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Committee Hearings
of the
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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

INTERVIEW OF: MATT OLSEN

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in room
HVC-302, Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 1:38 p.m.

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1 Appearances:

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5 For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

6

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8 CHRIS DONESA, DEPUTY STAFF DIRECTOR

9 SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

10 MAC TOLAR, SENIOR COUNSEL

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19 For ODNI:

20

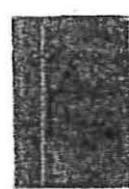
21 KEN WAINSTEIN, ESQ.

22 [REDACTED] ESQ.

23 [REDACTED] ESQ.

24

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1 A That's right. Till a little bit after that,
2 September 2014.

3 Q 2014, okay. Prior to that, just a couple of your
4 key roles. General counsel of NSA. Is that right?

5 A Yes.

6 Q Associate deputy attorney general.

7 A Yes.

8 Q Guantanamo Review Task Force.

9 A Yes. At Justice. That was at Justice.

10 Q Deputy assistant attorney general Justice of the
11 National Security Division for a few years?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Then, prior to that, the U.S. Attorneys Office in
14 D.C.?

15 A Right.

16 Q Okay. Hopefully, you can speak just for a minute
17 about what the general mission is -- or mission was -- of
18 NCTC when you were Director.

19 A Sure. NCTC was created after 9/11 to really be the
20 central hub for intelligence analysis on counterterrorism, so
21 the place in government where all analysis or intelligence
22 would come together and would be analyzed by the all-sources
23 analysts at NCTC and then shared back out with the
24 intelligence community at the Federal level, but also with
25 State and local consumers of terrorism analysis.

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1 Q So within the CIA, they have a counterterrorism
2 center in there.

3 So your analysts at NCTC, how does what they do differ
4 than what CTC analysts do at CIA?

5 A There was a fair amount of overlap between the two.
6 In fact, many of our analysts at NCTC were are on detail from
7 CIA and from CTC's Office of Terrorism Analysis. That's the
8 component within CTC that handles terrorism analysis.

9 If there was a distinction, it would have been sort of
10 along the lines of the CTC analysts, by and large, focused on
11 more tactical and operational activities in support of the
12 CIA; whereas, at NCTC, we sort of ran the gamut, from very
13 strategic analysis to also tactical. And then we also acted
14 on behalf of the intelligence community as a whole. So most,
15 if not all, of our products were coordinated across the
16 intelligence community; whereas, CIA analysts were focused,
17 again, more on the CIA mission.

18 Q So part of the strategic analysis that your
19 analysts did at NCTC, that would involve identifying emerging
20 threats in certain areas around the world?

21 A Yes, if it was terrorism-related.

22 Q And did your analysts identify an emerging threat
23 in Libya in 2011-2012 time period?

24 A Yes. We definitely spent a fair amount of time
25 focused on North Africa, and Libya in particular, in terms of

1 the threat situation there.

2 Q To the extent you can remember, going back to the
3 2012 timeframe, can you share a little bit about what you
4 learned about the emerging threat in Libya?

5 A Sure. And I should say that both I have a general
6 recollection today of that, but I have also spent some time
7 looking back. I went and reviewed documents. I went to ODNI
8 and looked at some of the documents to help me be better
9 prepared for this testimony. So my answers will kind of be
10 maybe a mix of what I remember independently and my more
11 recent review.

12 In answer to your question, we were -- Libya, like a
13 number of places in North Africa and the Middle East, we were
14 focused on a sort of expanding terrorism threat that
15 reflected the sort of shift in the role of Al Qaeda.

16 So we had made gains against the Al Qaeda leadership in
17 Pakistan, in terms of the leadership and the counterterrorism
18 pressure in Pakistan, had had an impact there, but we were
19 analyzing at the time that the threat was evolving to be more
20 dispersed geographically, and there were more smaller groups
21 that were either affiliated or aligned with core Al Qaeda,
22 but weren't directed specifically by the leadership in
23 Pakistan.

24 And that was sort of where we were in 2012. And Libya
25 was certainly an example of where that dispersed threat had

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1 manifested itself -- and particularly eastern Libya --
2 following the conflict in Libya and really the breakdown of
3 security there.

4 Q So the breakdown of security, is that why there was
5 sort of an emerging threat in eastern Libya in that
6 timeframe?

7 A It definitely was a contributing factor. Again,
8 Libya was an example, like other places, where, in the
9 absence of strong security or effective borders, Al Qaeda
10 ideology was taking root. Other places would have been
11 certainly Yemen, Somalia, and then more recently or around
12 that timeframe and then after, Syria, of course, as well.
13 But Libya was just another example of lack of security. And
14 then, the effort really -- combined with the effort of Al
15 Qaeda to expand beyond its safe haven in the FATA, which was
16 a concerted effort.

17 Q So a couple of questions. You said Libya was just
18 another example. Was there anything unique about Libya?

19 A I wouldn't say anything unique about Libya, but it
20 was certainly -- it was, along with Yemen, a place that
21 really lacked any serious security.

22 Q You talked a lot about Al Qaeda. Had you seen Al
23 Qaeda in Libya prior to sort of the summer of 2012, where the
24 security had broken down?

25 A We saw Al Qaeda -- there were Yemen -- I mean,

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1 Libyan individuals who were part of core Al Qaeda. And we
2 knew that there was some, as I recall, we were concerned
3 about Libyans who had gone to become -- join core Al Qaeda,
4 had actually gone back. One guy in particular had gone back
5 to Tripoli.

6 We were always worried about the influence of Al Qaeda
7 in Libya, without regard to sort of that 2012 timeframe.

8 Q Right, right. Were there any other sort of
9 emerging organizations within eastern Libya, other than Al
10 Qaeda? Al Qaeda is the only one you touched upon that you
11 can remember?

12 A There were definitely other Islamic extremist
13 groups operating within -- in eastern Libya and within sort
14 of the militia groups there. What I recall is that if you
15 had tried to sort out all the different groups -- who they
16 were aligned with and what their strengths were -- it would
17 be a long list.

18 Q Sure.

19 A It would be hard to do.

20 Q Do you have any sense as to whether those
21 organizations were more recent, since Qadhafi had left, or
22 whether they had been there for some time?

23 A I would say today, honestly, my answer is that they
24 were post-Qadhafi. For all the problems of a dictatorship
25 like Qadhafi, we weren't as concerned about extremists and

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1 having a safe haven under the authoritarian rule. So my
2 sense was that the problems in eastern Libya arose largely
3 after the fall of Qadhafi, from, again, just looking at it
4 through the lens of terrorism and extremists.

5 Q Sure. That's helpful.

6 You mentioned that your analysts are sort of the central
7 hub of all-source analysis. When your analysts would write a
8 product or come to a certain view, how would NCTC kind of
9 push that out to the broader community?

10 A So we would -- as a general matter, there were a
11 number of product lines that the NCTC analysts were
12 responsible for, you know, the National Terrorism Bulletin,
13 or in some cases we wrote the CURRENT.

14 Q CURRENT.

15 A Exactly. Thanks. It's been a while. Those
16 product lines helped to determine the channels of
17 dissemination and how broadly they were disseminated. So
18 some things that would even start as more sensitive products
19 that would have a more limited distribution would get changed
20 in order to be distributed more widely on our online system
21 to become available to a broader range of -- a broader set of
22 analysts. And Current was kind of our flagship way of
23 getting our analytic products out.

24 Q So is The Current kind of sent out to the broader
25 IC or is it shared with specific customers or a combination

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1 of both?

2 A No, I would say more the former. So broader IC,
3 very wide distribution. Anyone that would have the ability
4 to go to the NCTC online portal, classified portal, would
5 have access to The Current.

6 Q If there were particular pieces of interest that
7 you or others in NCTC may have felt should have gone to
8 certain customers, were there efforts made to put those
9 particular pieces in front of those customers?

10 A Sure, definitely. In particular instances,
11 whether -- it would be -- it could be something as
12 significant as providing something directly to the National
13 Security Council in a meeting, for example -- you know, put
14 something on the table and talk about it in a setting like
15 this -- to, at the other end of the scale, we had a group of
16 detailed firefighters and police officers who got cleared to
17 work at NCTC for a year who wrote unclassified products for
18 their local fire departments and police departments, and then
19 everything in between. But those were sort of more focused,
20 tailored products for a particular audience.

21 Q Did you ever travel to Libya prior to the Benghazi
22 attacks?

23 A Not prior. I did afterward.

24 Q Not prior, okay. How long after did you travel?

25 A I don't remember exactly when it was, but I went to

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1 Tripoli for the day. I didn't stay overnight. I went with
2 JSOC and General Votel, CENTCOM Commander. And we went
3 into Tripoli, [REDACTED]
4 and then met with -- FBI was there. So one of the reasons I
5 am remembering it in this way is because we talked about the
6 Benghazi attacks, obviously.

7 Q So this would have been within 1 or 2 months after
8 the attack?

9 A No, no, potentially longer, potentially longer. So
10 some time between the attacks and, obviously, when I left.
11 But, yeah, after the attacks, because we talked about
12 Khatallah at the time, and he was at large. So I don't know
13 if that helps frame the timeframe.

14 Q It narrows it down to 18 months.

15 A Yeah, right, right.

16 Q Did you ever have occasion to meet with any
17 officials of the Libyan Government when they were here in
18 D.C. or America?

19 A Not here. I did there.

20 Q Prior to the attacks.

21 A No, not prior. I don't have any recollection. I'm
22 pretty sure I didn't meet with any Libyans. I met with a lot
23 of people both in my own role, but also I would sometimes go
24 to meetings with the DNI when his counterparts or our
25 counterparts would come to town. I don't ever remember

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1 meeting with any Libyans.

2 Q Were there individuals within specific agencies --
3 the NSC, the CIA, the State Department -- that you not
4 necessarily equal, but you had normal daily communications
5 with or weekly communications with discussing different
6 ideas?

7 A Definitely. It would sort of correspond, more or
8 less, to the Deputies Committee at the NSC. So if you think
9 about who the deputies were of each of the intelligence
10 organizations, they were sort of my immediate counterparts.
11 So we would see each other, if not every day, no more than 2
12 days would go by we would be at the White House together.
13 And then around those White House meetings or just otherwise,
14 we were having pretty consistent email -- mostly email, but
15 sometimes phone communication.

16 Q So the State Department, who would that individual
17 or individuals have been?

18 A So State Department would have maybe not been -- I
19 should be careful, because in the sense that State Department
20 is probably not at the same as FBI and CIA and DOD, maybe
21 even -- but CIA and FBI were the key ones.

22 The State Department would have been Burns, Bill Burns,
23 and then sometimes Dan Benjamin, the counterterrorism person,
24 and the person who took over for him, Tina -- I am forgetting
25 her last name. It wasn't quite the same in terms of an

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1 intelligence community role for them. So I would say my
2 interaction with them was maybe a little bit less frequent.

3 Q What about Jake Sullivan? How frequently did you
4 interact with him?

5 A Jake only -- I got to know Jake when he joined the
6 Vice President's staff as a national security adviser. And
7 then I would see him at the White House, typically.

8 Q So that would postdate his time at the State
9 Department.

10 A Right.

11 Q Again, we're talking about the period prior to the
12 September 11th attacks.

13 A Okay.

14 Q In terms of how you learned information about the
15 emerging threat in Libya, did that come from reading NCTC
16 products, CIA products, DIA products, all of the above?

17 A All of the above. And just briefly, on that point,
18 you know, like a lot of folks, I got a morning briefing.
19 7:30 every morning we started with, basically, a threat
20 update that was all -- and it was delivered by an NCTC
21 briefer, but it focused on all products that were fairly
22 characterized as sort of, you know, kind of what we're going
23 to be working on today, tomorrow, this week threat type
24 information. That was the first half hour.

25 Then, the second half hour, I received the Presidential

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1 Daily Brief -- basically, the binder -- and that was a little
2 more strategic. That was a smaller group of people at NCTC
3 who were cleared to get that. And that was, basically, the
4 second half hour. So that was my main source of sort of
5 daily --

6 Q To the extent you can remember -- again, prior to
7 September 11th -- do you have any idea what sort of the DIA
8 focus was for their products as it related to Libya?

9 A Not specifically, no, not DIA. They generally were
10 working the same threats that we were. I wouldn't think it
11 was any different from what NCTC was doing.

12 The only thing I should add, actually, is that they
13 didn't have access to all the information that CIA and, as a
14 consequence, we had at times. There was operational
15 information that DIA did not have the same access to. It
16 didn't typically impact the analysis, although it could in
17 certain cases.

18 Q When you say operational information, are you
19 talking about accompanying cables, cable traffic?

20 A Yes. So the most sensitive CIA operational traffic
21 typically wasn't available to DIA analysts.

22 Q Talk about the night of the attack?

23 A Sure.

24 Q To the extent you can remember, walk us through
25 where you were when you learned about it and sort of what

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1 initial steps you took.

2 A Sure. So the night of the attack, I was at NCTC.
3 And I don't recall specifically how I first learned, although
4 I do remember that we were tracking the situation in Cairo
5 and the events in Cairo.

6 At some point, I was -- into the early evening, into the
7 evening -- on a secure video call with a number of other
8 departments, agencies, around the government, and that was
9 all focused on what was happening in Benghazi.

10 So that was sort of -- the reason I remember that is
11 that my sort of information was kind of real time at that
12 point, so we were getting it in the course of this ongoing
13 secure call that was not -- I mean, it was common for us to
14 have those secure calls.

15 So that's where I was and that's where I was through the
16 evening.

17 Q So the secure call, do you, if you can
18 remember, who else from sort of the IC was represented on
19 that call?

20 A This was -- and actually it was a video call. So I
21 was in my conference room with the TVs. From the IC? I
22 don't actually remember who else was on from the IC. I think
23 Sean Joyce was on from the FBI. I don't remember Michael
24 Morell. He would typically have been on it if he were -- but
25 I don't remember if he was on it or not. If not him, he had

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1 people who were head of the Office of Terrorism Analysis that
2 were probably on.

3 I remember the State Department folks were on it and
4 were sort of some of the key persons having information. And
5 I remember Patrick Kennedy being on. And I remember Denis
6 McDonough at the White House was on it. He would have been
7 at that time deputy national security advisor and would have
8 essentially been running the call and sort of chairing it. I
9 don't remember who else.

10 Q So Sean Joyce is the only person that you
11 can recall --

12 A Pretty sure about Sean. Not 100 percent sure.

13 Q You don't know who, if anybody, from the CIA was on
14 the call?

15 A I'm confident -- I would be very surprised to learn
16 that nobody from the CIA was on. I just don't remember who.

17 Q Okay. What can you tell us about what you remember
18 about the call?

19 A As I said, I remember that we were sort of getting
20 information as it was happening and that this was how it was
21 coming to us and that it was unfolding -- and I was also
22 getting -- we have a 24-hour operations center at NCTC, and
23 they were getting information as well. And I remember at
24 some point getting updates from them -- I don't remember
25 specifically what they were about -- but they would come in

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1 with information, as I recall, that they had gleaned.

2 Probably the most memorable moment -- and I don't
3 remember when it was, what time -- but I remember clearly
4 Patrick Kennedy saying that they didn't know where the
5 Ambassador was, and his voice cracked and he seemed to be
6 kind of breaking down a bit from the emotion of it. So that
7 was obviously a very memorable moment during that call. I
8 never had anything quite like that happen either before or
9 since in my job there. So I remember that.

10 Then there were other details that came out that. If
11 you want, I can keep talking about --

12 Q Sure.

13 A One of them was the issue -- an issue came up about
14 the YouTube video and -- you know, the video that was so
15 controversial and was inflammatory. And we were aware of
16 that video partly because of Cairo. I don't think I'd seen
17 it at that point. I'd just read about it.

18 Denis McDonough talked to us, talked to the group about
19 trying to get the video taken down from YouTube. At the
20 time, it struck me that is a reasonable and sensible and
21 appropriate course of action. We were very concerned at that
22 point, obviously, about Benghazi, but we were sort of
23 connecting -- in my mind, connecting Cairo, Benghazi, and
24 thinking out beyond to other diplomatic posts.

25 Q Was there any discussion of sort of the video and

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1 Benghazi being linked on the call?

2 A I don't remember specifically, you know, how we
3 talked about it. I'm sure that we did, right, because we
4 were -- the fact is that it came -- the discussion of taking
5 the video down was part of our conversation in this call that
6 was really focused on what was going on in Benghazi.

7 And in my own mind, at the time, I recall linking the
8 two, you know, that this -- we were thinking about what had
9 happened in Cairo, we were thinking, okay, now this seems to
10 be happening again in Benghazi, and we're worried about
11 other, obviously, other diplomatic posts in the Middle East
12 and North Africa.

13 On that particular issue, one thing that I recalled in
14 thinking, again, sort of preparing for coming here, sort of
15 trying to recollect as much as possible, one of the issues
16 that Denis asked me -- and I think Nick Rasmussen, my deputy,
17 was there as well -- was to see if we could work with -- if
18 we could contact Google to talk to them about enforcing their
19 terms of service, which was the way that we often thought
20 about offensive or problematic content.

21 Q Google, owner of YouTube?

22 A Yeah. Since Google owned YouTube, could we somehow
23 go to Google. [REDACTED]

24 [REDACTED]

25 [REDACTED]

Because we

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1 [REDACTED] more
2 generally -- not sort of as part of it, but sort of the ideas
3 part, right, of counterideology.

4 ~~So my reaction to that was, you know -- and I didn't~~
5 really say this to Denis at the time, because it just didn't
6 come up that way -- but the real way to approach Google was
7 through the FBI. The FBI had those relationships. They were
8 the ones who dealt with companies-- Internet service
9 providers, communication providers -- and did that. They
10 were the front-door guys, not NCTC.

11 So I reached out to Sean Joyce, as I recall, and talked
12 to him about this, because I didn't think it was really the
13 right -- I didn't think NCTC should do it. Either I did or
14 Nick did. One of us did.

15 Anyway, sort of a long-winded answer, Carlton, but
16 that's just one thing I recall about that lengthy night.

17 Q Do you know if Sean or anybody else at the FBI
18 actually contacted Google that night?

19 A I don't know for sure.

20 Q Okay. Did Denis McDonough -- was he the person
21 that brought up the video during the call, that you can
22 recall?

23 A I don't know if he brought it up in the first
24 instance. I think we may well have just been talking about
25 where it is and where it is being seen and other places that

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1 we were concerned about.

2 Q Were there any other discussions about making calls
3 either to Google or to other individuals about the video?

4 A What I recall, simply, is Denis asking us to see if
5 we could get in touch with our contacts at Google to get them
6 to start thinking about taking it down, consistent with their
7 terms of service.

8 Q Pastor Terry Jones, do you know him?

9 A I know who he is.

10 Q Were there any discussions about calling him to
11 take down the video that you can recall?

12 A That's a good question. I don't remember, but, you
13 know, there had been prior occasions where -- I don't know if
14 he was burning a Koran or something -- where the FBI was
15 the ones who -- were the ones, in their field office in
16 Florida, where they would sometimes be involved in trying to
17 figure out what to do with Pastor Terry Jones. That was an
18 FBI -- that would clearly be an FBI lane.

19 Q Staying on the SVTC. What can you tell us about
20 any discussion about a military response to the attacks? Or
21 you can kind of share what you can recall, if anything. Was
22 there a discussion about a military response?

23 A I'm sure we talked about what DOD assets were
24 available, and there would have been somebody on the call
25 from DOD, probably from the Joint Staff. I don't recall

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1 specifically, like, what was said.

2 I obviously know now -- I don't know if I knew then --
3 that there was a Predator surveillance feed that was
4 available. I don't remember seeing any feed live, certainly,
5 and I don't remember when I learned about that.

6 Q Not exactly your lane --

7 A Right.

8 Q -- so not something that you would have a stark
9 memory of?

10 A Right, that's exactly right. This wasn't -- you
11 know, I think we were going to be -- you know, for my part,
12 we were starting to, like, sort of pull together whatever
13 intelligence we were getting from [REDACTED] which was very
14 limited at that point, to see what more we could learn, and
15 also drawing on open sources information, to the extent there
16 was any.

17 Q So talk about the information that you started
18 drawing in the night of the attack and the day after.

19 A Right. So from through the night into the next
20 day, sort of the standard routine for the analysts would have
21 been -- what they did, because I saw the analysis that came
22 from it [REDACTED] We had an [REDACTED] at
23 NCTC. So we got their [REDACTED] - we got their [REDACTED]
24 reports. And that, along with any [REDACTED] I just
25 don't remember if we had any [REDACTED] reporting in that first,

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1 like, 24 hours. There was [REDACTED] reporting
2 and then some open source.

3 Q So as NCTC Director, McDonough tells you to contact
4 "Google." You have the conversation with the FBI about that.
5 What role did you see yourself playing in those 24 hours
6 after the attack? What was your focus?

7 A My focus would have been primarily to make sure
8 that our analysts were pulling all the threads, to gather the
9 information to understand both what was happening, but also
10 to identify any additional threats that we were going to be
11 facing or were facing.

12 I remember being very concerned, along with others --
13 everyone else, really -- about certainly what happened in
14 Benghazi and how quickly that was going to be resolved and
15 how we were going to find out who did it, but also what other
16 threats we were facing in the region in what appeared to
17 us -- I mean, my sort of working hypotheses of sort of
18 related sort of violent events targeting our diplomatic
19 presence. So, like, what are we seeing, what's happening, so
20 we can give a warning. I would say that was probably the
21 number one goal, along with trying to figure out what
22 happened in Benghazi.

23 Q There are always threats out there. Is that fair
24 to say?

25 A Sure. In the 24 hours after Benghazi, were there

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 any threats that kind of stuck out to you or the analysts, in
2 addition to sort of the normal vagaries that you see?

3 A I know that there were several other diplomat posts
4 where there were demonstrations after Benghazi. Certainly,
5 nothing rose to the level of either Cairo or Benghazi. So I
6 don't remember anything, you know, like Tunis or any other
7 place. We were mindful of that possibility, but I don't
8 remember one rising up to be --

9 Q So you say your analysts were focused on sort of
10 scouring the NSA wire to figure out what intel there was.
11 Looking at CIA reports. You said that HUMINT was very
12 limited at that point. Open source reporting.

13 A Right.

14 Q Did these trickle their way up to you? How did you
15 learn about what may have happened?

16 A So the way I learned about it was both being
17 advised in my morning briefing the next morning, but then
18 also we were producing -- this is something we would have
19 done -- and I remember seeing this, sort of what we call spot
20 reports, which was sort of here is exactly what is happening
21 right this minute, pretty unfiltered analysis, but then a
22 number of subsequent analytic products to try to bring the
23 community -- to get a line, an analytic line on what happened
24 at Benghazi.

