

[REDACTED]

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

INTERVIEW OF: MAJOR [REDACTED]

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-302,  
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 10:08 a.m.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

MAC TOLAR, SENIOR COUNSEL

HEATHER SAWYER, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

PETER KENNY, MINORITY SENIOR COUNSEL

SHANNON GREEN, MINORITY COUNSEL

For the DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE:

WILLIAM HUDSON

COL. NORMAN ALLEN

EDWARD RICHARDS

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) This is a transcribed interview of Major [REDACTED] [REDACTED] conducted by the House Select Committee on Benghazi. This interview is being conducted voluntarily as part of the committee's investigation into attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, in September 2012, and related matters pursuant to House Resolution 567 of the 113th Congress and House Resolution 5 of the 114th Congress.

(U) Major [REDACTED] could you please state your full name for the record?

(U) Major [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Chipman. On behalf of the committee and Chairman Trey Gowdy, we appreciate your time and your willingness to come in and talk to us today. My name is Dana Chipman, and I'm a counsel on the committee's majority staff, and I'd like to ask everyone else in the room to introduce themselves as well.

(U) Mr. Tolar. I'm Mac Tolar with the majority staff.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Ms. Sawyer. Heather Sawyer with the minority staff.

(U) Ms. Green. Shannon Green, minority staff.

(U) Mr. Kenny. I'm Peter Kenny with the minority staff.

(U) Mr. Richards. Edward Richards with DOD Office of General Counsel.

(U) Mr. Hudson. Bill Hudson with the DOD Office of General Counsel.

(U) Colonel Allen. Colonel Norman Allen from U.S. Special Operations Command.

(U) Mr. Chipman. Thank you. I'd like to go over some of the ground rules and explain how the interview will proceed.

(U) Generally, the way the questioning proceeds is that a member from the majority staff will ask questions first for up to 1 hour, and then the minority staff will have an opportunity to ask questions for an equal period of time, if they so choose.

(U) Questions may only be asked by a member of the committee or designated staff member. I am not aware of any members of the committee, there are 12, who have indicated they will appear today, but they certainly could drop by if they are in town.

(U) We will rotate back and forth, 1 hour per side, until we are out of questions and the interview will then conclude. Unlike a testimony or a deposition in Federal court, in a transcribed interview, the format we are using today, the committee is not bound by the rules of evidence. You or your counsel may raise objections for privilege, subject to review by the chairman of the committee, Chairman Gowdy.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) If an objection cannot be resolved in this interview, you can be required to return for a deposition or hearing. Members and staff of the committee, however, are not permitted to raise objections when the other side is asking questions. This session will be conducted at the Top Secret, Sensitive Compartmented Information level under the Alternative Compensatory Control Measures, or ACCM used for NICROM Spike-protected information. That's a mouthful.

(U) You are welcome to confer with counsel at any time throughout the interview, and if something needs to be clarified, we ask that you make this known.

(U) If you need to discuss anything with counsel, we will go off the record and stop the clock to provide you that opportunity. We will also take a break whenever that's convenient for you. This can be after every hour of questioning, after a couple of rounds, whatever you prefer.

(U) During a round of questioning, if you need anything, a glass of water, use of the facilities, to confer with counsel, please just let us know, and we will go off the record and stop the clock.

(U) As you can see, we have an official reporter transcribing this interview, so we ask that you give verbal responses to all questions, yes and no, as opposed to just nodding your head. I'll ask the reporter to jump in if you do respond nonverbally. Do you understand that?

(U) Major [REDACTED] Yes.

(U) Mr. Chipman. Also I will try not to talk over you and ask that you try to do the same so that we can get a clear record from our

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

reporter. I would ask that you answer all questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible. We will take our time and repeat or clarify our questions, if necessary.

(U) If you have any questions or if you do not understand any of our questions, please let us know, and we will give it another try.

(U) If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or do not remember, please indicate that as your response. Give us your best recollection, and if there's things that you do not know or cannot remember, just say so and tell the committee who, to the best of your knowledge, may be able to provide a more complete answer to the question posed.

(U) Do you understand that you have an obligation to answer questions from Congress truthfully?

(U) Major [REDACTED] Yes.

(U) Mr. Chipman. This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff, those of us here at the table in an interview. Do you understand that?

(U) Major [REDACTED] Yes.

(U) Mr. Chipman. Witnesses who knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or for making false statements. Do you understand that?

(U) Major [REDACTED] Yes.

(U) Mr. Chipman. Is there any reason you are unable to provide truthful answers to today's questions?

(U) Major [REDACTED] No.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Chipman. Okay. That's the end of my preamble.

(U) Does the minority have anything to add at this point?

(U) Ms. Sawyer. Not at this point. We just thank you, Major [REDACTED] for appearing before the committee voluntarily. We very much appreciate it, and look forward to hearing your testimony today.

(U) Mr. Chipman. Thank you. The clock now reads 10:15. We'll get started with the first hour of questions.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. CHIPMAN:

(U) Q Major [REDACTED] if I could, I'd like to start with your professional background. When did you join the Army?

(U) A I joined the Army in 2000, July of 2000.

(U) Q And were you commissioned at that point?

(U) A I was commissioned through the ROTC program at James Madison University.

(U) Q What basic branch did you enter in 2000?

(U) A I entered in infantry.

(U) Q Okay. And how long did you serve as an infantry officer?

(U) A Approximately 3 years.

(U) Q At some point, you transitioned to become a Special Forces officer?

(U) A Correct. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. And then when did you complete the Special [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Forces officer course?

(U) A That was in the spring -- late spring of [REDACTED].

(U) Q Can you relate to us the assignments you've had since your completion of [REDACTED]?

(U) A I reported to First Battalion [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Stuttgart, Germany, in November of 2005. I was assigned to that battalion until -- for 5 years, 4 of which were at the battalion, and then 1 year was as a aide-de-camp for the commander of Special Operations Command Europe. And then I left Germany in 2005, and I went to work for another organization down at [REDACTED] for about a year, and then I went to Naval Command and Staff College, the Naval War College up in Newport, Rhode Island.

(U) Q And when did you complete the Naval War College?

(U) A 2012, summer of 2012. And then I reported to First Battalion [REDACTED] in Germany again.

(U) Q Yeah.

(U) A As a commander of [REDACTED], as we call it.

(U) Q Okay.

[REDACTED] A [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q So if we could go back, I think you mentioned you left Europe in 2005. Did you mean 2009, 2010?

(U) A I left Europe in 2010 the first time.

(U) Q 2010?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q So you served from 2006 to 2010?

(U) A End of 2005 until the fall of 2010.

(U) Q Great. And then you returned to First of the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] summer of 2012?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And at that time you assumed command of Charlie Company?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q At what point were you promoted to major?

(U) A I was promoted January 1st, 2009.

(U) Q 2009?

(U) A I'm sorry, 2010.

(U) Q But you were then a major when you took command of Charlie Company First of the [REDACTED]?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q Okay. And again, that battalion -- the company and the battalion both are located in Stuttgart, Germany?

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q All right. If you would, please describe for us, we're not as educated on Special Forces capabilities and units, what is the structure of a Special Forces company?

(U) A [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] -- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

(U) Q What's the size of an operational detachment alpha?

[REDACTED]

(U) A [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

(U) Q [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. So there is [REDACTED] of those operational detachment alphas, we call them [REDACTED] if that's okay to use that term. [REDACTED] is an acronym. And then there's approximately [REDACTED] personnel that work at the company staff level.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A Sort of organizational admin and operations for that company.

(U) Q So roughly [REDACTED] personnel total is the size of a standard SF company?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And what was your chain of command when you took command of [REDACTED]? What was your reporting structure?

(U) A My reporting structure, I worked -- I was one of three Special Forces companies, and we worked for a battalion commander, a lieutenant colonel who was in command of First Battalion 10th group. And then we were -- our group headquarters, [REDACTED] is back in Fort Carson, Colorado, so we were the only forward deployed -- forward-stationed battalion in the organization, 10th Special Forces Group. And so while we were forward, we had operational control from Special Operations Command Europe. So Special Operations Command Europe did the TSOC, Theater Special Operations Command, for European Command.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. And European Command is -- the headquarters is also located in Stuttgart, Germany?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q When you were the aide-de-camp, who was the TSOC commander for whom you worked?

(U) A At the time, it was Major General Frank J. Kisner. He recently retired as a lieutenant general in the Air Force.

