

RPTR BAKER

EDTR HUMKE

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

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-205,  
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 11:28 a.m.

Present: Representative Cummings.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

SARA BARRINEAU, INVESTIGATOR

SHERIA CLARKE, COUNSEL

HEATHER SAWYER, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

PETER KENNY, MINORITY SENIOR COUNSEL

CARLTON DAVIS, INVESTIGATOR

For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

For [REDACTED]:

RAEKA SAFI, ESQ.

Ms. Jackson. Good morning.

This is a transcribed interview of [REDACTED] conducted by the House Select Committee on Benghazi.

This interview is being conducted voluntarily as part of the committee's investigation into the attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, and matters related to it pursuant to House Resolution 567 of the 113th Congress and House Resolution 5 of the 114th Congress.

The committee appreciates your appearance here today, Mr. [REDACTED]. Could we have you state your full name for the record, please.

Mr. [REDACTED]

Ms. Jackson. And would you spell your first and last name for the official reporter, please.

Mr. [REDACTED] and the last name is [REDACTED]

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Well, Mr. [REDACTED], again good morning. My name is Sharon Jackson. We met a little earlier today, and I'm a member of the committee's majority staff. I understand that you are here present with your counsel today. Who is your counsel?

Mr. [REDACTED] Counsel is Raeka Safai.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. And I have the spelling of that name as R-a-e-k-a, S-a-f-a-i. Is that correct?

Ms. Safai. Correct.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Agent [REDACTED] I also notice at the table is Mr. Austin Evers, who is counsel with the State Department. Is he here at your personal request today?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, I wanted him.

Ms. Jackson. Okay, all right. But Ms. Safai is here as your counsel. Is that correct?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. And you understand the distinction between Mr. Evers' role as counsel to the State Department and your own personal counsel?

Mr. [REDACTED] I do.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. And they've taken time to talk to you about that and those kind of things?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay, all right. As we do in all of these interviews, I'm going to have everyone go around the table and introduce themselves, and I will start to my left with Mr. Chipman.

Mr. Chipman. Dana Chipman. We met out in the hallway. I'm the chief counsel for the majority side of the committee.

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

Ms. Clarke. Sheria Clarke, majority staff.

Ms. Jackson. And then we'll go to your lawyer, just to --

Ms. Safai. Sure, Raeka Safai.

Mr. Evers. Austin Evers, State Department.

Ms. Sawyer. Heather Sawyer chief counsel for the Democrat members of the committee.

Mr. Kenny. Peter Kenny, minority staff.

Mr. Davis. And I'm Carlton Davis, and I work for Mr. Gowdy.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Agent [REDACTED] before we again today, I just want to lay out the ground rules and the procedure that we're going to follow today.

How this will occur today is that questioning will occur in one-hour rounds. First myself, perhaps Mr. Davis, or any member of the majority staff will ask you questions for up to an hour. Then we will change places, and the minority staff, either Ms. Sawyer or Mr. Kenny or perhaps both of them, will question you for up to an hour.

In our procedures, questions can only be asked by a Member of Congress, a member of this committee, or a member of their staff. So no one else is permitted to ask you questions today. We may have a Member of Congress that's assigned to this committee join us at some point today, and if so, we generally allow them whatever leeway they want in asking questions. And so that's the general process that we will follow.

We will also take a break, usually at the end of the first hour and at the end of the second hour, but if at any time you need a break, you want another cup of coffee -- feel free to add cream and sugar to that if you need it. But if you need a comfort break at all or need a moment to confer with your counsel, we'll be happy to go off the record and take a break whenever you would like it. So just please ask, and then we will accommodate you in that manner.

Unlike testimony in Federal court that you may be familiar with, the committee's format is not as rigid and structured. We are not bound

by the rules of evidence, so hearsay, opinion, those kind of matters, are admissible and may be inquired upon during our interview today. There are only rare times that there is any type of objection. The only one that the chairman of the committee is likely to consider would be one of privilege, and it is up to the chairman to decide whether or not to have the question answered notwithstanding a claim of privilege. Again, rarely comes up, but just want to let you know that those are the essentially non-evidentiary rules that we go by in this setting.

As we currently sit here, we are in an unclassified setting. We have arrangements for a classified setting for the afternoon, and so what we're going to do is ask a series of questions that we believe will elicit only unclassified information. If you think that any one of our questions delves into classified matters, please just say so, and we will withdraw it at the time and either just withdraw it altogether or reserve it and ask it when we move to a classified setting later today.

Again, you are here with counsel, and you are welcome to confer with your counsel whenever you need to or you choose, and, again, just let us know if you need to do that.

If at any time you don't understand a question or miss part of it, please just ask that we restate it or rephrase it in some way because, as you know, it's just as important to understand the question as it is for us to understand your answers. So no matter who's asking the questions, if you just would like it restated, broken down into

if it's a compound question, just let us know and we'll be happy to do that.

As you can see, we have an official reporter taking down everything that is being said today so that we will have a written record of this interview. One of the things that we have probably not been very good at is not talking over each other during the course of these interviews, so to the best of our abilities, and I'm just as guilty of this as anyone, is that I will sometimes start asking a question before you've finished with an answer with a follow-up. I will do my best to not interrupt your answer in any way. And if we can all just be conscious of letting one person finish before we start with another, that would make the official reporter very, very happy.

We are going to ask you questions from a time that is nearly four years ago, and we understand very well that memories fade over time. We are asking you to give us your best recollection. So if you remember part but not all, we ask that you give us the part that you do know. And we will sometimes follow-up and say, you know, well, if you don't have a recollection of this particular event, are there others present that you do recall being there, just so that we can get a full accounting of what happened. But obviously if you just don't remember something, just please say so, and we fully understand that.

You are appearing before a congressional committee this morning. Do you understand that you have to answer the questions from Congress truthfully?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Good. And do you understand that applies to this committee as well as Congress as a whole?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. You're a Federal law enforcement agent. I'm sure you well understand that providing false testimony before a congressional committee could subject you to a potential prosecution for perjury or making false statements. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Is there any reason as you sit here today that you feel you would not be able to give truthful questions to the questions that are posed to you today?

Mr. [REDACTED] No.

Ms. Jackson. Okay, well, that's the end of my preamble. I keep trying to shorten it. It never goes any shorter. Does the minority have anything that they would like to add?

Ms. Sawyer. Yes. Just briefly. Good morning. Thank you for being with us.

It's our understanding, and two requests were conveyed by Mr. [REDACTED] counsel, Ms. Safai. One was for -- well, three total. One was to hold the entire interview in a classified setting to make it a little easier for her client not to have to police the line between information that might be classified or not. The ranking member certainly supported that request and continues to support that request. We don't think -- we can get a full, fair and better accounting if we do it in the classified setting and that we need not put that additional burden

on the witness. So we would like to, if it's supported by everyone, just go ahead and proceed in the classified setting at this point.

The second request was for, from the witness' perspective and his attorney for the State Department to be present. We do appreciate the decision to accommodate that request. That was also one that the ranking member supported, and then finally, both Mr. [REDACTED] lawyer and the Department of Justice independently did request to have present here a representative from the FBI and the Justice Department just to be able to make sure that they could help us avoid things that might negatively impact on those law enforcement efforts. Again, the ranking member fully supported that request, thinks it's very important and critical that we not do anything that would possibly risk the efforts to bring the attackers here to justice.

Again we hope -- they are not here today because they were told that request was denied by the chairman. We hope that the chairman going forward will revisit that. And we do just want to enter for the record the letter requesting that from the Department of Justice so that this can be part of this transcript as well. So I will give you guys a copy of that.

I don't know if we need to formally mark it as an exhibit for you. I don't know if you had the opportunity to see that.

Ms. Jackson. Anything else, Ms. Sawyer?

Ms. Sawyer. I assume we'll just proceed in the unclassified setting for now?

Ms. Jackson. Yes, we are going to proceed in an unclassified

setting.

Ms. Sawyer. But we do have the ability to --

Ms. Jackson. All those arrangements have been made.

Yes, we are going to proceed in an unclassified setting for at least the first one-hour rounds by each side.