25 Q So when you say that "we" produce spot reporting,

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1 are you talking like we at the IC or we as NCTC producing the
2 spot reporting?

3 A The spot reporting would have been NCTC, and not
4 coordinated. Everything else would have been almost
5 certainly -- or likely would be coordinated.

6 Q Was there a point the night of the attack or the
7 following day, or the following day, where you sort of had an
8 initial assessment of what you believed had occurred in
9 Benghazi?

10 A I would say that it was -- my judgment about it, my
11 understanding of it, was sort of kind of in flux from the
12 beginning, because there was so little information that we
13 had available to really go on.

14 You know, I have been through these sort of things. I
15 was a prosecutor for a long time in the D.C. U.S. Attorneys
16 Office for 10 years, and so very aware that the initial
17 reports on things are almost always off a bit and sometimes
18 wildly off.

19 So I think it was incumbent on me and others in my types
20 of position to try to reserve our ultimate judgment about
21 what happened. But, at the same time, the tension there, as
22 you appreciate, is that there is a strong demand signal for
23 information from policymakers.

24 Q Of course.

25 A So trying to do both of those things is the

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1 challenge.

2 Q As the attack was unfolding, did you personally
3 have an opinion that it may have been a terrorist attack?

4 A So I would say that I never from the outset looked
5 at this as a terrorist attack. Like it never, to be honest,
6 it never occurred to me to -- once it started and once we
7 knew, for example, that the Annex had been targeted with
8 mortar fire and we knew there were four Americans that were
9 killed, then it was, from my vantage point, I didn't actually
10 ask myself the question: Was it a terrorist attack? I,
11 basically, as I look back, I assumed it was from the outset.

12 Q When did you first learn that Al Qaeda was
13 involved -- may have been involved? Not necessarily Al
14 Qaeda, but an offshoot of Al Qaeda, those with links to Al
15 Qaeda.

16 A Right. That was one of the early [REDACTED] reports
17 that we got, that there was an individual who was involved in
18 the attack who [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED] somebody who was connected to AQIM.

20 So one other answer to your question, Carlton, about how
21 we thought about this and my own involvement in trying to
22 give an assessment was one of the early opportunities I had
23 to do that was with HPSCI. I went to HPSCI on the 13th for a
24 briefing. And I had a page, or less, to go with, right?
25 They were not very satisfied.

~~TS/301~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 Q I have read they were nonplussed that you didn't
2 have very many answers for them.

3 A Yeah, I had very few answers. And it was
4 frustrating, obviously, for me, but it was more frustrating
5 for the members of the committee to have so many questions,
6 some of which I just didn't have answers to because we didn't
7 know, but other questions were sort of answers, you know,
8 would have been directed better at the State Department; for
9 example, why there was only X number of DS agents. Perfectly
10 appropriate, understandable questions, just I was not in a
11 position to answer. And there was definitely frustration
12 there in that sort of -- that was probably, you know, less
13 than 48 hours after.

14 Q Sure. That meeting with HPSCI, how did that come
15 about? Is that something that you offered, is that something
16 they asked for, did they ask for you specifically, or were
17 you the administration representative to go up there?

18 A I just don't remember how it came about. Whenever
19 they asked to come, I pretty much went, right, so they may
20 have just asked: There has been an attack, you know, and we
21 want NCTC. We always tried to be really responsive. But it
22 is also possible it was a regularly scheduled, because I had
23 regularly scheduled roundtables with HPSCI. So it might have
24 been that was just by coincidence. I just don't remember.

25 Q I'm going to pass out Exhibit 1.

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 [Olsen Exhibit No. 1
2 was marked for identification.]

3 Mr. Olsen. Ken just reminded me, I basically -- I had
4 so little information. One of the pieces was that AQIM
5 [REDACTED] report that I mentioned to go to HPSCI with.

6 So I had a little bit of intel reporting, but I was
7 really -- I was acutely aware that what I had was a fragment
8 of the body of information that would tell us what had
9 happened, and tried to make that point and emphasize that
10 point.

11 BY MR. DAVIS:

12 Q Sure. So passing out Exhibit 1. This is a WIRE
13 published on 13 September, 2012. You've seen this document,
14 I presume.

15 A It looks familiar.

16 Q Okay. Do you know if you reviewed it in
17 preparation for --

18 A I don't know if I did. I may well have.

19 Q All right. Let me turn your attention, I guess, to
20 the fourth page.

21 A The fourth?

22 Q Fourth page. Footnote 30. Do you see that?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Footnote 30, [REDACTED] And the footnote
25 here, September 12, 2012: [REDACTED]

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/001~~

1

2

3

A Yes.

4

Q This is Exhibit 1.

5

A Yes.

6

Q Presumably, that is in the [REDACTED] that you're talking about with the AQIM.

7

A This certainly looks like it.

8

Q And that's something you said you had very early

9

on?

10

A [REDACTED]

11

12

[REDACTED] But, anyway, yeah, this looks like --

13

Q [REDACTED]

14

[REDACTED] You can take a look at it if you need more time. If you did read it, it would have been provided to you in either the PDB or your internal NCTC brief?

15

16

17

A Yes. And it's quite likely, given how focused we were and given the date, that I would have seen this and read it at the time.

18

19

20

Q Okay. You don't have any specific recollection of that, though.

21

22

A No.

23

24

Q At some point in the days following the attack, a narrative was emerging or an issue was emerging that there

25

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1 may or may not have been protests prior to the attack.

2 A Right.

3 Q Do you recall when you first learned about that
4 issue popping up?

5 A I am, obviously, aware of the issue. I don't
6 remember when I first learned of -- that that was -- I don't
7 remember when I first learned. It may have been when I first
8 sort of focused on it as an issue. Well, at least, I know I
9 did focus on it as an issue on the Saturday after Benghazi
10 during the Deputies call and Michael Morell mentioned during
11 that -- it was a video call. Again, it was a Saturday
12 morning. I was at NCTC. And he talked about how he had
13 gotten an email or a cable from the station in Libya in which
14 I think it was a station chief was saying that there was not
15 a protest.

16 So that would have been, right, so 5 days afterward.
17 And Michael said at the time -- I recall him saying: We're
18 looking at that right now. The analysts have looked at it,
19 but given what we have, we're sticking with what we have been
20 saying so far, that there was a protest, notwithstanding the
21 sort of different view.

22 So whether I thought it about it before then, I don't
23 know, but I definitely thought about it that morning.

24 Q Do you recall whether you knew that the CIA had
25 said that there were protests prior to the call? Was that

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~~TS/SC1~~

1 something that was even on your radar?

2 A My feeling today is that that was news to me to
3 hear that that Saturday morning, that I had not heard before,
4 and there wouldn't be a natural channel for me to learn that
5 from the station chief. In other words, he wouldn't have
6 sent me an email that he sent to Morell, if that answers your
7 question.

8 Q Well, I just want to clarify. When you say it's
9 news to you, the fact that the chief of station said there
10 may not have been a protest or just the general discussion of
11 protests?

12 A I don't remember specifically on the general
13 discussion. It's possible that I was aware of a general
14 discussion around the question of whether there had been a
15 protest or not before that Saturday morning. I don't
16 remember.

17 Q Is that something you or your analysts were focused
18 on, the question as to whether or not there were protests?

19 A You know, I don't remember it being a central focus
20 of our attention. And as I've thought about it since, I've
21 wondered, and my sense is that it probably would have not
22 been a central focus because our focus was on who, why, where
23 they are, whether they were connected to other people, who
24 within Al Qaeda, perhaps, was involved, if there are were
25 other Al Qaeda elements, and then where the threats were.

~~TS/SC1~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 The question of whether or not there had been a protest,
2 I just don't remember that being at all a central focus. I
3 do remember, as I said, that Saturday morning.

4 Q Sure. That's fair. So I just handed out
5 Exhibit 2.

6 [Olsen Exhibit No. 2
7 was marked for identification.]

8 BY MR. DAVIS:

9 Q It's an email from you to a group of folks,
10 September 15th, 2012, 11:15 a.m. It's in response to an
11 email from Michael Morell, which is on page 2?

12 A Right.

13 Q So I have several questions for you about this
14 particular document.

15 Do you remember this email stream?

16 A Yes.

17 Q So the first question is, so Morell sends an email
18 with the talking points, looking for signoff from you and
19 some other folks. You say: "Michael -- This looks good to
20 me." And then you send him an attachment that says: "These
21 are the points that ODNI leg sent to Ruppertsberger yesterday
22 afternoon based on his request."

23 So can talk about the impetus for your talking points
24 that you included in this email?

25 A Sure. So the talking points that I included in

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1 this email arose from the briefing that I mentioned, which
2 was on the 13th, where I was at HPSCI and provided that
3 session -- which, again, didn't answer a lot of questions,
4 but everything I knew at the time, which was limited.

5 At the end of that, Chairman -- what I recall for my
6 briefing, Chairman Rogers was there only for a short period
7 of time. He had left and left it over to Congressman
8 Ruppertsberger as the vice chairman or ranking member. And
9 then at the end of that -- to sort of run the meeting -- and
10 then at the end of that, Congressman Ruppertsberger asked me
11 or me and my leg person who was there with me for
12 unclassified talking points that he could use to answer
13 questions publicly.

14 And so we went back to the office and my leg affairs
15 person, who is [REDACTED] V [REDACTED] as I recall, he drafted up
16 these points. At some point, I saw them and said they were
17 fine. I don't remember changing anything or having any role
18 in drafting them. I do recall that I looked at them and said
19 they're good, go ahead and send them over. And so that's how
20 they came to be.

21 Q Estimated length of time between when you got back
22 to the office and when these were sent over to HPSCI?

23 A I can sort of piece it together. I don't have a
24 recollection today, but I say in this note that we sent them
25 yesterday afternoon, so that would have been Friday, and I

~~TS/SCI~~

1 would have been at HPSCI on Thursday, on the 13th.

2 Q So it would have been over the course of a day?

3 A Yeah, 24 hours to maybe more, but definitely from
4 one day to the next. The next day they are sent over.

5 Q So after you kind of give your leg affairs person
6 the thumbs up, do you know if he sent them straight over or
7 do you know if he coordinated them with other individuals or
8 other entities?

9 A I've talked to him about it. I believe, based on
10 that, that he sent them directly and that it didn't go
11 around, for example, to interagency.

12 Q Why didn't they go to the interagency?

13 A I don't know the answer. I mean, you could talk to
14 him. It didn't strike me at the time. If the question is
15 sort of like why wouldn't I have directed him to send them
16 around, I would probably have thought it was appropriate,
17 under the circumstances, given the nature of the request,
18 that that would be something that would be fine to send to
19 Ruppertsberger -- to the committee, to HPSCI.

20 Q So without coordinating.

21 A Yeah.

22 Q So they should not necessarily have been
23 coordinated, is what you're saying.

24 A It wasn't that there was anything wrong with
25 coordinating them. It just didn't strike me at the time that

1 it was something that we would necessarily feel we needed to
2 do.

3 So sitting here today, and then -- what I recall, too,
4 is at the time when Michael Morell sent his around, I was
5 like, well, I should show you what we already provided to
6 HPSCI. That was actually literally what went through my
7 head. At the time when we sent them over, it didn't occur to
8 me that it was necessary to coordinate those.

9 Q So you said Morell talked about this at the
10 Deputies on Saturday morning?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Was that the first time you had heard that they
13 were doing a set of talking points for HPSCI?

14 A Yes. That was the first time I heard.

15 Q Did you have any follow-up conversations with
16 Michael Morell outside of this email chain about these
17 talking points?

18 A Not about them before they went up. In other
19 words, I have since talked to him about the talking points
20 issue, right. I think this was the only communication I had
21 about sort of the substance of the talking points before that
22 day, and then I assume they went up that day.

23 Q Were you surprised to learn that the CIA was also
24 doing a set of talking points for HPSCI?

25 A No. No, I wasn't actually surprised to learn that,

~~TS/SCI~~

1 because I think I knew that Director Petraeus had been to
2 HPSCI. It didn't surprise me to learn that they might have
3 asked him the same thing that they asked me.

4 Q Were you surprised to learn that these talking
5 points, the ones from the CIA, were being coordinated with
6 the interagency?

7 A No. It didn't surprise me. In fact, I think
8 probably it struck me as quite reasonable to do that, to
9 share them at that point. From what I recall, again, looking
10 back, is that I -- he was coordinating his, and it struck me
11 we should send what we sent around so they have the benefit
12 of seeing what we already sent.

13 Q Let me ask you this. So you can look at your
14 talking points.

15 A Right.

16 Q I want you to look at them and tell me if anything
17 in there is inaccurate. I'm asking about your talking
18 points.

19 A I'll read them again carefully.

20 Q Sure, sure.

21 Mr. Wainstein. Inaccurate based on the knowledge now or
22 back then?

23 Mr. Davis. Correct. Based on the knowledge now.

24 Mr. Olsen. So I mean, I think that they are accurate.
25 They were accurate then. I think they remain accurate.

~~TS/SCI~~

1 BY MR. DAVIS:

2 Q Let's look at Michael Morell's talking points. If
3 you can read those briefly and tell me if there is anything
4 that you know now to be inaccurate about those talking
5 points. That you know now to be inaccurate.

6 A Right.

7 Q It is not a trick question.

8 A Right.

9 Q Is there anything in there?

10 A That is not accurate today?

11 Q You know now to be not accurate.

12 A There is ways in which it probably -- I have,
13 obviously, talked to Michael about it -- that it could have
14 been more artfully drafted.

15 Q Let me read the first sentence: "The currently
16 available information suggests that the demonstrations in
17 Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the
18 U.S. Embassy in Cairo," et cetera, et cetera.

19 Were there demonstrations in Benghazi, I guess is my
20 question.

21 A The term "demonstrations" is probably the least
22 sort of helpful, because, you know, it was obviously an
23 attack in Benghazi.

24 Q Sure.

25 A And there were no -- it didn't say this, but the

~~TS/001~~

1 word "demonstrations" evokes that you have a protest, which
2 we know now there was no protest.

3 Q Here is what I am getting at. On these two pages,
4 there are two sets of talking points.

5 A Right.

6 Q There are your talking points from NCTC and then
7 there are the CIA talking points. Both sets of talking
8 points were for HPSCI, okay? One -- and this is my view --
9 seemed to undergo some arbitrary bureaucratic process that
10 ended up with inaccuracies. One was done within a particular
11 agency that was sent over. Those were correct.

12 So why did one go through this process and one didn't go
13 through this process? That's just what I'm trying to ask you
14 about.

15 A That is a fair question. I think there is nothing
16 wrong, and would have even, and if I had thought about it at
17 the time, with our talking points, would have been good to
18 get input from the CIA analysts or the other analysts.

19 Again, I have thought a lot about this and read a lot
20 about it since then, right? I think having -- there are
21 concerns about having public affairs people at times get
22 involved. But there is nothing per se wrong. I wouldn't
23 have thought at the time, nor today, that if we had taken
24 what we drafted and sent it over to -- if I sent it to
25 Morell, for example, that would have been maybe even a good

~~TS/001~~

1 thing to do, you know what I mean, like a wise and prudent
2 thing to do. But it's also not against our sort of approach.
3 It's one thing to -- we would always want to -- for certain
4 types of analytic products, we say we coordinate those, we
5 coordinate those across the IC.

6 Talking points is sort of a one-off. It is not like me
7 actually saying. like, if Congressman Ruppertsberger had said,
8 "Hey, what can we say? What can I say unclassified today? I
9 am going to walk out of here and someone is going to ask me,
10 what can I say?" And I would say: "Here is what you should
11 say." And I might even convey that orally.

12 So that's kind of how I thought it about.

13 Q The analytic products that are coordinated
14 throughout the interagency, those tend to be almost
15 predominantly classified.

16 A True.

17 Q Is that right?

18 A True, yeah.

19 Q These are talking points. They were meant to be
20 unclassified. That was the request.

21 A That was the whole point, right.

22 Q So isn't it different applying the process of
23 interagency coordination for classified sort of assessment
24 versus talking points that were meant to be publicized?

25 A I do think the classification issue is relevant,

1 but it is not really dispositive, because you might, even in
2 an unclassified statement, you might decide you want it to be
3 the voice of the IC behind that statement. I think it has
4 more to do with just the nature of the request and what we
5 were trying to accomplish than whether it was classified or
6 not.

7 Q You said that the email from Morell was the first
8 time you sawing the talking points. The discussion at the
9 Deputies was the first time you learned about these
10 particular talking points. Did you at the time have any
11 understanding of any changes that had been made, outside of
12 the email you got from Morell, in the talking points drafting
13 process?

14 A Yes. The one issue that Michael Morell talked
15 about during that video conference was -- what I recall was
16 that he mentioned that there was some language in there about
17 prior threat warnings that the CIA had given. And he
18 mentioned during this call that he had taken that out or was
19 going to take that out or recommended it be taken out.
20 Basically, my impression was that he had decided that that
21 would be taken out because he thought it would sort of
22 unfairly point a finger at the State Department as not having
23 done enough and sort of had a feel of being a CYA, if I can
24 use that term --

25 Q Sure.

1 A -- sort of thing for the CIA to do. And I remember
2 thinking at the time: That's right, you know, yes.
3 Unclassified talking points for HPSCI is not the place to
4 start saying we knew this and we told you. There will be
5 plenty of time for that. I say that jokingly, okay. I did
6 remember thinking he is making the right call.

7 Q I want to turn your attention to the HPSCI talking
8 points on page 2. The last sentence of the first bullet, it
9 says: "There are indications that extremists participated in
10 the violent demonstrations."

11 A Right.

12 Q Do you know what that is referring to -- may be
13 referring to?

14 A I assume -- I don't know for sure -- I assume that
15 it's a reflection of, for example, that [REDACTED] report and other
16 limited reports at the time.

17 Q Okay. Do you recall ever actually reading that [REDACTED]
18 report?

19 A No, I don't recall ever reading the actual
20 underlying report.

21 Q So someone says there is an [REDACTED] report or there is
22 [REDACTED] that says X, and obviously you're going to take it at
23 face value.

24 A Yeah. And given the way it came to me in the
25 reporting that I saw. Yeah, I was confident that I could

~~TS/SCI~~

1 rely on it in the analysis I was seeing.

2 Q Have you since learned about any issues with that
3 particular report?

4 A Not that I recall.

5 Q Okay. Susan Rice, the next day, went on the Sunday
6 morning talk shows. Did you watch her while she went on
7 shows or did you hear about it later that day, what she may
8 have said?

9 A I definitely heard about it. I don't remember if I
10 watched it. I don't think I did watch it at the time. I
11 don't typically watch the Sunday shows. But I definitely,
12 obviously, heard about it with, if not that day, the next
13 day, and then read transcripts.

14 Q You definitely obviously heard about it.

15 A Yeah.

16 Q Why is that so definite? Why do you recall such a

17 --

18 A Because it became -- well, obviously since then, it
19 has become such a focus of attention.

20 Q Sure. But at the time, how or why were you told
21 about her appearance?

22 A I just don't remember the first time I would have
23 heard about it or learned about her appearance.

24 Q You said you read the transcripts. Was that at the
25 time?

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A No, subsequent, subsequent.

2 Q When you were told about her appearance or you
3 learned about her appearance either that Sunday or that
4 Monday, do you recall thinking, "Oh, that sounds about
5 right"? Do you recall thinking that she had maybe gone a
6 little further than what you may have done or you knew? Do
7 you have any thoughts about what she said? Again, at the
8 time.

9 A At the time, it's hard to parse out my view at the
10 time versus my few weeks, month, years later. But, you know,
11 I would say that at the time -- I remember having thoughts
12 about it at the time. Obviously, I subsequently testified.
13 And so I am aware of the -- I became aware of this
14 controversy around what I said before the Senate Homeland
15 Committee and what Secretary Rice -- Ambassador Rice said.

16 So, you know, I remember at the time thinking more or
17 less that what she said was -- I remember thinking that what
18 she said was accurate, given the information that we were
19 putting out in our analysis.

20 What I remember, though, is also thinking that she in
21 some ways was more unequivocal about what she was saying than
22 we were being. So it was more almost the demeanor and sort
23 of the way in which she phrased her comments on the Sunday
24 shows that I thought was, again, more certain than we felt
25 the information supported.

~~10/301~~

1 Mr. Davis. All right. So I'm at 52 minutes. I think
2 we will stop now because the next topic I was going to jump
3 into was your testimony. That'll take more than 8 minutes.
4 So we'll stop now and take a break and we'll assess the path
5 forward.

6 [Recess.]

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~~TS/301~~

1 [2:50 p.m.]

2 BY MR. DAVIS:

3 Q We're back on the record.

4 So a couple very brief follow-up questions, and then we
5 can dive into the documents.

6 In our discussion about the talking points last hour,
7 you said something along the lines of public affairs
8 individuals being involved. Can you expand on that as to
9 whether or not you viewed that as a positive, a negative, or
10 what you meant when you mentioned "public affairs
11 individuals"?

12 A My sense is influenced by having talked to Michael
13 Morell and sort of followed the controversy around the
14 talking points since this all happened and how important it
15 is for the intelligence analysts to have control over the
16 substance of anything that is put out, whether it's in a
17 formal analytic product or talking points. And I think,
18 certainly, you need to work with the public affairs folks and
19 congressional affairs folks as the conduit and as sort of the
20 liaison and also just the coordinating mechanism for
21 intelligence information to flow, particularly to Congress.
22 But when it comes to the substance, then that's a place where
23 you have to be really careful to make sure that, you know,
24 what the substance of the analysis is, is up to the analysts.
25 That was my thought when I said that.

~~TS/301~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 Q Is that going to matter whether -- talking points,
2 for example -- whether they're classified or unclassified?

3 A No, it really doesn't. The issue is the same
4 whether it's classified or unclassified in terms of the
5 importance of the independence and authority of the analysts
6 over the substance.

7 Q So the NCTC talking points, obviously, HPSCI asked
8 you for those in an unclassified manner. Do you recall
9 occasions where you've provided classified talking points to
10 HPSCI?

11 A No, because, again, sort of the whole idea behind
12 it was so that the Members would have something to be able to
13 say. And my probably critical focus was, one, accuracy, but,
14 you know, second was sensitivity, so that what we were giving
15 to HPSCI was not -- wouldn't disclose any information that
16 was classified or certainly, you know, compromised any
17 sources or methods.

18 And, in fact, that's why, in retrospect, looking back,
19 you know, that what we provided -- now, what we provided when
20 I read it, I remember -- and I think, today -- what NCTC, I
21 should say, provided was very limited in terms of the amount
22 of actual factual information.