(U) Q And was General Kisner still in command at SOC Euro when you returned to take command of [REDACTED]

(U) A No, it was Major General Army Mike Repass.

(U) Q Okay. You mentioned that -- a TSOC structure, Major [REDACTED] What is a Theater Special Operations Command? What is the role of that command?

(U) A The role of the Theater Special Operations Command is the command and control of Special Operations forces that operate within the European area of responsibility, underneath European Command.

(U) Q And is it a joint command or is it an Army command?

(U) A It is a joint command.

(U) Q So the TSOC commander or the TSOC command actually works under the operational control or direction of the theater commander?

(U) A The EUCOM commander.

(U) Q The EUCOM commander.

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It's one of the component commands to the European Command.

[REDACTED] Q [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A That's right.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Now, you said departs notification. Is that notification, is that what we refer to as N Hour?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And what is the significance of an N Hour?

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And how -- how long of an alert status would you maintain before rotating? Was it 2 months, 3 months, how often did you swap out half the company for the other half?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes. So our primary role, being that we're forward in -- and their responsibility is to work with partner nation units as well as conducting unilateral operations. So the benefit of having a forward-deployed organization like that is you're already in the area, and being Special Forces, one of our primary roles is to work with other nations' forces. So when we're not -- when we're not on alert status, the other teams are off working with European partners.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Roughly speaking.

(U) Q And then a slice of the headquarters as well?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q And where were you physically located on that day?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It was approximately the first week of September. I believe it was right after Labor Day.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. But you were located on an airfield?

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A By military aircraft.

(U) Q And what asset is that typically?

(U) A It was C-130.

(U) Q C-130?

(U) A Two C-130s.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

(U) Q Okay. The two vehicles, what are those vehicles?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And what's the number of personnel that a Sprinter van could carry?

(U) A Sprinter van can carry at least 12.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And so in that case you would then shift from SOCEUR command and control to SOCAF command and control?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And had you experienced that shift during your time in command of C/1-10?

(U) A I have not, no.

(U) Q Talk to us about --

(U) A I'm sorry, not prior to the --

(U) Q Not prior to September 11th of 2012. Okay. Now, prior to September 11th, so you took command of Charlie Company when? July of 2012?

(U) A It was -- yes, middle of July 2012.

(U) Q So the events of 9/11 were roughly 2 months or less into your new command?

(U) A Correct, first trip.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes. So I was an ODA commander for two teams, an assault team and a reconnaissance team. That was in 2006 through -- the fall of 2006 through the summer of 2008 I worked for C/1-10.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And that was an operational deployment, not a training --

(U) A It was operational.

(U) Q -- or exercise deployment?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And again, these were operational deployments.

(U) A These were all operational deployments.

(U) Q This is Libya -- I mean, excuse me, Liberia and to Iraq?

(U) A Afghanistan, Morocco --

(U) Q Afghanistan, Morocco.

(U) A -- Liberia, Iraq, Israel, Romania, so all over Europe.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Got it. And --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. And what is the [REDACTED] series of exercises?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q People who served there that you knew?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And that would have been fall of '11 or spring of '12?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A I'm sorry, it was -- you said fall of '11, '12. That would have been --

(U) Q I'm sorry, fall '10 or spring '11.

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q I apologize.

(U) A Okay. Sorry.

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes, sir, the same day.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A You're just always ready. So the previous commander, they were on -- our company was on alert the day before I took command, the day I took command, and every day thereafter.

(U) Q And so then I assume that as you readied to take command from your predecessor [REDACTED], there was a left seat, right seat orientation period?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) And then everything prior to that is a matter of working with the outgoing commander, incoming commander, standard practice, and then when the new command comes in, we sit down, we do an assessment of the organization by talking to the different leadership, and then we set up training exercises. We set up training exercises once every about 3 months to internally test ourselves.

(U) Q You mentioned that everyone who is going to serve with the CIF has to be trained in some capacity back at [REDACTED]. Is that simply the leadership or all the team members as well?

(U) A Any -- any assaulter, any sniper, and all leadership have to pass what's called the Special Forces -- this acronym is going to be long, but [REDACTED] --

(U) Q [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A [REDACTED], yes.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A So that to pass [REDACTED],  
[REDACTED], and if you are going to be a sniper, you have to pass  
[REDACTED], and then you have to pass [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED], as well.

(U) Q And I apologize. I cut you off, but if you would try  
to expand on [REDACTED] so that we have a good record of that acronym.

(U) A [REDACTED] is -- I believe it's 10 weeks long. It's at  
Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It's run by the [REDACTED]  
and school, and it is an advanced urban combat course.

(U) Q And again, what does the acronym, [REDACTED], stand for?

(U) A Hopefully I won't mess it up, but [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Course.

(U) Q That's outstanding. And again, everyone who is  
assigned to the CIF has been a graduate or has gone through the [REDACTED]  
training?

(U) A If you are a Green Beret and you're going to be serving  
on one of the operation detachment alphas or you're going to be in  
leadership at the company level.

(U) Q Now, you mentioned that you had engaged in several  
operational deployments with the [REDACTED] in your first tour. In any of  
those prior evolutions, had you entered the sovereign air space of a  
hostile nation or a combatant nation, to the best of your knowledge?  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Were these all deployments where we had permission to enter the air space of that sovereign country?

(U) A We -- to the best of my knowledge, we always had permission to enter, through the dip notes.

(U) Q You didn't have any prior experience, as far as you know, of entering hostile air space without permission of a sovereign nation?

(U) A I do not have any experience with that.

(U) Q You mentioned briefly [REDACTED]. And if you could, please expand on your understanding of what [REDACTED] is and does.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And this is a military plan. Is it a concept plan, contingency plan, do you know what it -- I can't recall what CONPLAN stands for.

(U) A I believe it's concept --

(U) Q Concept plan.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A -- operational plan, yes.

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Now, you mentioned that you -- this was the first time you had shifted operational control to AFRICOM when that shift occurred on or after the events of 9/11.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. My first tour, everything EUCOM -- EUCOM'S area of responsibility was both Europe and Africa.

(U) Q And Africa?

(U) A Sub-Saharan Africa.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It was approximately 1 week long.

(U) Q It was 1 week long. So were you then getting ready to redeploy to Stuttgart on 9/11, or can you recall what your end ex was or your end date for your training deployment would have been?

(U) A I literally -- we finished the culminating exercise about 2 o'clock or about 1:00, about 2 o'clock in the morning on September 12th. We were literally drove back up to our staging base, and that's when we found out about the situation going on in Benghazi. So that on September 11th, that afternoon, was the culminating exercise

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

for our -- for that week.

(U) Q And you say you finished that culminating exercise early in the morning of September 12th. And at about 02 as you were moving back to your, I guess your bed down location --

(U) A Right.

(U) Q -- is when you first learned of the attacks in Benghazi?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And were the aircraft -- what was your then -- were you already scheduled for a deployment flight sequence as of the end of that culminating exercise?

(U) A To the best of my knowledge, it was going to be the afternoon of September 12th is when we were going to redeploy, possibly a little bit later, but --

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q And so your understanding of your alert posture during that training exercise was what? What was your response time requirement?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A To the best of any knowledge, I don't recall if the same aircraft that flew us down there were the ones that just stayed there. I didn't see the airfield. We were near it but not within eyesight, so I'm not sure where those aircraft were.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

(U) Q And during this exercise, were you in a daylight training cycle or a reverse cycle training? Were you training largely during the day or at night? You mentioned finishing the culmination exercise at 02.

(U) A It was 24/7 at the time.

(U) Q 24/7. So there was no down time?

(U) A There was no down time.

(U) Q Now, as the 9/11 anniversary window approached, do you recall any discussion about the significance or the, you know, hey, we're back at the 9/11 anniversary, be vigilant, or here's some

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

additional indicators of threats and warnings?

(U) A     Aside from just paying, you know, remembrance to the day as a memorial, there was nothing out of the ordinary in terms of reporting.  If I recall correctly, we did hear about some unrest, but we always heard about unrest.  So there's nothing significant really about any threat on 9/11, aside from the fact that it was 9/11.

(U) Q     The nature of service with a force responsible for North Africa is that unrest is part of the game?

(U) A     We just always -- in daily intel reports, we always saw different pockets of it.  Sometimes it can escalate more than others.  This probably, I believe, is one of those cases, but it wasn't to such an extent that it caused us to refocus our efforts.