The time now is 11:40, and so I will begin the first hour.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Agent [REDACTED] again thank you very much for being here today. We understand that testifying before a congressional committee is probably not high on your list, or probably never on your bucket list of things to do, but we do appreciate your being here today and your service as a Federal law enforcement agent with the Diplomatic Security.

You have a very serious job that you do extraordinarily well, and we appreciate your service and your appearance here today. So thank you very much.

A Thank you for having me.

Q Agent [REDACTED] when did you join the Diplomatic Security?

A [REDACTED] 2011.

Q Okay. And did you have any prior military or law enforcement experience before you became a special agent with Diplomatic Security?

A I had prior military experience.

Q Okay. And could you summarize that for us, please?

A So I had 8 years of active duty experience. Joined the Army in 1996. I spent the majority of that time as an explosive ordnance disposal technician [REDACTED], providing support to Secret Service and other agencies as far as rendering safe explosives and other things like that.

After that, I spent time in the National Guard for about 3 years. And I left the service in 2004. After leaving the service in 2004, I spent time contracting for the DOD until I joined the State Department in 2011.

Q And as a contractor for [REDACTED] did you deal with issues regarding explosives?

A Yes, I did. So I spent 2 years working in [REDACTED] almost 2 years, less than 2 years in [REDACTED] working on a captured enemy ammunition project for the [REDACTED] travelling around the country. Then I spent time working for an [REDACTED] called [REDACTED].

Q Could you say that a little slower please?

A [REDACTED], called [REDACTED]. So I worked for them for 3 years, spent time with them in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

In [REDACTED] I worked for them as a [REDACTED]. In [REDACTED] I was a liaison [REDACTED] and an advisor to the [REDACTED] there. And currently I'm still in the service. I'm an [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED].

Q So you're in a reserve status with the [REDACTED]

A Yes, I am.

Q Okay. And how often do you have an active deployment with the [REDACTED]

A I haven't, not in the 4 years I've been with the [REDACTED]

Q Okay. All right. Since you joined Diplomatic Security Service, can you run through your various assignments that you've had with them?

A After completing training, I'd say sometime around October, November of 2011, I was at the [REDACTED] field office. There we're just domestically assigned investigating visa fraud and passport fraud, until I went to Libya for a 60-day TDY.

Q And when did you first go to Libya?

A Three weeks prior to the event, so I arrived in Tripoli, I believe, the second week in August.

Q So somewhere around the 10th to the 15th of August, or the 10th to the 20th of August?

A I believe so.

Q Okay. How did you learn about the temporary assignment in Libya?

A Well, there was a message asking for volunteers, and then if you wanted to volunteer you would go through your chain of command, through your supervisor.

Q So there was a like Diplomatic Security-wide announcement that went out saying we need people to go to Libya?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what interested you about going over there?

A Well, it was an opportunity to actually do the job of a Regional Security Officer, as assistant Regional Security Officer, seeing as I was doing investigations at the field office, and down the line I was looking at going and serving at a post overseas. And ideally I wanted to serve in a high-threat post as my first one, so I viewed Libya as a good place to, you know, learn the ropes with the State Department.

Q And Libya was considered a high-threat post at the time. Is that correct?

A I believe so, yes.

Q Okay had you --

A Well, it wasn't a high-threat post because there was no high threat at the time. It was just everyone understood it was a higher threat as far as whatever was on the critical -- terrorism, critical crime, those types of things.

Q Okay. So when they ranked Libya, it ranked high on having a lot of security risks about it?

A I would say, that yes.

Q Okay. It's your understanding that since that time, there is an actual designation that's been created called high-threat posts?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And did you have any specialized high threat training before you went over?

A Yes, I went through the high-threat course.

Q And when did you do that?

A I believe that was earlier that year. Exact date -- it may have been May, May of 2012.

Q 2012 or 2011?

A I can't remember. It may have been 2012 --

Q Okay.

A -- 2012.

Q Okay. And how long was that course when you took it?

A Five weeks.

Q Okay. And where did you take that course?

A At our training center in West Virginia.

Q Okay. And what were the various subject matters that you were trained on during the high-threat course?

A High-risk protection, tactical medicine, some planning, communications, weapons fire, those things, as far as I can recall right now.

Q Prior to going to -- well, let me back up. When you went to Libya, did you go to Tripoli first?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Your assignment was to be in Tripoli?

A Yes, it was.

Q Okay. Was it your understanding that you were to be in Tripoli the entire time of your temporary assignment?

A Well, that's where I was going to be assigned, but I didn't

understand if I was going to go to, you know, depending, you may have to go TDY, Benghazi, something like that. I didn't rule that out.

Q Okay.

BY MR. DAVIS:

Q Quick question about your training prior to Libya. Did you undergo any type of other specialized training other than your high-threat training?

A In my career?

Q Yes, at DS.

A Oh, for DS? Yes, I've gone through -- well, as far as investigative training, yes. I went through a high-threat firearms course, which is 3 days of intensive firearms training.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q And you did that in conjunction with the high-threat tactical course?

A After.

Q After?

A Yeah, I believe it may have been after. After the tactical course, yes.

Q Were either of those courses a requirement to go to Libya?

A Yes, the high-threat course, the 5-week course was a requirement to go there.

Q But the weapons course was not necessarily a requirement to go there?

A No, it was not.

Q Okay. Do you know if I say that there's something called FACT training, do you know what I'm talking about?

A Uh-huh.

Q Foreign Affairs Counterterrorism Training?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Is that something that agents --

A The Center -- sorry go ahead.

Q Go through?

A It's not a requirement if you've gone through high-threat training. That's more for the Foreign Service officers.

Q And is it more of a condensed version, or is it a substantially different type of training than what you go through in DS?

A It is. It is. I think that's more of a -- so people, Foreign Service officers have a general understanding of what to expect in that type of environment. Where in high threat, we're trained to perform in that environment, so there are checkmarks that you have to hit. You have to be able to do the tactical medicine, the live-fire training, all of those things.

Q In your preparation to go to Libya, did you know whether the Foreign Service officers were required to undergo the FACT training to be in Libya?

A Not that I can remember. I don't know.

Q Okay. Once you were there, did you learn whether the Foreign Service officers had undergone any type of FACT training in

order to serve in Libya?

A It's not something I paid attention to as far as what the Foreign Service officers' training was, no.

Q Okay. Okay. Did you know any of the other agents who were serving in Libya or going to be over there at the -- let me ask this in three different parts.

Did you know any of the other Diplomatic Security agents who had served in either Benghazi or Tripoli, were going to be there when you were there? And there was a third, but it's escaped my mind at the time. So we'll just start with there. Did you know anybody who either had been in Libya before doing a TDY or was going to serve when you were there?

A Yes, I did.

Q Okay. And who were those individuals?

A Okay. I had three friends that went through basic special agent training with me that were there prior to me. [REDACTED] (phonetic).

Q I'm sorry, the last name?

A His name is [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (phonetic).

Q And were any of them going to be there when you were there?

A No.

Q So they had all completed?

A They would all be leaving probably a month before I arrived.

And I know [REDACTED] who was in Benghazi. I knew him. He

was in my basic special agent training as well. And [REDACTED] was in the [REDACTED] field office with me, and he also attended that 3-day firearms course with me as well.

Q And had he completed that course before he went to Libya?

A Yes, he did.

Q Okay. Did you talk with them prior to deciding whether to do the TDY or at any time prior to your departure for Libya about what they experienced and basically what you would be getting yourself -- what you would be exposed to over there?

A Yes, I did.

Q Okay. And can you describe for us the nature of those conversations, and with whom did you have them?

A I believe I spoke to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. And they would just give me a general rundown of their daily duties, what they were doing day-to-day, essentially.

Q Let me ask this. Were they in Tripoli or Benghazi?

A They were in Tripoli. I hadn't spoken to anyone that was in Benghazi, so it was mostly just the Tripoli agents that I knew.

Q Anything else that they told you before you went over?

A Nothing that stands out.

Q When you arrived in Libya, can you describe for us the number of Diplomatic Security agents there and other security personnel that were present to protect the foreign officers and others in Tripoli?