23 Q I was looking over it again, and I thought it
24 was -- it was my assessment, you know, six or seven bullets
25 points, you say a lot without saying anything.

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A Which is -- you know, to be honest, that was -- we
2 want to give the Members something that they can point to,
3 but we also -- again, we were very early --

4 Q Sure.

5 A -- and we didn't know much --

6 Q Sure.

7 A -- and we also -- it's an unclassified setting.
8 But if you were saying more specifically, that definitely
9 militates in favor of coordinating. For example, if there is
10 an FBI equity, you know, in something you're saying, you
11 know, about who might have been involved and what is now an
12 ongoing investigation, you would want -- I would feel like at
13 the time -- and today -- I would feel that it would be right
14 to talk to, for example, at the time, Sean Joyce and say:
15 Here is what we're putting out. We want to make sure this is
16 -- you don't have an issue with that from -- in a way that
17 NCTC is not appreciating the FBI perspective.

18 That's why I understand and I understood at the time why
19 Morell would want to circulate that, and whereas what we said
20 was so limited factually that it didn't occur to me that it
21 would be necessary to get that input.

22 Q When you sent your talking points over there, were
23 you expecting them to represent the views of Matt Olsen, of
24 NCTC, or sort of the greater IC in general?

25 A I think, inevitably, it would represent the views

~~TS/SCI~~

1 of the IC, perhaps, because that's the role that NCTC played,
2 but they were clearly sent over as NCTC -- you know, from
3 NCTC to HPSCI.

4 Q And did you have any idea whether the talking
5 points that the CIA sent over were supposed to reflect the
6 views of the CIA in particular or the greater IC as a whole?

7 A I interpreted it at the time, because I, you know,
8 I was part of the coordination process with Michael Morell
9 that Saturday, that they would represent sort of the IC view
10 of the facts as we knew them at the time.

11 [Olsen Exhibit No. 3
12 was marked for identification.]

13 BY MR. DAVIS:

14 Q Okay. Let's go to exhibit 3.

15 A Okay.

16 Q And this is document No. SCB0051480. It's actually
17 an email from Bernadette Meehan to Cheryl Mills. But the
18 subject is "Olsen Transcript." And below is an email from
19 Shawn Turner to several folks, and it appears to be a
20 transcript of the hearing before HSGAC, on September 19th,
21 2012.

22 So I have a couple of questions about this particular
23 document -- really, about the hearing transcript.

24 So if you turn to page 487 -- 51487 -- I'm sorry. It's
25 at the very bottom right?

1 A Oh, okay.

2 Q 51487.

3 A Page 487. Okay.

4 Q Yes. So I want to direct your attention to your
5 opening statement. My first question here is: Who drafted
6 your opening statement, if you can recall?

7 A The typical way that this would have gone is that
8 the -- that there is -- an initial draft is prepared by
9 our -- you know, one or two people -- I don't know the
10 time frame -- who are congressional affairs for NCTC who
11 would pull together information from the analysts and then
12 put together a written statement for the record for -- and I
13 would have -- I had a -- I typically took a pretty prominent
14 role in editing that document.

15 And So again, I don't specifically recall the written
16 statement for the record, but the typical process would be I
17 would get a draft, and I'd have a role in editing it and in
18 approving it before it would be submitted. That would be the
19 written statement for the record.

20 So if -- for this, which would be a version of the
21 written statement, right? So what I would typically do is
22 take the written statement and cut it down in length to an
23 oral statement that would be more appropriate for the
24 setting.

25 And I can give you a little more further elaboration,

~~13/301~~

1 which is to say I went back and looked. In the written
2 statement, I don't mention Benghazi, as I read my written
3 statement for the record, which made me think it must have
4 been submitted before Benghazi. That's the only way that
5 would make sense. And we typically tried to get it to the
6 committee, I don't know, a week before or whatever, but I --

7 Q Well, that's interesting because -- and I didn't
8 mean to cut you off.

9 A That's all right.

10 Q So paragraphs 2 and 3 of your statement, of your
11 oral statement, mentioned Benghazi in particular?

12 A Yes.

13 Q So there's a chance that the written statement may
14 have been submitted, you know, more than a week in advance?

15 A I think that's right. That's what I -- when I went
16 back and read the written statement for the record, I don't
17 remember seeing -- I looked, and I didn't see any reference
18 to Benghazi. So I, obviously, do reference it here: so I
19 would've been involved in sort of recrafting this to,
20 obviously, address Benghazi in my oral statement.

21 Q So you don't know if this particular statement was
22 shared with others outside NCTC before it was submitted to
23 HSGAC?

24 A I don't know. I don't know. Yeah. This, I
25 just -- this I would've -- the oral statement -- yeah, I

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 don't know if I would've -- if it would've been circulated.

2 Yeah.

3 Q All right. So let's jump ahead.

4 A Okay.

5 Q We're going to go to page 51491.

6 A Okay.

7 Q So this is Senator Lieberman's questioning. It was
8 the very first question of the hearing. And I'm going to go
9 to the fourth paragraph here.

10 And Senator Lieberman says: "So let me begin by asking
11 you whether you would say that Ambassador Stevens and the
12 three other Americans died as a result of a terrorist
13 attack."

14 Your answer: "Certainly on that particular question, I
15 would say, yes, they were killed in the course of a terrorist
16 attack on our embassy."

17 A Yes.

18 Q We can discuss this, I guess, a little later, but
19 this is sort of a well-known turning point in terms of
20 information coming from administration officials as to what
21 happened regarding the Benghazi attack.

22 Did you approach this hearing knowing that you were
23 going to publicly acknowledge that what happened in Benghazi
24 was a terrorist attack?

25 A No. It was -- in fact, it was a question that,

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1 until Senator Lieberman posed it, it didn't really even occur
2 to me during my preparation for the hearing, which, you know,
3 sitting here today, looking back, even to me -- you know,
4 maybe -- I wonder if I should've been more thoughtful about
5 whether to think about that question. But when he framed the
6 question was really the first time, sort of, the thought was
7 occurring to me about how to answer the question of whether
8 this was a terrorist attack.

9 Q You had no indication up until that moment that he
10 was going to ask you that question?

11 A No. No. And, you know, we had had prep sessions
12 for me to get ready for this hearing. And I should add, you
13 know, this hearing was a previously scheduled --

14 Q Sure.

15 A -- you know, a regularly scheduled update, right?

16 Q I understand that.

17 A So then Benghazi's the intervening factor. But I
18 did have some time to prepare and talk to folks and talk to
19 my leg team, and we never, as I recall, we never talked about
20 that particular question.

21 [Olsen Exhibit No. 4

22 was marked for identification.]

23 BY MR. DAVIS:

24 Q Okay. Let's look at exhibit 4. You can kind of
25 lay it side by side.

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A Yeah.

2 Q We might jump back and forth.

3 So exhibit 4. This is an email. It's document
4 C05561987. It's an email from Bernadette Meehan to Victoria
5 Nuland and [REDACTED] Again, you're not on this email
6 chain.

7 I want to direct your attention down to the bottom
8 email, from Bernadette Meehan to Victoria Nuland, and I will
9 just read it really quickly.

10 A Sure.

11 Q "I am rushing to Jay's prep, and will circle up
12 with the broader group after, but wanted to flag that Matt
13 Olsen from NCTC will be on the Hill this morning, along with
14 FBI and DHS. It is a prescheduled session," as you just
15 noted, "but we expect that the Q&A will focus heavily on the
16 Libya attacks.

17 "Wanted to flag that --" in all caps "-- IF ASKED, Matt
18 will use the line," and then there are a couple -- then
19 there's a bullet point there about indications that some of
20 the extremists involved may be linked to Al Qaeda or its
21 affiliates.

22 So you mentioned a prep session earlier.

23 A Yes.

24 Q Who participated in your prep session for this
25 particular hearing, if you can recall?

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~~TS/SCT~~

1 A [REDACTED] is our -- my leg person, and then
2 some analysts -- I don't remember who -- and possibly Nick
3 Rasmussen.

4 Q So all internal NCTC?

5 A Oh, yeah. It's just internal, yes.

6 Q So I read this email from Bernadette Meehan to
7 Victoria Nuland. It seems to me that, you know, if asked,
8 you will use the line, and then there's a line about linking
9 the attack to Al Qaeda or its affiliates.

10 Is that something that you had had discussions with
11 outside of NCTC?

12 A Yes. So not outside but on that particular point I
13 have a very specific recollection of talking to -- internally
14 -- particularly to [REDACTED] in the preparation for this
15 hearing, and if it was -- it probably was the day before --
16 and saying: I am going to -- I want to talk about the Al
17 Qaeda connection. The Al Qaeda connection, largely coming
18 just from that one [REDACTED] report we've talked about that
19 linked one of the participants to AQIM, was a prominent fact
20 in our analysis.

21 And I specifically recall talking to [REDACTED] about: This is
22 what I'm going to say if asked about who was involved. And
23 we talked about coordinating that point -- in other words,
24 basically alerting the interagency leg, you know, sort of
25 team -- that that was going to be part of my testimony, and

~~TS/SCT~~

~~157501~~

1 being aware at the time too that that was a fact that was --
2 you know, had not really been, I think, out in the public
3 domain up until that point. I remember being aware of that,
4 thinking it was important that it be part of my testimony,
5 and wanting to make sure that that was something that was
6 made, you know, part of the coordination process.

7 Q Do you know why it wasn't out in the public domain
8 up till that point?

9 A No. I mean, in other words, nobody had said it,
10 but I don't know why no one had mentioned it, right?

11 Q You said you talked to [REDACTED], who worked on the leg
12 affairs team. Did you, personally, have any conversations
13 with folks outside of NCTC about this particular point on Al
14 Qaeda?

15 A Not that I recall. And I should go back to my last
16 answer, which is, you know, that the CIA talking points
17 made -- you know, Michael Morell's talking points made some
18 reference to extremists, looking at indications that
19 extremists were involved. This seemed to me to be, you know,
20 certainly consistent with that but more to the point, you
21 know, more to the point of looking at indications. Again,
22 even the way -- as it turns out, I basically -- as I
23 testified, I had not seen this email before, but as I
24 testified, it pretty much follows what was sent around for
25 coordination in terms of what I actually said.

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 So I had a pretty strong -- in other words, this is an
2 indication to me, sitting here today, that I had a pretty
3 strong sense of how I wanted to phrase that --

4 Q Sure.

5 A -- so as not to go too far.

6 Q Do you recall what the response was from other
7 individuals in the interagency when it was known -- when it
8 became known that you were going to stress this point if
9 asked?

10 A I don't recall any reaction, but I would have
11 expected [REDACTED] to tell me if there was a very -- if
12 there was a strong negative reaction. That's kind of the
13 idea of coordinating, to find out if there are any concerns
14 that merit, you know, further conversation, and I don't
15 recall hearing that there were any such concerns expressed.

16 Q Was there a concern on your end -- you mentioned
17 the one [REDACTED] report that came out shortly after the
18 attack -- the fact that that was, in fact, a [REDACTED] report
19 and saying this in an open session, that there were links to
20 Al Qaeda?

21 A What that meant to me was that -- and we also had
22 indications of Ansar al-Sharia being involved, I think at
23 that point, the group, you know, with some degree of alliance
24 with Al Qaeda. That was why I phrased it in a somewhat
25 conditional, somewhat equivocal way, that, you know, we were

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 looking at -- let me find exactly what I said.

2 Q Well, let's look at 51492.

3 A Okay.

4 Q That's the next page. It's the top of that page.

5 A Right.

6 Q I'm just going to look at the last sentence in your
7 response. "We're looking at indications that individuals
8 involved in the attack may have connections to al-Qaida or
9 al-Qaida's affiliates --"

10 A Right.

11 Q "-- in particular" AQIM.

12 A So that's exactly -- I appreciate that, because
13 that is -- when you asked the question about, you know,
14 potentially the classified nature of the information that was
15 underlying this, that was why I phrased it in that way as
16 opposed to more specifically than, you know, considering the
17 information I knew at the time.

18 Q Do you recall, on that particular point about the
19 [REDACTED] whether you had had conversations with anybody outside of
20 NCTC about knowing that fact coming from the [REDACTED] or whether it
21 had come from other sources in addition?

22 A Today -- as I sit here today, I think that we had
23 multiple different sources that would have supported that,
24 and it wasn't simply the [REDACTED] report. Although, the AQIM
25 reference may only have come from the [REDACTED]

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 Q Okay. I want to get exhibit 4 really quickly. I
2 have two questions on this.

3 A Okay.

4 Mr. Wainstein. Can I have 1 second?

5 Mr. Davis. Yeah, of course.

6 [Discussion off the record.]

7 Mr. Olsen. So if I can go back and just give a little
8 more elaboration on my thinking on the -- my mentioning of Al
9 Qaeda.

10 So part of my thought was, if you recall, I had been
11 before HPSCI the week before, shortly after the attack, and I
12 had actually talked about, you know, obviously, the
13 classified reporting at that time. We had -- you know,
14 several days had gone by. I was more aware of additional
15 reporting, as I recall, I don't remember specifically what.

16 But my thought at the time was this is not overly
17 sensitive, and it is the kind of information that I was
18 concerned, if we didn't -- if I didn't say this in response
19 to a question about who was responsible for this attack, it
20 would be an omission that would be glaring in the -- you
21 know, as, one, Congress Members, themselves, were aware of
22 this, right? Some of them serving on HPSCI or SSCI may well
23 have seen the reporting. So it seemed to me the right thing
24 to do to avoid being, you know, viewed as not being as
25 forthcoming as I could be, even if it went beyond what had

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1 been publicly stated.

2 So that was my thinking at the time, why I thought that
3 that was an important point to make and why I actually
4 focused on it in advance of the hearings, so that folks would
5 know that I was going to say it.

6 BY MR. DAVIS:

7 Q So going to exhibit 4 really quickly. At the very
8 bottom of the page is a sentence. "Hopefully won't come up,
9 but wanted to flag just in case." Do you know why she would
10 have said hopefully don't come up?

11 A No.

12 Q Do you know who Bernadette Meehan is?

13 A No.

14 Q You don't know who she is?

15 A [Nonverbal response.]

16 Q Okay.

17 A I assume a State Department person, but I don't --
18 but I don't know.

19 Q Okay. But you don't know why an individual --
20 she's in the administration -- you don't know why an
21 individual would have said "hopefully won't come up" on the
22 AQIM topic?

23 A No. You know, I just don't. I just don't.
24 Obviously, I could speculate, but I don't know.

25 Q Okay. We've seen indications from other

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1 individuals that, when asked specific questions about the
2 attack, they would refer it to the ongoing FBI
3 investigation --

4 A Right.

5 Q -- and just kind of say we're waiting for the
6 investigation to unfold, and we'll draw our conclusions when
7 that's completed.

8 Why didn't you say that in regards to, A, whether or not
9 it was a terrorist attack, and, B, who was responsible for
10 perpetrating the attack?

11 A You know, my general sense and my approach was to
12 be as forthcoming and open as possible with Congress and, you
13 know, as a consequence in an open hearing with the American
14 public about what we could talk about. You know, there are
15 many opportunities to say, you know, I'm only going to talk
16 about, you know, what -- this is the FBI's investigation
17 or to not answer the question.

18 To me, you know, the NCTC was created to answer these
19 exact questions, and there are, you know, there are facts
20 that the intelligence community can put onto a public record
21 that are helpful to Congress and to the American people to
22 understand not only what happened, but the broader context of
23 the nature of the terrorist threat and all the types of
24 information that are, you know, I think, appropriately part
25 of the public discourse on terrorism. And so that was my

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1 approach when I was in office.

2 Q Sure.

3 A And that -- I brought that to bear on this
4 particular set of issues.

5 Q Was there anything about the FBI investigation that
6 prohibited you from either, A, saying it was a terrorist
7 attack, or, B, drawing a link to AQIM?

8 A No, nothing that I -- no, I don't -- certainly not
9 the question of whether it was a terrorist attack or the way
10 I phrased the answer to the question on who was
11 responsible -- on the connections to -- you know, potential
12 connections to terrorist groups.

13 Q So if nothing about the ongoing investigation
14 prohibited you from saying that, then why would others refer
15 to the ongoing investigation when asked those very same
16 questions?

17 A You know, I, obviously, don't know exactly why
18 others. I do think there's a range of reasonable, you know,
19 approaches to this question. In other words, I don't think
20 there is one right approach.

21 Q Let's hear some of the options of why they might
22 rely on the FBI investigation instead of answering the
23 question.

24 A Well, you know, actually, a little bit. I would say
25 I was drawing on my own experience, having been a prosecutor

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~~TS/SC1~~

1 and having been -- having worked at the FBI, having worked at
2 DOJ. You know, I have maybe more comfort with where these
3 lines are.

4 I get that there need to be lines about what you can say
5 and what you can't say, and there are sensitivities and
6 equities that are really important. But I had sort of
7 navigated those as a prosecutor and as a DOJ official and in
8 the NSA as the general counsel to the point where I was, you
9 know, reasonably confident in my ability to make those
10 judgments.

11 But I certainly would acknowledge that others with less
12 experience or less, you know, confidence in their ability
13 would feel more comfortable simply deferring to others, and I
14 think that's a reasonable approach for others to take.

15 Q Sure. As a prosecutor, the facts are very
16 important to you. A fact is a fact, and you're going to
17 share what that fact may be -- is that fair to say? -- as
18 opposed to being concerned about public relations, in lack of
19 a better phrase, or the impression people might get?

20 A That's basically right, and that's sort of -- that
21 is the approach of being a prosecutor in terms of reliance on
22 facts. I'm not -- I shouldn't, you know, lead you to believe
23 that I'm completely oblivious to --

24 Q Of course.

25 A -- the public impression that you can leave and the

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1 importance that that has too.

2 Q All right. Let's go back to exhibit 3 in your
3 testimony. I'm on page 491, 51491.

4 The third paragraph of your second answer, it begins:
5 "It appears that individuals --" do you see that? Let me
6 just read it. "It appears that individuals who were
7 certainly well-armed seized on the opportunity presented as
8 the events unfolded that evening and into the -- into the
9 morning hours of September 12th."

10 My question to you is: When you say, "seized on the
11 opportunity presented," what were you referring to at that
12 point, if you can recall, what opportunity in particular?

13 A So I think at this point in time that was
14 consistent with the analysis that we were -- that we were
15 putting out on the opportunistic nature of the attack based
16 on the information we had. So as I look back on that
17 particular phrase, you know, certainly we knew that there
18 were individuals who were well armed in Benghazi. We knew
19 that there were many people involved in the attacks, and we
20 didn't -- and we didn't have a bead on what motivated them.
21 I think that's kind of where we were from an analytic
22 standpoint. And we didn't have any indication that there was
23 external direction or significant preplanning.

24 So I think all of those factors led me to that
25 formulation of seizing on an opportunity that presented as

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1 the events unfolded that evening.

2 Now, I think -- so I think that's the answer. As I'm
3 sitting here trying to remember, you know, we were -- at this
4 point, we were still concerned about -- I think we were still
5 relying on the notion that there had been a protest, and I
6 think that also led to this.

7 Q When you say "we" were relying on the notion that
8 there was a protest, "we" being?

9 A The intelligence community generally.

10 Q Okay. So at this point -- and I've lived this the
11 last year of my life.

12 A Yeah.

13 Q I understand you've been doing other things.

14 A I appreciate that. Right.

15 Q So your testimony was on the 19th. On the 18th,
16 the U.S. Government, specifically the CIA, received a
17 write-up from the Libyan Intel Service about what was on the
18 closed-circuit television cameras --

19 A Right.

20 Q -- at the compound.

21 Are you familiar with that generally speaking?

22 A Generally speaking, I am, yes.

23 Q Do you know when you learned about that writeup or
24 what was on the contents of that camera?

25 A I don't remember that --

~~15/301~~

1 Q Okay.

2 A -- when I learned that. You know, I don't remember
3 when I learned that. And I don't remember if, even at this
4 point in time, we were starting to -- you know, obviously, we
5 had had that conversation on Saturday with Morell and sort of
6 -- there was conflicting information from the station.

7 Q Right.

8 A How far along that had gotten, I don't know.

9 Q Well, that's fair. Okay.

10 I want to keep your attention on the paragraph we were
11 discussing. The next sentence says: "We do know that a
12 number of militants in the area, as I mentioned, are
13 well-armed and maintain those arms. What we don't have at
14 this point is specific intelligence that there was a
15 significant advanced planning or coordination for the
16 attack."

17 The next sentence: "Again, we're still developing facts
18 and still looking for any indications of substantial advanced
19 planning."

20 A Right.

21 Q So one question here. In one sentence, you mention
22 "significant advanced planning," the next sentence you're
23 looking for any indications of "substantial advanced
24 planning."

25 Again, this is a specific question: Did you know at

~~13/SC1~~

1 that point whether there were any indications of any advanced
2 planning -- substantial, significant, or otherwise?

3 A And it's a good question, and I think at the
4 time -- I know what I was thinking at the time by adding in
5 those modifiers, is that, you know, given just what we know
6 about the facts of the attacks, and, you know, the multiple
7 attacks, and particularly the mortar attacks -- it didn't --
8 it certainly would not -- didn't seem wise for me to
9 foreclose the possibility that there was planning involved,
10 right?

11 I mean, it just -- what I knew about it at that point
12 suggested that there certainly could have been some degree of
13 planning that went into, you know, understanding where the
14 Americans were, understanding how to bring a number of
15 militants together at the same place and the same time. That
16 also suggested to me some planning, so that's why I focused
17 on "substantial" or "significant."

18 Q Do you recall being aware at this time knowing
19 whether or not there was an intel report [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED] Does that ring a
21 bell?

22 A I know -- I think I know which report you're
23 talking about, but I don't think we knew that. I don't think
24 I knew that at the time.

25 Q Okay.

~~13/SC1~~

1 A I think I learned about that subsequently.

2 Q So you talked about using the modifiers
3 "significant" and "substantial."

4 A Right.

5 Q I think in the first hour you had talked about
6 Susan Rice's appearance and said that she was a little -- I
7 don't remember the word you used -- but was firmer with her
8 comments than you may have been.

9 A Yes.

10 Q Do you know --

11 A She was more -- I would say she was more
12 emphatic --

13 Q More emphatic.

14 A -- and less equivocal, yes.

15 Q And when you heard that, did you think that maybe
16 she had other information that you did not have access to?
17 Do you know why she was more emphatic?