(U) Q     Now, you again, you were training, you were participating in this [REDACTED] series exercise on 9/11 itself.  And in your time in the Army since 2000, or since 2001, more particularly, do you recall any focus or discussion or particular emphasis on a force protection posture that is assumed in the period before, on, and immediately after 9/11?  Is that a significant date in the Army training cycle?

(U) A     Any changes in alert posture, in my experience, were never driven by a date.  It was driven by an event.  So there was no change to, you know, 10th of September versus the 11th of September just because of a date.

(U) Q     So you never -- at least on 9/11/12 and in your recollection prior to 9/11/12, you didn't assume an increased alert

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

posture simply because the anniversary of 9/11 was approaching?

(U) A No, we did not.

(U) Q You adjusted alert posture based upon threat indicators and warnings coming through the intel channels?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And in your experience, does intelligence threat reporting typically increase in the period pre-9/11, on 9/11, post-9/11, or do you have any sense that there's anything different about that period from the other 364 days of the year?

(U) A No real difference.

(U) Q And in this particular year, in the 2012, you'd mentioned you recall at least some indicators of unrest. Do you have any specific recollections of what you may have been hearing or learning or alerted to in the window as you were conducting your exercise in Croatia?

(U) A If I recall, I can't recall completely, I remember protests, and that's about it. I remember there was protests in Africa, but there wasn't anything -- we didn't stop our culminating event. We were pretty focused just on that. It might have been in the daily intel report perhaps, but I don't recall completely.

(U) Q Okay. In your time as a Special Forces officer, do you recall specifically, prior to 2012, that you have been engaged in training evolutions that would span the 9/11 anniversary?

(U) A I can't remember. I was deployed -- are you asking if

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I was kind of deployed on 9/11 versus --

(U) Q If you ever recall having had a training exercise, a training deployment or an exercise that would have crossed the 9/11 anniversary. And you may not recall. I'm just -- if you --

(U) A I don't recall.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

(U) A We had one more --

(U) Q One more back in Stuttgart?

(U) A -- back in Stuttgart as well.

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

something on the turret, just like any other Humvee, but then it was more open in the back to fit personnel in a very quick offload/onload fashion.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No, the gunvees were back at home station.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A 58 is pretty high. I believe it was around 40 or so.

(U) Q Around 40?

(U) A Just with -- ideally, you would have the exact 12 -- you know, 12 men per [REDACTED]. That rarely happens for a variety of reasons. So I think our force was about 40 personnel.

(U) Q Okay. And then I -- I had also reviewed something that indicated two of the [REDACTED] were assault teams and one was a sniper team. Is that what you called the reconnaissance team earlier?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q That's a sniper reconnaissance team?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A That's correct. When we arrived early September, I didn't -- I didn't have any interaction with the pilots, and we're not in eyesight of the airfield, so I didn't know where they were.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It's tight, but yes, that's just the worse case scenario.

(U) Q That's the worse case scenario. You prefer more?

(U) A Prefer more, yes.

(U) Q You prefer a warm start, if you could?

(U) A Oh, yes, always.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No, no indication.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q Okay. I'd like to transition a little bit to the events of that day of 9/11. You'd mentioned you finished your culmination exercise, and it was about 02 on the morning of the 12th, and you were back, I guess, at the airfield and you had just learned of the attack in Benghazi. Tell us what you recall about that initial notification.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And were you told that you would be deployed at that time or was this -- was that the end state of all the information you had right then?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And so this was conveyed to -- I suspect you had some sort of command-and-control node at that airfield?

(U) A We did. So for the exercise, Special Operations Command Europe had sent down a part of their staff, so they have a portion of their staff that's on alert and everything as well, and there's an O6 officer who was in charge of the SOCEUR staff co-located with us, more robust communications package. And that's who, for the exercise, that's who we were working with. And in times of crisis, they have the connectivity to SOCEUR. So instead of me having to pick up a phone, I have someone right there that I'm working with.

(U) Q And so by O6, you mean a colonel?

(U) A A colonel in the United States Army.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q And that individual had contact and was -- more robust communications with EUCOM back at Stuttgart?

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No, not any specifics.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. We did not make any adjustments.

(U) Q And the fact that there was a protest in Cairo didn't cause you to tighten up or to adjust or modify your alert posture?

(U) A No.

(U) Q Because again, you're not even sure you knew of the protest in Cairo?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q Was there anyone else --

(U) A I personally didn't. I don't know if somebody else had known, but I personally was not aware of it.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct, I didn't know.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And what would be the nature of the capabilities that could be brought to bear in a crisis? Based upon your background and your experience as a Special Forces officer, what other capabilities could be brought to bear in addressing a crisis?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A As commander.

(U) Q -- or for anything else that you know in the DOD inventory?

[REDACTED]

(U) A I'm not aware, no.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q FAST alert, okay.

(U) A -- as well.

(U) Q Is it fair to say that the biggest driver in alert posture or in a response capability, the biggest driver in that response

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

capability timeframe is the availability of aircraft?

(U) A In my opinion, yes.

(U) Q Particularly where aircraft is the only way to transport and you need to transport over a significant distance?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And so the availability to meet any sort of alert response timeframe depends on ready access to available aircraft?

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And again, you're not -- you didn't have specific knowledge of the alert posture of the FAST units that you were generally aware of were in Rota, Spain?

(U) A I did not have any visibility on the FAST platoons, no.

(U) Q And did you have any specific knowledge that there was in fact a MEU present in the Mediterranean during the timeframe of 9/11, 2012?

(U) A No, I did not.

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And when you say acquaintances, personnel you've known over your career, where were those nodes that you were pulsing, where were you reaching out for information?

(U) A I was pulsing Stuttgart, Germany, I was pulsing Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and I was pulsing the Pentagon.

(U) Q And who at the Pentagon would you have been reaching out to?

(U) A My older brother.

(U) Q And what role was he occupying then at the Pentagon?

(U) A He was in the DDSO.

(U) Q DDSO. And what is the DDSO?

(U) A Deputy Director of Special Operations.

(U) Q And so that's a position within the operations directorate of the Joint Staff?

(U) A A J37, right.

(U) Q J37. So it's a -- it's a directorate within the operations for the Joint Staff or the Joint Chiefs of Staff, J3, the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

operations director, and that is a directorate or a cell that responds specifically to Special Operations missions?

(U) A I believe so. I don't -- I've never worked there, but I believe that's what they do, yes.

(U) Q Okay. So you're pulsing J37, DDSO, your brother, you're pulsing Stuttgart, and then you're pulsing Fort Bragg. Were you contacting the [REDACTED], their joint operations center?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And were those calls at the headquarters of Fort Bragg or did you also go out to the unit with which you had trained in the fall and spring of '10 and '11?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And your former boss. So were you emailing him directly? Was it [REDACTED] chat? What capability were you trying to reach him on?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A I forgot which one. I was using all of them, so I believe it was email at the time. I forgot, to be honest with you.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It was -- I don't know if it's actually in the -- that document, but there was a portal that we all worked off of, and I had contact information from that.

(U) Q So you were really -- your role was to try to reach back to the functional portal [REDACTED] so you could get increased awareness of what's going on and let them know who you were and where you were?

(U) A Correct. I just wanted to make sure everyone -- everyone had notifications out to the units, and I wanted to make sure I was working with point-to-point personal contacts.

(U) Q Okay. Major [REDACTED] we've reached the end of the first hour of questioning, so my time is done, and so I'd like to go off the record at this point, please.

[Recess.]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[11:30 a.m.]

(U) Mr. Chipman. So we are back on the record, please.

(U) BY MR. CHIPMAN:

(U) Q Major [REDACTED] my counterparts on the minority staff have agreed that I can continue with the questioning. They will still have their time to question you, but I will proceed at least for the next hour again, and then we'll assess accordingly where we go from there.

[REDACTED]

(U) What did you learn as a result of that additional effort you made?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A So, can I say to our MTOE?

(U) Q Sure.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. And so by MTOE, what you're referring to is the Modified Table of Organization and Equipment.

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. That sounds right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A I don't; I'm sorry.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A At that time, there was no -- there was all notification. There was no planning going on. So I'm not sure where --

(U) Q I may not have asked the question very artfully.

[REDACTED]

(U) So the first step is always make contact with everyone you're working with.

(U) Q It's 0200 on the morning of the 12th and you've just been engaged in an exercise for the last 7 seven days. How would you assess your sleep status or your sleep posture for your unit and capabilities to now transition immediately into a real world

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

operational deployment?

(U) A We were energized when we found out it was [REDACTED]. We were definitely tired, yes.

