?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Was there any other VIP person other than Ambassador Rice?

A The U.S. Ambassador, Ambassador Cretz.

Q He came from Tripoli?

A No. He actually flew to Malta, and that's where, you know, they flew -- Ambassador Rice flew in from Malta to Benghazi.

Q Okay. So Ambassador Cretz had met up with Ambassador Rice in Malta.

A Right. And they flew together into Benghazi.

Q Okay. And then left together?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A Went back together to Malta.

Q Okay. And how long was Ambassador Rice in Benghazi?

A Seven hours.

Q A very long 7 hours?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Describe for us what you and your team had to put together for the security for both Ambassadors Rice and Cretz.

A At the time, I had -- one, two, three, four, five, six, seven -- seven, a combination between seven fully armored and light-armored SUVs, mainly Toyota Land Cruisers. So we had to use all of them in order to support the visit, in order to sit all of the party that came with Ambassador Rice and the Ambassador.

And, of course, you know, I had to dedicate my three agents plus everybody else that came from Tripoli to that trip.

Q Did you ask February 17th to augment their staff in any way?

A Yes.

Q What did you request?

A I requested -- actually, the MSD team that came from Tripoli was the one that requested the additional help from the Brigade. And they put a package together comprised of Brigade 17 folks, local police. We had an ambulance as part of the motorcade.

Q Any other security steps that you had to take prior to the arrival of the two Ambassadors?

A No. We just had to get the team into Benghazi and formulate a plan. And I believe they got in 1 or 2 days before the actual visit.

Q Okay.

A So we had several meetings to plan the visit.

Q Did [REDACTED] come from Tripoli?

A No.

Q Okay. He stayed behind to hold down the fort?

A Yes.

Q And how long were the two Ambassadors in Benghazi, from wheels down to wheels up?

A Wheels down was around 9 o'clock in the morning, and wheels up -- I know that it took longer for them to get back to the airport, but I believe it was between 3:30 and 3:45 they were wheels up.

Q Okay. And how many sites did they visit while they were in Benghazi?

A That I don't remember, but I know there were a few.

Q Okay. And did you and your team do site surveys ahead of

time?

A MSD did.

Q MSD did?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And, to your knowledge, were there any type of briefing books, either security and political, prepared for their visit?

A I don't recall if we had any briefing books, but we did have countdown meetings every day.

Q Tell me what a countdown meeting is.

A It is just, you know, a planning meeting with all of the people that were going to take part in the visit. So we had the principal officer, [REDACTED]. We had the political officer attend, you know, and then mainly, you know, the military and Diplomatic Security.

Q Do you know why the Envoy didn't stay for this visit?

A No, I don't.

Q Okay.

A I don't want to speculate either.

Q Not asking you to.

During your stay in Benghazi, was this the first time that any MSD or SST assets had come into Benghazi?

A That was the only time while I was in Benghazi.

Q Okay. And that was for this specific trip?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Had you ever requested MSD or SST assets before?

A No.

Q Okay.

Let me ask you just a couple of questions about the communications capabilities in Benghazi. I believe you stated earlier that in your Tactical Operations Center you had computers. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. I'm assuming you had classified and unclassified --

A Yes.

Q -- systems. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. How was the Internet connectivity in Benghazi?

A It was awful.

Q Were you able to utilize your State Department email address to communicate with main State? On a regular and recurring basis? Let me add that.

A In the beginning, yes, but then we had total communication failure for several weeks. So we were relying on telephones, MSAT phones.

Q Okay.

A My State Department classified account did not work after the first week that I was there.

Q Okay. Did your unclassified email address work?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Did you or other agents make use of any Gmail

accounts to communicate either internally or with other members of the Diplomatic Security Service?

A I believe that Tripoli was using Gmail. And I don't know the reason why.

Q Okay. Do you recall an email address of [REDACTED]@gmail.com?

A Yes.

Q And was that an email address that was being used?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Was there an [REDACTED]@gmail.com email address?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. Do you recall a Gmail address of [REDACTED]@gmail.com? [REDACTED], for "[REDACTED]"?

A There might have been one, yes.

Q Okay. Other than the Tripoli one, did you use or check the [REDACTED] Gmail account?

A Every day, yes.

Q Okay. And who would communicate with that email address?

A I don't recall, but I don't think I was using that address.

Q So you were monitoring it but not using it?

A Right. Yes. Yeah, we didn't have the problems that Tripoli was having with unclassified. I believe that all my emails are state.gov, right?

Q One final area.

A Yes.

Q Well, maybe second-to-the-last area, but we're getting close to the end.

A Okay.

Q Do you recall any additional equipment coming in or authorization to acquire physical security equipment being made while you were there?

A Am I understanding this correctly? Are you asking if we made any --

Q Well, let me just ask it a little more simply.

A Okay.

Q Were you aware that right before you arrived that [REDACTED] had made a request to be able to purchase additional equipment for the vehicles?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And tell us about that.

A For the vehicles?

Q Yes.

A What exactly? What are we talking about? I knew that he had requested \$26,000 worth of security upgrades.

Q Tell us about that first.

A Okay.

Q What kind of security upgrades was he requesting?

A Okay. Drop-arms, because we were using our armored fleet as, you know, barriers right on the inside of every car gate and pedestrian gate.

He was requesting to local purchase or have, you know, several platforms built so that the local guard force could see over the walls of the Special Mission.

And also some anti-ram barriers. These are HESCOs that are -- they're like planters, if you will, but they're made out of wire and canvas, and you pile either sand inside or rocks. And that's an additional security measure. You would place those on the outside of the external wall, and if anybody tried to ram, it would be harder for them to penetrate the external wall.

Q Okay. So he had made these requests before he left and then handed it off to you for followthrough?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what state was it in when you arrived? I mean, had they just been requested? Was it in the approval process? Had they been approved? Where were you along the request fulfillment continuum?

A If I recall correctly, [REDACTED], that was one of the documents that he sent before I even left [REDACTED]. And he told me that this is what he had requested but there hadn't been any movement from Washington, D.C., or any decision.

Q So there had been no approval for you to acquire those items yet?

A Right.

Q Okay. So no funding for those items yet?

A No.

Q Okay. Did that change while you were there?

A No.

Q Did you ping or ask anyone in Washington regarding those?