18 A I don't know why. She seemed to me to be more
19 emphatic. But I don't think that she had access to
20 information that I didn't have. That would have been -- you
21 know, that would not have been, you know, the normal course.
22 I would have the same information, the same information that
23 she had --

24 Q Okay. Let's --

25 A -- about this issue.

~~10/001~~

1 Q I understand. Did anybody even have more
2 information than she did about this particular issue?

3 A Possibly, yes.

4 Q Flip the page to 51492.

5 I'm sorry. At the bottom of the prior page, Senator
6 Lieberman asked: "Do we have any idea at this point who was
7 responsible among those groups for the attack on the
8 consulate?"

9 Your response: "This is the most important question
10 that we're considering."

11 The next page, Senator Lieberman says: "Right."

12 And then you say: "We're focused on who was responsible
13 for this attack."

14 So there were a lot of moving parts in terms of the
15 analysis, the post-attack analysis?

16 A Right.

17 Q In your mind, focusing on who was responsible was
18 the most important factor?

19 A Yes, and then finding them.

20 Q And finding them.

21 A Yeah.

22 Q And so the notion of whether or not there were
23 protests, at least according to you and NCTC, was not at the
24 front of the --

25 A Yeah. At best, sort of a subsidiary issue.

~~10/001~~

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1 Q Okay. I want to flip ahead to page 51494.

2 You say -- your first response on the page: "I would
3 agree with your characterization of the threat in pretty much
4 as you laid it out. The threat in Libya from armed militant
5 groups, from al-Qaida-affiliated individuals was high and
6 that made Libya in some ways very similar to other countries
7 in the region."

8 Do you ever recall discussing this threat, prior to the
9 attacks, with Bill Burns or with the head of CT at the State
10 Department? Do you recall having those conversations?

11 A No, not, you know, specifically with those
12 individuals.

13 But certainly, you know, the -- every 2 weeks or so we
14 had a home -- a threat update with the President and the
15 National Security Council, and, typically, Secretary Clinton
16 and the Deputy Secretary, if it was Burns at the time, would
17 be present for that. And during those sessions I laid out
18 the threat and I would have certainly talked about the threat
19 in places that I mentioned here, like Mali and Egypt and
20 Libya.

21 So no specific recollection of having direct
22 conversations, but we certainly talked -- you know, had this
23 as part of our general disclose.

24 Q Okay. I want to flip ahead to page 51495, and this
25 is the third response by you on the page.

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1 "I would say that we do, as a community, provide as much
2 information as we possibly can in as timely a way as possible
3 with the State Department, as well as the rest of the federal
4 government."

5 So when you say, "provide as much information as we
6 possibly can in as timely a way as possible with the State
7 Department," are you referring to NCTC products that are
8 disseminated throughout the community? What are you
9 referring to when you say provide as much information as
10 possible, "in as timely a way as possible with the State
11 Department"? Just generally speaking there? You don't have
12 any specific --

13 A I see the question there. I was just reading the
14 question that Senator Collins asked.

15 Q Sure.

16 A I mean, I was -- yes, I almost certainly was
17 thinking about the analysis that we generate out of NCTC --

18 Q Okay.

19 A -- in that answer.

20 Q Your next sentence says: "We do rely -- and I
21 would say this: We do rely on host countries to help protect
22 our diplomatic personnel in those countries."

23 Were you aware whether or not that was occurring in
24 Libya?

25 A You know, I subsequently learned how little

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1 security, you know, we had in Benghazi.

2 Q So you're speaking generally there?

3 A I'm speaking generally there. Yeah, definitely
4 generally. I don't think I knew -- you know, again, it
5 wouldn't kind of be my responsibility or part of my job to
6 understand at the time how we're working with host countries
7 to provide security for our diplomatic personnel.

8 Q Okay. After this testimony ended, did you receive
9 any calls or emails from folks within the interagency about
10 what you had said regarding a link to AQIM or the fact that
11 it was a terrorist attack?

12 A So after the -- during the testimony, I have a
13 recollection of actually realizing that my answer to Senator
14 Lieberman was -- you know, I remember thinking at the time
15 what I hadn't appreciated before was an important fact that I
16 had just testified to.

17 Q Which answer?

18 A That this was a terrorist attack, the fact that
19 Senator Lieberman led with that at the very beginning. The
20 moment was not lost on me that that was a significant
21 question for him to lead off with, and I remember thinking at
22 the time, being struck, okay, that actually is, you know,
23 that's an issue that I just testified about in a way that I
24 hadn't appreciated before.

25 Q Why was it an issue?

~~107001~~

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1 A I interpreted it from the way that Senator
2 Lieberman asked me that question, and it just struck me -- it
3 was -- I realized at the time this was a question that was on
4 the minds of Senator Lieberman and others that I had not
5 fully appreciated, to the point that I either at a break or
6 at a moment when someone else was being asked a question,
7 because I was up there with other representatives of the
8 executive branch -- I mentioned to my leg affairs or public
9 affairs person, you know, "Think about whether you need to go
10 tell anybody about this. You know, that seemed like I may
11 have made some news there." Something along those lines.

12 I don't remember exactly what I said, but I do have a
13 recollection of actually realizing, more than I had before
14 the hearing, that that was potentially a news-making moment.

15 Q Why was that important, the fact that you may have
16 been making news with that comment?

17 A Why was it important? Yeah.

18 Q Well, why did you tell your leg affairs guy, "Go
19 tell people about this if you need to"?

20 A Because it's the kind of thing that, you know, when
21 I -- when you -- for me, sitting there testifying, I would
22 want people to know, right? I would want people to be
23 prepared to talk about this.

24 Q So what were the repercussions of you saying that
25 it was a terrorist attack?

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1 A So one of the things I did afterwards was I wrote
2 an email to both John Brennan and Denis McDonough -- you
3 know, Denis was the Deputy National Security Advisor and John
4 was -- John Brennan was the counterterrorism advisor -- and
5 explained to them -- you know, I said something like, "I made
6 some news today with my testimony. Here is why I testified
7 that this was a terrorist attack," was my thought process.
8 And they wrote back to me, saying, "You did the right thing,"
9 essentially, in emails that day. You know, "Understand you
10 made the right points," or something like that.

11 But again, look, I was aware, again, in a way I hadn't
12 really been before that what I was testifying to was
13 potentially newsworthy, and, in fact, it was. So that's why
14 I thought both let my press person think about what we need
15 to do, ask him to think about what we may need to do, and
16 they also, myself, reach out to John Brennan and Denis
17 McDonough.

18 Q So I just want to make sure I understand. The fact
19 that you said it was a terrorist attack was not preplanned?

20 A Right.

21 Q Okay. And it wasn't coordinated in any way with
22 anybody else in the interagency or the executive branch?

23 A Right.

24 Q You realized when you said it, shortly after you
25 said it, that it may be newsworthy?

~~18/301~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A Yes.

2 Q After the hearing, you sent an email to two folks
3 at the White House, saying: "Hey, I made some news." And
4 they wrote back and said: "You did the right thing"?

5 A Yes. All that's true.

6 Q Okay. What other emails did you send regarding --
7 Mr. Kenny. I thought we were talking about the AQIM
8 comment, that you were trying clarify the terrorist attack.
9 The discussion you had before, I thought, was with specific
10 respect to the AQIM potential connection. So just -- I don't
11 know if that's clear or not.

12 Mr. Olsen. So I can answer that question. I mean, what
13 I'm answering to -- and what you just went through,
14 Carlton -- was on the answer to, "Was this a terrorist
15 attack?"

16 So Lieberman lays out the definition of a "terrorist
17 attack," and I answered, yes, it was a terrorist attack, and
18 then I elaborated on different things we don't know about it,
19 but that, at least on the specific question of whether it was
20 a terrorist attack, the answer, in my view, was yes. All
21 those facts that you just laid out related to that.

22 BY MR. DAVIS:

23 Q Did you have conversations with anybody else in the
24 executive branch, either that day or the following day, about
25 your comments, that you can recall, regarding it being a

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SS1~~

1 terrorist attack?

2 A I mean, I certainly would have talked to people at
3 NCTC about it.

4 Q Outside of NCTC.

5 A I sort of like -- in other words, I had no -- I
6 don't remember talking to anybody else, like John or Denis or
7 anybody else about it.

8 Q Do you remember any press reports about your
9 testimony?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Now, going back to Peter's comment about the AQIM
12 affiliation, is that something you shared with Mr. McDonough
13 and Mr. Brennan in your email as well?

14 A I don't remember. I don't remember if I did or
15 not. I may have as a way to explain. More -- if I had, at
16 least sitting here today, my recollection is that it would
17 have been more as a way to explain why I said it was a
18 terrorist attack as opposed to, in and of itself, you know,
19 in and of itself noteworthy.

20 Q But you felt that that was significant because
21 that's not something that had been shared publicly, and you
22 felt that it needed to be out there?

23 A The reference to AQIM?

24 Q Correct.

25 A Yeah. That's why, before -- now, that's the one I

~~TS/SS1~~

~~TS/SOI~~

1 did coordinate, because I thought that was taking a step
2 beyond what had been said before, but I thought it was
3 important for me, in my role as the Director of NCTC, to say
4 publicly.

5 Q And I just want to make sure I understand
6 correctly. You said it was coordinated before. You had
7 directed your leg affairs guy to coordinate with others. Do
8 you know who he coordinated that with?

9 A No. Again, I want to be clear. Like, not
10 specifically. I figured, you know, his leg counterparts --

11 Q No. I understand. I'm looking for specifics.

12 A Yeah.

13 Q If you don't know, you don't know.

14 A Yeah. I don't know specifics. If you're looking
15 for specifics, I don't know specifics.

16 [Olsen Exhibit No. 5
17 was marked for identification.]

18 BY MR. DAVIS:

19 Q Okay. I want to direct your attention to
20 exhibit 5.

21 So this is a September 24 WIRE, written by the CIA
22 Office of Terrorism Analysis. Turn to the very last page on
23 the WIRE, page 4. It says: "This WIRE was produced jointly
24 with the National Counterterrorism Center."

25 A Yes.

~~TS/SOI~~

~~TS/SC1~~

1 Q Do you see that?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Do you remember this particular WIRE? The title
4 is: "Libya: Updated Assessment of Benghazi Attacks."

5 A I mean, I don't remember. I mean, I know that I've
6 seen this before. When I read it and you handed it to me
7 today, I remember seeing this before.

8 Q Okay. Do you remember at the time this WIRE sort
9 of being a big deal, more important than, maybe, your
10 run-of-the-mill WIRE?

11 A I don't -- yeah, I don't have a recollection of
12 that. I can say today, looking at it, that phrasing this,
13 you know, the topic or headline as "Updated Assessment of
14 Benghazi Attacks," that it would have been an important piece
15 of analysis.

16 Q You don't remember that from the time?

17 A Not really. I really don't.

18 Q Okay. So you don't remember when this WIRE -- how
19 long it took to write or be produced?

20 A No. And, you know, just to give a little bit of
21 context, you know, typically, I would have almost no role in
22 the development of the analytics.

23 Q Oh, sure.

24 A So --

25 Q I fully understand that.

~~TS/SC1~~

~~TS/301~~

1 A Yeah. Yeah.

2 Q I fully understand that.

3 A So it would -- I may have heard about it at the
4 time it was being written, but, quite likely, I didn't hear
5 about it until I saw it done. That's it. I also -- I
6 know that -- I'm sure at the time I was aware that these
7 issues were the subject of analytic work.

8 [Olsen Exhibit No. 6
9 was marked for identification.]

10 BY MR. DAVIS:

11 Q Okay. Let's turn your attention to exhibit 6.
12 So this is an email with a cut and paste -- do you have
13 it in front of you?

14 A Six.

15 Q Yeah, a Washington Post article?

16 A Yes. Oh. I see it's an email.

17 Q Yeah. "From video to terrorist attack: a
18 definitive timeline of administration statements on the Libya
19 attack," by Glenn Kessler, published: September 26. That
20 would be 2012.

21 So I just want to read you, from the first page, a
22 couple of sentences. The first sentence is going to be the
23 second paragraph, and this is coming from the article.

24 "For political reasons, it certainly was in the
25 White House's interests to not portray the attack as a

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1 terrorist incident, especially one that took place on the
2 anniversary of the September 11 attacks. Instead, the
3 administration kept the focus on what was ultimately a red
4 herring -- anger in the Arab world over an anti-Muslim video
5 posted on YouTube. With key phrases and message discipline,
6 the administration was able to conflate an attack on the U.S.
7 Embassy in Egypt -- which apparently was prompted by the
8 video -- with the deadly assault in Benghazi.

9 "Officials were also able to dismiss pointed questions
10 by referring to an ongoing investigation.

11 "Ultimately, when the head of the National
12 Counterterrorism Center was asked pointblank on Capitol Hill
13 whether it was an act of terror -- and he agreed -- the
14 administration talking points began to shift."

15 Then he takes credit for tough news reporting leading to
16 that shift.

17 And then the next four pages are a compilation of quotes
18 by various senior administration officials between the attack
19 on the 11th up until September 26th.

20 So my first question to you -- and we're not going to go
21 through -- I mean, I'd love to go through every single one,
22 but -- I mean, you're not in the mind of Jay Carney and
23 you're not in the mind of Susan Rice. So as fun an activity
24 as that would be, I don't think we're going to do that.

25 The first sentence, second paragraph: "For political

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~~TS/SCT~~

1 reasons, it certainly was in the White House's interests to
2 not portray the attack as a terrorist incident."

3 .Obviously, you were the first one to publicly say that
4 it was a terrorist attack.

5 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I'm not sure that that's really --
6 in here, though, they call it an "act of terror," and, of
7 course, you know the President did say that there was an act
8 of terror in the Rose Garden speech right afterwards. So I'm
9 not -- I mean, it's not in here, but --

10 Mr. Davis. Sure. It is in here. It's on page 3. At
11 the very bottom, it says: "Suddenly, a shift to a 'terrorist
12 attack.'" Those are the words I used, "terrorist attack."

13 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. No. No. No. I mean, the
14 President's Rose Garden speech is not in this particular
15 article, that I see at least, with reference to "act of
16 terror" that the President said in there.

17 Mr. Davis. Susanne, I'm specifically referring to the
18 phrase "terrorist attack." An "act of terror" is a different
19 phrase than "terrorist attack."

20 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. But Glenn Kessler says:
21 "Ultimately, when the head of the National Counterterrorism
22 Center was asked pointblank on Capitol Hill whether it was an
23 act of terror --" so here, he conflates both the term
24 "terrorism" and "act of terror," and he agreed. Clearly, he
25 conflates it in the article.

~~TS/SCT~~

~~187801~~

1 Mr. Davis. There's a whole lot of conflating going on.
2 Let me ask the question, and we can move on from there. Is
3 that okay?

4 Mr. Davis. So again, the sentence: "For political
5 reasons, it certainly was in the White House's interests to
6 not portray the attack as a terrorist incident."

7 On page 3, Kessler says: "Suddenly, a shift to a
8 'terrorist attack,'" and then it quotes you.

9 Did you at any point, whether before your testimony on
10 the 19th or after your testimony on the 19th, participate in
11 conversations or become aware of conversations by anybody in
12 the executive branch -- I realize this is a broad question --
13 that it was in the White House's interests to not portray the
14 attack as a terrorist incident?

15 Mr. Olsen. No. I neither participated or was aware of
16 any conversation along those lines that there was an interest
17 in the White House not to portray this as a terrorist attack.

18 Mr. Davis. Okay. Okay. That was it, Susanne.

19 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. That was a great question. I
20 think we have that in ours as well. Sorry.

21 BY MR. DAVIS:

22 Q Okay. Let me ask you the same question about
23 whether or not you either participated in conversations or
24 were aware of conversations by anybody in the executive
25 branch as to whether or not it was in the executive branch's

~~187801~~

~~13/301~~

1 interests to link or not link an affiliation with Al Qaeda to
2 the attack.

3 A Say that again.

4 Q Sure. The question is specifically regarding
5 whether or not it was in the executive branch' or the
6 White House's interests --

7 A Okay. Right.

8 Q -- to link or not to link Al Qaeda or one of its
9 affiliates to the attack.

10 A No. Neither aware of nor participated in any
11 conversations, whether it was in the White House or executive
12 branch's interests. So again, you know, to link it to Al
13 Qaeda -- again, so the -- but I should -- you know, I did
14 take steps to coordinate that particular answer to -- or that
15 particular part of my testimony, but I only did so as I
16 recall at the time, was because it was -- there were
17 sensitivities around --

18 Q Of course.

19 A -- further than what had been said before from a
20 classification standpoint. And I felt it was appropriate to
21 go further about who was involved, who was responsible, and
22 that was my thinking at the time.

23 Q Did you receive any pushback from coordinating
24 prior to your testimony on the AQIM?

25 A From where?

~~13/301~~

1 Q Pushback from outside the NCTC.

2 A No, I didn't. And that was the reason to push it
3 out, right, was to see if there were concerns, and I did not
4 hear back, and I would have expected to if there had been
5 some concerns about that from an analytic standpoint.

6 Q Let me ask you another question about exhibit 6,
7 second paragraph, last sentence: "With key phrases and
8 message discipline, the administration was able to conflate
9 an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Egypt -- which apparently
10 was prompted by the video -- with the deadly assault in
11 Benghazi."

12 Did you receive, either directly or indirectly, any
13 disappointment or consternation that you said what you said
14 on the 19th from anybody in the executive branch?

15 A Did I receive any disappointment or --

16 Q Yeah. Did anybody express to you that they were
17 disappointed in what you said, they were perplexed by what
18 you said, that what you said may have thrown a message off
19 kilter?

20 A Right. I mean, let me just say, when I read this,
21 you know, I'm reading exhibit 6 and exhibit 5 together.

22 Q Yes.

23 A The idea that there was a, you know, a concerted
24 effort by the administration to conflate these two things,
25 even reading it today, it seems to me to be off. From what

~~TS/001~~

1 we knew at the time, given exhibit 5, where we talk about the
2 intel from the one person we had that looked like he had a
3 firsthand account, was that, you know, that a decision to
4 attack Benghazi came after hearing of the events in Cairo.
5 So even our intelligence at the time sort of had those two
6 things linked.

7 So I think -- I'm not sure that's a right way -- you
8 know, I think what the article is saying is not exactly
9 right. It doesn't square with my recollection or even what
10 I'm looking at now.

11 But, you know, to your question, I did hear at one
12 point -- and I don't remember exactly when -- from Director
13 Clapper that he'd heard from Secretary Clinton, you know, of
14 some surprise about me saying that it was a terrorist attack.
15 And he basically said -- you know, I remember thinking he
16 basically said, you know, "We're saying what we see."
17 something like that.

18 But I remember hearing from him. He told me directly --
19 I think we were either in a car or getting ready to get in
20 his car to come downtown -- that he'd gotten a call or had
21 heard from Secretary Clinton about surprise that one of his
22 guys was talking about this being a terrorist attack.

23 Q Did he elaborate on why she may have been
24 surprised?

25 A No.

~~TS/001~~

~~TS/SC1~~

1 Q Okay. But you're not -- you are not aware of any
2 type of concerted effort by the administration to conflate
3 the attack in Egypt, which apparently was prompted by the
4 video, with the deadly assault in Benghazi?

5 A No, not at all. No effort, like, to falsely link
6 those two things or to make a concerted effort to mislead on
7 that question.

8 [Olsen Exhibit No. 7
9 was marked for identification.]

10 BY MR. DAVIS:

11 Q All right, let's hop over to exhibit 7.

12 I still have 10 minutes left, 11-1/2 minutes left, and
13 I'll take my 8 minutes from last time. I think we can cover
14 the waterfront in that time.

15 A Sure.

16 Q Is my hope.

17 A Okay. Good.

18 Q All right. So exhibit 7 is document C05415305, an
19 email from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] Friday,
20 September 28, 2012, 10:59 a.m. And that's last email in a
21 chain of emails.

22 So I want to direct your attention to page 5 of this
23 email chain. It's marked page 5. It's actually page 3.
24 Hold on a second here.

25 Can we go off the record for a second?

~~TS/SC1~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 [Discussion off the record.]

2 [Olsen Exhibit Nos. 8 and 9
3 were marked for identification.]

4 BY MR. DAVIS:

5 Q We can go back on the record,

6 So this is exhibit 9, it's document SCB0045811. It's an
7 email. The top email is actually an email from Cheryl Mills
8 to "H," but it is a forward of an email conversation between
9 you and Cheryl Mills.

10 So I want to go to the second page here. Do you recall
11 this email string at the time you were exchanging it with
12 Cheryl Mills?

13 A Yes.

14 Q And have you seen it --

15 A Probably not every aspect of it --

16 Q Of course.

17 A -- but I generally recall it. Yeah.

18 Q And you've seen it in preparation for --

19 A Yes.

20 Q -- this today?

21 A Yes.

22 Q So in your email, you write to Cheryl Mills on
23 November 19, 2012: "Cheryl, this is a quick note to say that
24 the hearings on Benghazi are going fine, from my perspective.
25 Pat Kennedy has been terrific -- substantive, precise, and

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SC1~~

1 firm in the face of some outlandish behavior. We continue to
2 fend off questions about the unclass talking points. And I
3 think the timeline narrative is helpful. I will call to give
4 you a more complete read-out."

5 First question: Do you know what hearings you were
6 referring to that were going fine?

7 A I don't have a specific recollection, although I
8 know we were doing a lot of different hearings and briefings
9 during that timeframe. So I don't remember exactly which
10 ones.

11 Q And you say, "from my perspective." What do you
12 mean "from my perspective"? What was your perspective that
13 you were sharing?

14 A I suspect not everyone thought they were going
15 fine. I don't know what I meant exactly by saying "from my
16 perspective." other than the obvious, you know, that I'm just
17 sharing what I -- what I was -- you know. I was only speaking
18 for myself.

19 Q Was it from a factual accuracy perspective? Was it
20 from a messaging perspective? What was your perspective?

21 A I would have been concerned about the facts and the
22 accuracy. That would have been my -- that would have been my
23 thought.

24 Q Okay. Second sentence, you refer to some
25 outlandish behavior. Do you know what you were referring to

~~TS/SC1~~

~~13/301~~

1 there?

2 A You know, I've thought about that. I don't have a
3 specific recollection of what I was referring to, but what I
4 do remember is that Kennedy was sort of the main focus of
5 many of the questions, and some of the most -- some of the
6 toughest questions were focused on Kennedy, given his role as
7 Under Secretary for Management, and a lot of the security
8 fell under him, and that, you know, basically out of some
9 degree of empathy for him and his -- you know, the questions
10 were really tough on him.