[REDACTED]

(U) A No, we did not take that into consideration.

[REDACTED]

(U) A I don't recall any rest cycle guidance in any planning guidance. You can be alerted at any time, so it is hard to determine a rest cycle off of that.

[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

(U) Q Okay. Had you been to Libya before?

(U) A I have never been to Libya.

(U) Q And so you are in the process of reconfiguring your kit, repacking, coordinating with the various nodes. Were you informed at any point as you're going through that process that U.S. personnel have moved from one facility in Libya to another, from one facility in Benghazi to another?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No, I did not. I did not know what was going on in Libya.

(U) Q Tell me what kind of planning you started or what you directed as a result of that initial notification from the SOCEUR liaison or from your own folks, however that notification came to you. Tell me what directions or what tasks you issued to your command.

(U) A So we were on we call it communications black, so no contact with anybody. And everyone was to prepare to deploy, repack, and configure for a real world deployment. So that was my initial guidance.

(U) Communications black is just don't make any phone calls or don't contact anybody outside of the chain of command.

(U) Q So that is an operational security measure, to not inform others outside of the chain of command. Is that correct?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Crisis action planning. Although. We didn't know -- the tactical planning aspects, we didn't have anything. Just the crisis action plan is what we were working on.

(U) Q And as the night proceeded, at what point did

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

you -- what would you say the status of the information you had at that point? Were you told you're going to deploy, were you told to prepare to deploy, were you just alerted? What was the nature of the guidance given to you initially, and when did that guidance develop into something else?

(U) A The initial guidance was -- I can't recall if someone said prepare to deploy or you will deploy. The notification we just operate under at all times, if you're notified, we are operating under the premise that we are going to deploy. But no one ever specifically said you would; or with that, we would. And as the situation progressed from initial notification around 02, through the early morning hours and throughout the next day, there were various updates along that timeline.

(U) Q As the night progressed and the morning developed, at what point were you told you will deploy and this is the N Hour? At what point do you recall receiving an N Hour notification? Or, did you receive one?

(U) A I can't recall the official N Hour notification that was set for official purposes. From my purview, when someone told me, that is when I started working off it at the tactical level so that we are prepared.

(U) So, from my recollection, it was in the middle of the night, but I can't recall when the official N Hour was set.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 1

was marked for identification.]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

BY MR. CHIPMAN:

(U) Q And what I would like to do at this point, Major [REDACTED] I have got a copy of an unclassified timeline that the Department has produced to prior committees before, and I would like you to have a chance to look through this timeline. And it may or may not refresh your recollection.

(U) I have got copies here as well. That's been marked Exhibit 1.

(U) This is a timeline, as I understand it. Did you have any role in compiling or preparing this timeline?

(U) A No.

(U) Q Again, as I understand it, this is a timeline that we have been produced from the Department of Defense that represented an effort to compile events during the relevant period. And that was provided I think first back in the fall of 2012.

(U) And so, Major [REDACTED] if what I'm looking at -- and I recognize you were not on Eastern Daylight Time in Croatia, were you?

(U) A No.

(U) Q And you were not on Eastern European Time -- or, you may have been on Eastern European Time -- about 6 hours ahead of the East Coast Time. Does that timeframe strike, roughly, your recollection?

(U) A Yes, it does.

(U) Q Okay. So we'll use the two times here. We'll stay away from Zulu Time, if that's okay.

(U) A Perfectly fine.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And as I understand it, the event occurred somewhere around 9:42 p.m. Eastern European Time. And, again, as you indicated earlier, you were finishing a training exercise on the evening of September 11th. Was that your earlier statement?

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q So, as best you can recall, you weren't aware of the initial report until roughly 02 on the 12th of September.

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q As I look at Exhibit 1, I would ask you to direct your attention to the place where there are three bulleted points. Point two, if you can read that. Was that the force with which you were associated?

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q So Exhibit 1 indicates that Secretary Panetta convened a series of meetings in the Pentagon with senior officials, to include the chairman, General Dempsey, and the AFRICOM commander, General Ham. It indicates that Secretary Panetta directed the following actions.

(U) And so you were the EUCOM Special Operations force then training in Central Europe to prepare to deploy to an intermediate staging base in Southern Europe. Does that strike with your own recollection?

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q Were you told in that initial notification, or at some point as the night proceeded and the morning arrived, where you would deploy to, what that intermediate staging base would be?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And do you recall any discussion as you were going through the coordination the early morning of the 12th, do you recall any earlier discussion about potentially moving to Suda Bay, Greece?

(U) A I do not recall any talk of Suda Bay, Greece.

(U) Q At your level, at least, that discussion wasn't occurring.

(U) A No.

(U) Q As you were pulsing the various nodes, whether at Fort Bragg, whether at headquarters in Stuttgart, whether at the Pentagon, at any point in the evening or in the early morning and the later morning were you in contact with the American embassy in Tripoli, Libya?

(U) A No, I was not.

(U) Q And did you ever link up with anyone at the State Department compound in Benghazi prior to personnel leaving that facility?

(U) A No.

(U) Q And how about the annex -- what is known as the annex in Benghazi -- did you ever establish communications with the annex?

(U) A No.

(U) Q Did you at [REDACTED], or within your own span of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

control, did you have any liaison officers -- or LNOs -- with other commands or units that were giving you additional situational guidance and awareness?

(U) A Not at this time.

(U) Q After you received the initial notification from your parent command, did you forward back to the command any intelligence or information requirements that would enable you to conduct more detailed mission planning?

(U) A Nothing formal. I just asked for more updates as they were available. I did not have any formal requirements.

(U) Q And were you given updates -- periodic updates from AFRICOM -- from the JOC at AFRICOM, known as the Joint Operations Center, during this timeframe?

(U) A We weren't working for AFRICOM at this time. We were still under the operational control of EUCOM.

(U) Q So the situational awareness you were obtaining was being forwarded to you from the EUCOM Joint Operations Center, or JOC?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q The SOCEUR occupy space within that JOC, or were you also getting separate updates from SOCEUR?

(U) A It was the SOCEUR JOC that I was getting the information from, not the actual EUCOM like FPOC or anything like that. It was a separate billeting that SOCEUR -- because they stood up very quickly their JOC, and we were getting everything from there.

(U) Q And by FPOC, you mean the Focal Point Operations

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Center --

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q -- that EUCOM stood up?

(U) As you were getting these additional updates, were you advised at some point that you would be shifted in operational control from EUCOM to AFRICOM?

(U) A We knew it was going to happen. We were just waiting for when. So from my recollection, SOCEUR was going to retain operational control until we were moved to an ISB. Once we arrived at an intermediate staging base and we had extra equipment and the ability to -- our crypto for our communications systems, so our crypto data, we needed separate crypto data and extra vehicles before they were going to shift operational control to AFRICOM.

(U) Q So if we could unpack that a little bit. The idea is that to communicate in a secure fashion you need certain cryptological capabilities and equipment.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes. At the tactical ground level, I can communicate kind of at the operational command and control level via email, but for the units with handheld radios and the tactics, you need the same cryptological fills for whoever -- whichever organization is in charge.

(U) Q So, as I understand, you were still getting updates from SOCEUR -- from the folks at SOCEUR, and you were not aware that U.S. personnel in Benghazi had departed from one facility and consolidated into another during the morning -- late morning -- or late night, early morning of September 12th.

(U) A No. I did not have any situational awareness or updates coming from Benghazi or anywhere in Africa.

(U) Q And did SOCEUR ever convey during that timeframe as you were, again, doing your initial planning, that there were continued intermittent small arms attacks at the second facility as the morning of the 12th unfolded?

(U) A The only thing I learned was that Ambassador Stevens had been killed.

(U) Q At some point during that morning you learned definitively that Ambassador Stevens had been killed.

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And at that point, how did that shift your mission planning, guidance, or thoughts as to what you should be planning?

(U) A For me, it didn't change anything because we were given the order to prepare to deploy. So we were focused just on that. So

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

at that time, that is all we were focused on.

(U) Q And at what point -- if you learned on that morning, or later in the morning -- at what point did you learn that there had been a mortar attack in Benghazi? Or did you learn anything about a mortar attack?

(U) A I don't recall learning of any mortar attack early in the morning on September 12th.

(U) Q Okay. Were you given access to the Predator feed that we understand was orbiting over Benghazi? Were you given access to that Predator feed at the SOCEUR node with you in Croatia?

(U) A I did not have any ISR feeds, no.

(U) Q Do you know if SOCEUR had that ISR feed?