A When I arrived, I would say there were -- give me a second -- there were between five and seven agents. If you give me

a second, I would be able to give you everyone's name. I actually did know one other person, [REDACTED]. He went through training with me as well, so I knew him.

Q And he was in Tripoli when you arrived?

A He was in Tripoli.

Q Okay.

A Yeah so, seven DS agents that I can remember.

Q Including yourself or in addition to yourself?

A In addition to me. No, it nine. I'm sorry. So it was nine agents.

Q Okay.

A To the best of my memory it was nine agents, including me.

Q Including you. Okay. Who was the RSO?

A [REDACTED]

Q So he was the RSO when you arrived?

A Yes.

Q Was he the RSO the entire time that you were there?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Of the nine of you -- and is [REDACTED] one of the nine?

A Yes.

Q Did the nine of you all remain in Libya during your entire TDY, or did some come and go?

A I believe one of the assistant RSOs, [REDACTED], I don't think he was there when I arrived. So correction on that. He came

in maybe a week later, I believe. And some people were transitioning out. Exactly who at what time I don't know. There was, I think his last name was [REDACTED] (phonetic); I don't know if he was leaving or he was preparing to leave. There was [REDACTED] (phonetic); he was preparing to leave. There were some of them that may have left. I don't know. It's fuzzy.

Q Did the complement of agents remain pretty steady at nine in Tripoli during the time that you were there?

A Yes, I believe so.

Q Were there other security forces or personnel in Tripoli when you arrived, such as an MSD team or SST team from the Department of Defense?

A Yes, there was the MSD team. So add that to the number. There were two gentlemen, so that's 11 agents there.

Q So there were just two members of MSD that were there in addition to the complement of nine DS agents?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Was there any SST support when you arrived in Tripoli?

A Yes, there was four, four SST team members there.

Q Was it your understanding that there had been additional MSD or SST personnel in Tripoli prior to your arrival?

A Yes.

Q Okay. What was your understanding of that?

A With the SST team, for, I'm not sure exactly the reasons,

but I know they weren't permitted to stay, from what I understand. So there was some debate whether they were going to stay and in what numbers, but the majority of team left. I believe they were up to maybe 12 at their highest.

Q When you say that there was a debate, who was having that debate?

A I would say it was between State and the DOD.

Q Do you know who at the Embassy in Tripoli was involved in that debate?

A The Ambassador.

Q And was that Chris Stevens?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And do you know who from DOD would have been involved in that debate?

A No.

Q Okay. Was there a similar conversation or debate regarding MSD teams remaining in Tripoli?

A No, not that I know of.

Q I had a couple more questions regarding prior to your going into Libya. Were you given any type of briefings, security briefings, or cultural -- you know, about the Libyan culture or anything like that prior to going in, or did you do any type of self-study regarding the security situation in Libya prior to going in?

A There was a -- so the regional desk officer, [REDACTED], I believe he put out an email or it may have been [REDACTED] that sent

me an email that outlined some of the different events that happened in Tripoli and Benghazi. Some of the threats and some of the actual incidents that had happened.

Q Okay. So you took a look at those?

A Yes.

Q Was there any other type of information that you reviewed prior to going over to Libya?

A Just, I may have researched generally just the overall dynamic of what was happening in Libya, you know, between trying to look it up on S.gov or even just general open source, you know, even Wikipedia, reading up on Benghazi -- or I mean, Libya in general.

Q Wikipedia, the thing everybody goes to first.

A I know, it's great.

Q Yeah.

A It's awesome. Take it with a grain of salt though.

Q That's right. Did you receive any post-specific training or specialized equipment, either personal protection. I'm not going to know all the correct agent terms, you know weapons or anything -- was there anything different about either your training or the gear that you took over with you to Libya?

A So you mean was there different gear than what I was trained on?

Q Or that you were using at the [REDACTED] field office as an agent?

A No. I would say it was consistent with what we have in the

inventory.

Q And were you required to bring your own, I think it's called SPE -- SPE or -- do I have that right?

A You say PPE, personal protection equipment?

Q Yes.

A SPE would be my handgun, and I wasn't allowed to take that.

Q Okay. So were weapons provided to you once you --

A Once I arrived, there were weapons there.

Q What type of weapons were there when you arrived?

A M4s, Sig 9 millimeters, Glocks, shotgun.

Q Okay. Any higher level of guns such as machine guns or anything like that?

A No, not that I remember.

Q Okay. What about your personal protection equipment? Did you take that with you, or was that awaiting you when you arrived in Libya?

A No. I took some of my gear, my personal gear.

Q Okay. Was there additional gear available for you in Libya?

A Yes, there was.

Q And what type of additional gear was available for you there?

A Vests, helmets, pouches, holsters.

Q Were the vests and the helmets different or more enhanced than what you were used to?

A It was just the same, generally the same, yeah.

Q Thank you. Okay, I believe you've mentioned before that you knew [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] prior to going over to Libya. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And were you aware that they were assigned to Benghazi when you went over?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were they present in Benghazi at the time you arrived in Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And did you know any of the other agents who were in Benghazi?

A [REDACTED].

Q You knew him?

A Because he was in Tripoli prior to -- so when I arrived in Tripoli, [REDACTED] was there. And then I believe a week prior to the event he had went TDY to Benghazi.

Q Okay. And was he to remain in Benghazi for the remainder of his TDY?

A I don't believe so.

Q He was just going there for a specific purpose?

A I believe so.

Q And did you -- No those were the three --

BY MR. DAVIS:

Q Just briefly, you mentioned that in addition to the DS agents, that there were two MSD personnel and the four SST personnel in Tripoli when you arrived?

A As far as I remember, yes.

Q Did any of those four SST personnel depart during your time in Tripoli?

A I believe the person in charge, I don't know if he was a Major or a Lieutenant Colonel, but I believe he may have transitioned out.

Q And did any of the two MSD personnel that were there when you arrived depart during your time in Tripoli?

A I can't remember.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q When you arrived in Libya, what was the general security situation in and around, let's first go with Tripoli and then broader?

A General security. Tripoli seemed to be a little bit, somewhat stable. You know, I know there were some incidents at the airport that would routinely happen, but it seemed safe enough to move around.

Q And did the Ambassador move around fairly freely in Tripoli?

A Yeah, he did.

Q And when the Ambassador would travel around Tripoli, would you be one of the individuals that would be part of his protection detail?

A No. Routinely they would have the AIC.

Q Agent in charge?

A Agent in charge.

Q Yes.

A And then you would have his -- there would be a QRF in town usually, and those are Libyans. [REDACTED] I actually did go out one time; but that wasn't for the Ambassador's detail. I was just on a QRF, and that was general security for anyone who was in town from mission.

But at some point while I was there during that 3 weeks that stopped where it would just be Libyans on the QRF.

Q So the Ambassador would -- I just want to make sure I have this correct. The Ambassador would always have an agent with him. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q But when other members of the Embassy's team, the other Foreign Service officers, would travel around Tripoli, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ?

A No.

Q They would have the Libyan QRF, which is the quick response force members?

A Yeah. Not with them, but [REDACTED] within town to be able to respond.

Q To your knowledge, was that different for the Embassy folks that were in Benghazi? Did they have a different structure? Prior to your going to Benghazi, were you aware?

A No. I don't know.

Q Okay. Were there security threats to the Ambassador while you were in Tripoli?

A I believe they were just general threats. We had two instances, I believe, of I would say surveillance, not necessarily the Ambassador, but -- and the details -- I can't remember the exact details, but there was a time where he was possibly being surveilled in Tripoli.

Q Okay. Was that when he was running?

A I've heard about that one. That was prior to. And when I arrived, he had to stop running outside the compound.

Q Tell us what you know about that, what you were told and what was changed.

A Well, that he would routinely run with an agent outside of the Special Mission, or the Embassy grounds, the CMR, so he would go running outside. And I know everyone had a bit of an issue with that as far as for safety reasons. So I believe he stopped.

Q Okay. And you said there were two surveillance-type security incidents in and around Tripoli while you were there. Is that correct?