A Yes. I believe I pinged the -- or asked the desk officer several times.

Q And what response, if any, would you get?

A Nothing, really. The big thing that they were mentioning is that the Special Mission was going to go away after a while so they weren't going to spend the money on security upgrades.

Q Okay. But yet, at the same time, you're looking at various locations to have a continued presence in Benghazi. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And your recommendation was to stay exactly where you were.

A Yes.

Q Did you concur with [REDACTED] request?

A Oh, yes, I did.

Q Okay. Were there additional requests that you thought ought to have been made?

A No.

Q Okay. And during your tenure there, you were never given authorization or approval to institute any of those security upgrades?

A I was never given the funds to institute security upgrades.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 6

Was marked for identification.]

Ms. Jackson. I want to have you look at what I've marked as

Exhibit 6, which, at the top --

Mr. Evers. Can I ask a question real quick?

Ms. Jackson. Yes.

Mr. Evers. Can we take a 5-minute break?

Ms. Jackson. Sure. Absolutely. We will go off the record at 3:22.

[Recess.]

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Let's go back on the record. It is 3:29. Again, it is Sharon Jackson, resuming questions with Agent [REDACTED].

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q You have before you what is marked as Exhibit 6. It is an email chain at the top from a [REDACTED], dated November 3, 2011, at 2:12 a.m., subject line, "Re: Vehicle Kits/Equipment." It bears document number C05397345.

Agent [REDACTED], have you had an opportunity to review Exhibit 6?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And although you are not an author of any part of this email chain, are you familiar with its contents?

A Yes.

Q Okay. I stated that it was from a -- several of the parts of the email are from a [REDACTED]. Again, who was he?

A [REDACTED] was a TDY from Frankfurt, and he was wearing two hats at the time. He was the acting admin officer and, also, his job back in Frankfurt, where he was the information management officer.

Q So he kind of kept the computer systems running? He was

your tech guy?

A He was our tech guy, and he was our money guy.

Q Very important hats for him. I bet he was your friend while you were there, wasn't he?

A Yes, he was.

Q Okay.

And this email chain involves a [REDACTED], who I believe you've described as your predecessor agent in charge in Benghazi. Is that correct?

A Yes, that is correct.

Q And Agent [REDACTED] has made a request to purchase various things, various pieces of equipment for your vehicles. Is that correct?

A That is correct.

Q Okay. And what's the general nature of the items that Agent [REDACTED] is asking to purchase?

A Tools for the vehicles. For example, first-aid kits, which we didn't have in any of the seven vehicles. Jumper cables.

Q You didn't have jumper cables?

A No.

Q Okay. Go on.

A Tow straps so we could do self-recovery.

Q And what does that entail?

A Tow straps are thick nylon straps that we would tie to either the front or rear bumpers of the vehicles. If we had a breakdown around

the city or if we were outside the city, we could self-recover by pulling this broken-down vehicle with the other vehicle.

Q And why was it that Agent [REDACTED] thought that these items were necessary?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't know.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q I would like to direct your attention to the top of page 2 of this document. It's in the part from [REDACTED] to four different people at the top of this page.

Does [REDACTED] express a belief that he thinks that Benghazi is going to get more dangerous in the coming months or has the potential to become more dangerous in the coming months?

A Are you asking my opinion or --

Q I'm asking you if that's what he reports in this email chain.

Mr. Evers. She's on page 2 of the document, I believe.

But if there's a sentence you wanted to draw his attention to, that might help.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q All right. Let me draw your attention to the second sentence in the top paragraph of page 2, where Mr. [REDACTED] writes, "Though Libya has declared their liberation, as you all may be aware, the next few months could be even more dangerous than during active fighting due to the diverse nature of the rebel forces. At least they had a common enemy prior to last week. The next few weeks to months,

situations could arise and arise quickly for us to 'bug out.'"

Were you aware of this sentiment when you were in Benghazi?

A I was aware that our egress out of Benghazi was to, you know, drive overland east towards Egypt.

Q By "egress," do you mean your evacuation plan?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what was your evacuation plan? You drive east to Egypt, and then what?

A Cross the border. Get to safety.

Q Were you going to be allowed to cross the border into Egypt?

A We don't know that.

Q Okay. Was there any concern that you wouldn't be allowed to?

A No.

Q Was the Libya-Egyptian border open?

A I don't know. I never drove that far east.

Q Okay.

Ms. Jackson. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Sara Barrineau. She had a couple of followup questions regarding protection details.

Ms. Barrineau. Just a couple. And then I think we're almost finished.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. You said early this morning, many, many hours ago, that Benghazi was a high-threat post when you were there and that you

were required to attend high-threat training, right?

A Yes.

Q Did part of your high-threat training include how to run a protection detail in a high-threat environment?

A Yes.

Q During that training, how many cars and agents were you taught would be used, that DS would use, in a high-threat environment?

A We used --

Q Do you remember?

A Yeah. [REDACTED].

Q And how many agents?

So let's go with that. Okay, so you have [REDACTED]. What [REDACTED] do you have?

A [REDACTED].

Q Okay. So, under DS training standards on high-threat training, how many agents would have been in your [REDACTED]?

A [REDACTED].

Q [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

A This is based on --

Q On training.

A -- our high-threat training?

Q Right, right. On your training. Right.

A [REDACTED].

Q And then how many would have been --

A I'm sorry. [REDACTED].

Q [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

A [REDACTED].

Q [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. And you were in Benghazi with six agents.

A Correct.

Q Got it.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Following your return from Benghazi back to the good ol' USA, did anyone ask you to write any type of report or interview you or debrief you about your experience in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Okay. Did they ask for your travel voucher?

That was -- yeah. Never mind. I'll withdraw that question.

A I submitted a travel voucher after the trip.

Q Yeah.

After the attack in Benghazi, did anyone ask to interview you or debrief you in any way regarding your experience in Benghazi?

A No, but I was requested to send all my emails.

Mr. Evers. I'm sorry, I may have heard a knock.

Ms. Jackson. Yeah. Sorry.

Mr. Evers. Not sure if I did.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q And when did you get that request?

A I don't recall. But --

Q Shortly after the attack or many months after the attack?

A I think it was during the time that -- around the same time that they started the hearings, congressional hearings.