(U) A I do not know if they did.

(U) Q How were you receiving messages or reports or communications? You mentioned you could email. Did you have other capabilities that you could use? Did you have secure phones with you?

(U) A Yes, we had secure phones both at the Secret level, and then the SOCEUR node that was down there had Top Secret phones.

(U) Q And then were you up on the system [REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. We did it on the ground and we also can do it in flight.

(U) Q And were you also engaging in chat or messaging at the same time -- not same time chat, but something like a Merc chat capability? Did you have that?

(U) A I can't recall if I was up on Merc chat. I don't believe I was.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q Do you recall roughly when in the sequence that you learned that?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A In that timeframe, yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A I stand corrected. That early in the morning I cannot recall whether or not it was the ISB. To my recollection, we weren't sure still at that time whether we would go straight to a crisis point, wherever that was, or to an ISB.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q So it is really a question of being able to have an available aircraft to load and a wheels-up time and then a destination given for you to be able to conduct onward planning.

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Do you recall -- and, again, this is 3 years later, so I realize that the timing is not good.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Why did it transition from a crisis action planning event to a deliberate planning event? What was the nature of what his death generated in terms of your planning sequence?

(U) A From my recollection -- and I wasn't in constant communications about all of that; I just remember hearing that he was killed, and there were no reports of any other missing American citizens or any life, limb, or eyesight threats to American personnel in the original crisis point. Once we heard of that, and then from that point we knew we were going to an ISB, for sure. So there is no longer an in extremis, as we call it, crisis, and personnel are safe, for a matter of speaking, it became a much more deliberate planning cycle.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It was related to me that there was a fight of some sort going on.

(U) Q In Benghazi, at the annex, the second facility?

(U) A I can't recall where exactly, but I call it the crisis point. That was -- at that time -- that was just Benghazi versus any particular location.

(U) Q Got it. And then, again, you don't recall having ever learned on the morning of the 12th of the mortar attack as you were going through your sequence of planning to move to an ISB.

(U) A I don't recall hearing about the mortar attack --

(U) Q But when you learned --

(U) A -- that early on.

(U) Q Go ahead.

(U) A That early on, I don't recall learning of the mortar attack.

(U) Q And again, you learned that the Ambassador had been killed. And from that perspective, that shifted from an in extremis or crisis action planning model to a more deliberate planning model?

(U) A For my -- nothing was directed in that sense, but for me, as the commander, it is more deliberate because there was really no more crisis going on if all the Americans were recovered. He was killed -- that is a crisis -- but no one -- everyone was removed from the fight. So from my level of command, we didn't slow down, but I didn't know what else I was supposed to be planning for at that point if there was no longer -- the missing Ambassador was now dead and he

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

was recovered in a safer location. I was waiting for orders, to be honest with you, from that point forward, outside of deploying. I knew I was going to deploy. Aside from that, the scope of that deployment, in terms of a mission statement, was still unknown.

[REDACTED]

(U) A It is, yes.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q By a MEU, you mean a Marine Expeditionary Unit?

(U) A That's always my default for NEOs, because they are afloat and they are usually very close to the embassies and they have organic air on the ships, from my understanding.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A For us, it would be any and all of the above.

Nonpermissive would be definitely within our purview.

(U) Q And semi-permissive could also be within your purview?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Nothing official. The wide aperture of possible mission sets, that definitely fell within the scope of what we were thinking about.

(U) Q But, again, you weren't in communication with any nodes in Benghazi, as I recall.

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And no one at your parent command, whether SOCAF, AFRICOM, no one related to you, "Start planning to assist in a NEO, if necessary," sort of a be prepared to task, support NEO from Benghazi, to the best of your recollection.

(U) A We were still working for SOCEUR, so I still hadn't contacted anyone from AFRICOM or SOCAF. But the term NEO, to the best

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

of my knowledge, that term did not come up. It was more just my tactical sort of level thoughts.

(U) Q Again, that shift of OPCON, or operational control, was to occur on wheels down at Sigonella or wheels down at the ISB that you were working toward?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) That didn't occur until -- that definitely didn't occur while we were in Croatia. SOCEUR had the responsibility of deploying us to the ISB, and they were pushing more of our equipment from Stuttgart, Germany. So that extra [REDACTED] that was still back in Germany, we alerted them. Even though they weren't technically on recall, we alerted them to deploy. They packed up from a training mission and came back to Stuttgart and they prepared those two gunvees for deployment.

(U) So everything in Croatia was focused on getting to -- in the early morning hours -- to the ISB. And these shifts in command and control didn't occur until September 13.

(U) Q And you just related a bunch of different steps. And so I just want to go through those, if I can, so I understand the

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A So, in terms of the air, my recollection, I did not -- I was waiting on the aircraft. I wasn't involved in the planning of the aircraft, is the best way to describe it. So I don't recall the N Hour sequence for the air movement. It was -- for us, we packed up very quickly and then we were waiting at the airfield.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A And my comms -- I packed up my comms and everything. So once we were sitting at the airfield about seven o'clock in the morning on September 12th, I had limited communications with what was going on. I was just waiting for the aircraft to show up.

(U) Q You're a passenger and not an owner of the aircraft.

(U) A Correct. Once we packed up our comms and put them in the truck, we were waiting.

(U) Q Okay. And so to the best of your recollection, you were ready -- your unit was ready as of 07 on the morning of the 12th for onward movement to an ISB, wherever directed.

(U) A Definitely by 07. We were packed up. We had our -- I use 07 just loosely, as I think that is when the Sun came up, but first daybreak on the morning of September 12th we had all of our equipment and we were ready to load an aircraft. So we were just waiting on aircraft.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A We did have communications, it just wasn't as robust as we had it in our command center upon initial notification.

(U) Q Because the command center had been taken down to prepare for onward movement?

(U) A Correct. We packed it all up. We leave a really small capability just for voice communications.

(U) Q And those communications, again, were coming from SOCEUR back at Stuttgart?

(U) A Correct. And the the SOCEUR colonel -- his team was still there, so they had -- I was pulling information from them. So they had good awareness as to what was going on. But none of us knew -- we weren't aware of the aircraft deploying time. On that set N Hour to move aircraft, I don't recall what that was.

(U) Q Do you recall any efforts to try to coordinate back with SOCEUR headquarters to say, "Hey, is there an N Hour sequence in effect"?

(U) Were you tracking an N Hour sequence of any type or was it more of a deliberate deployment sequence?

(U) A I was tracking -- for me, as a ground assault force, the second I heard what was going on, that was kind of what I was tracking. And we moved as quickly as we could. And once we found out that the crisis was not what it was originally articulated in terms of a U.S. Ambassador or any Am cit missing, and that he was killed and nobody was -- that crisis was no longer occurring as originally

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

discussed, then it became deliberate.

(U) So, from my perspective, at that point the crisis was no longer ongoing and it was more of a deliberate process. So the N Hour sequence, I hate to use the term irrelevant, but I didn't know what my mission was going to be if there wasn't a crisis that we were prone to look at.

[REDACTED]

(U) A No, I did not do that.

(U) Q And SOCEUR was orchestrating or coordinating the arrival of aircraft to deploy you to your onward ISB?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q Were you given any mission planning guidance as you were awaiting the arrival of aircraft -- the upload of the aircraft -- were you given any mission tasks or any commander's intent about what options you should be considering in preparing to execute?

(U) A No.

[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A We do.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. At what point do you recall knowing that the aircraft would be available at the airfield for upload? Was that something you knew in advance or did you hear a bird had set down and a ramp came down and you were directed, "Hey, load up." Did you have a sense of a deliberate sequence for your outload?

(U) A No. We knew we were waiting on the aircraft. I did not know a hard time for when they were supposed to arrive.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Once the aircraft landed and we identified they were the right aircraft, again, about an hour, just to make sure everything gets loaded on properly before you could take off.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Not at that time, I did not receive one. It all was verbal.

(U) Q Verbal.

(U) A A verbal order is an order. So that is what we went off of.

(U) Q So your actions essentially were being directed by what we call VOCCO, or verbal order of the commanding officer?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And that is all you need for authority to execute.

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It was the afternoon of September 12th, because when we landed -- I think it was a couple-hour flight; maybe 2, 3 hours, I believe. I say the afternoon because when we landed, it was dusk when we arrived.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A That is accurate, yes. Dusk in Europe at that latitude is about accurate.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Find somebody from the base that knew where we were supposed to stage our equipment. So a base representative came out to the aircraft. I explained we were there on an emergency and we needed a hangar for our equipment and then a space large enough to accommodate about a hundred people or so. And to be as discreet as possible with everything.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Your additional [REDACTED] that you had requested from Stuttgart.