A Yes. Outside of the CMR or outside of the Embassy there were some local kids playing. And I can't remember the make and model of the vehicle, but someone asked if those children, had the Ambassador driven through to the Embassy. So that was one. And then there was another one going into the CMR, but the details I can't remember.

Q And were any changes instituted as a result of those potential surveillance incidents?

A Specific ones, I can't remember now.

Q Okay. Prior to your going to Benghazi, were you aware of security incidents that occurred in Benghazi? I guess were they being reported through Tripoli or just in conversation with the -- I mean in casual conversation with the agents, did you learn of any security incidents in Benghazi?

A Yeah, I know of the major events that happened. There was an attack on the wall. Someone threw an explosive at the wall. I knew about that one and a few other nonspecific ones. But anything besides that I can't remember now.

Q Okay. Was there a lot of communication back and forth between the agents in Benghazi and the agents in Tripoli during the time that you were there?

A I believe so. I mean, I know everything was relayed to the RSO, and then any information we had gleaned was picked up in conversation between the agents. We routinely talk about everything, whatever was happening as far as -- that was of value.

Q Okay. You routinely did talk about things of value. Is that correct?

A Uh-huh.

Q Okay. And did you have more casual conversations with the agents that you knew on a more personal level that were assigned to Benghazi?

A As far as casually, just day-to-day, home, family, those things?

Q Yes.

A I would say so.

Q Okay. And how would that conversation take place? Would that be through email? Would that be on phone? Instant message? What was the mode of communication?

A So you mean my conversations with the agents in Benghazi?

Q Yes.

A Oh, no, I did not. I'm sorry. I did not.

Q You did not. Then what were you talking about?

A To the agents in Benghazi or in Tripoli?

Q Your answer before was the agents in Tripoli?

A Yeah.

Q Okay. So to be clear, you and the other agents in Tripoli talked routinely about security incidents that --

A Yes.

Q -- occurred --

A Yes.

Q -- both in Tripoli and in Benghazi?

A If there was something that needed to be brought up to anyone's attention, yeah, we would talk about it. But mainly we were talking about the day-to-day in Tripoli.

Q Yeah. Prior to going to Benghazi with the Ambassador on September 10, had you gone to Benghazi before?

A No.

Q Okay. Was there -- did anyone else from your team, other than [REDACTED], go to Benghazi?

A Before?

Q Yes.

A [REDACTED] had not, and the Ambassador. So he had been there prior to.

Q [REDACTED] had or had not?

A He had not. He had not been there.

Q He had not. Any other DS agent that was assigned to Tripoli, had they gone to Benghazi before?

A Yes. [REDACTED], he had been to Benghazi before.

Q Okay. What, if anything, did you know about the sufficiency of the number of DS personnel that were in Benghazi prior to September 10?

A I knew that there were three agents there.

Q Was there any conversation among the agents as to whether that was a sufficient number or not, or was there any request for additional security support, DS agents in Benghazi prior to your going there on the 10th?

A Not that I can remember, no.

Q Did you know about any request for additional physical security upgrades that were being made for additional support in Benghazi?

A While I was in Tripoli?

Q Yes.

A No.

Q Okay. How about prior to going to Tripoli?

A No.

Q Okay. Were there any physical security upgrades requested for Tripoli while you were there?

A Not that I can remember, no.

Q While you were in Tripoli, did it have an exfiltration or evacuation plan?

A It was in development. So the TDY agents were tasked with developing an EAP, emergency action plan, and [REDACTED] was the one working on that while I was there, and then that transitioned to [REDACTED].

Q And was it completed while you were still there?

A Not that I can remember, no.

Q Okay. Were you aware of whether or not Benghazi had an exfiltration or evacuation plan?

A A formal one, I don't know.

Q Okay. Did it have an informal one?

A While we were there we discussed what the emergency action plan would be.

Q After you arrived in Benghazi?

A After I arrived in Benghazi, yes.

Q Okay. We'll get to that then in a little bit. I'll save that question, that logical follow-up question, for a little bit later.

A Let's just talk about the emergency action plan.

Q Okay.

A There was an older one that they were revising that had been developed but they were revising.

Ms. Safai. In Tripoli?

A In Tripoli. And they were revising that one. And that revision was being done by [REDACTED] and then [REDACTED].

Q Okay.

A So there was a plan, yes.

Q It was considered to be updated or needed to be reassessed in some way?

A Yes.

Q And you were in the process of doing that?

A Yes.

Q Okay. When you arrived in Benghazi, do you know if they had a formal plan that perhaps needed to be updated, too?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. To your knowledge, did the Ambassador carry any type of personal GPS tracker with him when he moved around? Well, did he carry one with him?

A Yes. Yeah, a locator.

Q Okay.

Ms. Sawyer. I'm just going to say a couple of the questions that have been asked about some of the details I trust are not getting into classified information. But I would just say let's tread carefully,

particularly about the movements of the Ambassador and other State employees about the Ambassador in this setting. We can certainly ask all of those questions when we move to the classified setting.

Ms. Jackson. Well, just for the record, I'm confident that all of this has been discussed within State Department records that have been deemed unclassified by them. And I would anticipate that I would say that if the State Department has not sought to classify that information, then we are free to talk about it in this setting.

Mr. Davis. Sharon, we have also had discussions on the Ambassador's movements and other individuals' movements with previous witnesses with State Department counsel present and there has been no objection.

Ms. Sawyer. That's fine. Is it our protocol that the State Department will have an opportunity to review transcripts? Just to remind me --

Ms. Jackson. We can talk about that during the break, yeah.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q So was it your understanding that the Ambassador carried the personal tracker with him at all times?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Tell us about how you first learned that you would be going to Benghazi with the Ambassador in September of 2012.

A I knew there was a trip tentatively planned. At some point there was a request to send an agent, or they were going to send an additional agent down to support because, again, there were only three

agents in Benghazi.

So one additional agent, I believe, to either sit in the command center in Benghazi or help with movements. So the AIC at the time was [REDACTED], and then that transitioned to [REDACTED]. So with [REDACTED], I can't remember how it came about, but one of them came to me and said, hey, would you be interested in going to Benghazi.

Q You called them the AIC?

A Agent in charge.

Q Was that not [REDACTED] or do I have their roles --

A [REDACTED] is the Regional Security Officer. He's the RSO. The agent in charge is that closed protection agent with the Ambassador.

Q So sort of head of the personal protection detail?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And who was that first?

A It was -- I think we were transitioning every week, so at one point it was [REDACTED], when I first heard that they may want to go to Benghazi. Then it was [REDACTED], and I believe he had been the agent in charge for maybe a week.

Q Okay. And was this the week prior to going to Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q So that would have been around the 1st of September?

A I believe so.

Q Okay. And what are the roles and responsibilities of the agent in charge?

A As far as everything, all movements related to the

Ambassador and safety, he's responsible for those things. As far as making sure that -- so you don't really have a shift lead, so you'd have the AIC, so with that AIC he would make sure that he advances or the Libyans give him the timely information as far as what safety and security look like in whatever the venue they were going to and that the route was planned sufficiently, and that he maintained a close personal protection on the Ambassador.

Q Okay. And the AIC would also determine how many vehicles needed to travel with the Ambassador?

A In conjunction with the RSO. If he felt they needed more vehicles, he would coordinate that with the RSO to get additional support if needed.

Q And when is it that you first learned then that -- how many days before you left for Benghazi did you know that you would be going?

A I don't remember. It may have been 2 days, but again, that's 2 and a half years ago.

Q Were you aware that [REDACTED] was going to go?

A Yes.

Q I believe that what you said was that initially you thought it would just be one agent that was going?

A It may have been just [REDACTED]. I think at that point we were moving to a new week, and I was supposed to take over duties as AIC, but since we were going to Benghazi, we decided to leave -- they decided to leave [REDACTED] as the AIC since he had already been with the Ambassador for a week.

Q And at what point was it determined that two agents were going to travel with the Ambassador from Tripoli to Benghazi?

A May have been 2 days. May have been 3. I can't remember.

Q Do you know why that determination was made?

A Probably the agents in Benghazi asked for additional agents. I mean, they would have been the ones to decide whether they had enough support or not. You know, that may have been their call. I don't know.