Q Okay. Was it a request for the ARB? Was any request made of you to pull your emails for the Accountability Review Board?

Mr. Evers. If you remember.

Ms. Jackson. Yeah, if you remember.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't remember.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Okay. Do you think when the congressional -- to the best of your recollection, when the congressional interviews started, you were requested to pull your email? Is that correct? I just want to --

A I don't know if it dealt with the ARB, but at some point after the attack I was told that I needed to get all of my emails together and send them forward to --

Q And how was that communicated to you? Did you get a written memo? Did you get an email? Did, you know, a boss come in and tell you?

A To the best of my recollection, I think there was an email.

Q Okay. And what steps did you take then?

A I had to go and look for all my emails while I was in

Benghazi.

Q Okay. And how did you do that search?

A I had them all saved at the time.

Q Did you, like, create a folder or something that you called "Benghazi" or a folder that was called "I'll never do this again" or --

A No. Actually, I pulled hard copies of all my emails during the time that I was in Benghazi, and I forwarded all those.

Q Okay. As hard copies, packaged them up? Or did you send them electronically?

A I don't recall if I sent them electronically or hard copies.

Q Okay.

Were you requested to meet with any member of the Accountability Review Board?

A No.

Q Did you ask to speak to any members of the Accountability Review Board?

A No.

RPTR KERR

EDTR CRYSTAL

[3:40 p.m.]

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Before I end, I have two final questions. Is there any area that you thought we would ask about but we haven't?

A No.

Q Okay. Is there any answer that as you sit here now you think needs further elaboration or clarification in any way?

A No.

Q Okay. Then with that, I will note that it is 3:40 in the afternoon, and I will turn it over to the minority for questions. Take another 5-minute break or anything?

A I'm good.

Q Okay. We'll go off the record for just a second while we reconfigure ourselves.

[Recess.]

BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

Q Okay. So we are close to the end. I am going to run through some followup stuff from the last round and earlier, and then turn it over to Brent, who I think is just going to follow up with sort of our longer list of allegations.

So just now, in the last round, you were asked about the high-threat training that involved, I guess, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Is that accurate?

A Yes.

Q And was that the -- that the standard training for a high-threat situation?

A That's what we were trained on when I went through high threat.

Q And in Benghazi you were using two vehicles and six agents for movements, right?

A No.

Q No? I'm sorry.

A No, I wasn't.

Q What were you using in Benghazi?

A We had a total of six agents in Benghazi. I couldn't send all six agents on a move.

Q Uh-huh.

A It was just impossible. I had to keep agents behind so that we could -- we could do our job of protecting, you know, the U.S. Special Mission.

Q Uh-huh. So the moves had -- and I'm sure I have this earlier from my notes -- but had two vehicles and how many agents? I'm sorry, the moves had two vehicles, right, in Benghazi?

A Most of the moves, yes. The first vehicle was an advance vehicle, and then we had the limo. The advance vehicle would arrive first, you know, like 5 minutes before the arrival of the limo.

Q And I think you said before there were two special agents in the limo. Is that right?

A That's what I recall.

Q And then in the advance vehicle, there was a February 17th individual and how many special agents?

A To the best of my recollection, one DS agent or the SPS that was there at the time and one of the armed guards.

Q So you were moving with four security individuals and two cars. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And did you raise up concerns that that wasn't enough agents or enough cars to do a movement?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. If you had, do you recall who you would have raised them to?

A Probably the desk officer back in Washington, D.C.

Q Were you -- you also discussed in the last round that you all had an evacuation plan, is that accurate, when you were in Benghazi?

A I believe so, yes.

Q And did you have a reaction plan in case there was an incident or something occurred?

A Can you be more specific? What are you talking about?

Q Sure. So did you and the agents on the ground have a common understanding or a plan about what you would do if an incident occurred, a security incident?

A Such as what type of incident?

Q I don't know. Any -- any type of incident, a security

incident.

A Can you give me an example?

Q Well, I don't -- I don't want to go into hypotheticals. I'm just asking if you had a plan for a security incident?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. To have an evacuation plan, one presumes that means that you all had discussed or had some concept that if something occurred you would use that evacuation plan. Is that right?

A That was one of the scenarios, but the thing is that, you know, we had several. [REDACTED] talked about several, I recall.

Q Okay. So [REDACTED] discussed with you several scenarios to deal with if there was a security incident?

A If we had to evacuate quickly.

Q If you had to evacuate. I see. And did you and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or you and others in Benghazi discuss what types of things would cause you to evacuate?

A You mean tripwires?

Q Yeah.

A I never did.

Q So while you were there, what was your understanding of what would cause you to evacuate?

A Civil unrest to the point where, you know, we were -- we were starting to get targeted.

Q And where did that understanding come from?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. But you had some understanding in your head, at least, about what would cause you to make a recommendation to evacuate?

A Yes.

Q And who would have made the decision about evacuation?

A I believe that the person in charge of the U.S. Special Mission.

Q Okay. So that would have been the Special Envoy when he was on the ground?

A Yes.

Q And then when he left, it would have been the principal officer?

A Yes.

Q And you never made a recommendation to evacuate from the time you were in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Because there was no need to?

A There was no need to.

Q Also in the last round you talked about some security upgrades. I think they were -- yeah. Okay. Sorry. I think it was like \$26,000 of security upgrades, physical security upgrades. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q Okay. That [REDACTED] had recommended?

A Yes, and I concurred.

Q And you concurred. And none of those occurred when you were

there. Is that accurate?

A Right.

Q Do you know whether those occurred after you left?

A I don't know.

Q And is that -- after you left Benghazi, did you continue to follow what upgrades were made physical securitywise in Benghazi?

A No.

Q And after you left, did you continue to follow or be aware of what number of personnel they had on the ground in Benghazi?

A No.

Q You also were asked earlier in the day about concerns that were had with the local guard force. Do you recall that?

A Yes.

Q Were you aware that the local guard force contractor was fired?

A Can you specify who you're talking about? Are you talking about the guard force commander? Are you talking about the actual contractor that supplied the --

Q Yes. So concerns were raised up to main State about the contract with the local guard force. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And my question is, were you aware that the contract with that company was canceled?

A Was it canceled during the time that I was there?

Q I don't know. That's what I'm asking you.