11 And some fairly so right? I don't -- I don't think,
12 like, it was unfair that he was responsible for the security
13 side and that he was asked some tough questions. But what I
14 remember at the time is that I thought some of the questions
15 went a little -- went too far, went too far in, you know,
16 kind of putting the blame on him. And that's why I think I
17 was saying that to Mills, who was the Chief of Staff, to
18 somebody who was in a position at the State Department, you
19 know, with authority over him.

20 Q So in terms of outlandish behavior, you're talking
21 about questions by Members that, in your opinion, went too
22 far in trying to pin Patrick Kennedy to whatever the topic
23 was?

24 A Just in personally going after him a bit. It was
25 my recollection.

~~13/301~~

1 Q How often --

2 A Yeah.

3 Q Sure.

4 A The degree of severity in that he was being
5 questioned.

6 Q Okay. Next sentence: "We continue to fend off
7 questions about the unclass talking points."

8 Do you know what questions or what types of questions
9 you were fending off?

10 A No. By this point in mid- to late November, you
11 know, a lot of the focus had become -- had turned from, you
12 know, from who was responsible and where they were, which I
13 thought was where the questions should have been focused on,
14 on bringing the perpetrators to justice, to, you know, a very
15 detailed, granular discussion of talking points.

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24

25

1 [3:50 p.m.]

2 BY MR. DAVIS:

3 Q We continue to fend off. Who is we? Who did you
4 mean by we?

5 A Certainly myself, but in the plural, the other
6 people who were on the panel. There was always a group of us
7 that were consistently testifying at these hearings.

8 Q Were you testifying alongside Pat Kennedy?

9 A Yes, multiple times.

10 Q I guess what prompted you to send her this email?
11 How often had you been talking with her about Benghazi?

12 A So Mills was somebody who, that I didn't have much,
13 if any interaction with before Benghazi. But right after
14 Benghazi happened, she started to go as the State Department
15 representative to the White House meetings on Benghazi. So
16 it was, without anyone ever saying to me, it was clear to me
17 that she had been given sort of the point for the State
18 Department on Benghazi.

19 So as my sort of, the closest thing to a counterpart to
20 me to talk to at the State Department, she was the person
21 that was the right person for me to communicate with.

22 Q Okay. You mentioned the timeline narrative is
23 helpful. What timeline narrative are you referring to?

24 A I'm confident that I'm referring to the NCTC
25 multimedia slideshow with the surveillance tape and the rest

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1 mixed in as helpful as being able to develop a strong factual
2 basis for understanding better what actually happened during
3 the attacks. It was very useful to establish a factual
4 foundation for the actual events that was missing, you know,
5 without it I thought.

6 Q Okay. Your last line, I will call to give you a
7 more complete readout. Why would you need to call her to
8 give her a more complete readout, especially if Patrick
9 Kennedy was testifying?

10 A Well I don't specifically know what I meant when I
11 said that today, but I, you know, typically it would just be
12 more useful to have a conversation than to try to capture all
13 of the facts around the hearings in an email.

14 So I don't know exactly what I meant. But that would
15 not be uncommon for me to write that at the end of an email
16 where I'm trying to convey, you know, more information and I
17 just ran out of time on my -- I actually even remember
18 writing this. I was on my BlackBerry. I was going, I was
19 leaving the country, I think, to go on my trip.

20 If I can just elaborate on that last answer just
21 briefly, which is to say, you know, you asked me about why
22 Cheryl Mills. I mean, I answered obviously Cheryl Mills was
23 the point on Benghazi. But, in particular, with respect to
24 this email, you know, my point, a bit on mentioning Pat
25 Kennedy, what I remember is that he was just getting, I mean,

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~~18/001~~

1 again, some fair, but he was definitely the focus of the
2 Members' attention, and some of it, I thought, went beyond
3 what was fair. And I wanted Mills, as, basically, Kennedy's
4 boss -- Kennedy's basically, as far as I know, a career guy
5 in the Department, rose up in the ranks, and was taking this
6 on the chin, and I felt like, look, this is something that,
7 if I were him, I would want my boss to know from what other
8 people who were with him how he was doing, and that's why I
9 wrote to her.

10 Q And how frequently had you interacted with Cheryl
11 Mills in the month or two prior in emails?

12 A A handful of times, a couple of other emails, maybe
13 phone calls, seeing her at the White House meetings, some of
14 it directly related to the development of this timeline that
15 I reference here. I talked to her a couple of times about
16 that, because that timeline was coordinated around the
17 community, including the State Department, and she was quite
18 part of, she was part of that discussion about what that was
19 going to say, what we were going to say factually about what
20 happened.

21 Q I mean, couldn't you have just told her in person
22 the next time you saw her at one of the White House meetings?
23 Why the email to her at 11:02 at night?

24 A Yeah. I don't know the answer to that question.

25 Q Okay. So her response, 7:17 the next morning:

~~18/001~~

~~10/30/01~~

1 Dear Matt, thanks so much. We've been getting as good a
2 reports as one might expect. That said, I welcome the
3 readout, and look forward to sharing some concerns. I'm
4 around all day today, though much easier to reach in the
5 afternoon.

6 Do you know what concerns she was referring to?

7 A No. I don't, at that point, know what she's
8 talking about. But now that I look at this email, I see that
9 the subsequent email where I was planning to leave for
10 Africa. That was the one, I think that I sent from the
11 airport on Sunday.

12 So this prior one, I should say was, it's almost a week
13 earlier, Monday, at 11:02. Yeah. I don't know. So just to
14 be clear, it was the subsequent email when I wrote back to
15 her after that I that was getting ready to leave the country.
16 After, I guess, the end of the Thanksgiving holiday.

17 Anyway, no, I don't know what concerns, and I don't
18 remember her sharing any concerns in particular about the
19 hearings or anything.

20 Q Okay. All right. Your response to her, 5 days
21 later, Sunday, November 25, Cheryl, I'm just following up
22 from last week. I know you spoke to Nick on Wednesday.

23 That's your deputy?

24 A Yes.

25 Q I thought the ARB session went very well. Good

~~10/30/01~~

~~13/301~~

1 questions and discussion with the panel.

2 So you met with the ARB?

3 A Yes.

4 Q And how long did that meeting last?

5 A I remember just one meeting, and probably a couple
6 of hours is my best recollection. And as I read this, what I
7 recall is being impressed with them, you know, that the
8 members of the ARB, these were former high-ranking government
9 officials, were quite steeped in the facts of Benghazi. They
10 had done their homework, and I kind of remember that. And
11 maybe when I say good questions, discussion, I was impressed
12 with the panel.

13 Q Do you know if all of the ARB members were present
14 for your interview? There are five of them.

15 A I don't remember.

16 Q Do you know if there was a reporter there like
17 there is here today?

18 A I don't remember there being a reporter there, so I
19 doubt it.

20 Q Why did you feel the need to tell Cheryl Mills that
21 the ARB session went very well?

22 A You know as I sit here today, my sense is that it
23 was just keeping her informed about things that were
24 happening on Benghazi. No particular -- I think, beyond
25 that, just continued to keep folks apprised of how things

~~13/301~~

~~TS/001~~

1 were going.

2 Q Do you know what the purpose of the ARB was?

3 A Yeah, to do an after-action on the Benghazi
4 attacks. I don't know, like, specifically, what their sort
5 of charge was.

6 Q Okay. So you don't know whether or not Cheryl
7 Mills may have had a conflict of interest by you telling her
8 the session went very well?

9 A No.

10 Q Well, let me ask you this. Did you have a
11 follow-up conversation with her about your ARB session
12 outside of this email?

13 A Not that I remember. I'm just looking at the
14 email. I guess the email string ends with that, but I don't
15 remember having any further conversation with her about that.

16 Q Do you know what the contents of her conversation
17 with Nick were?

18 A Nick? No. That would have been Nick Rasmussen.

19 Q Right.

20 A No, I don't recall talking to Nick about that. I
21 think Nick may have been -- I just don't remember if Nick was
22 with me at the ARB. It's possible he was.

23 Q Okay. Next paragraph:

24 I was planning to leave for Africa today but I've
25 postponed my trip to handle the "redacted" tomorrow --

~~TS/001~~

~~TS/001~~

1 "redacted."

2 That's our life over here.

3 It may be good for us to talk tomorrow morning. I'd
4 appreciate any suggestions or insights you have in advance of
5 the White House meeting.

6 Do you know what White House meeting you're referring
7 to? And I don't mean to trip you up.

8 A Yeah. No.

9 Q There's a separate email. I can hand it out as an
10 exhibit, but I was trying to save paper.

11 Monday, November 26, from 2:35 to 3:20. Topic,
12 Benghazi. Was it sort of a standing --

13 A I'm sorry. Say that again.

14 Q Yeah. I'll just hand it out as an exhibit. And I
15 think this is, I believe this is what you're referring to.
16 I'll hand it out as exhibit 10.

17 A Okay.

18 [Olsen Exhibit No. 10

19 was marked for identification.]

20 BY MR. DAVIS:

21 Q Do you know if that's the meeting you're referring
22 to in your email with Cheryl Mills?

23 A Let's see. Let me take a quick look.

24 Q Sure.

25 A I've not seen this before. Yeah. So what this

~~TS/001~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 almost certainly is, I mentioned before that every 2 weeks we
2 had a White House meeting with the President and the National
3 Security Council focused on threats. And that would always
4 come from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was actually the NCTC
5 detailee and at the time was Senior Director for
6 counterterrorism and working at the National Security Council
7 staff. Previously that had been Nick Rasmussen's job.

8 But anyway, this exact formulation is how it was every
9 time. You would have like to have heard via the usual
10 scheduling channels about the timing for next week's, and it
11 would have been a White House meeting on key threats.

12 Now, what's probably redacted but referenced in the
13 subsequent message from Dan Benjamin is the agenda for that
14 meeting and, which may well, you know, I would infer it
15 references Benghazi.

16 Q Sure.

17 A Right.

18 Q Right. And if you look at the top of the email
19 chain on Exhibit 10, it says topic, Benghazi.

20 A Yeah.

21 Q But back to your email to Cheryl Mills.

22 I appreciate any suggestions or insights you may have in
23 advance of the White House meeting.

24 What were your roles typically at this meeting, you and
25 Ms. Mills?

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A Well, typically, at the general threats meeting
2 with the President, I gave a 5- to 10-minute briefing to the
3 President on the threats we faced.

4 Q Sure.

5 A This one looks like it might have been different.
6 I don't recall specifically. We have a lot of meeting at the
7 White House on Benghazi. I just don't recall if this was --
8 it looks to me like it was focused on Benghazi from exhibit
9 10.

10 Q Sure.

11 A I just don't really have a specific recollection.

12 Q You said you had a lot of meetings at the White
13 House about Benghazi.

14 A Yes.

15 Q What were the main focus of those meetings? Did
16 they vary? Was it singular?

17 A Well, the typical effort from September 11, for
18 several, really several months I want to say, was to focus on
19 diplomatic posts and threats to diplomatic posts subsequent
20 to Benghazi. That would have been sort of the NCTC role was
21 looking at places like Karachi, where we have a consulate
22 that is in a very high-risk area. But other places as well.
23 Sana'a was a place that we were worried about the threat.

24 So that would have been what we would have talked about
25 at a meeting like this. Would have been threats to our

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SSI~~

1 diplomatic posts. So and again, I don't have a specific
2 recollection of this particular meeting, but that would have
3 been what we were talking about in the White House meetings
4 after Benghazi.

5 Q Okay. Great. We can go back to exhibit 7. So
6 exhibit 7 and 8, and that's all I have left.

7 Heather, just FYI, on your end, just the two documents,
8 and then I'll be done. I'm a little overtime. So we can
9 take a break or we can power through.

10 A It's okay with me. It's absolutely fine.

11 Q Okay. Let's look at exhibit 7. Which, again, is
12 document C05415305. And this is a rather lengthy email
13 chain. I believe we have all seven pages now.

14 I apologize for that.

15 A I don't though. Did you give them to me?

16 Ms. Jackson. Yes. In the new mark.

17 Mr. Olsen. Okay. Yes.

18 Ms. Jackson. Do you want to give your counsel one?

19 That's the same.

20 Mr. Olsen. Okay. These are the same.

21 Mr. Davis. Do you have what you need.

22 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I have a full set.

23 BY MR. DAVIS:

24 Q Okay. We can discuss that after the interview.

25 All right. So the first time, working from the bottom

~~TS/SSI~~

~~TS/OCI~~

1 up, the first time I see you on a this email chain is an
2 email from Robert Cardillo on page six, Denis McDonough and
3 Michael Morell. You're cc'd, along with John Brennan and
4 Nick Rasmussen?

5 A Yes.

6 Q And that is in response to an email from Dennis
7 McDonough where he says: Hey, guys. This is the third
8 report making this assertion. Is this correct?

9 Do you know what assertion he's talking about?

10 A Well, I do today, and I would have read down, I
11 guess I would have gotten the whole thread in the email from
12 Cardillo, and with the subject, Fox News, U.S. officials knew
13 Libya attack was terrorism within 24 hours, sources confirm.
14 So I would have read through it and seen the Fox News report.

15 Q -- So did U.S. officials know whether the Libya attack
16 was terrorism within 24 hours?

17 A So you know, what generally, U.S. officials knew or
18 didn't know, I can't really say. But I can say what I knew
19 and, you know, how I looked at that question, which was, that
20 I certainly viewed it as a terrorist attack from the outset
21 and treated it as such, given all the circumstances
22 surrounding it. And you know, we can talk further about it.

23 But the key point was, in answer to your question, that
24 the working assumption was that it was a terrorist attack,
25 given everything we knew from the outset. And there was

~~TS/OCI~~

~~TS//SI~~

1 never a point at which, for example, I considered not having
2 NCTC work on this or have our analysts focused on it, you
3 know, and everything about it, and the more we learned,
4 including the more information we got about who was
5 potentially involved, the more confident I was that it was a
6 terrorist attack.

7 Q The [REDACTED] report we've talked about that
8 references the connection to AQIM, did that come out within
9 the first 24 hours?

10 A I'm pretty sure that we had that within, certainly
11 by the time I testified on the 13th before HPSCI. I remember
12 having that then, so very early on.

13 Q Outside of that report, are you aware of any
14 analysis or information done or gathered [REDACTED] about
15 other connections to Al Qaeda or its affiliates?

16 A Not right now do I have a recollection of that.
17 There may be, I just don't remember. But I'll say what I was
18 looking at was primarily the nature of the attack,
19 particularly, the violence in the mortar attack on the CIA
20 Annex, the fact that these were known to be U.S. Government
21 facilities, the lethality behind it, and then the people
22 involved.

23 I mean, all of those factors, you know, made it so that
24 it was, to me, there was not really question of whether it
25 was a terrorist attack.

~~TS//SI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 Q So Robert Cardillo's response to Denis McDonough,
2 the very first thing he says, I'm fairly sure the answer is
3 no.

4 Is he wrong? It sounds like, at least you talking for
5 yourself say the answer is yes. Speaking only for yourself.

6 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Well, perhaps the witness should
7 read the actual article. And we should give him time to read
8 the article.

9 Mr. Davis. You can take your time time and read the
10 article.

11 Mr. Olsen. I'll read the text of the article because I
12 just read the headline.

13 Ms. Sachsman Grooms. As opposed to just the headline.

14 BY MR. DAVIS:

15 Q Let's go sentence by sentence in the article.

16 A Sure.

17 Q U.S. intelligence officials knew from day one that
18 the assault on the consulate in Libya was a terrorist attack,
19 and suspected Al Qaeda-tied elements were involved.

20 Is that true or false?

21 A So again, the hesitation I have just that I can
22 really speak for myself, right? So I certainly fall within
23 the category of U.S. intelligence officials. So as one of
24 those people, I would have said that, you know, and I might
25 quibble with the word "knew," you know, allowing for some

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/CGT~~

1 possibility that it would turn out not to be. But, you know,
2 if you'd asked me the day after the day after, do you think
3 this was a terrorist attack, are you treating this as a
4 terrorist attack, my answer would have been, yes we're
5 treating it as a terrorist act. And that individuals with
6 ties to Al Qaeda, as opposed to, yeah, suspected Al
7 Qaeda-tied elements were involved, again, affirmative answer
8 there.

9 Q Sources told Fox News, that it took the
10 administration a week to acknowledge it. Is that clause
11 true?

12 A I don't know on that. I don't know about that
13 answer. Right, I mean, I think --

14 Q Well, we talked earlier about your testimony before
15 HSGAC regarding the terrorist attack and the AQIM connection.
16 That was a week after the attack. You were the first one I
17 think we discussed who mentioned both of those publicly. So
18 I guess the clause in the article that it took the
19 administration a week to acknowledge it, do you know if
20 that's I guess true or false?

21 Ms. Sawyer. Can I just ask, are you asking him whether
22 it took the administration a week to acknowledge it in a
23 public setting or in a classified setting?

24 BY MR. DAVIS:

25 Q I'm asking about that. That's a good question.

~~TS/CGT~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 Let me ask you specifically about a public setting.

2 A Yeah. I mean, and that's the right way to think
3 about it. Right. I mean, we weren't, internally, I would
4 say that I was, you know, that everyone I was talking to was
5 ~~treating this as a terrorist attack internally, the people~~
6 that I was working with in the intelligence community.

7 Publicly, I became aware, sort of when I was asked the
8 question, I became sort of aware that I was perhaps the first
9 to state as definitively as I did that I thought this was a
10 terrorist attack.

11 So in that sense, if the question is is it a public
12 acknowledgment, the only reason I'm hesitating on this is
13 because I'm obviously also aware that the President
14 referenced an act of terror.

15 Q I understand that.

16 A And there's ways you can interpret that.

17 Q Yeah. I understand that.

18 Next paragraph: The account conflicts with claims on
19 the Sunday after the attack by U.S. Ambassador to the United
20 Nations, Susan Rice that the administration believed the
21 strike was a quote, unquote, "spontaneous event" triggered by
22 protests in Egypt over an anti-Islam film.

23 Do you know if that sentence is true or false? Do you
24 know if she made those claims?

25 A This gets increasingly complicated for me to

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SC1~~

1 comment, you know, true or false. So you know, whether the
2 account that we knew that it was a terrorist attack from the
3 beginning conflicts with her testimony, you know, I would
4 say, in some ways, no.

5 In other words, I remember hearing about her statements
6 on the Sunday shows and thinking those were consistent with
7 the conclusion I had reached that it was a terrorist attack,
8 you know, and what I said at the hearing.

9 Like, those two things are not, you know, in and of
10 themselves, inconsistent. So I can't really say that it's
11 true that those two things conflict.

12 Q All right. Well, let's go to the next paragraph.

13 Sources said the administration internally labeled the
14 attack terrorism from the first day to enable a certain type
15 of policy response.

16 I want to focus on the first half of that sentence.
17 Sources said the administration internally labeled the attack
18 terrorism for the first day. That seems consistent with what
19 you had just said.

20 A That part is true. The motivation is not
21 necessarily -- that was at least my motivation, in other
22 words, to enable a type of policy response.

23 Q Well, that was my next question. What type of
24 policy response would that have been?

25 A I'm not sure. Obviously there were certain,

~~TS/SC1~~

~~137501~~

1 operational options that might be available if it's a
2 terrorism attack versus if it's not a terrorism attack.

3 Q Can you describe what those differences might be?

4 A It's more like who would work on it and who would
5 be involved in conducting an investigation or be involved in
6 following up than a policy response.

7 Q What would the options be in terms of different
8 entities that would take the lead?

9 A Well, certain, you know, certain elements within
10 the FBI, for example, different components within the FBI,
11 different components within CIA, and perhaps even different
12 components within DOD would be involved in the response,
13 depending on whether it's a terrorist attack or a purely
14 criminal attack, you know, something that is not terrorism.
15 I haven't actually thought through, and so I apologize for
16 not being more thoughtful about that.

17 Q That's okay.

18 A Because my gut is that there are, that that's true
19 that there are different policy options available if it's
20 terrorism and if it's not. But I can tell you that at least
21 in terms of the motivation behind labeling it as terrorism,
22 that that wasn't part of my motivation.

23 Q Okay. Finish off the sentence.

24 And that officials were looking for one specific
25 suspect.

~~137501~~

1 Do you know if that was the case at the time?

2 A I don't know. I don't think, that I don't think is
3 true because we were looking for a lot of different, you
4 know, we knew there were a lot of people involved. So it's a
5 little ambiguous if they're talking about there was one
6 person that had been identified that we were looking for,
7 because there were a couple of people, there were a few
8 people that had been identified by name early on. I don't
9 remember by this point certainly we knew that there were a
10 lot of people responsible.

11 Q Last sentence. In addition, sources confirmed that
12 FBI agents had not yet arrived in Benghazi in the aftermath
13 of the attack. This was September 27, 2012, with the
14 article.

15 Do you know if that is true, that FBI agents had not yet
16 arrived?

17 A I don't know specifically if it's true. I know
18 that it took some time for the FBI to get there.

19 Q Okay. Let's go back to page six, where Robert
20 Cardillo says, I'm fairly sure the answer is no. You
21 actually responded to his email. What did you think he was
22 saying no to, in terms of the email?

23 A I don't remember. You know, I really don't
24 remember. When I saw this last week, I first saw this set of
25 emails, I didn't even recall this email chain.

~~TS/SC1~~

1 Sitting here today, you know, yeah, I don't know.
2 Actually, I just don't know.

3 Q Okay. And let's look at your response.

4 All, as Robert suggests, I think the best way to
5 approach this is to review and memorialize exactly what we
6 were saying from the onset of the attacks going forward.
7 We've got a chronological catalog of all finished
8 intelligence on the attack, and we'll put together today a
9 timeline summary that sets forth all key points and analytic
10 judgements as they develop from 9/11 through the present.
11 Nick and I will get started on the timeline right away.
12 Matt.

13 So a couple of questions. We've got a chronological
14 catalog of all finished intelligence on the attack.

15 I read that as you already having that chronological
16 catalog prior to this email chain?

17 A That's probably right. I would read it the same
18 way. I know I wrote it, but I don't recall whether we had
19 something like that, but it would make sense to me that we
20 had, you know, that I would have a binder on my desk where
21 I'm every day, you know, I'm adding more on Benghazi, my
22 Benghazi binder, and I'm keeping that as the pieces come in
23 every day.

24 Q Okay.

25 A In a chronological order.

~~TS/SC1~~

~~TS/CSI~~

1 Q Okay. So you think there might be a binder that
2 existed that you put together of that?

3 A Yeah. I'm pretty confident that that's what I
4 would have -- that would have been pretty standard for me
5 once we're in the middle of something like this to have a
6 separate binder with all the finished intel so that I could
7 quickly reference things.