Q You were not part of those discussions at all?

A No.

Q Would [REDACTED] have been part of those discussions?

A No. That may have been the RSO.

Q That would have been [REDACTED]?

A It would have been [REDACTED].

Q Would [REDACTED] have been part of those discussions?

A Yes.

Q Now, you said [REDACTED] had gone to Benghazi several days before the Ambassador traveled there. Is that correct?

A I believe so. I believe it was a week.

Q A week?

A Yeah, I believe so.

Q And do you know was he to remain in Benghazi just for the Ambassador's trip and then come back, or was he going to finish his TDY out in Benghazi?

A I don't know. I can't remember. I can't remember.

Q Was his purpose in going there to help prepare for the Ambassador's trip?

A I don't believe so. I believe he was there to act as the ARSO and then rotate. I believe [REDACTED] may have been the next one up to go replace [REDACTED]. So on this day the assigned RSOs in Tripoli, I believe they may have been rotating or decided to start rotating to Benghazi.

Q Okay. So your understanding is that [REDACTED] -- is that his correct pronunciation of his last name?

A [REDACTED].

Q [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were two ARSOs assigned to Tripoli, and they were rotating back and forth with assignments in Benghazi?

A As far as I can remember.

Q Okay. I just want to make sure that I understood your answer.

BY MR. DAVIS:

Q I want to go back for a second to your time in Tripoli. You mentioned that you did not serve on the Ambassador's protection detail during any of his movements in the city. Is that correct?

A No, I did. I was on the shift lead on move out of the city. So we were going to -- I can't remember the location. It was the opening of an office at a different town, so I was there with the Libyan guard, and I was the shift leader.

Q Okay. Is that the only time that you served on his close

protection detail, or were there other times when you were in Tripoli?

A As far as I can remember, that was the only time that I was with the Ambassador, yeah.

Q So that was the only time you were with the Ambassador. And then the week you went to Benghazi, you were scheduled to rotate and to be the AIC of his protective detail. Is that right?

A Yes, but that was delayed because we were going to Benghazi. Had we stayed in Tripoli I would have become the AIC.

Q So you have the AIC. How many people are under the AIC on the Ambassador's protective detail when you were in Tripoli?

A So you would have the advances, and then if there was -- you know, say, there was a follow car, then whatever Libyan bodyguards were there, he would be in charge of all those people.

Q So was it a DS agent in the follow car, or was it simply the Libyans in the follow car?

A Depends.

Q Depends. And how many people normally served on an advance team?

A More than likely one. There would be one Libyan.

Q Now, were you ever on an advance team for one of the Ambassador's movements in Tripoli?

A Not that I can remember.

Q So what was your role, your day-to-day role when you were in Tripoli in the 2 or 3 weeks that you were there prior to going to Benghazi?

A Augment where we were needed. So if we were needed to work in the -- we ended up doing a lot of time in the command post, working shifts at the command post. I ran exercise, emergency reaction drill, more like a duck and cover exercise. I was the shift lead on one movement.

And then also went out one time with the QRF, the Quick Reaction Force, located -- where we stayed [REDACTED] to respond to any movements that are out from Chief of Mission personnel.

Q Was there a name of a group where the QRF was pulled from, or did you just know them as the QRF? I guess my question is, was there a militia that the RSO had contracted with? Who were the QRF individuals?

A Our QRF?

Q Yes.

A These were our Libyan bodyguards.

Q Your Libyan bodyguards.

A Who worked for Embassy.

Q Okay, and to the best of your knowledge, they had been vetted and gone through the proper process for QRFs?

A To my knowledge, yes.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Did you have any understanding as to the QRF that was in Benghazi?

A You mean the one owned by the Embassy, the Libyan guards, or are you talking about the QRF on the Supreme Security Council?

Q The QRF that were working in the Benghazi facility, U.S. facility.

Ms. Safai. I'm sorry, what's the question again?

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Were you aware that there was a QRF contingent assigned in Benghazi to that facility?

A Prior to going?

Q Yes.

A Yes.

Q Okay. And were they part -- do you know, were they part of the militia or were they direct hires of the facility in Benghazi?

A They were contracted.

Q Do you know whether they were part of a militia?

A I don't remember.

Q Does the term Feb 17th Brigade ring any bells?

A It does.

Q Okay. And what, if anything, do you recall about the February 17th Brigade?

A I do remember that distinctly when I arrived on the way to the Special Mission I was given a lot of these details. And that's where it stands out. I may have heard the term in Tripoli, I don't know.

Yeah, but I was told these things. So I was briefed on the QRF, the militia, on our way from the airport to the Embassy.

Q Had you been part of any of the planning or briefings prior

to the day you traveled to Benghazi?

A I had a meeting with the Ambassador the day prior to where we discussed what was supposed to happen, what was the schedule possibly going to be like. Yes, I was part of that.

Q Okay. So that would have been on September 9th?

A Yes.

Q You traveled on the 10th. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And can you describe for us that meeting that you had with the Ambassador on the 9th, who was present, what were the topics, issues that were discussed?

A Most vivid is myself, the Ambassador, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I can't recall who else.

Q Was Greg Hicks present?

A I can't recall.

Q Okay. And what were the issues that were discussed during your meeting?

A His possible itinerary, limiting his exposure as far as media, try to maintain most of the meetings on the compound so we didn't have to do a lot of external movements.

Q And why was that a concern?

A Security reasons just because it would be harder, especially with the footprint, the amount of agents that we had to be able to effectively secure him outside of the Embassy -- or, I mean the Special Mission.

Q During this meeting, did you have a conference call or communicate in any way with [REDACTED] or others who were physically present in Benghazi?

A I did not.

Q Okay. So they weren't on a phone, conference call-type phone?

A Not that I remember, no.

Q Do you know if anyone had talked with them prior? Did anyone during the meeting, say, [REDACTED], suggests X or something like, to that effect?

A I don't know. I can't remember.

Q What, if any, concerns were there -- if there were concerns, what were they about either the number of meetings the Ambassador wanted to have, or the location of meetings, to the best of your recollection?

A The main concern was being off of the Special Mission. And again, the biggest issue was limiting his exposure as far as media. So I think the day prior to our -- we were scheduled to go back to Tripoli from Benghazi. He had an event, and that's where we kind of agreed that the media would be part of that since that would be a pretty public event so --

Q So it was as scheduled was just the day before you were to depart was going to be his only media event?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And do you recall what that event was to be?

A It is the opening of an American corner. I believe it was

at the university.

Q Okay. And what's an American corner?

A It's an area where you can -- live-ins can go and read American literature.

Q Okay. Now, you said that you had gotten some additional information, discussions, briefings on your way to Benghazi on the 10th. Is that correct?

A When I arrived in Benghazi on the 10th.

Q All right. Tell us how you and Agent [REDACTED] and the Ambassador actually traveled to Benghazi. Plane, train, automobile?

A So we took a plane from Tripoli.

Q Was it a commercial airline?

A Yes. Afriqiyah, I believe, so Afriqiyah Airlines to Benghazi.

Q And then were you met at the airport by other agents?

A We were met by two agents.

Q Were they augmented by any of the QRF?

A I can't recall.

Q Okay. And then did you travel directly to the compound?

A Yes. Yes, we did.

Q Okay.

Mr. Davis. Were you met by anybody else at the airport in addition to the two agents?

Mr. [REDACTED] I believe it was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] may have been there.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Did he travel back with you to the compound or did he depart Benghazi?

A No, he traveled back to the compound.

Q Were there any Libyan nationals there when you arrived at the airport?

A From the Embassy -- I mean, from the Special Mission?

Q Yes.

A I can't remember.

Q Okay. Anyone else that the Ambassador knew?

A I believe there may have been -- actually, I can't remember. I don't know if he was -- there was a very close personal friend he had, and I don't believe I can use his name, but I believe he may have been there.

Q When you say you believe you can't use his name, why do you say that?

A [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I'd rather not use his name.

Q And was this individual either at the airport or at the compound when you arrived? I guess my question is, did you see him on that first day, this individual?

A On the first day, yes.