A It wasn't canceled during the time that I was there.

Q Okay. So that didn't occur when you were there?

A Right.

Q Okay. And if it happened after you left, you wouldn't know about it?

A No.

Q Okay. Do you recall whether main State or ██████████ told you what their plan was to do with the local guard force while you were there?

A No.

Q Do you recall any response that you had gotten from him on that topic?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. You were asked in the last round about the Benghazi Accountability Review Board. Do you recall that?

A Yes.

Q When the Benghazi Accountability Review Board was convened, did you think that you had information that would help it with its investigation into the attacks?

A Can you be more specific? I mean, like what type of information?

Q Yes. So my question is the Accountability Review Board starts up, they start talking to people. Did you personally feel that when you heard it was going on that you had information that would help them figure out what happened in the Benghazi attacks?

A Apparently not because they didn't call me to interview me.

Q Okay. I understand that they didn't call you. My question is, did you feel personally that you had information that you thought that you should provide to the Accountability Review Board?

A I don't know.

Q Did you know -- did you know anything about -- you had left Benghazi in --

A December 2011.

Q Okay. And the -- which was a fair amount of time before the attacks. Is that accurate?

A Yes.

Q And you hadn't stayed current on what was going on in Benghazi after you left. Is that accurate?

A No.

Q So did you think you had any specific information that would assist them with knowing what happened on the night of the attacks?

A No, because I didn't know.

Q Did anyone ask you or order you not to provide information to the ARB?

A No.

Q And were you ever asked or ordered to conceal or destroy information from the ARB?

A No.

Q I think that was all of my followup. I'm going to turn it over to Brent who has a series of what are our standard questions.

A Okay.

Q Ask that you bear with us on this.

BY MR. WOOLFORK:

Q So, sir, I have a series of questions regarding public allegations that have been made regarding the attacks in Benghazi. Just to be clear that I, nor the members of the minority side, think these questions necessarily have any merit, but we are asking this as part of the investigation. So I'm going to go quickly through this list of allegations, so please bear with me as this will take --

A Allegations?

Q Regarding the attacks in Benghazi.

A Okay.

Q It's been alleged that Secretary of State Clinton intentionally blocked military action on the night of the attacks. One Congressman has speculated that, quote, "Secretary Clinton told Leon Panetta to stand down," end quote, and this resulted in the Defense Department not sending more assets to help in Benghazi. Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton ordered Secretary of Defense Panetta to, quote, "stand down" on the night of the attacks?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton issued any kind of order to Secretary of Defense Panetta on the night of the attacks?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it, quote, "four

Pinocchios," end quote, its highest award for false claims.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security resources to Libya?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton was personally involved in providing specific instruction on day-to-day security resources in Benghazi?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by Qadhafi to his own people in order to garner support for military operations in Libya in spring 2011.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by Qadhafi to his own people in order to garner support for military operations in Libya in spring 2011?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the U.S. mission in Benghazi included transferring weapons to Syrian rebels or to other countries. A bipartisan report issued by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence found that, quote, "The CIA was not collecting and shipping arms from Libya to Syria," end quote, and that they found, quote, "no support for this allegation," end quote.

Do you have any evidence to contradict the House Intelligence Committee's bipartisan report finding that the CIA was not shipping

arms from Libya to Syria?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that the U.S. facilities in Benghazi were being used to facilitate weapons transfers from Libya to Syria or to any other foreign country?

A No.

Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily delayed from departing the annex to assist the Special Mission Compound, and there have been a number of allegations about the cause and the appropriateness of that delay. The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report concluding that the team was not ordered to, quote, "stand down," but that instead there were tactical disagreements on the ground over how quickly to depart.

Do you have any evidence that would contradict the House Intelligence Committee's finding that there was no stand-down order to CIA personnel?

A No.

Q Putting aside whether you personally agree with the decision to delay temporarily or think it was the right decision, do you have any evidence that there was a, quote, "bad or improper reason" behind the temporary delay of the CIA security personnel who departed the annex to assist the Special Mission Compound?

A No.

Q A concern has been raised by one individual that in the course of producing documents to the Accountability Review Board

damaging documents may have been removed or scrubbed out of that production. Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or, quote, "scrubbed" damaging documents from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department directed anyone else at the State Department to remove or scrub damaging documents from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A No.

Q Let me ask these questions also for documents that were provided to Congress. Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or, quote, "scrubbed" damaging documents from the materials provided that were to Congress?

A No.

Q The last one. It has been alleged that CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell altered unclassified talking points about the Benghazi attacks for political reasons and that he then misrepresented his actions when he told Congress that the CIA, quote, "faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship," end quote.

Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director Mike Morell gave false or intentionally misleading testimony to Congress about the Benghazi talking points?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director Morell

altered the talking points provided to Congress for political reasons?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Ambassador Susan Rice made, quote, "intentional misrepresentation" when she spoke on the Sunday talk shows about the Benghazi attacks.

Do you have any evidence Ambassador Rice intentionally misrepresented facts about the Benghazi attacks on the Sunday talk shows?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the President of the United States was, quote, "virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief," end quote, on the night of the attacks, that he was, quote, "missing in action," end quote.

Do you have any evidence to support the allegation that the President was, quote, "virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief," end quote, or, quote, "missing in action on the night of the attacks"?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that a team of four military personnel at Embassy Tripoli on the night of the attacks who were considering flying on the second plane to Benghazi were ordered by their superiors to, quote, "stand down," meaning to cease all operations. Military officials have stated that those four individuals were instead ordered to, quote, "remain in place," end quote, in Tripoli to provide security and medical assistance at their current location.

The Republican staff report issued by the House Armed Services

Committee found that, quote, "There was no stand-down order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi," end quote.

Do you have any evidence to contradict the conclusion of the House Armed Services Committee that, quote, "There was no stand down-order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi," end quote?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the military failed to deploy assets on the night of the attack that would have saved lives. However, former Republican Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, the former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, conducted a review of the attacks, after which he stated, quote, "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," end quote.

Do you have any evidence to contradict Congressman McKeon's conclusion?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that the Pentagon had military assets available to them on the night of the attacks that could have saved lives but that the Pentagon leadership intentionally decided not to deploy?

A No.