8 Q Okay. We will put together today a timeline
9 summary that sets forth all key points and analytic judgments
10 as they developed.

11 Is that something you ended up doing, you or your team
12 at NCTC?

13 A Yeah. Again, I don't remember exactly what that
14 looks like or what we did. But if I said we would do it, I
15 assume we did it. I don't remember seeing something like
16 that.

17 I'm looking forward in this exhibit to see if there's a
18 reference to anything more on that document, but I don't see
19 anything, any other reference to it.

20 Q All right. Well let's go to Robert Cardillo's
21 response to your email.

22 A Okay.

23 Q On page five, it says: NCTC has already made great
24 progress of documenting the chronology of what we knew and
25 what we published. My reading of that draft is that we can

~~TS/CSI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 easily debunk Fox and refute the hits on Susan's statements
2 on Sunday, 16 September.

3 As I read the laydown, her comments were consistent with
4 our intel assessment at that time.

5 ~~I'll focus your attention to the second sentence, my~~
6 reading of that draft.

7 A Right. So that definitely suggests we had a draft
8 that we had circulated of the timeline or chronology of what
9 we knew and what we published.

10 Q Okay. Is that we can easily debunk Fox. So do you
11 know what part of the Fox article he was talking about when
12 he said that?

13 A No. I could go back and look at the Fox article,
14 but, given the second part of his comment there, I think, I
15 think, I don't know, but I think that it's the paragraph
16 about how the administration's account conflicts with
17 Ambassador Rice's claims that the administration believed the
18 strike was a spontaneous event triggered by protests.

19 Q So Cardillo's next sentence, as I read the laydown,
20 her comments were consistent with our intel assessment at
21 that time.

22 A Right.

23 Q Do you know if all of her comments were consistent
24 with the intel assessment? Just some of the comments? I
25 mean, did you have any sense of the accuracy of her

~~TS/SCI~~

~~10/001~~

1 statements at that point?

2 A Yeah.

3 Q This was 11 days after she went on TV?

4 A Yeah. My sense is that her comments were

5 consistent with our intel assessment at that time. So I
6 agree with Cardillo on that point, that her comments were
7 consistent with what we were assessing at that time.

8 Again, I had earlier mentioned that I thought she was
9 overly emphatic and certain about things that I was more
10 equivocal about. But in terms of the facts that she
11 conveyed, my sense was that they were fully consistent with
12 what we were assessing at the time.

13 Q Okay. Let's look at the response to Mr. Cardillo's
14 email. It's from Denis McDonough. It starts on page three.
15 You're also on this email, it's to Robert Cardillo, Matt
16 Olsen and Michael Morell.

17 We don't need something yet tonight as I think it is
18 late. A definitive letter and outreach effort by tomorrow
19 would be excellent.

20 The piece immediately below led ABC World News Tonight
21 today. It is really galling.

22 You can take a look. Sir, you can take a minute and
23 read the piece if you want. I'm just trying to understand
24 what you thought Mr. McDonough was talking about was galling
25 in the piece.

~~10/001~~

1 A Okay. Let me take a moment and read this real
2 quick.

3 Q Sure.

4 A Okay. So I have read the ABC story.

5 Q Sure.

6 A So what's --

7 Q The question is, Denis McDonough says that the
8 piece is really galling. Do you know what he was referring
9 to?

10 A No.

11 Q No? Okay. I'm on page three, I want to skip up a
12 couple of emails. From Robert Cardillo, 8:03 p.m.: Matt,
13 either way, please take lead on drafting the statement.

14 So what was the statement that you were going to take
15 the lead for?

16 A So oh, I see. Okay. Yeah. This was ultimately
17 the statement that I think you have handed out to me.

18 Q Exhibit 8.

19 A Yeah. Exhibit 8, the statement that Shawn Turner
20 issued.

21 Q Yep. Were you the primary drafter of that
22 statement?

23 A I was part of the drafting of it. I don't know if
24 I, you know, I don't know if I would characterize myself as
25 the primary. There might be been actually somebody -- you

~~TS/SCI~~

1 know, I know that I worked on this a lot with Nick Rasmussen,
2 so it could have been Nick who could have been the primary.

3 Q What was the purpose of the statement? Why was it
4 important to put out?

5 A I think what, from my perspective, it was useful to
6 put out our latest understanding of what had happened in
7 Benghazi, what our analysis was telling us about who was
8 involved, and the nature of the attack itself.

9 It was also useful, in particular, because that
10 obviously, that understanding had changed from what was said
11 initially about the initial understanding that there were
12 protests, and that we had learned that there weren't
13 protests.

14 Let me double-check, but I think by this point we knew
15 that there were not protests.

16 Q Well, I guess that leads to my next question, which
17 is when did Matt Olsen learn that there were no protests?
18 That you said you can remember?

19 A Right. You know, when I first learned about it was
20 when we got word from the U.S., whether it was FBI or CIA who
21 had reviewed the surveillance tapes, that was the definitive.
22 Now we knew prior to that both what Morell had said about the
23 station, but also what the Libyans told us.

24 But I think in my own mind it was sort of definitive
25 once we heard from --

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 Q And you don't know when this was?

2 A I don't know exactly when that was.

3 Q Okay.

4 A I don't know exactly when that was. There's

5 probably a way to figure out when that was, just given when
6 we got that reporting, because I would have gotten it right
7 away. I would have gotten it quickly.

8 Q Hop ahead to page one. Page one, at the very
9 bottom, there is an email from you. Do you see that?

10 A Yes.

11 Q All, FYI, we provided a draft statement this
12 morning to Shawn Turner for further refinement and
13 coordination. It includes the following key point about our
14 assessment.

15 The first sentence: Our understanding and analysis of
16 the events of September 11 have evolved as new information
17 has become available over the last 17 days.

18 Seventeen days is a long time. Do you know, I guess,
19 how spread out that new information was over the last
20 17 days? Was it roughly an equal amount, you know, on the
21 12th as it was on the 26th? Was it, you know, packed up
22 front in the week after the attack? Was there more
23 information in the week prior to this email chain?

24 Do you know when that information came in I guess is my
25 question?

~~TS/SCI~~

~~13/301~~

1 A No. You know, my recollection sitting here today
2 is that it was sporadic during that two-plus weeks, as
3 opposed to condensed in one timeframe, you know. In other
4 words, I think we were getting bits and pieces over the
5 course of that 2 weeks. But you know I mentioned that one of
6 the critical pieces was U.S. officials reviewing the
7 surveillance tapes. I mean, that's obviously a very
8 important point and that would have been a part of that, I
9 think.

10 Q Let me keep reading. In the immediate aftermath of
11 the attack there was information that led us to assess that
12 the attack began spontaneously following the protest earlier
13 that day at our Embassy in Cairo. As we learned more about
14 the attack, our initial assessment shifted. We now assessed
15 that the attack was a deliberate and organized assault by
16 extremists.

17 Are those two things mutually exclusive? Beginning
18 spontaneously following the protests, and a deliberate and
19 organized assault by extremists?

20 A I would say not completely mutually exclusive, but,
21 you know, they certainly are different expressions of, or
22 assessments of what happened. So there is a material
23 difference between those two things, between a spontaneous
24 attack following protests and a deliberate organized assault.
25 I think those are materially different assessments, although,

~~13/301~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 you know, to your question, I don't think they're completely
2 mutually exclusive.

3 Q Next sentence. We have also learned more about the
4 affiliations of at least some of the perpetrators, and we
5 assess that some of those involved were linked to groups
6 affiliated with or sympathetic to Al Qaeda.

7 So let me tell you what I, how I interpret that
8 sentence, okay?

9 A Sure.

10 Q We have learned more about the affiliations of at
11 least some of the perpetrators. I bet that's probably true.
12 You have an extra 2 weeks to identify individuals involved
13 and learn about their affiliation.

14 And we assess that some of those involved were linked to
15 groups affiliated with or sympathetic to Al Qaeda. We talked
16 earlier about the [REDACTED] reporting that
17 occurred that came in the day after the attack. That's
18 something that some folks got shortly after the attack.

19 A Right.

20 Q It seems to me to be an extremely carefully worded
21 sentence. It says we assess that some of those involved, not
22 we now assess, just that we assess.

23 A Right.

24 Q We have learned more about the affiliations, well,
25 sure you've learned more. It's been an extra 2 weeks.

~~TS/SCI~~

~~10/301~~

1 I mean, I guess my question is, when did you learn about
2 the affiliations of some of these perpetrators? When did you
3 learn that there was an initial link to Al Qaeda? Didn't
4 that occur the day after attack?

5 A So your question is when did we learn about that?

6 Q Yeah.

7 A We definitely had, as I've mentioned, the AQIM
8 piece early on, a day or so after. But I think at this point
9 we had additional information is my recollection,
10 particularly with Ansar al-Sharia from other sources being
11 involved.

12 Q And that would be the group affiliated with or
13 sympathetic to Al Qaeda?

14 A That would fit within the umbrella of that, yeah,
15 that phrase, that we assess that some of those involved were
16 linked to groups affiliated with or sympathetic to Al Qaeda.

17 Q All right. Let's look at the statement on
18 exhibit 8. I'm just going to ask a couple of questions about
19 this, and then I'll wrap it up.

20 A Okay.

21 Q Second full paragraph. In the immediate aftermath,
22 there was information that led us to assess that the attack
23 began spontaneously following protests earlier that day at
24 our Embassy in Cairo. We provided that initial assessment to
25 executive branch officials and Members of Congress who used

~~10/301~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

1 that information to discuss the attack publicly and provide
2 updates as they became available.

3 Do you know what specifically that's referring to,
4 providing that initial assessment, who used that information
5 publicly to discuss the attack publicly?

6 A No. I assume that is a reference to -- well, you
7 know, that the initial intel assessments is what initial
8 assessment is.

9 Q So that would be a wire or a current?

10 A Yeah. A wire right, or some kind of record.

11 Q Okay. Throughout our investigation, we continue to
12 emphasize the information gathered was preliminary and
13 evolving.

14 A Yes.

15 Q Who is we referring to?

16 A That would have been the intelligence community.

17 Q Okay. Would that include Susan Rice? Would she be
18 part of the intelligence community, as the Ambassador to the
19 U.N.?

20 A I don't, you know, I don't know, Carlton. I mean,
21 how, when we use the word we there, you know, this is coming
22 from ODNI Public Affairs.

23 My sense is that what Turner's referring to is speaking
24 on behalf of the intelligence community at that point and not
25 really beyond that.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 Yeah, if you look at other places with first person
2 plural, you know, we continue to make progress in the next
3 paragraph, I think the point of this is to speak on behalf of
4 the DNI as its representative.

5 Q Okay.

6 A I guess the other point there is just that to
7 support that notion is the idea that we provided that initial
8 assessment to executive branch officials, sort of
9 distinguishing between intel community and other executive
10 branch officials.

11 Q You know, reading the statement -- and I have read
12 it several times. I'm often wrong -- I do not see anything
13 in here that directly addresses the notion as to whether or
14 not protests or demonstrations, whatever word you have,
15 occurred in Benghazi prior to the attack. You can read it.
16 Maybe I'm wrong.

17 But why isn't that in here, that that was the big
18 discussion, public discussion as to whether or not that it
19 occurred. Why didn't that make it into this statement?

20 A So the short answer is I don't know why it's not in
21 the statement. You know, I mean, obviously the statement is
22 pretty, I think it's pretty faithful to the information we
23 provided in this email as I'm comparing the two.

24 And certainly the idea that this was a, you know, as I
25 sort of mentioned before, that we've revised our initial

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SC1~~

1 assessment to reflect new information indicating it was a
2 deliberate organized terrorist attack carried out by
3 extremists, that is inconsistent with the idea that this was
4 a, that this was a protest or, as we said in the paragraph
5 before, that the attack began spontaneously following the
6 protests in Cairo.

7 But you're accurate in observing that it doesn't
8 specifically take head-on the question of whether or not
9 there were protests.

10 Q You guys were aware that there was, you know,
11 public debate as to whether or not that was the case.

12 A Right.

13 Q Whether there were protest or not protests?

14 A Certainly would have been aware. Yeah. I think I
15 mentioned before, it was, we were aware of the public debate.
16 It was not a, you know, an analytic focal point because it's
17 less material to the real charge that I felt we were
18 responsible for a responsibility that I felt we had, which
19 was to identify what happened and who was responsible in
20 particular.

21 So that's potentially a partial answer to the question,
22 but I don't really recall your question, why we didn't make a
23 reference to the previous answer, assessment that there had
24 been a protest, and now we were saying there wasn't a
25 protest, or at least, I think at this point we knew there

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~~TC/CCI~~

1 wasn't a protest.

2 Q Okay. I'll wrap up for now. You and the minority
3 have been very gracious of my going over so ---

4 A Just give me one second, let me ask to see if I
5 missed anything.

6 Ms. Jackson. Yeah. We can take a break and then come
7 back on and we can clarify anything.

8 [Recess.]

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 [4:56 p.m.]

2 Mr. Kenny. We will go back on the record. The time is
3 4:58.

4 Mr. Olsen. So as we get started, is it okay for me just
5 to give a couple of clarifying comments to Carlton's
6 questions.

7 Mr. Kenny. Absolutely; please.

8 Mr. Olsen. So Carlton, if I could go back to some of
9 your questions, if I could, real quick, and make sure I am as
10 clear and as helpful as possible.

11 So one of the questions or areas that you questioned me
12 about was, that coordination of like my testimony on the
13 19th. And I was clear about the fact that I coordinated on
14 this idea that I was going to mention, if asked, the AQIM-AQ
15 connection, but hadn't specifically coordinated anything
16 about terrorism because I didn't really anticipate getting a
17 question about terrorism.

18 What I sort of thought about at the time, and since, is
19 that, to a large degree, my thought process and even in
20 sitting here today, by mentioning Al Qaeda and AQIM and by
21 coordinating on that question -- I was going to mention
22 that -- I was putting the coordination point out on terrorism
23 as well. You know what I mean?

24 I always thought of it as terrorism, but by putting into
25 the interagency the idea that there was a connection -- we

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1 were looking at connections to AQ, putting out there the idea
2 as well that this was terrorism, which, you know, looking at
3 it -- you are obviously welcome to ask questions.

4 BY MR. DAVIS:

5 Q In your mind, they are one in the same?

6 A Basically, it is all one in the same, and that is
7 how, in coordinating on this question of Al Qaeda, I was
8 coordinating on the whole idea of this as terrorism.

9 Q We have heard testimony from other CIA officials
10 just about word choice -- of language. To them, they are the
11 exact same thing. But to outsiders -- the press, the
12 public -- they mean different things.

13 A Right. And I see that and appreciate that,
14 obviously, more in the aftermath of this. But yes, that was
15 one point, just to make sure that I wasn't overstating the
16 distinction between what I coordinated on and what I didn't
17 coordinate on. I think to me, as you said, it was one in the
18 same.

19 A second quick point of just clarification. You asked
20 me questions about Ambassador Rice's Sunday appearance and
21 how that squared -- what she said -- with what the IC was
22 assessing.

23 My general sense is that it was consistent. I haven't
24 parsed all of her statements. In particular, the point
25 where, to the extent that she said that there was a protest,

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1 which we had assessed in Benghazi -- but to the extent that
2 she said that there was a protest caused by the video in
3 Benghazi, I don't think that we ever said that in the IC.

4 I don't think we ever -- it is somewhat of a nuanced
5 point -- but I don't think we ever specifically attached the
6 protest in Benghazi to the video. We attached it to Cairo,
7 but not specifically to the video. Just a quick point of
8 clarification.

9 And the last point I wanted to make is just on the
10 statement. We talked a little bit about the November 28
11 statement from Sean Turner.

12 Q September.

13 A September 28; I am sorry. The September 28
14 statement from Sean Turner and sort of my involvement in
15 generating that and, to a certain extent, my motivation
16 behind being involved and role in that.

17 What I recall is, in large part -- I felt at the time --
18 this is 17 days after Benghazi -- my job, in part, was to
19 defend, to a certain extent, protect the analysts from the
20 growing political swirl around Benghazi to ensure their
21 continued independence and apolitical nature.

22 It seemed like the right thing to do -- to sort of put
23 out a statement in defense of what the IC was doing -- and
24 the analysts at NCTC -- to really give them the continued
25 vote of confidence from the Director of NCTC that what they

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1 are doing, it is okay to change, it is okay to have your
2 position evolve; reading that there is a problem with that
3 is, in my view -- I did not want them to read what was
4 happening in the news in a way that would deter them from
5 following the facts, wherever they would lead.

6 And I felt like standing up for Clapper or through Sean
7 Turner and my role, to defend them was the right thing to do
8 to continue to ensure that they were doing the job the way
9 they needed to do it.

10 That is all I had in terms of your questions -- those
11 three things I wanted to clarify.

12 Q Thank you.

13 EXAMINATION

14 BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

15 Q I think that was a helpful clarification.

16 During your clarification, you talked a little bit
17 about, to the extent that Susan Rice connected the video to
18 the attacks in Benghazi, and earlier you had made some
19 statements about having an overall impression that she had
20 been overly emphatic or less equivocal.

21 I want to give you an opportunity now -- because it
22 sounds to me like maybe you haven't looked at actually what
23 she said in a long time -- to go back through a little bit of
24 what she said and test your memory a little bit on, really,
25 whether what you are recalling now is based on what she said

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~~15/01~~

1 in the transcripts or the sort of media hubaloo that was
2 created after her statements, if that makes sense?

3 A Okay.

4 Q We will mark this exhibit 11.

5 [Olsen Exhibit No. 11

6 was marked for identification.]

7 BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

8 Q And just before we go into that, I just want to
9 bring you back to your testimony -- it's exhibit 3 -- in
10 front of Senator Lieberman. I want to take you to page
11 SCB0051492.

12 A Okay.

13 Q And about five paragraphs down. I think we had
14 talked about this before, but we had sort of stopped before
15 we had gotten to this point. So in here, you discuss, you
16 know, you mentioned the AQIM connection. And you said:

17 At this point, what I would say is that a number of
18 different elements appear to have been involved in the
19 attack, including individuals connected to militant groups
20 that are prevalent in eastern Libya, particularly in the
21 Benghazi area, as well. We're looking at indications that
22 individuals involved in the attack may have had connections
23 to Al Qaeda or al Qaeda's affiliates; in particular, Al
24 Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

25 Senior Lieberman said: Right. So that question has not

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1 been determined yet -- whether it was a militant -- a Libyan
2 group or a group associated with Al Qaeda influence from
3 abroad.

4 And you responded: That's right. And I would -- I
5 would add that what -- the picture that is emerging is one
6 where a number of different individuals were involved, so it
7 is not necessarily an either/or proposition.

8 And he said: Okay. Okay, good, well --

9 And you said quote, "again, as you know, the FBI is
10 leading the investigation and that's ongoing."

11 Do you see where I am talking about?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Okay. I think in the previous couple of hours, at
14 some point we discussed whether or not it was reasonable to
15 reference that the FBI was leading the investigation, and
16 then defer to the FBI as being sort of the ultimate arbiter
17 and ultimate decisionmaker. Is that accurate?

18 A In terms of the investigation, yeah.

19 Q And you had explained that the facts were important
20 to you. When you were making that statement, were you
21 implying that you thought that the facts weren't important to
22 anybody else in the administration?

23 A No, no.

24 Q And is the reference here to the fact that the FBI
25 is leading the investigation, one of those qualifiers that

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1 you would put in there, to sort of imply or explain that you
2 weren't certain yet about what the ultimate conclusion of the
3 investigation would be?

4 A You know, I think when I am sitting next to the FBI
5 representative, I think it was important to me to make sure
6 at this point that there is still -- I think, to your
7 question, I think I am making the point that there is still a
8 lot we don't know about who was involved and ultimately it
9 was going to be the FBI that was going to help us figure that
10 out.

11 The intelligence community, as a whole, was going to be
12 a part of that; but in terms of the investigation itself, the
13 FBI would have the lead. So that is why it seemed right to
14 identify the FBI as leading the investigation in the context
15 of answering questions about who was involved.

16 Q And you felt that was appropriate?

17 A Yes.

18 Q And in fact, if we can pull out the exhibit that is
19 the Morrel talking points. It is exhibit 2.

20 A Okay.

21 Q These were the draft talking points from Saturday,
22 September 15, that Mr. Morrel sent, 11:08 a.m.

23 A Yes.

24 Q In those draft talking points, the third point,
25 again, references "under an FBI investigation." Right? "The

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1 investigation is ongoing and the U.S. Government is working
2 with Libyan authorities to bring to justice those responsible
3 for the deaths of U.S. citizens."

4 A Yes.

5 Q And you had approved, or at least coordinated on
6 those -- and, essentially, approved those talking points, is
7 that right? Because here it says, "Michael, this looks good
8 to me."

9 A Yes. So in saying "this looks good to me," I had
10 concurred with those points that he sent around.

11 Q So you thought those points at the time that he
12 sent them to you were accurate?

13 A Yes.

14 Q And you thought they were consistent with the
15 available intelligence at that time?

16 A Yes.

17 Q And did you think that they were an accurate
18 representation of the Intelligence Community's best
19 assessment of the intelligence at that time?

20 A Yes. Yes.

21 Q To the extent that it could be said publicly?

22 A To the extent that it could be said publicly. And.
23 again, there is certainly room for different points to be
24 made. These could have been expressed in a number of
25 different ways, but the gist, I thought, was accurate and

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1 consistent.

2 And, you know, I should add, if this came to me from an
3 NCTC analyst or someone who worked for me, I might have taken
4 a different -- I thought these were accurate, but I would
5 have maybe taken a harder look at them and maybe felt more
6 empowered to edit them.

7 They came from Michael Morrel, the Deputy Director -- or
8 maybe he was actually Acting Director, at the time: I don't
9 remember -- Deputy Director of the CIA. For the purpose that
10 I was looking at them, I was satisfied that I would concur
11 with what they said.

12 Q I guess, if you had been handed these talking
13 points as an administration official -- as Susan Rice was --
14 would you have felt comfortable talking off of these talking
15 points?

16 A Yes, certainly. Coming from Morrel, coming from --
17 if I knew they came from Michael Morrel and I knew that
18 others had looked at them, that would give me more
19 confidence -- that would give me confidence if I were a
20 policymaker, whether in the executive branch or Congress,
21 relying on these as a basis for a public statement, yes.

22 Q Let me take your attention now to the exhibit we
23 just marked. It is exhibit 11. The Bates number is
24 C05394585.