(U) A They arrived before we did, with those two gunvees.

(U) Q With those two gunvees. And so did they help stage your forces, direct you where you needed to offload your equipment?

(U) A Yes. They had gotten there before us and they knew exactly what was supposed to happen as well. So when we arrived, they were there as well.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And then did you perform the reception staging onward integration -- the RSOI -- for that command?

(U) A As best we could. We put our stuff in a hangar and we stood there when they arrived and shook their hands. And that is about it. We had a room identified for them to set up a JOC.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A I have no recollection of any knowledge of crew rest.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A I was not, no.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A I don't recall that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q And what is your assessment? Why do you conclude that?

(U) A It is the closest point of a U.S. installation to that area of Africa, and anywhere else. So that is why.

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q Is it a better location than Suda Bay, or the equal?

(U) A I don't know the distance, but I think Suda Bay is a little further from Libya than -- Libya and Benghazi -- than Sigonella.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Definitely. Yes.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) A Not operationally. Just in passing. We rested overnight there once.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A From my understanding, from my perspective, outside of any known crisis point, yes, that is a good staging area.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A For the North African coast, yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A We were prepared to load an aircraft in a couple of hours of first learning of the incident. I keep saying 02. So around 02, within a couple hours of that, we were ready to board.

(U) Q So if we go back to Exhibit 1, that second page where [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the bullet that talked about 2:39 ordered by Secretary Panetta, at some point after 2:39 a.m. Eastern European Time, and a couple hours at least after that, you would have been prepared to move onward to wherever.

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q So 05 would have been -- 0500 would have been, in your assessment, a time when your unit was prepared to move onward to an ISB, give or take an hour.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) So yes, I mean 3 hours, if we're using that. You're saying 02.

(U) Q Three hours you say, more or less?

(U) A Three-hour timeframe; yes, that would have been sufficient for us.

(U) Q He who controls the keys also has a vote, right?

(U) A Yeah. We would've gotten the key.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) You've got your basic load of ammunition, which is

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

configured in bulk, I suppose, on an aircraft. So you don't necessarily have readily accessible ammunition. Or, do have you a combat load that you could deploy with as well?

(U) A We have a combat load -- unit basic load -- that includes everything from antitank rockets to nine-millimeter pistol ammunition and grenades. It is a bit of a speculative question to think about to fight through a situation. It would have to depend on the situation, because it would do nothing to take injuries to get to the point -- cause more injuries in order to get to the point where you're trying to provide help.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q It's a fair answer. And I think that in your role as commander, you were always responsible for balancing risk versus reward. Is that one of your duties and responsibilities as a commander?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q So your assessment and what you've just related to the committee was that it is a difficult question because while you would want to fight your way in, there is inherent risk in that approach.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. I guess a better way of putting it is having a higher risk -- accepting an extremely high risk to your force could ultimately prevent you from accomplishing your mission. So you have to balance it. Those are tactical considerations that vary for any operation. So we can go very many paths with that.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Now, what do you mean by counterterrorism focused? How does that differ from crisis action planning?

(U) A Deliberate counterterrorism focus. So there was no longer a missing American citizen. To my recollection, there wasn't

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

a facility or equipment or piece of anything that needed to be recovered. So it was the mission. Though I never read one, or I don't recall if there was ever one, the focus I guess was more of deliberate counterterrorism operation, that being develop the aftermath of that crisis and produce concepts of the operation for the future associated with a response to what had happened in Benghazi; a counterterrorism response to what had happened in Benghazi.

(U) Q So when you mean a counterterrorism response, what you're talking about is you were involved in efforts -- planning efforts that would guide or help formulate the U.S. response, if directed. If DOD were directed to form some sort of response, you were engaged in that planning as to what you would do to forward a counterterrorism response to the crisis in Benghazi.

(U) A That, along with being prepared for unrest -- responding to continued unrest.

(U) Q So did you develop plans, concepts of operations, or CONOPS to deal with other NEO situations in Tunisia or Sana'a or other embassies?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A So on September 13th -- to the best of my recollection, September 13th, in the afternoon, was when I saw some of the formal written orders that you referred to started coming through. We started receiving those. They were written. It just took a while for our comms to get them. And it directed that we now are TACON to SOCAF operational control.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q And the overall operational control of the AFRICOM theater commander.

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q And your specific task within that sequence was to do what?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. I see I've reached the end of my second hour, so if we could go off the record, please, and take a break and get a drink of water, confer with counsel, hit the head.

[Recess at 12:30 p.m.]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q You mentioned also that, initially, you were directed to plan target development for a follow-on counterterrorism effort. What is target development? What does that consist of?

(U) A Collection of information using a variety of intelligence collection platforms, be it signals intelligence, human intelligence, a vast array of all types of intelligence to determine and find locations that can be attributed to supporting what occurred in Benghazi.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q This was target development designed to, perhaps,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

execute missions against terrorist training camps or other outposts --

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q -- in Libya?

(U) A Yes.

(U) Q And that's the kind of target development efforts in which you were participating?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. And did any of those missions ultimately get ordered to be executed --

(U) A No --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q Again, your operational deployments were to Tunis, to Khartoum, and to Djibouti?

(U) A To Djibouti. So we didn't actually go to Khartoum. We just went to Djibouti.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A We never actually went to the embassy in Khartoum.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q So you had access to their birds, but you didn't have your own organic lift capability that had been brought --

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q -- from Stuttgart?

(U) A No, nothing. No rotary wing --

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A -- outside of the [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A To the best of my knowledge, that flight was feasible, but it was at a reduction in personnel and equipment --

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A -- due to fuel constraints.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It is if it's a semi or a non-permissive environment.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Not during my experience, but it has in the past in terms of assisting with noncombatant evacuation operations.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. So I was left uncertain --

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q It is a routine link-up with the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
at which you would exchange the requisite fills?

(U) A Correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A A couple of hours. I believe it was about 2 to 3 hours,  
I think.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A I think it was earlier than that, so the flight might  
have been longer.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A I just can't remember the exact time.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It was about that. Between waiting -- we were co-located near the airfield, and then we moved over there. So, in terms of us being packed up, it was about that.

(U) Q During those 9 hours, give or take, what activities were you engaged in?

(U) A We were just waiting.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A So we were reconfiguring some of our equipment just to be lighter. We left some equipment that was just focused on the training exercise. We were separating that. I was speaking with the SOCEUR colonel that was there, assisting their efforts to deploy because they were [REDACTED] to deploy as well. So it was second nature for us to pack up and move quickly, and we were helping them do the same.

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Again, from your level, you couldn't influence that timeline?

(U) A No.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q You are a consumer of aircraft and not a generator?

(U) A Correct. Yeah.

(U) Q All right. Former Secretary Panetta made a comment at some point along the way in the aftermath of Benghazi that the basic principle here is you don't deploy forces into harm's way without knowing what's going on, without having some realtime information about what's taking place; and as a result of not having that kind of information, the commander on the ground or in that area -- General Ham, General Dempsey, and I -- felt very strongly that we could not put forces at risk in that situation.

(U) Do you agree with former Secretary Panetta's observation?

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A It is.

(U) Q Like that situation that may have presented at Benghazi before the recovery of the Ambassador?

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A I can't really comment on that because, once I'm

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

notified of a mission, we all want to execute, but the greater context to it we're not really privy towards. So what I don't want to do is also rush to our deaths, if that makes sense, you know, because then you're causing more of a problem.

(U) So the difficult part of -- the burden of command is always to not do something. The decision not to execute is much more difficult than the decision to execute, and that is based on risk versus gain; and so my purview of risk versus gain at that time was, you know, someone's -- there's a missing American, so we all want to go assist. The motivation is there -- you know, that's inherent -- but if that changes, you know, and there's other people looking at it from another perspective, you know, we're ready to do it, but that doesn't necessarily mean -- it's not my call to go do it or not; and I can't really agree or disagree with, you know, things that I'm not -- conversations that I'm -- awareness and information that I'm not privy to.

(U) Q Your concern as a commander is rushing to failure if you are directed to go into a situation where you don't have an adequate understanding of the enemy situation, friendly capabilities, the environment on the ground. Is that a fair observation?