Q Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Sir, just before we go off the record, I

just want to thank you for your service.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. And wish you the best of the luck in your next position.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Ms. Jackson. And we have no further questions. So we too thank you for your service and wish you good luck.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Mr. Evers. Thanks, everybody.

[Whereupon, at 4:02 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness reviewed the accompanying transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide corrections to the transcript.

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in HVC-301,
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 1:41 p.m.

1 Appearances:

2

3

4

5 For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

6

7 DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

8 SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

9 SARA BARRINEAU, INVESTIGATOR

10 SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR/GENERAL

11 COUNSEL

12 BRENT WOOLFORK, MINORITY SENIOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF

13

14

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17 For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

18

19 AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

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21

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1 Ms. Jackson. Let's go back on the record. Again, it is
2 Sharon Jackson. The time is now 1:40 in the afternoon. We
3 have reconvened in HVC-301, which is a classified setting,
4 and we are going to continue our interview with Special Agent

5 [REDACTED].

6 Mr. [REDACTED], you're back on the record. Do you
7 understand that?

8 Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

9 Ms. Jackson. Okay. And you understand we're now in a
10 classified setting?

11 Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

12 Ms. Jackson. Okay. To the best of your ability, and no
13 one is going to hold you to this, but to the extent that any
14 answer in your opinion might be going into classified
15 information, would you so signify? Otherwise, we will assume
16 that your answer is intended to be at the unclassified level.
17 But it will be reviewed further by someone else for an
18 official determination of classification.

19 Mr. Evers. Do you understand the request?

20 Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

21 Mr. Evers. Okay.

22 Ms. Jackson. Okay. All right. Any questions about
23 that?

24 Mr. [REDACTED] No.

25 Ms. Jackson. Okay.

1 you felt that Benghazi was a safer security environment when
2 you were there in October and November of 2011 as compared to
3 Tripoli?

4 A The Americans at the Special Mission in Benghazi
5 were not targeted. There were three security issues that I
6 mentioned before, and I want to elaborate more on them. The
7 first one, and I don't recall the date it happened, but it
8 dealt with [REDACTED] which was about a mile
9 and a half away from the Special Mission.

10 Q And that was in early November?

11 A That happened November 12, I believe, according to
12 the spot report.

13 Mr. Evers. For the record, I'm showing the witness what
14 had been marked Exhibit 3.

15 Ms. Jackson. Exhibit 3. Okay.

16 BY MS. JACKSON:

17 Q Please elaborate as to what happened in the
18 incident [REDACTED]?

19 A Yes. There was an empty lot [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED] It used to be an old cow or milk farm. And the
21 [REDACTED] used to run in that empty property.
22 And this particular night they came under fire. Somebody was
23 shooting at them.

24 Q Directly at them?

25 A Yes, directly at them, according to the accounts

1 from one of the agents that was exercising at the time. What
2 they were doing, they were running laps in that property.

3 I received the call. I'm not sure about the time. But
4 what I did was I informed the 17th February Brigade and
5 dispatched the armed soldiers to their location.

6 Q Okay. And did they take anyone into custody, find
7 any perpetrators, or what was the result of the February 17th
8 Brigade going there, to the extent that you know?

9 A According to the investigation that they conducted,
10 this was the previous owner of that space or that property.
11 He was just scaring, you know, the folks away.

12 Q He thought they were trespassers?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Okay. You mentioned that there were three
15 incidents. What were the other two?

16 A The other one happened slightly before this one on
17 31 October where one of the armed soldiers assigned to the
18 U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi, as he was driving away, he
19 had finished his shift, and driving away from the Special
20 Mission was flagged down by somebody, and they wanted his
21 weapon. They knew he was armed. So he refused to surrender
22 his weapon, and he sped off, and that's when this person shot
23 a round into his car.

24 Q And was that reported to you or other Diplomatic
25 Security agents?

1 A That was reported to me, and I sent a spot report
2 to Washington, D.C.

3 Q Did you or other agents take any other actions,
4 conduct any investigation?

5 A We reported the matter, and there was no
6 functioning police department that could investigate.

7 Q As a result of that incident, did you recommend
8 that any additional or different security measures be taken?

9 A It wasn't targeted against the Americans.

10 Q But it was targeted against someone who was
11 employed at the Special Mission Compound?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Did you make a determination that it was personal
14 against that individual? I guess what I'm asking is, how is
15 it that you determined that it wasn't targeted at him because
16 of his position or to him personally?

17 A According to what he told us after the fact, the
18 only thing that they asked him was, you know, do you work at
19 the Special Mission, the Special U.S. Mission, and are you
20 armed? And that's when he said yes and sped off, and that's
21 when they shot into his car. They just wanted his weapon.

22 Q And the third incident, what was that?

23 A The third incident, I don't recall the date, but it
24 was the day that they captured Said Qadhafi, and when news
25 broke out throughout Benghazi, everybody started shooting up

1 in the air. So at a distance I could hear artillery
2 explosions. I could hear close to the Special U.S. Mission
3 small arms fire being shot in the air, and we knew that
4 because several rounds did impact inside the perimeter. And
5 I instructed everybody to stay inside the buildings, to
6 include the local guard force.

7 Q Was that the only time that you required the people
8 staying at the compound to stay within the compound and
9 restrict their movements?

10 A To the best of my recollection, I believe so, yes.
11 But --

12 Q Go ahead.

13 A Let me continue. This third incident, when
14 everybody was shooting up in the air, there was a
15 rocket-propelled grenade that landed on the street close to
16 the entrance of Villa C, the main entrance to Villa C, so I
17 had an unexploded rocket-propelled grenade or ordnance in the
18 street in close proximity to Villa C. So I instructed, or I
19 called the 17th February Brigade to come and remove it, and
20 they did.

21 Q For that incident, did you issue a spot report?

22 A Negative.

23 Q And just for clarification, what is a spot report?
24 What's its purpose?

25 A A spot report is any security issue that happens

1 that involves, you know, the personnel of the Special
2 Mission. So since I know we weren't targeted, I don't recall
3 if I reported it, but it wasn't -- we weren't the target.

4 Q Do you recall that during your time in Benghazi,
5 that an American citizen was kidnapped?

6 A I don't recall.

7 Q The time that, whenever Saif Qadhafi was captured
8 and you ordered the personnel to stay within the compound
9 confines, again, was that the only time that you imposed
10 additional security measures on the U.S. personnel that were
11 there?