Q Yes. Okay. So was he at the compound the first day?

A As far as I can remember, yes.

Q Okay. And was he part of any conversations that you were either a part of or privy to?

A Me personally, no.

Q He was not discussing the Ambassador's schedule, or movements, or anything like that?

A Not with me.

Q Okay. Were you present when he was discussing the Ambassador's schedule or movements when this individual was talking with the Ambassador or others?

A No.

Q You stated earlier that you were given -- you received additional information regarding the security situation in Benghazi after you arrived in Benghazi. Is that correct? Do I have that right?

A Yes.

Q And where were you when you received this information?

A We were in the vehicle. I was in a Land Cruiser with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I was in the back. And it was about a 35-minute drive, I believe. And they started giving me a general rundown.

Q Give us -- please recount as best you can the conversation that you had or the information that they imparted to you on that 35-minute drive from the airport to the compound.

A They may have went over a tentative schedule. They did tell me about the QRF. I believe there was some dispute as far as contractor dispute, so they were limited to, I think, three QRF members.

Q Was there any discussion that the QRF was refusing to do off-compound moves?

A They may have talked about that. I believe so.

Q Was it your understanding that the QRF was not available to do off-compound moves?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what else did you discuss?

A That's -- I don't remember all the details of the conversation. Those are the biggest points there.

Q Was there any conversation about the overall security situation in Benghazi as a location?

A As a location, they told me where it was located, near a commercial district. They said routinely, they said daily -- daily you could expect to hear gunfire and explosions, so it's hard to get a background as far as the ambient noise was explosions and gunfire. So it's violent. So it's real hard to do, as far as threats, it's hard to identify a threat or an incoming threat when every day there is gunfire. So some of those atmospherics.

Q Did they share with you their opinion or their assessment of the overall security situation of the compound, whether they had enough physical security, whether there was enough agents there? Did they impart any of that type of information to you?

A No. They spoke of a meeting. They did talk to me about,

you know, some of the improvements they've made. I found myself to be quite impressed with their level of fidelity on what was going on. You know, they were a TDY just like myself at a field office. They seemed to have a really good handle on what needed to be done.

I remember them talking about the Concertina wire and some other improvements that they were trying to get done and accomplished. But the exact details of that, I can't really recall.

Q Did they talk to you at all about needing more agents in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Any difficulty in getting people assigned TDY to Benghazi?

A No.

Q Did they talk to you at all about their assessment of the local guard force, the unarmed security at the compound?

A Their assessment? No, not that I can remember, no.

Q Did they talk about the local guard force in any manner with you?

A They detailed how many people they had, who the supervisor was for the, I believe it was Blue Mountain, Blue Mountain Group. Then when I arrived they introduced me to them. He ended up showing up. He was a Brit.

Q Had they shared with you any concerns they had over the quality or quantity of local guard force that they were receiving through Blue Mountain Group?

A Not that I remember, no.

BY MR. DAVIS:

Q You mentioned on several occasions the Special Mission. Is that a term that you used when you were in Tripoli and Benghazi, or is that a term that you have learned since the attack?

A No, I believe they used Special Mission there.

Q When you say they, are you talking about other RSO agents or DS agents?

A Yes.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q I want to take just, I've got just a few minutes left before the first hour is up, and I want to just take a step back to late August, first of September, when you were in Tripoli. Do you recall that the Libyan Government had issued a maximum state of alert for the country of Libya right around the end of August?

A I can't remember that detail, no.

Q Do you remember that while you were there, there was any type of heightened concern because of -- while you were in Tripoli, was there any time that there was a heightened state of alert that you were aware of?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A There was a vehicle bomb that went off.

Q In Tripoli?

A In Tripoli.

Q Okay. And where did that go off?

A In the city. I can't remember exactly where.

Q And what did that cause you or others to do at the Tripoli Embassy?

A We were already in a heightened posture anyway. I don't think it affected day-to-day operations much.

Q Okay. So movements were not restricted. People were not -- Embassy personnel were not restricted to the compound?

A I can't remember that.

Q Do you recall that September 1 was a special date for the Libyan people?

A I can't remember.

Q You and Agent [REDACTED] travelled with the Ambassador to Benghazi. That's correct? Right? You do have to answer out loud for the reporter.

A Yes, I did.

Q Not for me, but for the official reporter here.

A Yes.

Q And when you traveled with the Ambassador, how many Diplomatic Security agents were left in Tripoli?

A You have to give me a second to count that. I would say between five and seven. I can't remember if the MSD agents were gone at that time.

Q So the five to seven would have included the two MSD agents if they were still there?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And how many Foreign Service officers were in Tripoli, approximately how many? So basically how many did you all have to --

A Towards Chief of Mission?

Q Chief of Missions. How many were you providing protection for and security for while you were there?

A Exact number I can't give you, I mean.

Q More than 10, less than 50, is there a range that you could give us?

A I would say there was less than --

Ms. Safai. What size Embassy was it considered?

Mr. [REDACTED] Small. I would say less than 40. More than 15.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Okay. Did you and the other agents feel that you had a sufficient number of agents given the size of the Embassy in Tripoli?

A I didn't hear any objections, no.

Q Did you hear any objections from any of your fellow agents as to whether the number of agents and the quality of the QRF in Benghazi was sufficient?

A Not that I can remember.

Q In my last couple of minutes, when you arrived in Benghazi on September 10, did they have any additional security equipment, particularly weapons, that you did not have a like weapon in Tripoli? I asked that very awkwardly, so if you would like me to rephrase it, I will.

A Anything I had not been trained on or that was unfamiliar from what we had in Tripoli?

Q We'll start there.

A No.

Q Did they have any type of weapons that sort of a greater caliber or a greater number than you had? Basically, were they augmented in any way in Benghazi that was different than Tripoli?

A No.

Q Okay.

BY MR. DAVIS:

Q Were you able to take the weapons that were issued to you in Tripoli? Were you able to take those to Benghazi?

A No.

Q So you received new equipment when you arrived in Benghazi?

A Yes.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Were you even able to take your sidearm with you?

A No, I could not.

Q Okay. So when you and Agent [REDACTED] traveled with the Ambassador on the plane, you were unarmed at that time?

A Yes.

Q Were you all three seated in close proximity to each other or next to each other?

A Yes, we were all together in one row.

Ms. Jackson. All right. I see that I only have about 90 seconds

left, so I think we'll go off the record.

Mr. Evers. Sorry, I didn't want to interrupt your flow before, but do you mind, I just wanted to say a couple of quick things before we go off record.

Mr. Davis. Actually, we do want to go off the record.

Ms. Jackson. We do. So let's go off the record first.

[Recess.]

Ms. Sawyer. We'll go back on the record. It is about 12:58.

Mr. [REDACTED] my name is Heather Sawyer. I am one of the counsel for the minority Members. I am joined here today by one of my colleagues, Peter Kenny. The ranking member, Mr. Cummings, is hoping to also join us. So hopefully he'll be here shortly. I don't know his schedule exactly, and I think the snow may have delayed him a little bit, but he does hope to join us. And we all appreciate the time you're taking to be with us, and that you have agreed to talk with us voluntarily.

We appreciate that your time is, you know, scarce, and also that going over this particular incident is probably not easy for you. We definitely appreciate it. We also want to acknowledge -- we know you've already spoken with the Accountability Review Board. You've spoken with the Justice Department and the FBI. We hope that you have had an opportunity to read the Accountability Review Board report, at least the unclassified version. You know, that was a pretty hard-hitting report, but one thing that was very clear in that report and that we heartily agree with and want to thank you for was the tremendous bravery and courage that you and your team on the ground

that night showed. And we certainly appreciate that and appreciate your service. So thank you for that.

At the end of the last hour some questions came up just about ability to protect the record. And so I wanted to just make sure we had fleshed all of those out because in the last hour there were some identifications certainly. And we appreciate you providing the committee with all of the information we asked for. So we do not fault you in any way. We appreciate it. We need the information. We just want to make sure we are taking adequate steps to make sure everyone is protected adequately.

So I just wanted to give an opportunity to have your lawyer express to us, if she would, steps that she thinks would be appropriate for us to take in order to help protect both your identity and anyone that may also be identified on the record through your interview.