(U) A Yes. A crisis is inherently going to be risky, and that's -- you take ownership of that, and you accept that risk, but you also -- in order to be successful and, say, recover a hostage or recover something very dangerous to the United States or whatever the case may be -- in order to be successful, you really need to balance

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

how you position yourself to be in a position of advantage to make that happen. Sometimes that requires patience and a little bit of time to let the situation develop because, otherwise, you're rushing. You could rush to failure as we said earlier.

(U) Q Okay.

(U) A Yeah.

[REDACTED]

(U) What's your sense about that commentary, that critique, by those who have raised that issue?

(U) A Can we scope it in time?

(U) Q Sure.

[REDACTED]

(U) And I'm not sure who would ever make that decision to cancel all of that because there was unrest somewhere else when, I hate to say, there seems to be unrest everywhere all the time, so -- but prepositioning for an emergency, in my honest opinion, is almost like guesswork. If you always try to preposition for an emergency, what you're positioning might not be capable of doing what you want it to do because they don't have time to train and be prepared if that -- it's kind of the only way I can answer it is -- I'm trying to provide an answer without speculation.

(U) Q I appreciate that. And it's not speculation. It's simply trying to get your assessment --

(U) A Yeah.

(U) Q -- as someone who has been moving to the sound of guns for a dozen years. It's trying to get your sense of how you would approach the calculus here and what inputs would influence you.

(U) A I'll tell you we're always willing to risk our lives, but the burden of the commanders at any level is to tailor that with ultimate mission success, and it always doesn't necessarily match up

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

with, you know, other people's perspectives on it, I guess.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yes, because the ambassador was already -- for lack of a better word -- recovered.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A We never went to Yemen, but to Khartoum, Tunis. It was from my -- given the tyranny of distance problem, as we like to call it in Africa, that was the best place we could stage from, a U.S. installation.

(U) Mr. Chipman. Okay. Let's go off the record.

(Discussion held off the record)

(Recess taken 1:02 p.m. to 1:10 p.m.)

BY MS. SAWYER:

(U) Q Back on the record.

(U) Major [REDACTED] thank you again for your time today, and we really do appreciate your testimony. We think, you know, what we have heard today is very helpful. We are very hopeful that it will help the committee certainly understand how events unfolded on the night of 9/11/2012, and that, ultimately, will help us put to rest and explain

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

to the American public, you know, what happened that night; so we thank you very much.

(U) I wanted to return briefly to a couple of issues and then, hopefully, conclude the committee's questioning for the day.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) So, first of all, was this the unrest that you were referring to?

(U) A Yes. Just looking off that timeline, that un-class one -- so -- yeah, with the incident starting at the facility in Benghazi. So that's where I went to when I said that earlier --

(U) Q So you were talking about --

(U) A -- or not the incident in Benghazi, but everything that led up to that, the unrest. I don't know when the unrest started, to be honest with you, but that's what I was referring to.

(U) Q You indicated that, if decisions triggered off of unrest, which you reluctantly and, I think, unfortunately, had to acknowledge occurs pretty much every day -- if decisions triggered off of unrest that it would be -- I think the word you used was

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

"guesswork" -- and that it would be then possible that, one, you wouldn't be able to engage in very important -- I think you have indicated -- number one training priorities. Was that accurate?

(U) A That's from my perspective from being at the end of the whip, you know, being on alert status. If you are on 1-hour alert or something like that, you can't do anything but sit there with your equipment. So that's my perspective.

(U) And, specifically for Benghazi, my perspective was -- the culminating event for me was a very important exercise and for Special Operations Command Europe. So it was a big deal to not complete that exercise. Now, if there was an emergency that rendered or justified canceling it, that's very, very easy, and everyone understands. It's just hard for me, personally, at my level, to understand if that decision had been made really early in the process.

(U) I can tell you now in 2015 -- and probably right after Benghazi -- with the new normal construct, that all shifted. So one of the lessons learned was of, hey, let's assume -- let's start some -- let's prepare or start more of a warm start based off of unrest, because we can see how quickly unrest could lead to something more catastrophic. So it's definitely a lesson learned, but, you know, so --

(U) Q Yes. And you had noted something I did want to get to in terms of -- I think you had said -- you used the term "tyranny of distance" when you were talking to my colleague.

(U) First of all, with regard to Africa, could you just explain

[REDACTED]



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Correct. The 1 October 2012 date is just the formal date for them to be fully operational capable.

(U) Q Now, one of the things that you made very clear and, I think, said repeatedly was, from the moment you were notified as you came off the training exercise -- well, first of all, just to be perfectly clear -- and I think you did state this -- the fact that you were engaged in a training exercise did not impact in a negative way your ability to be ready in the time anticipated --

(U) A No.

(U) Q -- for your force?

(U) A No, it was not.

(U) Q So, from the moment that you were first notified as the commander of that force, you said, at one point, We did not slow down in our preparations to be ready to deploy. You said, We moved as quickly as we could. And then you had indicated initially that you believed you were at the airfield. You said it was sunrise, and you said at approximately 7 a.m. It sounded like you thought it could be as early as 5 a.m. that morning.

(U) A We were about a 5- to 10-minute bus ride away from the actual tarmac at the airfield. So I remember having our equipment packed up at that location, and then, when we actually got buses and movement over to that airfield and we got our ammunition, I think it was about 7:00 in the morning. It was definitely in the early morning hours.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And that would have been the time that you would be ready to load a plane, to get all of the equipment onto a plane, to then deploy to wherever you were being ordered to deploy?

(U) A Yes. So, within a couple of hours of when I first -- when we first realized what was going on, the initial notification around 02 in the morning. Within a couple hours -- I think we talked about 3 hours -- we were physically prepared with all of our equipment packed in our vehicles so we could drive them on, and it was just a matter of, you know, a 10-minute drive to get to the airfield and load an airplane, but I --

(U) Q You had indicated a few times that it would take about an hour to load all of the equipment and get the airplanes ready to actually go, wheels up.

(U) A Yes. When the airplanes stop and they put their ramps down, it's about an hour just with us loading our equipment, and they go through their procedures and so on and so forth.

(U) Q So, if you're at the airfield and waiting at 0700, 0800 is the time that you think "wheels up" with an aircraft there, ready to be loaded? That would have been a reasonable time to be wheels up?

(U) A All based on the airplanes. So, if the aircraft are there, we can -- we can load them in an hour.

(U) Q So an hour from the time you were on the tarmac?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q So, if it's approximately 7 a.m., 8 a.m. is the time you can be wheels up? If it's approximately 6 a.m., then 7 a.m. --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A 7 a.m., exactly.

(U) Q -- is the time that you could be wheels up?

(U) A Correct.

(U) Q Just redirecting your attention to Exhibit 1 that my colleague and you had discussed in the prior rounds, which is the timeline, as my colleague indicated, had been provided to Congress in November of 2012 from the Department of Defense, available to prior congressional investigations as well as made available to us in the course of our investigation -- I am just looking at that timeline and directing your attention to the time that we were talking about where you are on the tarmac, ready to load a plane, getting a plane loaded within that hour.

(U) So, at 6:05 a.m. -- this is on page 2, under Wednesday, September 12th, 2012. It indicates at 6:05 a.m.: "AFRICOM orders a C-17 aircraft in Germany to prepare to deploy to Libya to evacuate Americans."

(U) Now, you had indicated you didn't have kind of moment-by-moment updates about the events on the ground in Libya. Would you have expected the individuals who were then ultimately authorizing and ordering you to deploy forward to have had that information as they were making decisions about where you would move and when you would move?

(U) A Yes, I would think that they would -- people would have that information, yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A We would if it was -- if they were -- if the embassy looked like it was going to be overrun or if it was a very -- a very dire circumstance. We always use the term "in extremis." So, in that situation we can assist with that because we can be additional security for the embassy.

(U) Now, when we talk about a non-evacuation operation, it's also much more broad in scope because we could be talking about all Americans that work with the U.S. Embassy in their various locations and various -- you know, their home residences and stuff like that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Okay. And the time that we had been talking about -- I just want to direct your attention to the time immediately prior to that 6.

(U) It says: "5:15 a.m. The second facility in Benghazi comes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

under mortar and rocket propelled grenade fire."

(U) At the time that that happens, if you were on the tarmac at 7:00, it's potentially 2 hours after that has occurred.