12 A Let me see. I believe I also restricted movement
13 whenever there was demonstrations downtown or a large
14 gathering of people downtown.

15 Q And how often would that occur?

16 A I don't remember.

17 Q Did it happen once or twice while you were there or
18 once a week or more often than that?

19 A I remember it happened several times while I was
20 there.

21 Q Okay. And would you know in advance that these
22 demonstrations were going to take place?

23 A Yes.

24 Q And how would you get that information?

25 A We would get that information [REDACTED]

1 Q Okay. [REDACTED] shared
2 information and intelligence with you?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Okay. [REDACTED]

5 A [REDACTED]

6 Q And were they there when you arrived?

7 A Yes.

8 Q [REDACTED]?

9 A I don't know.

10 Q Okay. And you said they were a little over a mile
11 away?

12 A About a mile and a half.

13 Q A mile and a half. Okay. Can you describe or
14 compare and contrast the security [REDACTED] versus
15 the security that was at the Special Mission Compound? Was
16 it similar? Was it cameras? Did they have a talk? Did they
17 have local guard force, any host nation support? Can you
18 just kind of compare and contrast what the Special Mission
19 Compound had [REDACTED]?

20 Mr. Evers. If you know.

21 Mr. [REDACTED] I don't know, because I wasn't -- you
22 know, there was -- we were limited as to where, you know, we
23 could go whenever we went over there.

24 BY MS. JACKSON:

25 Q Okay. And how often would you go [REDACTED]?

1 A [REDACTED] in a week, three or four times. That's
2 what I recall, yes.

3 Q Okay. So you'd physically go over there three or
4 four times a week?

5 A Yes, and this was to drive the Envoy over there for
6 briefings.

7 Q Okay. So would he get security intelligence
8 briefings [REDACTED]?

9 A I don't know.

10 Q Okay. You didn't sit in on those briefings?

11 A No.

12 Q Did you physically accompany him when he would go
13 over there?

14 A Yes, several times.

15 Q Okay. And would [REDACTED] come and
16 visit the compound?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Did you ever do any joint security training with
19 them, a field exercise, things like that, to either test or
20 reinforce your and your agents' abilities?

21 A No.

22 Q Did they ever provide any training for the February
23 17th Brigade or your local guard force?

24 A No.

25 Q I want to return to the few times or several times

1 that there were demonstrations that occurred where you would
2 restrict the movements of the State Department personnel that
3 were at the Special Mission Compound. Was there a particular
4 time of day that these demonstrations would occur? Morning,
5 noon, evening, night?

6 A Afternoon, closer to evening.

7 Q Late afternoon?

8 A Late afternoon, yes.

9 Q Okay. Typically at that time?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Okay. And would there be a particular day of the
12 week, such as Fridays, that they would occur, if you recall?

13 A I don't recall.

14 Q And you said that you had -- [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED] would give you some sort of advance warning that a
16 demonstration was going to occur?

17 A Yes.

18 Q To your knowledge, were RPGs ever fired during the
19 demonstrations?

20 A Not to my knowledge.

21 Q Mortars ever fired?

22 A No.

23 Q Okay. Any other type of weapons fired?

24 A During those demonstrations?

25 Q Yes.

1 A I don't know because we were far away from the
2 demonstration. We wouldn't go close to it.

3 Q Would you hear any firearms?

4 A Not on the compound.

5 Q Okay. I want to now turn to the issue that arose
6 when you were there about whether the Special Mission
7 Compound was going to be extended, was going to stay in that
8 current location, or whether it was going to move someplace
9 else?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Okay. And you were part of that discussion. Is
12 that correct?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Okay. Tell us what you were told or learned about
15 why the Special Mission Compound might be extended past the
16 end of 2011?

17 A They were going to be extended due to the fact that
18 not the entire government had moved to Tripoli. I believe
19 there was a part of the government that stayed in Benghazi.

20 Q So the United States Government was going to
21 maintain a presence in Benghazi also. Is that correct?

22 A Yes.

23 Q Okay. And you stated that there were a few
24 locations that were under consideration. Is that correct?

25 A Yes, there were three locations.

1 Q And would you describe those three locations for
2 us?

3 A Yes. The current compound that we occupied. There
4 was a property [REDACTED]. And there was a third
5 property several miles from the U.S. Special Mission.

6 Q Was that third property also a villa compound-type
7 property?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And what, in your opinion, were the pros and cons
10 of the various locations that you looked at?

11 A Okay. Let's start with the current compound that
12 we occupied. We had three villas, A, B, and C. The building
13 or the house, the villa, in A was in close proximity to one
14 of the walls, so it didn't have the necessary setback from
15 the external wall. So that was a con, you know, if we were
16 to stay there. But the other two villas had proper setback,
17 with the exception of the office space behind in Villa B, it
18 didn't have the correct setback from the back perimeter wall
19 in Villa B.

20 Q And how far was that setback to B?

21 A I don't recall. Do you have the diagram of the
22 compound?

23 Q I don't have one with me right now.

24 A Okay.

25 Q Okay. But it was a sizeable distance?

1 A It was a sizeable distance.

2 Q Okay. And the property that was [REDACTED]

3 [REDACTED], what were the pros and cons of that?

4 A Only one entrance. There was a vacant property
5 right behind it with access to -- vehicular access. One of
6 the buildings was against the back wall, so there was no
7 setback at all. And the setback, I believe, on the western
8 wall wasn't that much.

9 Q Were there any pros to relocating [REDACTED]

10 [REDACTED]

11 A Not really. Securitywise, no.

12 Q Was there any discussion of moving back to a hotel?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Okay. And what was your opinion of that?

15 A It was a bad idea.

16 Q And why do you say that?

17 A Because the hotel where they started out, where the
18 Special U.S. Mission started out, there was a security
19 incident before I got there.

20 Q And were you told whether that was directed at the
21 Americans or other Westerners?

22 A I don't recall.

23 Q Okay. But there was a security incident at the
24 hotel where the U.S. delegation was staying?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Okay. And do you recall what that security
2 incident was?