Ms. Safai. Sure. Thank you.

Yes, we do like to put on the record our request that the interview be moved to a classified setting. And there is two main reasons for that, the first being that Mr. [REDACTED] name has not been released in public. We want to ensure that that doesn't happen, as well as the names of other individuals that have been thrown out there during this interview.

The second reason is, as I'm sure the committee wants to explore the events of the evening, and that will more likely than not get into sensitive and classified information. So to allow Mr. [REDACTED] to freely tell his story without being interrupted or have to process what's

classified and not, we would prefer that the interview be conducted in a classified setting.

Ms. Sawyer. And then in terms of part of the interview already has not been conducted in a classified setting, so with regard to information that is already in the record, are there steps that we could take to kind of protect particularized information on your behalf?

Ms. Safai. Yes. So with the transcript, we would ask that it be treated as a classified transcript, even though it was not started in an unclass setting.

Ms. Sawyer. Okay. And we will certainly take that request back to the chairman. I don't know if, Sharon, you had anything to add at this point. You had indicated, you know, obviously, that we're all in agreement that these are very serious concerns and that the committee wants to take all necessary steps to make sure that sensitive information that might identify in particular individuals is not in the public domain. So I don't know if you wanted to add anything about those assurances?

Ms. Jackson. The majority staff will -- we hear your concerns. We will certainly do everything in our power to protect the identity of the agents. However, we are in the strong belief that their names are not classified information, and that it would be inappropriate to classify information that is not properly classified, that that would be inappropriate to do.

However, we will take whatever steps are necessary to protect the identity of this agent and other agents who were there, and fully

consider those law enforcement equities out there. The majority staff has absolutely no intention of ever putting any agent at harm, and through the conduct of this committee has never released any information in this forum, posting an interview transcript or putting it in a letter or anything like that. But we do believe that it is inappropriate to classify information that is not properly classified. That is in violation of Federal statutes and regulations.

Ms. Sawyer. Thank you. That's helpful. And I think setting aside the issue of the classification, I do think you have a legitimate concern about potential public release. You know, hopefully what the committee will do is to reach some kind of bipartisan agreement about in particular the release of sensitive transcripts. And we will certainly advise you of that agreement once that agreement has been reached.

So thank you again for being here with us and certainly for sharing your concerns. Having told us your concerns, you know, we are certainly agreeable, and we agree with you that in particular when it comes to the night of, you know, September 11, 2012, that is sensitive. We will agree not to discuss that in this setting and resume our questioning when we do move to the classified setting.

Is that agreeable with you in the majority, that we finish questioning here not touching on the night of the attacks in the unclassified setting?

Ms. Jackson. And as you will have noticed, we did not touch on the night of the attack in this unclassified setting when we were asking

questions in our first hour.

Ms. Safai. Okay. So is the plan to move into a classified setting before we discuss the events?

Ms. Jackson. Yes. So we have made arrangements to have a classified setting this afternoon.

Ms. Sawyer. Okay. Thank you.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q So just to start, at the very beginning of the last hour you said in particular that you had volunteered for this reassignment, the TDY assignment in Libya, because you in particular wanted to serve, I think you said, in a high-threat post, acknowledging it wasn't designated that at the time, but, you know, in an environment that posed challenges presumably. Why was that the case?

A Because I had already been on my previous assignment to now, which was [REDACTED] so I just returned in July from [REDACTED] a year tour. And prior to Libya, I had been given [REDACTED] as a follow-on assignment from the [REDACTED].

Q And how would serving in a challenging security environment have helped you in that regard or been of interest to you?

A Just understanding with, you know, elevated threat and some of the limitations you have in a country lacking certain security apparatus, kind of how to navigate those muddy waters. For me it seemed like it would be challenging and, again, a good follow-up for [REDACTED]

Q So it would help in terms of your own building your experience and career? Is that --

A Understanding State Department or Diplomatic Security processes in a hazardous environment, yeah.

Q Now, one of the other things you touched on when we were talking just the last hour was during some of the planning right before you went to Benghazi, so on I think the 9th of September, 2012, there was a discussion, you said, about some of the events that would take place in Benghazi and the desire to reduce the media profile of the Ambassador. And why was that an important consideration?

A Just to, again, limit his visibility. Ambassador Stevens was extremely popular. And it's not necessarily a negative aspect. It's a positive aspect. You know, he's well renowned. There was only person better liked in Libya than Christopher Stevens, and that was John McCain. They just love him.

So again, to limit that too, because if they knew he was in town, more media would come, again, more scrutiny. Who knows? You know, we don't know how that would -- any of his venues or even any of those movements to the Embassy, you may have people coming wanting just to meet him. Who knows? You know, I mean I -- but again, that's speculative.

Q And that desire to keep his visibility relatively low, would that have been a factor also in deciding how many DS agents should accompany him to Benghazi, to the extent you know?

A I don't know.

Q And you talked a little bit about when you arrived in Benghazi, you were met by two DS agents from the Special Mission and that there was some discussion in the car, and one thing that you indicated did come up in the car was just they touched on a contract dispute that was going on with some of their local guards who were on compound. Did you know and understand or have any sense of the nature of that contract dispute?

A No.

Q Did you have any sense of whether it was being worked out at the time?

A I knew prior to, there was a meeting. They had a meeting, I believe it was the two agents, [REDACTED] and an intermediary that had a meeting with 17th February to discuss those issues.

Q And were you in any discussions, or were you aware of any discussions that had taken place between the agents on the ground who were in those discussions about the contract and you all in Tripoli as you were planning the Ambassador's trip about this particular issue and how it might impact security while you were in Benghazi?

A I was not part of those meetings, no.

Q And stepping back just a tiny bit, I think you -- there was some discussion about staffing in Tripoli and who made up your team and whatnot. I just wanted to try to get a clear understanding of who your supervisor was in Tripoli, who you would have been reporting to.

A The RSO, [REDACTED].

Q Okay. And was [REDACTED], was the RSO the person primarily

responsible for communications between post and DS in Washington, D.C., or would that have been someone else, about Diplomatic Security-related issues?

A As being RSO, it should have been [REDACTED].

Q And would you have been involved in all of those discussions?

A No.

Q And if he had communicated either by phone or by email, would you have been included on all of the email discussions that he would have had with folks here in Washington or elsewhere?

A No.

Q While it wasn't your primary responsibility to communicate with Washington, as I understand it -- was that the case?

A No, it wasn't my responsibility.

Q Was there a mechanism, had you had a concern that you wanted to share with someone at Main State, DS here at Main State, was there a way for you to have done that?

A At the time?

Q Yes.

A Not that I knew of.

Q Did you ever have a concern that you felt like you needed to convey back but didn't have a mechanism for doing it during your time in Tripoli?

A No.

RPTR HUMISTON

EDTR HUMKE

[1:11 p.m.]

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Now, when you did get to Benghazi, you talked a little bit about a briefing that took place in the car, and then you indicated, but we didn't really talk about it, that once you got to the Special Mission, there was some review of the compound and facility and security.

Can you just talk to us about who those conversations were with and what those entailed? Like, what was the content of those conversations?

A Those conversations were with the TYRSOs and the RSO, acting RSO there in the TOC. There was some conversation in the vehicle and some in the TOC. The specificity with which, like, where and what is a little bit kind of put together in my head, melded, but generally did give me -- when I arrived, I know they gave me a quick rundown of the compound, they walked me around, they walked me into the Ambassador's villa, they showed me the TOC, they showed me where I would be staying, and some other discussions regarding what the emergency action plan would be.

Q And I think we'll reserve until we're in the classified setting more specific discussions about that emergency action plan, but just as a -- in a general way, did you feel that you

had -- comfortable with the information that you had gotten, that you had the information that you needed to be able to do your job --

A Yes.

Q -- at the Special Mission? Were there any particular concerns that you had that you raised --

A No.

Q -- about security?

A No.

Q Were you in any conversations with anyone else, and I'm just talking about when you arrived on the 10th, where they expressed security concerns about being able to protect the Special Mission?

A No.