(U) A So the best case scenario for us would have been, you know, we got back at 2:00 in the morning, roughly. There is no way we could have been there at that time. With the notification coming at 2 o'clock in the morning, even if the airplanes had shown up, I don't know how -- you know, the airplanes would have had to -- we would have had to have boarded airplanes at -- I don't even know. It was probably impossible.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q Even by 6 a.m., to the extent that -- and you said, certainly, if it was still an in extremis situation -- and presumably the folks determining and authorizing and ordering you to deploy

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

forward are assessing whether at that point in time it is still an in extremis or not -- you could have assisted; but given the timeline we have just discussed -- 6:05 a.m. -- would it have been possible for you to have been there to potentially assist with any evacuation that was ongoing? You will see that, at 7:40 a.m., "the first wave of American personnel depart Benghazi for Tripoli."

(U) A No, not with the notification coming at 2:00 in the morning. No.

(U) Q Then it indicates on the timeline that at 10 a.m., "the second wave of Americans, including the fallen, depart Benghazi for Tripoli via airplane."

(U) So, as of 10 a.m. -- and I don't know if you had that situational awareness --

(U) A No.

(U) Q -- everyone was out of Benghazi.

(U) A Not to this extent, we did not have that situational awareness.

(U) What we knew was, earlier than this time -- sometime in the early morning hours of September 12th -- we found out that Ambassador Stevens was killed, and there were no more missing American citizens, and they were being moved to a safe location. So we knew that well before 10 a.m.

(U) Q Did you also know that information before the airplane actually did arrive for you to start loading onto the airplane?

(U) A Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Q And, at that point in time, I think you did and were very clear that in your mind -- and this was not talking about the decision-making above you -- that, at that point, it did move from an in extremis to a nonemergency planning mode --

(U) A Yes, once they --

(U) Q -- at the point in time that you had been notified that the Ambassador was deceased and the personnel had been removed.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) So everything takes a more deliberate fashion because now -- I associate "deliberate" also with time. When you have more time to make decisions, you have more time to prepare, and that was very apparent just because we found out; we packed up very quickly; and we moved to the airfield; and then we -- the emergency, so to speak, was already over so why -- there was no reason to rush from that point on.

(U) Q And again --

(U) A That's my context to it, sitting here.

(U) Q Sure. Again, it did not impact your tasking that night and getting ready and making sure, as soon as the decision was made about what was now appropriate based on the unfolding events in realtime, you would be ready to go?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A Yeah, everything for me was very clear. There was an incident; there was a crisis; pack up; and wherever that plane -- if that plane -- once it takes off, it can land anywhere, and we'll still execute our mission. So it wasn't as important for me. What was important for me was make sure that my force was prepared to execute its mission wherever we landed. I just happened to want to know where it was. But it didn't really matter because we were going to plan the same thing -- to be prepared -- no matter what could happen.

(U) Q We did spend a little time earlier in the day also talking about the command and control and when you shifted from EUCOM to AFRICOM.

(U) Did any of those decisions about when that command and control shifted in any way slow you down in terms of your deployment and readiness to deploy -- getting ready to deploy -- on the night of 9/12/2012?

(U) A No.

(U) Q And did it have any practical effect on your ability to carry out your mission?

(U) A No. I say that because we were waiting on a mission, so we were kind of waiting to find out what it was we were going to do. So if there was -- if it took a little bit of time to change command and control, that's okay, because we were all trying to develop what we were going to do next.

(U) Q Just give us one second.

(U) I'm just going to shift gears a little bit and ask you some

[REDACTED]

████████████████████

questions that are more broad -- allegations that have been made in the course of the 3-1/2 years since the attacks.

(U) As you are likely aware -- and I think it was referenced earlier today -- this is now the eighth congressional investigation into the Benghazi attacks and the response both that night and the response over time since. I think all of the members of the committee are very committed to making sure that we, once and for all, put any of the concerns and investigate and look under every rock so that we make sure that, once and for all, we put questions to rest.

(U) There has been, of course, a lot of speculation and a lot of opinions about what happened, but there is only a limited universe of people who actually has firsthand knowledge and information, and a number of those folks have already testified. In fact, a number of folks who would have that kind of knowledge from the military community already have testified, and that certainly includes Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mike Mullen, and General Martin Dempsey, Vice Admiral Charles Leidig, and Rear Admiral Richard Lanhold, to name just a few. The former AFRICOM commander, General Carter Ham, has appeared, I believe, six times -- twice since his retirement. We now also have the benefit of your testimony, which, as I said before, we do appreciate.

(U) I am going to ask you about some of these public allegations. Again, I would ask, if you have firsthand or actual knowledge of any of them, to just please let me know, and we will explore that. Again, there are about a dozen of these, so I would just ask for your patience

████████████████████

[REDACTED]

in getting through them; but the importance again, as I have said, is I just have to make sure that we put to rest, once and for all, the public allegations because it is our understanding that, even where they may have been asked and answered, there is still an intent to investigate them, so we are just trying to cover all bases here.

(U) It has been alleged that Secretary of State Clinton intentionally blocked military action on the night of the attacks. One Congressman has speculated "Secretary Clinton told Leon Panetta to stand down," and this resulted in the Defense Department not sending more assets to help in Benghazi.

(U) Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton ordered Secretary of Defense Panetta to stand down on the night of the attacks?

(U) A No.

(U) 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?

(U) A No.

(U) 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 four Pinocchios -- its highest award for false claims. Nonetheless, this allegation has continued.

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

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) A No.

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

(U) A No.

(U) 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.

(U) 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?

(U) A No.

(U) 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 "the CIA was not collecting and shipping arms from Libya to Syria" and that they found "no support" for this allegation.

(U) 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?

(U) A No.

(U) Q Do you have any evidence that the U.S. facilities in Benghazi were being used to facilitate weapons transfers from Libya

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

to Syria or to any other foreign country?

(U) A No.

(U) 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 of and the appropriateness of that delay. The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report concluding that the team was not ordered to stand down, but, instead, there were tactical disagreements on the ground over how quickly to depart.

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

(U) A No.

(U) 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 bad or an improper reason behind the temporary delay of the CIA security personnel who departed the annex to assist the Special Mission Compound?

(U) A No.

(U) 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.

(U) Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

provided to the ARB?

(U) A No.

(U) 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?

(U) A No.

(U) Q Let me ask these questions also for documents that were provided to Congress.

(U) Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to Congress?

(U) A No.

(U) Q It has been alleged that CIA Deputy Director Mike 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 faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship.

(U) 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.

(U) Q Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director Mike Morell altered the talking points provided to Congress for political

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

reasons?

(U) A No.

(U) Q It has been alleged that Ambassador Susan Rice made an intentional misrepresentation when she spoke on the Sunday talk shows about the Benghazi attacks.

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

(U) A No.

(U) Q It has been alleged that the President of the United States was virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief on the night of the attacks and that he was missing in action.

(U) Do you have any evidence to support the allegation that the President was virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief or missing in action on the night of the attacks?

(U) A No.

(U) Q It has been alleged that a team of four military personnel at Embassy Tripoli on the night of the attacks, who was considering flying on the second plane to Benghazi, was ordered by their superiors to stand down, meaning to cease all operations. Military officials have stated that those four individuals were, instead, ordered to remain in place in Tripoli to provide security and medical assistance in their current location. A Republican staff report issued by the House Armed Services Committee found that there was no stand-down order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

sought to join the fight in Benghazi.

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

(U) A No.

(U) Q Then, lastly, it has been alleged that the military failed to deploy assets on the night of the attacks that would have saved lives. Former Republican Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, the former chair of the House Armed Services Committee, conducted a review of the attacks, after which he stated: "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."

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

(U) A No.

(U) 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?

(U) A No.

(U) Ms. Sawyer. Again, Major [REDACTED] thank you for your time. We do appreciate your explanation, your willingness to appear voluntarily, and answer all of our questions. We also truly appreciate it. On behalf of the Democratic members -- I think all of the members

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

of the committee and, certainly, the staff -- we also appreciate very much your service to the country. It is very important, and we do respect and appreciate it very much.

(U) Major [REDACTED] Thank you.

(U) Mr. Chipman. I would like to thank you, on behalf of Chairman Gowdy, for your personal willingness to appear, but also for the efforts of the U.S. Special Operations Command to enable your appearance and the coordination and support of the Office of the Secretary of Defense in furnishing you to the committee this morning. So I thank all of you.

(U) Ms. Sawyer. That's it.

[Whereupon, at 1:43 p.m., the interview was adjourned.]

[REDACTED]



Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

(U) 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

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Date



*Errata Sheet*

**Select Committee on Benghazi**

Department of Defense counsel on behalf of the witness reviewed the accompanying transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide corrections to the transcript.