3 A It was a vehicle explosion in the parking lot.

4 Q Okay. And was that a busy hotel?

5 A Yes, extremely busy.

6 Q Popular hotel then?

7 A Popular hotel. And in the lobby, a lot of the
8 airlines were operating out of the lobby of that hotel.

9 Q So it had a lot of foot traffic?

10 A Yes.

11 Q We talked earlier this morning about the DS agents
12 had personal tracking devices?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Okay. What are those called again?

15 A [REDACTED]

16 Q Tell me what those are.

17 A Yes. [REDACTED]
18 [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED]
21 [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED]
23 [REDACTED]

24 Q But the Envoy did not have one?

25 A No.

1 Q Do you know if he had one before you arrived?

2 A I don't recall. Well, I don't know. I wasn't
3 there.

4 Q Okay. You weren't told, didn't read any reports or
5 anything like that. --

6 A No.

7 Q -- that indicated whether he had one or not?

8 A No.

9 Q Okay. Is it typical or atypical in a high-threat
10 post for the highest ranking foreign service officer to have
11 a tracker; if you know?

12 A I don't know.

13 Q Okay. Did you recommend that the Envoy have a
14 tracker?

15 A I don't recall. But the thing is that there were
16 always agents in close proximity to him at all times.

17 Q So when he would attend a meeting, the agents would
18 be in the room with him?

19 A Yes.

20 Q Okay. Would the agents keep the trackers with them
21 when they were within the walls of the compound?

22 A Yes.

23 Q So they had to have them on them 24/7?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Okay. And was that a general DS requirement or

1 your personal requirement of them or both?

2 A Both.

3 Q Both.

4 Were there any other security threats that you were made
5 aware of while you were in Benghazi directed at either
6 Americans or Western interests?

7 A I don't recall.

8 Q I want to go back [REDACTED] for a moment and
9 expand a little bit on your statement [REDACTED] would
10 provide you with advance notice before demonstrations. Was
11 there other information, other intelligence, [REDACTED]
12 provided you regarding the security situation in Benghazi and
13 Libya?

14 A Not to me.

15 Q Did the agents that worked for you, did any of them
16 attend briefings [REDACTED] regarding the security
17 situation in Benghazi and/or Libya?

18 A I don't recall.

19 Q What, if any, intelligence reports did you get or
20 review, if any, while you were in Benghazi regarding the
21 security situation?

22 A [REDACTED]?

23 Q From any source.

24 A I don't recall at this time.

25 Q No CIA tables forwarded to you?

1 A No.

2 Q No internal State Department intelligence reports
3 being sent regarding the Near East?

4 Mr. Evers. If you remember.

5 Mr. [REDACTED] I don't remember.

6 BY MS. JACKSON:

7 Q You don't recall receiving any?

8 A I don't recall.

9 Q Any military reports?

10 A I don't remember.

11 Q Okay. Was there any type of military presence in
12 or around Benghazi or in Libya?

13 A U.S. military presence?

14 Q Yes.

15 A No.

16 Q Going back to the shooting incident [REDACTED]
17 do you know why [REDACTED] called Diplomatic
18 Security to assist? Did they tell you? Or do you know?

19 A Yes, because they knew about the armed guards that
20 we had.

21 Q Armed Libyan guards?

22 A Armed Libyan guards, yes.

23 Q Okay. Was there any type of agreement [REDACTED]
24 [REDACTED] that you
25 would come to each other as rescue or aid in an incident, in

1 any type of incident?

2 A There was never anything in writing.

3 Q Was there any verbal agreement, discussion, or
4 understanding?

5 A I don't recall if there was ever one during the
6 time that I was there.

7 Q Okay. Did you expect, though, if you called, that
8 they would come running?

9 A Yes.

10 Ms. Jackson. I see that the time is approaching my
11 30-minute limit. I have about 2 minutes left, but I'm going
12 to waive the rest of my time and turn it over to the minority
13 at this time for the next 30 minutes.

14 Mr. Evers. Before we go off the record momentarily, I
15 would just like to point out that at no point did the witness
16 designate an answer as classified, but we can talk off the
17 record about the appropriate way to review the transcript for
18 classified issues.

19 EXAMINATION

20 BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

21 Q If I could just start back with the incident [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED] November, I think, 11th or 12th. You said I think
23 just now [REDACTED] called the Special Mission Compound
24 for help because they knew about your armed Libyan guards.
25 Is that right?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Were the armed Libyan guards that responded [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED] that you were referring to the ones that were living in
4 the SMC?

5 A Yes.

6 Q So were those the same people that you then
7 referred to as being outstanding in the note?

8 A They were part of the Brigade, yes.

9 Q So can you explain how that response happened? It
10 sounds like they called you. Can you just walk me through
11 those steps?

12 A Sure. I received a call from them -- it was a
13 radio call -- that they were receiving fire, the folks that
14 were exercising right behind their compound. And I don't
15 recall if they asked for help, but we did volunteer the fact
16 that we had the armed guards and that we would send them over
17 there to investigate.

18 Q And then the armed guards from the Special Mission
19 Compound, those five Feb 17 individuals, did they all go?

20 A No. We kept some with us.

21 Q And why did you keep some with you?

22 A Because we needed protection.

23 Q Do you recall how many went?

24 A I don't recall.

25 Q And the ones that went, were they then joined by

1 others from Feb 17?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Do you know how many?

4 A I don't recall. I didn't leave the Special
5 Mission.

6 Q But it was your understanding that the ones that
7 you had contacted within the Feb 17 -- February 17 militia
8 group that were located inside of the Special Mission
9 Compound, then contacted others from the February 17 militia.
10 Is that accurate?

11 A Brigade, yes.

12 Q And then --

13 A They responded.

14 Q -- they responded as a group entity [REDACTED]?

15 A Can you be more specific? I mean, are you talking
16 about the ones living in the Special Mission and the others
17 coming from the Brigade?

18 Q Yes.

19 A No, I don't recall. I don't remember.

20 Q Okay. But February 17, the militia Brigade
21 responded [REDACTED]?

22 A Yes.

23 Q Okay. And it was your understanding that they did
24 that quickly?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Did you ever consider sending Diplomatic Security
2 agents [REDACTED]?