25 You will see it is an email from [REDACTED] to

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 Victoria Nuland, and a number of others, from September 19,
2 at 4:31. The subject line reads: "2012-09-16 - Ambassador
3 Rice - Sunday Shows," and includes an attachment. If you go
4 to the next page, the attachment is Bates number C05394586.

5 A Yes.

6 Q And it represents itself and appears to be a
7 compilation of the transcripts from Ambassador Rice's
8 appearances on the Sunday talk shows. Is that what that is?

9 A Yes.

10 Q And I just want to go through a couple of those
11 real quickly to make sure you have had an opportunity to look
12 at them. Because I don't think you have had an opportunity
13 to look at them today.

14 If you go to page three. And if you look at page three,
15 on the top. So the numbering up on the top. We're in ABC's
16 This Week and Ambassador Rice. And it is in that sort of
17 third full paragraph, but halfway in.

18 In a response to a question from Jake Tapper, Ambassador
19 Rice, says quote, "Well, Jake, first of all, it is important
20 to know that there's an FBI investigation that has begun and
21 will take some time to be completed. That will tell us with
22 certainty what transpired."

23 A Yes.

24 Q And So is that Susan Rice here referencing sort of
25 in the initial beginning of the ABC -- right before she even

~~TS/SCI~~

1 starts answering a question, her referencing that FBI
2 investigation being ongoing?

3 A Yes.

4 Q And then she states quote, "But our current best
5 ~~assessment, based on the information that we have at present,~~
6 is that in fact what this began as, it was a spontaneous, not
7 a premeditated, response to what had transpired in Cairo."

8 I want to take this time for you to compare that
9 sentence to the draft talking points that Mr. Morell sent you
10 in exhibit 2. Specifically, to the first sentence in there.

11 A Right.

12 Q The currently available information suggests that
13 the demonstrations in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by
14 the protests at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a
15 direct assault against the U.S. Consulate in subsequently its
16 Annex.

17 A Yes.

18 Q Do those statements look consistent to you?

19 A Yes. Again, I think they certainly are. As I
20 recall her reading this before or at least being aware of
21 what she said before, that these are generally consistent,
22 yes.

23 Q She then goes on a little bit and then, once again,
24 in what appears to be a pattern -- I am going to take you
25 through the pattern -- goes back to a caveat at the end that

1 the investigation will give the final answers.

2 So she further down says, "We'll will to see exactly
3 what the investigation finally confirms, but that's the best
4 information we have at present."

5 Do you see that?

6 A Yes.

7 Q So at least in this ABC This Week, does it appear
8 that she has caveated her answer both at the beginning and at
9 the end with a reference to the ongoing investigation?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And the fact that the information that she had at
12 the time was the current best assessment, but that it was
13 subject to change?

14 A Yes, she definitely does include those caveats.

15 Q So let's go to CBS Face the Nation. It is on page
16 eight at the top.

17 A Just in the interest of sort explaining to a
18 certain degree why I made the comment I made earlier, which I
19 think is probably fair to do, again, I think it is generally
20 consistent. I do think that the reason I think there is, to
21 a certain degree, Ambassador Rice was more emphatic -- and it
22 is perhaps a small point -- but, using terms like our best
23 information is that in fact what began as a spontaneous, I
24 think that suggests a degree of certainty that we did not
25 necessarily have in the IC about what happened.

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1 When we say "the currently available information" --
2 when Michael said -- and I agree "the current available
3 information suggests that the demonstrations in Benghazi were
4 spontaneously inspired," and Ambassador Rice talks about "our
5 best information is in fact what began," it is a slight
6 difference in emphasis and tone that I think was beyond where
7 we were in the intelligence community. A small difference.

8 But the other area is to, I think, to suggest here that
9 it was a small number of people who came to the embassy. I
10 don't know if we said how many people or what that meant or
11 that they wanted to replicate the challenge in Cairo. That
12 is somewhat of I think -- that goes beyond what we said --
13 that they were replicating what we saw, that we talked about
14 that they were inspired about the protests.

15 Again, I think small differences -- small level in terms
16 of -- more in terms of how she expressed those same points,
17 but that is what has led me to conclude that there are these
18 slight differences in how she explained the intelligence,
19 versus what we were saying inside the intelligence community.

20 Q Let me take you to CBS Face the Nation on page
21 eight. So here she starts again -- it is I think the third
22 paragraph down -- by referencing the FBI investigation being
23 ongoing.

24 She said quote, "Well, Bob, let me tell you what we
25 understand to be the assessment at present. First of all

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1 very importantly as you discussed with the President, there
2 is an investigation that the United States Government will
3 launch, led by the FBI, that has begun." And then it goes on
4 a little bit. Do you see that?

5 A Yes.

6 Q And So again, in the beginning of her statements on
7 CBS Face the Nation she again started by referencing that FBI
8 investigation. Is that right?

9 A Yes.

10 Q And if you go down a little bit further, she says,
11 quote, "So we'll want to see the results of that
12 investigation to draw any definitive conclusions." Do you
13 see that? It is the beginning of the full paragraph.

14 A Yes. Thank you. Yes.

15 Q Do you read that, again, as an attempt to caveat
16 the information that she is providing as being not certain,
17 and subject to change?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Then, again, she goes down and says, "But based on
20 the best information we have to date, what our assessment is
21 as of the present is in fact what -- it began spontaneously
22 in Benghazi as a reaction to what had transpired some hours
23 earlier in Cairo, where, of course, as you know, there was a
24 violent protest outside of our embassy sparked by this
25 hateful video."

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1 A Yes.

2 Q Is that, again, consistent with the talking points?

3 A It is.

4 Q Let's go to NBC Meet the Press. It is on page 12.

5 In this one, in response to David Gregory's question in the
6 first full paragraph by Susan Rice -- the second full
7 paragraph -- she says quote:

8 "Well, let me tell you the best information we have at
9 present. First of all, there's an FBI investigation which is
10 ongoing, and we look to that investigation to give us the
11 definitive word as to what transpired. "

12 Is this, again, starting her answer with a reference to
13 the ongoing FBI investigation?

14 A Yes.

15 Q And the fact that it is uncertain and she won't
16 know the definitive answers until it is done?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Then she says: "But putting together the best
19 information we have available to us today, our current
20 assessment is that what happened in Benghazi was in fact
21 initially a spontaneous reaction to what had just transpired
22 hours before in Cairo." Is that consistent with the talking
23 point?

24 A Yes.

25 Q And then later down she says in the next full

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~~TS/SS1~~

1 paragraph:

2 "What we think then transpired in Benghazi is that
3 opportunistic extremist elements came to the consulate as
4 this was unfolding." Is that consistent with the HPSCI
5 talking point that there are indications that extremist
6 participated in the violent demonstration?

7 A Yes, those are consistent.

8 Q And then, later on, she says quote:

9 "Obviously, that's our best judgment now. We'll await
10 the results of the investigation and the President has been
11 very clear. We'll work with the Libyan authorities to bring
12 those responsible to justice."

13 So again, that is yet another example of her sort of
14 book-ending at the end, in between her statement, that was
15 repeating the talking points of the reference to the FBI
16 investigation and that the answers are uncertain. Is that
17 accurate?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Let's go to Fox News Sunday. It is on page 23.

20 A 20?

21 Q I'm sorry 23. It is at the top. She says quote:

22 "Well, first of all, Chris, we're obviously
23 investigating this very closely. The FBI has a lead in this
24 investigation."

25 Is that, again, her starting her answer with the

~~TS/SS1~~

1 reference to the FBI ongoing investigation?

2 A Yes.

3 Q She then goes on to say:

4 "The best information and the best assessment that we
5 have today is that in fact this was not a preplanned,
6 premeditated attack. That what happened initially was that
7 it was a spontaneous reaction to what had just transpired in
8 Cairo as a consequence of the video."

9 Is that consistent with the HPSCI talking points?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And then afterwards, once again, she says quote:

12 "Obviously, we will wait for the results of the
13 investigation and we don't want to jump to conclusions before
14 then. But I do think it is important for the American people
15 to know our best current assessment."

16 A Yes.

17 Q Is that, once again, her sort of book-ending it
18 with another caveat that the information she had was
19 preliminary and subject to change?

20 A Yes.

21 BY MR. KENNY:

22 Q Director, if I could.

23 A Sure.

24 Q I would like to redirect your attention to exhibit
25 3. This is the September 19 testimony you gave before HSGAC.

~~TS/301~~

1 I direct your attention to page 51491, which is the beginning
2 of your exchange with Senator then-Chairman Lieberman of
3 HSGAC.

4 A Yes.

5 Q We have had an extensive conversation today about
6 your use of a particular phrase here, calling or confirming
7 the Senator's question about whether you agreed this was a
8 terrorist attack.

9 A Yes.

10 Q I would like to just drop down a little bit and
11 read a portion of your testimony and ask you a few questions
12 about that.

13 In response to your questions from Senator Lieberman,
14 the second question -- this is in the middle of the page --
15 you wrote -- or you testified:

16 The best information we have now, the facts that we have
17 now indicate that this was a opportunistic attack on our
18 embassy. The attack began and evolved and escalated over
19 several hours at our embassy -- our diplomatic post on
20 Benghazi. It evolved and escalate over several hours. It
21 appears that individuals who were certainly well-armed seized
22 on the opportunity presented as the events unfolded that
23 evening and into the morning hours of September 12. We do
24 know that a number of militants in the area, as I mentioned,
25 are well-armed and maintain those arms. What we don't have

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1 at this point is specific intelligence that there was a
2 significant advanced planning or coordination for this
3 attack.

4 What I would like to ask you about here -- I know we
5 have touched on it in a little bit in the past hours -- you
6 have been asked about your beliefs or feelings of whether or
7 not this was a terrorist attack and when you knew that,
8 whether or not you believed or agreed that there was a
9 protest and when there was contravening information to
10 dispute that, as well.

11 What I would like to ask you here is, moments before in
12 your testimony you referred to the attack as a terrorist
13 attack. Just a few moments later, you referred to as
14 opportunistic. I would just like to be as clear as possible
15 for the record that you didn't view the attack as being a
16 terrorist attack as somehow incompatible with it also being
17 opportunistic in nature: is that correct?

18 A Absolutely right.

19 Q In your mind, it is completely consistent to refer
20 to the attacks as both being a terrorist attack and
21 opportunistic.

22 A Yes.

23 Q One of those descriptors refers to a potential
24 motivation. The other refers to perhaps the length of
25 planning involved in the attack. Is that right?

~~TS/SC1~~

1 A I think that is fair to say that, yes.

2 Q And, additionally, when you refer to the attacks --
3 that they began and evolved and escalated over several
4 hours -- again, is that incompatible with referring to the
5 attack as a terrorist attack?

6 A No. Those are consistent or at least potentially
7 consistent. Yes, consistent.

8 Q Okay. And to the extent that we have seen other
9 references or other statements, including assessments that
10 refer to demonstrations or protests, would those also be not
11 inconsistent with the idea or the notion of this being a
12 terrorist attack?

13 A Certainly, potentially consistent. Again, if I
14 could just elaborate a bit, from the outset, as I have said,
15 I viewed this as a terrorist attack even when the initial
16 reporting, which included several reports both from
17 classified and open sources that there was a protest.

18 I never viewed that as being incompatible with the
19 conclusion that it was a terrorist attract. In other words,
20 the existence of a protest didn't undercut the conclusion
21 that it was a terrorist attack or the idea that the
22 initial -- what we initially said -- called it a spontaneous
23 demonstration that was spontaneously inspired -- again, that
24 has to do with the nature of the terrorist attack -- the
25 timing, the planning, other aspects of it -- but didn't

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1 undermine the conclusion in my own mind that this was a
2 terrorist attack.

3 And I think I tried to make that point I believe later
4 on at some point in the testimony I gave before the Senate
5 Homeland Committee.

6 Q Sure. And if I could, I would like to direct you
7 to the opening statement you gave and connect kind of the
8 idea that you were just making.

9 I will direct you to page 51487. And in the second
10 paragraph of this transcript there is a reference to the
11 attack in Benghazi. Your testimony at that time was quote:

12 "Certainly, the attack on our diplomatic post in
13 Benghazi that took the lives of four Americans, including
14 Ambassador Stevens, is proof that acts of terror and violence
15 continue to threaten our citizens and our interests around
16 the world." close quote.

17 To the extent that you are subscribing your belief -- at
18 least, initially from the outset -- that, based on certain
19 facts, that you felt that this was a terrorist attack, here
20 you use a slightly different verbiage. You refer to it as
21 acts of terror and violence.

22 I would just like to ask, was that a judgment that you
23 also believed at the time?

24 A I am sorry, what?

25 Q Was that a judgment that you also believed at the

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1 time?

2 A That the attack was proof that acts of terror and
3 violence continue to threaten citizens, you mean?

4 Q Yes.

5 A Yes, definitely. The reason I hesitate is I am
6 recalling what I meant by saying acts of terror and violence.
7 As I sit here and read that, I don't know that I was trying
8 to make a distinction between terror and violence of any
9 import or just sort of referring to the nature of what
10 threatens our interests and citizens around the world.

11 Q Sure. Much has been made of the use of one
12 phrase -- one formulation or the other.

13 A Right.

14 Q Sometimes it can have policy and legal
15 implications, those sorts of things. Your use of acts of
16 terror here, was that in any way an attempt to downplay the
17 nature of the attack in Benghazi?

18 A No. I mean, I think, in fact, without suggesting
19 that I had this in mind at the time, it certainly would only,
20 I think, highlight and do the opposite of downplay by using
21 the term act of terror in that sentence.

22 Q Okay. Also, in that sentence it does refer to
23 continuing threats to American citizens and interests around
24 the world.

25 A Yes.

~~TS/CCI~~

1 Q Were you pressured in any way to downplay the
2 extent of the continuation of these threats posed by
3 extremists in your testimony here?

4 A Never.

5 Q And if I could redirect you back -- I apologize for
6 flipping back and forth; it is a lengthy document -- we will
7 go back to the page we were on: 59491. At the very bottom
8 of that page, Senator Lieberman man asks you a question about
9 attribution and responsibility, and you replied quote:

10 "This is the most important question that we're
11 considering." close quote.

12 A Yes.

13 Q Is it fair to say that in the days following the
14 attack, your principle concern -- the National
15 Counterterrorism Center's principle concern -- was
16 identifying the attackers and supporting the FBI's
17 investigation and bringing the perpetrators to justice?

18 A That is absolutely right. That was the overriding
19 focus of our work.

20 Q Okay. I believe you have been asked this question
21 a couple of different ways. I will ask it perhaps an
22 additional way.

23 Were you ordered or instructed by anyone at the White
24 House not to acknowledge in your testimony that the attack
25 was a terrorist attack?

~~TS/CCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A No. I never had any discussion prior to my
2 testimony about that issue with anyone at the White House.
3 In fact, I don't recall ever talking to anybody at the White
4 House about my testimony, period. It certainly was never
5 suggested to me not to mention terrorist attack.

6 Again, as I mentioned before, by talking about and
7 coordinating this idea that they were looking at connections
8 to Al Qaeda, it sort of implied that we were looking at this
9 as a terrorist attack.

10 Q Sure. And, again, another slightly different
11 formulation of this. Were you told that the administration's
12 policy was not to acknowledge that this was a "terrorist
13 attack?"

14 A No.

15 Let me just add a little bit on that point. This idea
16 that the administration or the White House was focused on
17 downplaying the idea of Al Qaeda, if you read my statement
18 for the record and my testimony as a whole, it certainly
19 doesn't suggest for a moment that threats from Al Qaeda, Al
20 Qaeda affiliates, and Al Qaeda-linked groups is
21 insignificant.

22 In other words, the general message that I was conveying
23 at this hearing and the other hearings I testified in was the
24 nature of the threat is changing; that we made progress
25 against core Al Qaeda, but we still face threats against Al

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 Qaeda-linked groups; particularly, Al Qaeda in the Arabian
2 Peninsula. And I felt part of my job was to truthfully
3 convey the significance of that threat, which I thought was
4 substantial, in terms of the potential for terrorist attacks
5 against U.S. persons overseas and also inside the United
6 States.

7 Q And in fact, your appearance here was a regular
8 scheduled hearing before Congress on emerging threats. Is
9 that accurate?

10 A That is right.

11 Q And you had given a couple of those before, in the
12 past.

13 A Right.

14 Q Some of those may have also touched on threats
15 posed by either core Al Qaeda or the diffusion or dispersion
16 of AQ-affiliates who inspired terrorism?

17 A That is right.

18 Q You were asked in the first round a little bit
19 about some of the NCTC products. You had mentioned or we
20 discussed the NCTC's "Current." I think the way it was
21 described is: Are you aware of what sort of products are
22 pushed out to the community or to consumers? And just my
23 question on that, the NCTC Current, would that have been
24 something would have been available to authorizing committees
25 in Congress?

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A Yes. My understanding is -- and I don't remember
2 exactly the mechanism -- but there was a channel for
3 providing Current and other types of finished intelligence
4 products to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, in
5 particular.

6 Q Is the Current something that is posted on like an
7 internal Web site that then consumers can access?

8 A Yes.

9 Q So rather than being something that is pushed out
10 directly to people, it is something that is made available
11 to -- you described it as a wide audience?

12 A Quite a wide audience. It is an online portal for
13 the intelligence community, but I think Cap.net -- I can't
14 remember exactly, but there is a system here on Capitol
15 Hill -- where Intel Committees can access those products.

16 I recall I had also worked with our leg affairs to have
17 an email push of significant intelligence -- things that we
18 wanted to highlight to members of the Intelligence
19 Committees -- and push that by email; at least, highlight
20 particular products by email.

21 Q So to the extent that an NCTC product such as
22 Current documented the strategic environment --
23 counterterrorism environment in Libya, those products,
24 presumably, would have been available to Members of Congress,
25 the HPSCI; is that your understanding?

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/CCI~~

1 A That is, yes.

2 Q And do you recall in any of the previous emerging
3 threat hearings that you may have testified before -- the
4 open hearings -- do you recall whether you were asked any
5 questions specifically about the AQ threat in Libya?

6 A Sitting here today, I don't recall that in the open
7 hearings. I should point out, in addition to the opening
8 hearings, there were numerous closed hearings, and also
9 closed briefings with the Intel Committees, both by me, but
10 also by analysts, staff. So there was, from my perspective,
11 a consistent flow of information to and then back from the
12 Intel Committees on the overall threat picture.

13 Q So to the extent that NCTC may have produced
14 products describing the threat from terrorists in Libya --
15 threats to U.S. interests in Libya -- do you recall whether
16 the White House ever attempted to try to exert any influence
17 on an NCTC product to downplay or diminish the threat from
18 AQ and its affiliates?

19 A No. I have no recollection of that ever happening.
20 And it would be the kind of thing that would be considered an
21 egregious act, if there ever had been anything like that. So
22 if there had ever been such pressure that I was not directly
23 involved, I would have expected to hear about it.

24 BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

25 Q And that would apply for not just products related

~~TS/CCI~~

1 to Libya, but --

2 A Across the board. Across the board. There are
3 very few tenets -- I am not sure there is a more sort of
4 important tenet to an intel analyst than, that their analysis
5 is not subject to influence for any reason other than the
6 facts that are available.

7 So that is sort of part and parcel of being an analyst.
8 That never happened in my 3 years at NCTC, as far as I
9 recall, on anything related to our work.

10 Q To the extent that you had acknowledged both in
11 NCTC products but also in your testimony, private and in
12 public, both that Al Qaeda core was a shadow of its former
13 self and also that there was an ongoing threat from Al Qaeda,
14 was that a judgment that was shared throughout the
15 intelligence community?

16 A Yes. Those assessments were generally shared
17 throughout the intelligence community.

18 So let me give you a little bit longer answer to the
19 question, because I think it is relevant to this particular
20 issue.

21 There was an occasion where -- on the question of
22 influence on our products, one of the things that we produced
23 in connection with the Benghazi attacks was a narrative
24 timeline that included Predator video and surveillance video.

25 As we were generating that and the narrative that went

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1 with that product, which has been part of at least the HPSCI
2 review record -- I know they included it -- we held a meeting
3 at NCTC to finish the coordinating on that. We were
4 coordinating the narrative with the intelligence community,
5 but also DOD, the State Department, and FBI.

6 It was during one of those meetings -- I held a meeting
7 at NCTC with sort of my counterparts to finalize that
8 product. During that meeting, there was an instance where I
9 thought there was an occasion where there was some effort to
10 go beyond what we wanted to do with just the facts; in other
11 words, some effort to influence what we were saying that
12 seemed self-serving from the State Department. And I put my
13 foot down and said, This is just about the facts of the
14 timeline; it is not about the broader controversy around what
15 happened.

16 It is an example of how strongly I felt that we needed
17 to maintain the integrity of the analytic process throughout.

18 I just think that is a relevant fact in answering that
19 question about how we view our position, our role with the
20 IC.

21 Mr. Kenny. Independence is something your analysts take
22 seriously.

23 Mr. Olsen. Yes, extremely seriously.

24 BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

25 Q And to the extent that somebody at that meeting

~~TS/SCI~~

~~03/001~~

1 raised something from the State Department that you did not
2 want to include, was that person, in your view, attempting to
3 create a false narrative or put inaccurate or false
4 information in? Or, was it just something that wasn't
5 appropriate for that product?

6 A It was exactly that. More than that, it went
7 beyond -- it wasn't counterfactual or inaccurate. It just
8 didn't fit with a straightforward assessment of the facts.

9 Q So it just wasn't appropriate for that product?

10 A For that product, yes.

11 BY MR. KENNY:

12 Q At the beginning of our session today, you were
13 asked about your participation in a secure video conference
14 that occurred on the night of the attacks -- a 7:30 SVTC call
15 that occurred.

16 A Right.

17 Q You were asked some discrete questions about what
18 occurred on that call, but I was hoping if I could just ask
19 more generally about the tone and the tenor of that call.

20 A Sure.

21 Q You described in some of your information
22 availability your awareness of military assets. My question
23 to you is whether or not in that call you had a sense of
24 whether the safety and security of U.S. personnel in Libya,
25 including Benghazi and Tripoli, was something that was being

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~~TS/SCI~~

1 taken seriously by the interagency?

2 A That was the key focus of that video conference and
3 of paramount concern, was the safety and security of U.S.
4 personnel in Benghazi.

5 Q Okay.

6 A As well as the team from Tripoli, of course.

7 Q To the extent you were asked the question about the
8 YouTube video and the discussion about a YouTube video that
9 night, I take it that wasn't a key focus at that SVTC or that
10 was a focus that maybe touched upon NCTC's equities at the
11 time?