Q During the time that you were with the Ambassador and planning for the trip either, you know, in Tripoli on the 9th or as you were traveling even, because it sounds like you were all in very close proximity on the plane --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- did you talk about the Ambassador's reasons for being in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Did you have an understanding of what his reasons were for being there?

A Yes. He hadn't been there for a while since he had become Ambassador, and he felt it important to go back and listen to some of the -- any issues they had there.

Q And were you involved at all in planning the exact timing of his trip?

A No.

Q And do you know who was involved in the planning of the timing, that he would be there the 10th, I think? And do you remember the end date that he was supposed to be there?

A I remember the end date. Who exactly was doing all the detailed planning, I don't know.

Q And what was the end -- planned end date?

A I believe it was Friday.

Q My calendar recollection will be horrible. Does it sound like that was the 14th?

A 14th, yes.

Q 14th of September. And did the Ambassador express to you at any point any particular concerns about security he had about the trip to Benghazi?

A No.

Q I think a number of our other questions we're going to just reserve for the classified setting, but I did want to talk briefly with you about the Accountability Review Board process. You did speak with the Accountability Review Board. Do you recall roughly when that happened?

A I'd say roughly the last week of September or October, I believe.

Q And how did you find out about that, the ARB, and that it

was going to be convened and that they would want to talk with you?

A It was hard to miss. Everyone told me that, you know, I was going to have to speak before the ARB. Who exactly, I don't know.

Q There have been some allegations with regard to the ARB and the ARB process that it either wasn't thorough enough, or it wasn't independent enough, or that individuals were asked not to share all of the information they had. Did anyone ever indicate to you that you should withhold information from the ARB?

A No.

Q Did anyone ever give you any instructions about what you should say to the ARB?

A No.

Q And did you feel that in your conversation with them you were able to be fully forthcoming and give them all of the information that you wanted to?

A Yes.

Q And did you feel that they were thorough in their questioning of you?

A Yes.

Q And have you actually had an opportunity ever to read at least the unclassified version of the ARB report?

A Yes.

Q And did that -- I don't know how long ago it was that you read it, but do you recall whether or not you felt it accurately reflected your experience while you had been in Benghazi?

A Yes, yes.

Q Did you think there were issues that the Accountability Review Board failed to capture in terms of both your experience and any concerns that might have existed about the environment in Benghazi?

A Nothing that stands out.

Q I'm going to ask you just one somewhat specific question about the report. You know, as I mentioned when we first started, it was a pretty hard-hitting report. It also had some positives aspects, certainly around everything that you, your team, your colleagues did, very positive. And certainly we have no -- no other -- other belief other than that you guys acted tremendously well and with courage.

The ranking member has just joined us, so I'm going to hand it over to him. But I had just one more question for you before we did that.

As I said, it was a hard-hitting report. But one thing that the ARB also did recognize, and I'll just quote from the report, and it said, quote, DS, Diplomatic Security, overall has done a fine job protecting thousands of employees in some 273 diplomatic missions around the world. No diplomatic presence is without risk, given past attempts by terrorists to pursue U.S. targets worldwide, and the total elimination of risk is a non-starter for U.S. diplomacy, given the need for the U.S. Government to be present in places where stability and security are often most profoundly lacking and host government support is sometimes minimal to non-existent.

You were on the front lines of this. You were -- you volunteered

and took on an assignment in a place that you knew posed particularized security challenges. Having been there and having really been on the front lines, do you still believe that it's important for the U.S. to be able to conduct diplomacy in dangerous places, places that pose challenges, but may be very important for us to be?

A Yes.

Ms. Sawyer. And with that, I would like to introduce Ranking Member Cummings, and have him -- I know that he wants to welcome you here as well.

Mr. Cummings. I'll be very brief. Good afternoon.

Mr. [REDACTED] I just want to thank you for your service. And I want to take a moment to offer our condolences for your colleagues, the loss, and to let you know that we really appreciate all that you've been through.

We've been told of your and others' bravery that night, and we want to thank you for that. We can only begin to appreciate the grave danger and difficulty you experienced and how that must still affect you to this very day.

The Select Committee's investigation is now in the eighth -- this is the eighth congressional investigation of the attacks in Benghazi. Early on in our investigation we met with family members from all the families of the fallen, and they shared with us their grief over their loss of loved ones, and also they were looking for, and they made it clear, for some closure in all of this. And we vowed to do that, to help them do that, and we said that we would search for the truth,

because I think that's all they wanted. They wanted to make sure this didn't -- if there were things that could have been done to avoid this, that we do everything in our power to find out what those things were and then go about that type of reform.

So I know firsthand how difficult that process can be, having lost a young family member myself, 20 years old, 3 years ago, shot down, actually killed, college student, robbed at 5 o'clock in the morning, and then go to -- the next day go to his apartment the next day to see his blown brain -- his brain matter all over the walls is not -- it's kind of a tough thing to -- just sticks with you.

So there's another dimension here, though, and that is of those like you, who experienced these events firsthand, who carry on with memories of that night. That also includes your family members, who continue to support you and work through the memories and trauma from the night.

Now, I just have a few questions. I appreciate that this might be difficult, but it's also very important to have an understanding of how our work impacts your family. Can you share with us how continued attention to the attack affected you, your family, and the DS -- your DS colleagues?

Mr. [REDACTED] As far as my colleagues, I don't know exactly how they feel about it. But for myself, looking at it after talking to the ARB, I felt that most of the detail -- everyone went in there and spoke the truth, gave all the relevant facts, everything that they needed to say. So it's sometimes disheartening that the continued scrutiny and

sometimes the criticisms of our actions, when our actions were in the best intentions, and everything we did was in protection of the ambassador can sometimes be a little bit disheartening. But it's good to see that there are people who are supportive and working to get to the truth and make sure that the narrative is written the right way.

Mr. Cummings. Well, one of the first tasks that I undertook as the ranking member on this committee was to commission an what's called an asked-and-answered database, of which we could compile in one place as much information as possible regarding questions asked and answered based on the work of the seven previous investigations as well as the Accountability Review Board. I had hoped that this effort would help this committee define its scope and prevent unnecessary duplication.

Mr. [REDACTED] are there any specific questions that we can help answer for you or what you would like for us to focus on?

Mr. [REDACTED] No.

Mr. Cummings. In October 2013, I attended a deposition of a colleague of yours who was on the ground with you the night of the attacks. Your colleague expressed his grave concerns over the impact that the public disclosure of his name had had on his family's sense of security. And this is what he explained, and I quote, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And I understand that your name has not been publicly mentioned

in connection with the attacks, but do you have any concerns over disclosure of your identity in connection with the attacks?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, I do.

Mr. Cummings. And what are your concerns?

Mr. [REDACTED] The same security considerations, especially now with many things that you've seen in, you know, attacks with ISIS, there are so many things that we'd be fairly public and an easy target for someone, even from a lone wolf, it would be easy for them to say, you know, target them. So I would prefer it wasn't released.

Mr. Cummings. And I take it your family has the same concerns?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Mr. Cummings. So I just want to assure you that I take the ongoing prosecution and investigation, as well as your personal safety and security, very seriously. And what you just said does not surprise me. As I said, one of your comrades said something almost identical. And I'm going to work with the chairman and the other members of our committee to make sure that we do everything in our power to make sure that you are safe and that we do not mean to jeopardize your safety. And, again, I want to thank you for being here.

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Mr. Cummings. Thank you for your -- you know, giving so much to our country.

Ms. Sawyer. Wonderful. Thank you.

So as we had spoken about before, we want to be very sensitive to concerns about speaking in particular about both the security

information you were given, you know, the day, and then the incident on the night of the attack. So I think we are finished with what we would like to ask you in this setting.

We can go ahead and reconvene then in the classified.

Ms. Jackson. At this very moment, or should we break for lunch? Why don't we --

Ms. Sawyer. We can go off the record.

[Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the interview proceeded in classified session.]

## 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.

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Witness Name

---

Date

*Errata Sheet*

**Select Committee on Benghazi**  
Transcribed Interview conducted on 3/6/15

The witness reviewed this transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide edits to the transcript.