3 A I don't recall. I don't remember if they did or
4 not. But I never considered it.

5 Q You don't recall if Diplomatic Security agents
6 responded [REDACTED]?

7 A Right. I don't recall. I think it was just the
8 Brigade members.

9 Q Okay. So you think it was just the February 17th
10 Brigade [REDACTED]?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Would there have been a reason to keep the
13 Diplomatic Security agents on the compound?

14 A Yes.

15 Q What would that reason have been?

16 A The security of the Special Mission. Originally we
17 didn't know what was going on [REDACTED]

18 Q And so when February 17th responded quickly, were
19 they able to resolve the situation?

20 A They did their investigation.

21 Q And the shooting stopped, I assume?

22 A Oh, the shooting stopped long before, yeah, long
23 before they got there.

24 Q Okay. And is it fair to say that because February
25 17 responded, there was no need to send Diplomatic Security

1 agents or the February 17 individuals who were the armed
2 individuals within the Special Mission Compound [REDACTED]?

3 A That wasn't their mission.

4 Q What was their mission?

5 A Their mission was the security of the U.S. Special
6 Mission.

7 BY MR. WOOLFORK:

8 Q Mr. [REDACTED], earlier you were discussing the
9 three different options that you assessed --

10 A Yes.

11 Q -- as alternatives to -- or actually including the
12 compound itself, but I don't think you finished discussing
13 option three, which was the facility which was, I believe, as
14 you said, it was several miles away. I'm wondering if you
15 could talk about the pros and cons of that third facility?

16 A Yes, it was a compound. It had several buildings.
17 And I didn't like it because it didn't have the setback. One
18 of the buildings -- or several buildings were against the
19 external walls. And there was another big issue that I
20 looked at. Right next to the property, there was a gas
21 station.

22 Q And what was your concern about the proximity of
23 the gas station?

24 A Securitywise, you know, that could have been a big
25 explosion, and it could have breached one of the walls. But

1 I never considered that property due to the fact that we
2 didn't have the setback in several of the buildings.

3 Q In several options you discussed the concerns about
4 lack of setback. What were some of the other factors that
5 you considered in terms of assessing those other facilities?
6 I think you also had mentioned accessibility to some of those
7 in terms of entrances, number of entrances?

8 A Yes. I looked at how many routes we had to get to
9 those places and the property [REDACTED]:
10 There was a good paved route, but I did not like the
11 secondary route due to the fact that it was a dirt road and
12 you had high walls on both sides. That would have been
13 perfect for an ambush.

14 Q In terms of the threats or the primary concerns
15 about possible threats to any of the facilities, was there
16 any particular threat that you kept in the front of your
17 mind? Because you had mentioned in terms of the gas station,
18 you were concerned about a large explosion, and earlier you
19 had talked about if there was a vehicle or an explosive at a
20 hotel. Was there a concern about, like, a large bombing, or
21 what were some of the concerns in terms of setback?

22 A Well, that was a concern of mine. So that was
23 something that I looked at.

24 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I'm sorry. What was the big
25 concern of yours?

1 Mr. [REDACTED]. That, you know -- you're talking about
2 this third property, the one with the gas station right next
3 to it?

4 Mr. Woolfork. Right, but in addition in terms of the
5 issue of setback as it applied to the other facilities as
6 well, whether or not explosion was another concern at some of
7 these other facilities and that's the reason why you were
8 concerned about the lack of setback?

9 Mr. [REDACTED]. There were three buildings in that
10 particular property. Two of the buildings were against the
11 external walls. The third building, the one in the middle,
12 was too close to the rear wall. It did not have sufficient
13 setback. So that was a nonstarter for me. I decided that
14 for security, that was a bad property.

15 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. And this was the third option?

16 Mr. [REDACTED]. The third option, yes.

17 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Okay.

18 BY MR. WOOLFORK:

19 Q Now, in terms of one of the options of colocation,
20 did you have any, I guess, time while you were there to
21 assess the efficacy [REDACTED]?

22 A Can you be more specific?

23 Q Sure.

24 A What is your question?

25 Q In terms of the possibility [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED], were there pros and cons [REDACTED]

2 [REDACTED]

3 A The cons were mainly the security of that property
4 next-door. Only one way in, one gate, an empty lot that was
5 accessible by vehicle, and, you know, the western wall was
6 too close to the main building and the rear building was
7 against the back wall.

8 Q And were there any pros to that site, in your
9 opinion?

10 A Oh, and I forgot, you know, the secondary route
11 going in there.

12 Q The lack of a secondary route?

13 A Well, there was a secondary route, but as I said
14 before, it was a route, a dirt road with high walls on both
15 sides. So I didn't even consider that property.

16 The best property in terms of security was the existing
17 property where the U.S. Special Mission was located. The
18 only thing I didn't like about the current location was the
19 Villa A. The main building was too close to one of the
20 external walls. And in my assessment I let them know, if we
21 get rid of Villa A, you know, we could work with Villas B and
22 C.

23 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. And did they get rid of Villa A?

24 Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, they did. Not during the time that
25 I was there.

1 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. After you had left?

2 Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

3 BY MR. WOOLFORK:

4 Q And who did you make your assessment to in terms of
5 your recommendations based on security?

6 A Diplomatic Security.

7 Q And who would that have been? Would that have

8 [REDACTED] who was the desk officer, or another

9 individual?

10 A Yeah, I think it was the desk officer.

11 Q During this period, did you have any conversations
12 with then Special Envoy Stevens regarding your assessments at
13 the time?

14 A Yes.

15 Q And do you know --

16 A Well, let's go back. I believe that Special Envoy
17 Stevens was already gone. I believe he departed November 17.
18 And this would have been with the principal officer that
19 replaced him. His name is [REDACTED].

20 Q And did you have conversations with Principal
21 Officer [REDACTED] regarding your assessments?

22 A The pros and cons --

23 Q Yes.

24 A -- of every location dealing with security? Yes, I
25 did.

1 Q And did he concur with your recommendations?

2 A Well, he wasn't a security expert, but he had to
3 because I made the assessment pertaining to security.

4 Mr. Woolfork. Okay.

5 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Was there any discussion about an
6 option that included [REDACTED] in a different location?

7 Mr. [REDACTED] I don't recall.

8 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Can we go off the record for a
9 minute?

10 [Whereupon, at 2:30 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness reviewed the accompanying transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide corrections to the transcript.