12 A I would say that the issue of safety went beyond
13 Benghazi. So we were concerned that this was not going to be
14 limited in terms of risk to U.S. personnel to Benghazi, and
15 that the reason for that was the reaction to the video --
16 what we had seen in Cairo.

17 So I think out of concern for protecting the safety of
18 U.S. personnel at other diplomatic posts, the thought was to
19 limit the continued dissemination of the video via YouTube.

20 Q Did you see over the course of that week -- not
21 just limited to that particular SVTC, but to the days that
22 followed the attacks -- did you in fact see that that video
23 was beginning to spread throughout the region?

24 A Yes.

25 Q And incite additional unrest?

1 A I don't remember the numbers, but I would say in
2 the dozens. I should be careful. I don't know the number of
3 diplomatic posts that we had seen protests, but it was
4 several -- after Benghazi.

5 Q What was your understanding of the protest at those
6 locations? What was the cause of those protests?

7 A I think it was the video itself and reaction to the
8 video.

9 Q YouTube?

10 A The threat video. I don't know a better way to
11 call it than the YouTube video. The Innocence of Muslims
12 video. Yes.

13 Q So the request then that was made of you -- of
14 NCTC -- to work or coordinate with the FBI or to work and
15 address access to the video, is that something that you
16 viewed as inappropriate at that time, in the context of that
17 discussion?

18 A No. I thought the effort was the right thing to
19 do. I thought that we were not the right people to carry out
20 that task, but I 100 percent thought that was the right step
21 to be taking at the time.

22 Q And throughout that week, did you continue to
23 participate in secure video teleconferences --

24 A Yes.

25 Q -- discussing ongoing unrest in the region?

~~TS/SCI~~

1 A Yes; as well as meetings in person and at the White
2 House.

3 Q Okay. So is it fair to say that concern for the
4 safety and security of U.S. personnel remained throughout
5 that week and in the weeks that developed?

6 A And beyond, yes. At NCTC, I think we developed a
7 product. We had a threat matrix that we put out every
8 morning. I think we developed -- I recall we developed -- we
9 culled out of the threat matrix -- which is essentially a
10 catalog of all raw reporting -- anything relating to
11 diplomatic posts.

12 And so it just was a separate section of that threat
13 matrix that dealt with threats to State Department facilities
14 around the world, even if they weren't necessarily related
15 strictly to terrorism, as I recall. So even suspicious
16 activities. Just as a reflection of how heightened our
17 concern was.

18 Q And was that a process that you deployed daily for
19 the State Department?

20 A For the intelligence community. It was an Intel
21 Community product. It was certainly available to the State
22 Department; but yes, we developed that post-Benghazi.

23 Q Okay. So the threat matrix didn't exist before the
24 attacks?

25 A The threat matrix generally did, but then this

~~TS/SCI~~

~~TS/SCI~~

1 piece of the threat matrix that just focused on diplomatic
2 posts was culled out of the threat matrix -- those particular
3 types of threats -- in order to give us better insights to
4 policymakers and Intel Community folks better insights about
5 threats to diplomatic posts.

6 Q Do you recall your participation in the SVTCs as
7 being a daily occurrence, twice daily occurrence, through
8 this period?

9 A There were a number of different things going on,
10 but my participation in the sort of deputy-level meetings
11 would have been not probably daily, but multiple times a week
12 for the first few weeks after Benghazi. But beyond that,
13 there are -- at a lower level, there are secure video
14 conferences. Every day, NCTC hosts a secure video conference
15 three times a day with the intelligence community and with
16 non-intel community components of the government. And they
17 would have talked about these things.

18 Q Understanding it has been some time, but do you
19 recall a specific SVTC that occurred on Sunday, September 16?

20 A No. Saturday, the 15th, we talked about. Sunday,
21 the 16th; no, I don't recall.

22
23
24
25

~~TS/SCI~~

~~13/301~~

1 [5:50 p.m.]

2 BY MS. SAWYER:

3 Q So Director, I think we're almost done.

4 A Okay. I'm okay. Yeah, of course.

5 Q But I have just a couple of questions and you're
6 going to indulge me.

7 I just wanted to direct your attention to exhibit 7, and
8 you spent a little time talking with my colleague about that.

9 A Yes.

10 Q On the second page, one thing I don't think that
11 was discussed was in the context of your response -- it is
12 about halfway down -- your response about the potential
13 statements to kind of clarify where things stood. And you
14 will see it says: "From Matt Olsen." It's on Thursday,
15 September 27, 2012.

16 A Yes.

17 Q It's addressed to "Ben," and I assume that's Ben
18 Rhodes on that email address. I will give you a second just
19 to read that, and I have just a couple of questions.

20 A Yes. Okay. I'm good.

21 Q That second paragraph starts with, "I expect our
22 statement to make these points," and then it has several
23 points, the first of which is, "The IC's job is to follow the
24 facts wherever they lead."

25 Was that -- and I assume the things that you're putting

~~13/301~~

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1 in here -- and we can kind of go through each and every one
2 of them -- that was, indeed, what the intelligence community
3 was seeking to do throughout in its assessment of what had
4 happened in Benghazi?

5 A Absolutely.

6 Q You go on in the second point to say: "This was a
7 chaotic situation at the outset; we had more questions than
8 answers as the event unfolded."

9 I think we've gotten some sense of that today, and maybe
10 it's hard to put yourself back 3-1/2 years ago, but was that
11 kind of your sense that, at the time, there were a lot of
12 questions, not a lot of answers, it was chaotic?

13 A Yes, particularly at the outset. As I say, it was
14 very chaotic.

15 Q And, again, that first principle still was
16 governing, right, you were seeking to follow the facts where
17 they led, even in a chaotic and unfolding situation?

18 A Yes.

19 Q It goes on to say in the next bullet: "Our
20 collection has been limited and fragmentary."

21 What does that kind of mean, if you can flesh that out a
22 little bit?

23 A Sure. You know, what we were getting was extremely
24 limited from -- particularly at the outset -- from sources
25 that were either some limited [REDACTED] based on

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~~15/301~~

1 really [REDACTED] access, which is, you know, again, limited and
2 sometimes fragmentary, you know, where they happened to have
3 the ability to collect information or, you know,

4 [REDACTED]
5 And then what I recall is sort of a frustratingly small
6 number of [REDACTED] sources that were providing reliable
7 information. That was the nature of eastern Libya, I think,
8 at the time. It was just we did not have a lot of [REDACTED]
9 source information. So that was, I think, what I was saying
10 there basically.

11 Q And I think early on you had indicated that at the
12 same time, as you've just explained, that you were, you know,
13 getting some limited and fragmentary information, there was a
14 tremendous demand from what I'm going to refer to as
15 consumers --

16 A Yes.

17 Q -- of information. I assume that would be people
18 in Congress, others in the executive branch, certainly
19 reporters, the American people --

20 A Right.

21 Q -- to provide information.

22 A That's right.

23 Q You go on to say in here: "Our understanding of
24 the attack has evolved as new information has become
25 available." You know, I assume, not only was that true; but

~~15/301~~

~~13/301~~

1 was that something just unique to this situation, or is that
2 sometimes -- is that often what happens?

3 A No, that's always the case, particularly after
4 anything that's a crisis situation. It was true in my
5 experience after the Boston attack. It was true after other,
6 you know, significant events like this. It's just that we --
7 the initial reports are often inaccurate, and we really try
8 to sort out, through tradecraft, what we can rely on so that
9 we can provide precise information.

10 Q And your reference to "tradecraft" there, we have
11 heard from a number of folks in the course of this
12 investigation, I'm sure in the course of prior congressional
13 investigations as well, about tradecraft and its application
14 here.

15 Was there anything in what you've witnessed or
16 participated in with regard to the assessments in Benghazi
17 that departed from what would be longstanding, established,
18 you know, analytic tradecraft?

19 A No, there's nothing I've seen that departed from
20 established tradecraft.

21 Q And then you go on to say: "We have taken care to
22 be precise about the facts and about what we knew and did not
23 know." So I assume that was true, certainly, as you tried to
24 explain, you said there was a demand for the information, so
25 as you tried to explain over time, you tried to take care to

~~13/301~~

~~TS/SC1~~

1 be precise.

2 A Yes.

3 Q And then, finally: "At every opportunity," your
4 email concludes, "we have reported these facts based on the
5 developing intelligence." Again, you were trying to keep
6 people updated as instances developed?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And, certainly, we have talked a lot about various
9 statements. Some of these statements were made in the
10 public domain. Presumably, you were also giving classified
11 briefings at the time.

12 A Yeah. In fact, the classified briefings
13 outnumbered the information we were providing publicly.

14 Q And, certainly, in the classified setting, you
15 might have been able to convey more detailed information
16 about all of these things as they were developing based on
17 the intelligence. Is that a fair statement?

18 A Yes. It is, certainly, the case that we would be
19 able to be more specific in the classified setting in terms
20 of what we were learning from intelligence sources.

21 Q And so some of the adjustment or, perhaps,
22 difficulty and then translating it to some of the other
23 consumers -- the public consumers -- who wouldn't have access
24 to classified would be trying to make an assessment as to the
25 level of detail that could be given at any particular point

~~TS/SC1~~

1 in time?

2 A That's right. Yeah.

3 Q And the level of detail that might have been able
4 to be given on September the 13th in the public domain might
5 differ from the level of detail that could be given in the
6 public domain on September 19th?

7 A Yes. That's right.

8 Q And fair to say, when Ambassador Rice appeared on
9 September 16th, the level of detail that could be provided or
10 that people felt comfortable providing in the public domain
11 may have differed than it would have been on the 19th when
12 you testified before HSGAC?

13 A That's right. It was true here, but it's generally
14 true that, you know, following an event like an attack like
15 in Benghazi, over time you feel more confident providing more
16 detail as you learn more and can provide that information
17 publicly, and you'd expect that to evolve over time, yes.

18 Q And in the efforts to coordinate among the
19 interagency and figure out what was appropriate to say in the
20 public domain in particular, is it fair to say that different
21 people would have sensitivities to whether information was
22 classified or not classified, and revealed sources, revealed
23 methods might potentially interfere with an FBI investigation
24 that was ongoing?

25 A Well, those would certainly be some of the

~~TS/SC1~~

1 considerations that would be brought to bear on what we could
2 say publicly.

3 Q So in the 3-1/2 years -- if my math is correct --
4 since the attack, certainly, there has been significant
5 examination, we've done a fair amount of it today, in
6 addition to the course of the other investigations.
7 Ambassador Rice has been accused of an array of faults for
8 going on national TV. One is that she intentionally lied to
9 the American people. Some say she spun a false narrative. I
10 think what you are explaining to us today is you felt, upon
11 reflection of what she had said, that she may have been more
12 emphatic than, for example, you might have been.

13 I just want to make perfectly clear, though, because in
14 the back and forth what I found interesting was, you know,
15 she's been faulted for having told the American people that
16 there was a protest that preceded the attack that occurred
17 that night in Benghazi. But that is, in fact, what the U.S.
18 Government believed that day, is it not?

19 A Right. Yes. So the -- yes, we believed at that
20 time that -- and we were assessing that there had been a
21 protest in Benghazi, and that was part of the intelligence
22 assessment at that time.

23 Q So the fact that she may have -- and I don't know
24 if this was a personal tick of hers that you make the
25 reference to, in fact, I noticed, on one of the pages that

~~TS/SC1~~

1 you and my colleague were reading, she actually repeats that
2 very phrase.

3 A Yes.

4 Q So that might be a personal tick on her part.

5 But also, as of that day, it was the assessment based
6 on -- I think, Mike Morell has referenced it, and I know
7 prosecutors don't always agree with this term -- as the
8 evidentiary basis, it was factually what we believed that
9 day.

10 A That there had been a protest in Benghazi. Yes,
11 that was what we were assessing at the time. And -- yeah.

12 Q And that, to the extent that she also indicated
13 that had a connection. She says here that it was a
14 spontaneous reaction to what had just transpired hours before
15 in Cairo. That also was, in fact, what the U.S. Government
16 believed the day that she appeared on the talk shows?

17 A I'm sorry, that what? I'm sorry.

18 Q That it was a spontaneous reaction to what had just
19 transpired hours before in Cairo. She goes on to explain
20 that what happened in Cairo was prompted, of course, by the
21 video.

22 A Right.

23 Q So again, like the fact of a protest or the issue
24 of a protest, that was, in fact, what the U.S. Government
25 believed the day that she appeared, September the 16th.

~~10/001~~

1 A Right, because the talking points, at least as I
2 saw them on the Saturday before her testimony -- her
3 statement -- her appearance on the Sunday shows, that Morell
4 sent around, we said that the currently available information
5 suggested demonstrations in Benghazi were spontaneously
6 inspired by protests at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo.

7 Q Right. So the day she appeared, again, given your
8 best assessment, based on the currently available information
9 that she had, was, you know, in fact, that a protest had
10 occurred and that it had been inspired by the events in Cairo
11 earlier that day.

12 A Yes.

13 Q And then just like -- I probably should have asked
14 this. I think it was apparent.

15 [Discussion off the record.]

16 BY MS. SAWYER:

17 Q Sorry.

18 A That's okay.

19 Q I think it was apparent, but just to conclude --
20 again, with exhibit 7 -- the discussion you and I had about
21 kind of what you had articulated as the goals for that
22 statement and explaining how it unfolded, I mean, that, in
23 fact, did represent kind of how you and others had treated
24 the Benghazi. All of the things that we talked about, about
25 trying to follow the facts where they -- following the facts

~~10/001~~

~~TS/SGT~~

1 where they led --

2 A Right.

3 Q -- conveying that, that was accurate, that wasn't a
4 false portrayal of how you or others in the government had
5 treated this crisis. Is that true?

6 A Yes. This is the September 27th email.

7 Q Yes.

8 A Yes. that's certainly true, how we looked at the
9 circumstances around what our responsibility was.

10 Q So this wasn't some kind of tail spun to kind of
11 protect the government after there had been some criticism
12 about the handling of the assessment of the Benghazi attacks?

13 A Definitely not.

14 BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

15 Q And is it fair to say that the accuracy of those
16 statements was something that was shared by Denis McDonough?

17 A Of my September 27th email --

18 Q Yes.

19 A -- to those individuals? You know, look,
20 everything in my experience with the people who I sent that
21 to, from -- on the "to" line as well as the "cc" line -- from
22 Ben Rhodes, to Cardillo, to McDonough, to Brennan, to Morell,
23 Nick, Shawn Turner, [REDACTED] -- my experience over
24 dealing with those individuals before and since is that they
25 would absolutely agree that that was our job. And So I mean,

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1 I'm not sure there's more I can add to that other than I
2 think that they -- that this was absolutely where they would
3 want the NCTC and the intelligence community to be in
4 pursuing our job of explaining what happened in Benghazi.

5 Q And I think your statement there is also bolstered
6 by Denis McDonough's email response, and I'll just read it
7 into the record.

8 He says: "Thanks, Matt and team, for all the work you
9 are doing. The form and nature -- and of course the
10 substance -- of these documents is your call.

11 "The main issue here is our collective need to keep
12 Congress informed of what we know and assess about the
13 developments in and around the Benghazi attack. Many of the
14 reports that have been made public are incomplete -- and some
15 assertions that have appeared in the press are completely
16 inaccurate -- so we have an obligation to make sure Congress
17 is kept up to date on what intelligence we have as well as
18 our best assessments."

19 That was from 10:09 p.m., September 27th.

20 So is that sort of consistent with your understanding of
21 his general views?

22 A Yeah. Not only is that consistent in this
23 instance, but it's consistent in my dealings with Denis,
24 again, before and since. That is how he would approach the
25 intelligence community, and that's how he would approach me

~~TS/SC1~~

1 and the role of NCTC.

2 Q And you followed up the next day, Friday,
3 September 28th, at 10:40 a.m., with a draft statement. You
4 said you provided a draft statement this morning to Shawn
5 Turner, and I think we have already discussed that statement.

6 But was that statement meant to be a good faith effort
7 to address some of the confusion that had developed over the
8 public characterization of the attacks?

9 A I think that's a fair way to look at what we were
10 trying to accomplish, yes. Again, I think I said before too
11 that I think it was important, from my perspective, for the
12 DNI, given some of the discussion in the press, to give a
13 strong and public statement about where we were as a
14 community and also to defend the idea that it's not only okay
15 but, you know, sort of not uncommon for assessments to evolve
16 as you get more information, and that's what we want our
17 analysts to do.

18 For my part, as, you know, I am with my analysts at
19 NCTC, were, obviously, aware of the public debate, I wanted
20 them to feel that we basically had their back and that they
21 should continue to do their job.

22 Q And were you in any way trying to create or
23 perpetuate some kind of false narrative or some political
24 narrative?

25 A No.

~~TS/SC1~~

~~TS/SSI~~

1 BY MR. KENNY:

2 Q I appreciate your patience, Director.

3 A No problem.

4 Q I'll shift gears a little bit. This will,
5 hopefully, conclude our portion.

6 I'm going to read for you a series of allegations that
7 were made publicly about the attacks, in the 3-1/2 years
8 since the attacks, and just ask if you have any personal
9 knowledge or information to support that allegation. There
10 are several of them, so it will take a little bit of time to
11 work through them.

12 A Okay.

13 Q So I would appreciate your indulgence.

14 A Okay.

15 Q I will start with the first one.

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

22 Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton
23 ordered Secretary of Defense Panetta to, quote, "stand down,"
24 close quote, on the night of the attacks?

25 A No.

~~TS/SSI~~

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

4 A No.

5 Q Next allegation.

6 It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally
7 signed an April 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The
8 Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it
9 four Pinocchios -- its highest award -- for false claims.

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

13 A No.

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

17 A No.

18 Q Next.

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

23 Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton
24 misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed
25 by Qadhafi to his own people in order to garner support for

~~TS/SCI~~

1 military operations in Libya in spring of 2011?

2 A No.

3 Q Next.

4 It has been alleged that the U.S. mission in Benghazi
5 could have transferred weapons to Syrian rebels through other
6 countries. A bipartisan report issued by the House Permanent
7 Select Committee on Intelligence found that, quote, "The CIA
8 was not collecting and shipping arms from Libya to Syria,"
9 close quote, and that they found, quote, "no support for this
10 allegation," close quote.

11 Do you have any evidence to contradict the House
12 Intelligence Committee's bipartisan report finding that the
13 CIA was not shipping arms from Libya to Syria?

14 A No.

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

18 A No.

19 Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily
20 delayed from departing the Annex to assist the Special
21 Mission Compound. There have been a number of allegations
22 about the cause of and the appropriateness of that delay.
23 The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report,
24 concluding that the team was not ordered to, quote, "stand
25 down," close quote, but that, instead, there were tactical

~~TS/SCI~~

1 disagreements on the ground over how quickly to depart.

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

5 A No.

6 Q Putting aside whether you might agree with that
7 decision or think it was the right decision, do you have any
8 evidence that there was a bad or improper reason behind the
9 temporary delay of CIA security personnel who had departed
10 the Annex to assist the Special Mission Compound?

11 A No.

12 Q Concern has been raised by one individual that in
13 the course of producing documents to the Accountability
14 Review Board damaging documents may have been removed or
15 scrubbed out of that production.

16 Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State
17 Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the
18 materials that were provided to the ARB?

19 A No.

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

24 A No.

25 Q I'm going to ask this question for documents

~~TS/DBI~~

1 provided to Congress. Do you have any evidence that anyone
2 at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging
3 documents from the materials that were provided to Congress?

4 A No.

5 Q It has been alleged that CIA Deputy Director Mike
6 Morell altered unclassified talking points about the Benghazi
7 attacks for political reasons and that he then misrepresented
8 his actions when he told Congress that the CIA, quote,
9 "faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the
10 highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship," close
11 quote.

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

15 A No.

16 Q Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director
17 Morell altered the talking points that were provided to
18 Congress for political reasons?

19 A No.

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

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

~~TS/DBI~~

1 A No.

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

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

9 A No.

10 Q It has been alleged that a team of four military
11 personnel stationed at Embassy Tripoli on the night of the
12 attacks, who were considering flying on the second plane to
13 Benghazi, were ordered by their superiors to, quote, "stand
14 down," close quote, meaning cease all operations. Military
15 officials have stated that those four individuals were,
16 instead, ordered to, quote, "remain in place," close quote,
17 in Tripoli to provide security and medical assistance at that
18 location. A Republican staff report issued by the House
19 Armed Services Committee found that, quote, "There was no
20 stand-down order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli
21 who sought to join the fight in Benghazi," close quote.

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

1 A No.

2 Q It has been alleged that the military failed to
3 deploy assets on the night of the attack that would have
4 saved lives. However, former Republican Congressman Howard
5 "Buck" McKeon, former chairman of the House Armed Services
6 Committee, conducted a review of the attacks, after which he
7 stated, quote, "Given where the troops were, how quickly the
8 thing all happened, and how quickly it dissipated, we
9 probably couldn't have done more than we did," close quote.

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

12 A No.

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

17 A No.

18 Mr. Kenny. Director, I appreciate it. Thank you again
19 for your many years of service.

20 With that, we'll go off the record.

21 Mr. Davis. Actually, I just have one question based on
22 something you mentioned, Peter.

23 Mr. Kenny. We can stay on the record.

24 BY MR. DAVIS:

25 Q You mentioned there was a meeting in your office at

~~TS/SC1~~

1 NCTC to kind of finalize the timeline with other individuals.

2 A Yes.

3 Q When did that meeting take place, the one you were
4 referring to?

5 A I'm not sure the exact date, but it would have
6 been, I think, sometime -- my best recollection is it would
7 have been sometime in late October.

8 Q October. Okay.

9 A Yeah, October timeframe.

10 Q And what did this individual from the State
11 Department say or do that kind of gave you pause?

12 A To my recollection -- and it's not specific -- it
13 was -- it had to do with information that would have been
14 supportive of what the State Department was doing on that
15 night, and it was more qualitative than factual.

16 Q Do you recall specifically what it was?

17 A I don't recall other than my recollection is that I
18 thought that that -- and I said so -- I didn't think that
19 belonged in what we were doing.

20 Q Who from the State Department made those comments?

21 A It was Philippe Reines.

22 Mr. Davis. Okay. Thank you.

23 Mr. Kenny. Off the record.

24 Mr. Olsen. Just one moment, if I could, just to confer
25 here.

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~~TS/SC1~~

1 [Discussion off the record.]
2 Mr. Olsen. I'm good. Thank you.
3 [Whereupon, at 6:15 p.m., the interview was concluded.]
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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date

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Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness reviewed the accompanying transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide corrections to the transcript.